

Board of County Commissioners, Jefferson County  
100 Jefferson County Parkway, Suite 5550  
Golden, CO 80419

March 14, 2019

Honorable Commissioners;

The Directors of the Elk Creek Fire Protection District are writing you today to make you aware of a serious situation facing the residents of the Conifer area. The Elk Creek Fire District is reaching a crisis level in our capacity gap between what is needed to provide service to the residents of the Conifer area, and our ability to provide fire and life safety services, particularly as it relates to increased growth.

In the past year the Elk Creek Fire District had an increase of 8% in requests for service. At the same time the fire district general fund budget has fallen 11%. That is due to both falling tax revenue and falling ambulance revenue. In 2018, the fire district used \$67,000 from reserves; for 2019 that will be closer to \$250,000. That represents 20% of the fire district reserves, and 8% of the annual operating budget.

The fire district has only 2 or 3 firefighters on duty each day, in addition to what volunteers may be available. That represents one ambulance crew, or less than one full fire engine crew. If the fire district has an ambulance call, those 2 or 3 firefighters will be busy for upwards of 2 hours by the time they transport a person to St. Anthony or Swedish Hospital. During that time, any additional calls may be handled by volunteers, or by mutual aid...or in some cases, there will be no 911 response at all. Overlapping calls occurred 24% of the time in 2018.

There are a number of proposals for development in the fire district. The proposed developments in the area would add between 10% and 20% to the population of Conifer. Obviously, we anticipate a 10% to 20% increase in calls. Any increase in tax revenue would at best bring the fire district back to the funding level of 2017-2018. That is before the next Residential Assessment Rate decrease kicks in, which is likely to cause the fire district to lose still more revenue.

The fire district does not currently get impact fees from new development. That was not an option for fire districts prior to 2016 when HB16-1088 was signed into law. To be able to collect impact fees, the fire district must fund a study to determine the effective share of capital expenses the developer would be required to pay, and would need to have an agreement with the Board of County Commissioners to have the county collect those fees and remit them to the fire district. The fire district has not been able to fund that study in the past due to the already tight budget.

At this time, we request that Jefferson County place a moratorium on new development in Conifer other than already permitted single family homes until such a time that an impact fee agreement is in place, and to require all current commercial and multi-family developments in process be subject to the impact fees. The fire district will commit to a timely process to have a study and agreement to submit to the Board of County Commissioners. This would be a good first step toward reducing an unacceptably high fire risk.

Respectfully,



Greg Branch, Chair

Elk Creek Fire Protection District