COMMUNITY MEETING

Skagit County Fire Protection District #9

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

May 29, 2019

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

Commissioner Harmon, Commissioner Gubrud and Commissioner Thomson were present. Chief Berg, Assistant Chief Miner and Secretary Berg were also present. 43 community members signed in on the sign in sheet.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the capital needs of the district, as well as paying the firefighters and the levy lid amount required to meet these needs.

Assistant Chief Miner showed the community the items the District has received from grants in the last 15 years which included radios, air packs, cylinders and masks. He also the costs of equipment and how the grants have had a huge impact for us to be able to have new equipment. Example: The 2005 SCBA grant cost the District $15,000.00 instead of $78,000.00. The 2019 SCBA grant cost the District $5,000 instead of $106,000.00.

The community members had many questions pertaining to the lid lift and discussions followed. All questions were noted and will be included in notes of the minutes.

The next meeting will be June 19th, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Big Lake Station.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:36 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.