

August 14, 2020

TO: White Bluff Property Owners
FROM: Your Board of Directors
RE: White Bluff Volunteer Fire Department

Your Board held a Work Session yesterday to address vital issues facing our association including a revised budget for the balance of 2020, extensive consideration to capital expense needs, analyzing and making decisions on a new lease for golf carts, and discussing a way to hold the Annual Meeting that was deferred because of COVID19.

Two representatives from the WBVFD requested to appear before the Board and discuss the need for replacing a brush truck at a cost of **\$145,465**, payable when the truck was actually delivered in 10-12 months. It was proposed that the source of these funds would be the segregated money accumulated from a \$100 per year increase in Homeowner Occupancy Fees. After extensive discussion, the Board denied the request.

It is important that our property owners be aware of what went into this difficult decision. Well over two years ago the Board became concerned that little long term planning was in place relative to the future replacement of equipment. The POA donates \$40,000 per year to the VFD; this money is primarily used to address current needs with no POA restrictions. The VFD supplements these funds with numerous fundraising events, and while the aggregate amount of funds is generally sufficient to meet on-going current needs, they do not address the future.

When the \$100 increase in HO fees was approved, the primary concern of the VFD was the inevitability of having to replace the fire engine at a cost of \$400-450,000. The collected fees are held and controlled by the POA and are specifically earmarked for future capital needs.

It is important to note that at that time the VFD was operating with 2 brush trucks as they had been for numerous years. A barely used third brush truck was acquired less than two years ago, free of cost, through the efforts of the Board. The following facts were confirmed by the VFD representatives:

The VFD has three brush trucks, one of which needs to be replaced.
They have historically operated with two brush trucks.
According to the Fire Chief and VFD President there has never been a brush fire in White Bluff.
The WBVFD brush trucks are used totally to deal with brush fires outside White Bluff.
The WBVFD is reimbursed \$55 for each call it makes regardless of the number of trucks sent to the outside fire.

To date, the balance in the segregated account is approximately \$95,000. A new brush truck will cost **\$145,465**. When the money is due for payment and payment is made, the segregated account will be depleted. If and when a replacement fire engine (the primary need for White Bluff) is required, it would be highly doubtful that sufficient funds will be available **if** the equipment fund set up by the WBPOA is depleted by the purchase of a new brush truck. The State of Texas makes a very limited number of grants each year for the purchase of brush trucks, but no funds are available from the State of Texas for the replacement of fire engines. The burden of paying for a replacement fire engine falls on the fire department and the local community. White Bluff VFD still has two functioning brush trucks.

Decisions such as this are difficult at best; however, the Board has made and will continue to make decisions independent of any ancillary emotional aspects involved. We totally appreciate the unselfish time our dedicated VFD volunteers give to protect our community and surrounding areas.

It should also be noted that this Board totally remains committed to transparency. In the past five years there have been well over 400 email communications sent out. Open Q&A sessions were established at all Board Meetings, and numerous Town Hall Meetings have been held. Every board member is totally open to discussing any issue, and all emails are answered. There are some items that should and must remain confidential- some ongoing litigation issues and personnel issues are two examples.

This Board and those who will follow will continue to make objective decisions and simultaneously maintain transparency.