

# Mosier Fire District Budget Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 5:30 pm  
Held as in-person and Zoom Meeting

## Attendance

**Board Members:** Carol Goter, Kris McNall, Rob Miller, Todd Reeves, Joanne Rubin

**Budget Committee Members from the Community:** Barb Ayers, Craig Funk, Wade Root, Al Sorestad

**Staff:** Chief Michael Carlson

## Call to order 1738 by Todd Reeves

**Election of Budget Committee Chair:** Goter nominated Kris McNall for chair; Rubin seconded the motion. McNall elected chair by all except Ayers (arrived later).

**Chair McNall** described the purposes of the budget meeting: 1) Receive public comment; 2) Review the proposed budget. The MFD Budget Committee must have a motion to approve the tax rate and to approve the budget. McNall invited comments from the public; none present. Meeting then turned over to Chief Carlson, the Budget Officer.

**Chief Carlson** presented budget, containing budget letter and forms (see <https://mosierfire.com/other-documents/board/budget-docs/> ) under "Budget Meeting April 25, 2024" section. Chief stated that along with the executive summary describing current financial status and what's being budgeted for the following year, he would be asking for three recommendations: 1) \$63K for modifications to Station 12 to include either modifications to the current building or adding a second building to the site to accommodate current Stn 12 equipment (Brush 12); 2) \$35K for a Polaris ATV with firefighting and EMS packages (seating two EMTs, able to transport a patient, able to carry a 70-gallon tank) to provide service to locations not accessible by current MFD equipment, including the Twin Tunnels; 3) funds for 12 new Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs), four packs for each of the three engines, which would cost \$120K at last estimate, though grants or other funds will be pursued to offset that expense.

Chief stated that by including these in his budget, he will be able to fulfill his mandate to keep the residents safe from fire and to keep the volunteers in safe equipment.

Chief was questioned about acquiring a trailer for the ATV. That is being investigated. The state will not allow the ATV to be driven on public roadways, but the county and city can grant an exception. He will be working with County Commissioner Hege on getting permission to use small portions of Hwy 30. The only other local department using an ATV now is Hood River.

Chief continued to review the Budget spreadsheets with the Committee.

- **UP Dry Hydrant Fund:** During the 2022-2023 budget year, funds were moved to the Mosier Center Fund. Currently no money in this account, but legally, we have to keep this report active for three consecutive budget cycles, last year being year one.

- **Gisvold Bequest Fund:** The general intention is that this fund is to be used for items in the JUF for MFD, possibly something not currently identified but related to JUF. Ayers questioned moving this fund to something earning higher interest. McNall explained that most of MFD funds, including this one, are in the LGIP funds earning a good interest rate (near 5%).

- **Grant Fund:** All monies have been moved to the General Funds (in alignment with what other districts do with grant funds), but need to maintain it on the books for three years.

- **UP-Equipment/Derailment Reimb Fund:** No longer needs to be tracked, in packet for transparency purposes only.

- **Capital Reserve Fund:** Historically, this money is set aside for the replacement of vehicles and future expenditures. Expecting \$10K in interest earned. Proposal to transfer in \$75K from General Fund. This represents \$61K from the last tax increase (\$1.65/\$1K assessed value to \$2/\$1K), plus \$14K from our General Fund. A similar transfer has been done for the last two years because we haven't had to pay for JUF operations expenses or the JUF loan yet. With our vehicles close to or past retirement age, allocating the money in the vehicle replacement fund allows the board to authorize purchasing vehicles without doing supplemental budgets.

- **General Fund:** Cash on hand increased to \$368K due to reduced expenses last year (most of the year staffed by a part-time interim chief and no major costly fires in our district for two years). Some formula errors were discovered in the LB-20 and will be corrected by the next Budget Committee meeting. McNall explained that the source of the Second and First Preceding Years "Available Cash on Hand" numbers are the previous audits, and the source of proposed "Available Cash on Hand" comes from an estimate based on our current Balance Sheet as of July 1, 2024. Chief went on to explain that a forecast of 3% annual growth is used to project tax revenues. He also gets information from the County which provides a value of the district – not before the budget process, however, so extrapolations must be made from information available at this time.

- **LB-30:** Not many changes. Some expenses from last year will not be repeated (e.g., relocation expenses), but we will be paying a full year of PERS. A question was raised about why MFD pays more than other similar districts for unemployment insurance, but it has been challenging to communicate with the state about this. It was suggested that MFD should approach the state again about this.

Chief reviewed line by line of the LB-30. Of note, vehicle maintenance will stay the same. Even though we had weather-related damage to some of the vehicles, we should still be at or under \$23K. Chief is looking into some FEMA funds available related to winter storm damage. Fuel costs will be budgeted slightly higher even though fuel consumption in this fiscal year is down. Volunteer training budget is reduced. There are many volunteer opportunities, but they haven't been accessed. Discussion of recruitment and retention challenges included high cost of housing as a factor.

Chief Carlson discussed his efforts to fill three temporary positions for Wildland Firefighters which will be funded by a state grant for wildland staffing. This was inadvertently omitted from the budget numbers and will be added in by the next meeting. Details about paying PERS and FICA for these part-time positions were discussed. Chief will follow up with our bookkeepers and the State for clarification.

Chief Carlson explained his plan for station modification, budgeted at \$63K. It may involve some building removal or additions. He's also going to apply for a grant for modifications to Station 12 and 13. He's intending to talk to County Commissioner Hege regarding a potential change to the entrance and exit of Station 12, and possibly getting some help from the county for this.

Committee Member Funk asked about contingency plans for new SCBAs if unsuccessful in getting a grant. Chief explained that volunteers would only do exterior firefighting, and could not use apparatus replacement funds for SCBAs. McNall stated that MFD has always been able to acquire SCBAs from donations from others or via grants. Reeves requested a clarification in the budget message which addresses the cost for SCBAs, even though it's expected to be covered by grants.

**Discussion of Station Upgrade and ATV:** Chief Carlson advocates for this budget plan to keep our district forward looking and being able to competently and safely manage our district's needs. Chief feels that our projected cost savings can allow MFD to invest in an ATV and station maintenance/upgrade. McNall

stated her position that the station maintenance needs to happen, but does not feel that the ATV meets the same threshold. Chief answered questions about ATV use, high pressure water use results in lower water need, and the ability to go to areas not accessible by other vehicles. Rubin added her support for building upgrades, but not the ATV. Reeves' position was that the priority needs to be the JUF for any available funds. Committee Member Ayers offered a suggestion to divert \$10K of the ATV price tag toward the JUF, but McNall and Reeves stated opposition to buying the ATV this year. Ayers suggested coming up with a compromise that would allow for new firefighting strategies like this. Rubin reminded the group of the challenges of the JUF project and pushed for full support from MFD to complete it. Committee Member Funk acknowledged the importance of prioritizing completion of the JUF as well as MFD's mission and the Chief's risk assessment, and advised the Committee determine what is essential to service delivery. He also spoke to looking at the ATV as a piece of apparatus, could it be funded from the vehicle replacement budgeted funds. McNall requested more information specifically about how the ATV will make residents or their property safer. Board Member Miller requested that if the data exists, Chief Carlson quantify how the ATV could have been used in recent Mosier incidents or how Hood River has used their ATV. Chief will gather that information to present at the next meeting.

Further discussion of a third bay in the JUF or alternatives to that.

No public comment.

McNall will poll members for another meeting mid-May.

Meeting adjourned at 1944.