COMMUNITY MEETING

Skagit County Fire Protection District #9

16818 W. Big Lake Blvd, Mount Vernon, WA 98274

July 17, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Harmon.

Commissioner Harmon, Commissioner Gubrud and Commissioner Thomson were present. Assistant Chief Miner and Secretary Berg were also present. Chief Berg was working out of town. 34 community members signed in on the sign in sheet.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the levy lid lift for the fall of 2019.

Commissioner Harmon gave a recap of previous community meetings for 2019. Commissioner Thomson gave a report on the levy rates since 2002. Assistant Chief Miner spoke about the ladder truck and NFPA guidelines.

Commissioner Harmon asked for the public’s assistance in creating a pro levy committee and a con levy committee. The committee is limited to three members but each committee may have an unlimited number of persons assist them. Secretary Berg will submit each committee’s members to the elections office.

Resolution 19-228 – Commissioner Gubrud made a motion to assign resolution number 19-228 to the resolution they passed at the regular commissioner meeting on July 8th. Commissioner Thomson seconded. Motion passed unanimously. (The resolution passed on July 8th was to authorize a regular property tax levy of $1.00 per $1,000 of assessed valuation for 2019 and thereafter pursuant to RCW 84.55.050).

Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tracy Berg, Secretary \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Chair \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Community Questions and Concerns:**

*District 3 pays someone to write grants for them. Why doesn’t District 9 do that?*

The Secretary and the Assistant Chief both apply for grants.

*How does District 3 operate on the same budget as District 9?*

We cannot answer to District 3’s operating expenses. They receive $384,446 in taxes whereas District 9 receives $309,416 (for 2019).

*Has District 9 looked into annexing Otter Pond from Clear Lake?*

District 4 would have to allow us to annex the back side of Nookachamps. At this time, they do not want to give that up to District 9.

*There was no levy increase statement in the minutes so Brian Smith feels lied to. He also stated that District 9 commissioners said they did not plan on having anything on the fall ballot.*

In the meeting minutes of April 1st, 2019 the commissioners discussed the district’s capital needs (including ways to pay for those capital needs.) The decision was made at the May commissioner meeting to attempt to be on the ballot in November after community input. The commissioners are hosting community meetings to discuss the options.

*Mark Pearson wanted the papers handed out tonight available on the website ahead of time. He still feels we lack good communication. He wants a newsletter more often than what he’s been getting.*

We are trying to send out a newsletter quarterly. The last one was sent out in March 2019. We will be sending another one out soon. The papers handed out on Wednesday night will be posted to the website shortly.

*Martin Boer left the meeting because he could not hear the commissioners.*

We will attempt to have the microphone on and used at the remainder of the meetings.

*How can the helicopter crew stay in the old station but we can’t have residents live there?*

The helicopter crew is temporary. To accommodate full time sleeping facilities, the old station would have to be upgraded to comply with current codes.

*What can we give up from the capital list?*

We only brought the items we feel are 100% necessary for our fire department.

*What would .90 cents give us versus the 1.10?*

The lid lift to .90 cents would give the District an additional $151,024.11 in tax dollars versus $253,343.76 at $1.10.

*One community member said to not ask her to prioritize what the departments needs are.*

The list that we provided, we prioritized.

*Can we lease a fire truck?*

Yes, that is a possibility but at 300 calls a year, we can’t justify having a new truck every 5 years and always having a constant payment.

*Can we buy a used fire truck?*

Yes, that is a possibility and we have done in the past, under the right circumstances.

*Why does the fire department always want the best?*

We want the best so that we can protect our citizens and our firefighters.

*Call volume? Percentage of fires?*

2019 105 calls / 10.31% Fires (through May 29th)

2018 263 calls / 8.75% Fires

2017 321 calls / 7.48% Fires

2016 286 calls / 5.94% Fires

2015 258 calls / 8.53% Fires

*Why did we buy a ladder truck?*

We needed another engine for our rating and this one was available at a great price. The one we bought, just so happened to have a ladder.

*What is our rating?*

Our current rating with the Washington Survey and Rating Bureau is 5 which matches the city of Mount Vernon and the city of Burlington. Our great rating is due to our apparatus’ and maintenance as well as our firefighter training.

*Why not pay for a new truck over 20 years?*

Due to other apparatus requirements, we cannot extend payments that long. In addition, we cannot get an apparatus financed for that long of a term.

*When the board voted on the levy, what type did they vote on? And did we get an opinion from an attorney?*

We are still in the discussion phase and that has not been decided on. The board voted to increase the levy to $1.10. They did not vote on the type of levy and they did not get an opinion from an attorney.

Thank you to community member Diane MaKaeli for posting the following link on Facebook which explains levy lid lifts:

[*http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Finance/Revenues/Levy-Lid-Lift.aspx*](http://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Finance/Revenues/Levy-Lid-Lift.aspx)

*What is our population?*

According to the Office of Financial Management/Washington State, the estimated population for Skagit County Fire District 9 in 2018 was 2,940. (In 2000, it was 1,795).

*How many new homes?*

According to the Office of Financial Management/Washington State, the estimated number of total homes in Skagit County Fire District 9 in 2018 was 1,270. (In 2000, it was a total of 1,209).

*Why aren’t we using the fire program students from Skagit Valley College?*

If a student lives in Big Lake, we would love to have them join us. We currently have three firefighters on our roster that attended the fire program at the college within the last couple of years and we have one that is attending in the fall.

*Potential expansion about Little Mountain Road water line?*

Yes, we have heard that water is being brought to Big Lake via Little Mountain Road. This could bring more households into our fire district but we do not know the numbers.