

## LWFR Land Acquisition

The number of residents and the demand for fire and rescue services has grown dramatically over the last ten years and is expected to grow even faster in the future. LWFR existing facilities will not be adequate to handle the projected growth.

As a result, LWFR began talks with the Cascade School District in 2017 regarding purchasing a parcel of land owned by the school district that co-joins our property on Beaver Valley Road. The property sits behind the Beaver Valley Elementary School off Hill Street.

LWFR is interested in purchasing the property because it is centrally located, shares a common border with our existing facility, is relatively flat, has water and power available, and may be offered for considerably less than smaller properties that would need to be developed.

LWFR has been very open about our plans. We held a joint public meeting with the school district, held private meetings with those who could be most impacted, answered numerous written questions, and provided documents as requested. We have also offered public input in the design process of new facilities. However, we do not intend to design a facility before we have a place to put it.

A small group opposed to this acquisition has begun a campaign of misinformation that we feel is necessary to address. A small group opposed to the acquisition has been campaigning against the sale of the land and has made some misleading statements on their web page and in the local paper. Contrary to the misleading information:

- LWFR is not asking taxpayers for additional funds to acquire the land.
- LWFR has no plans to use the site for a regional training center with dormitories. We do envision a facility similar to the Leavenworth Fire Station except we will not be conducting training burns at the site. This facility has a training room, office spaces, apparatus bays, cooking areas, and sleeping areas for resident firefighters. The training room could be used by the community for meetings or more importantly a temporary shelter during emergencies.
- LWFR has not expressed a desire to build a jail or holding cell nor has the Sheriff approached us about a jail. We are planning to include a small office for the Sheriff personnel who patrol our area. The community has expressed the desire to have a more visible police presence in our neighborhoods.
- LWFR has assured those with concerns that emergency response will continue to be primarily off the Beaver Valley Road access.
- LWFR has publicly indicated that until development on that site is needed the land may be open to public use and Cascade School activities.

- LWFR currently performs and will continue to perform maintenance on their vehicles inside a maintenance shop. Having a local shop with trained mechanics allows taxpayers to save dollars and helps keep the vehicles in a more available status. In addition we have an agreement with Cascade Medical to service their ambulances. We are not planning any outdoor maintenance facilities.

The existing Fire Station on Beaver Valley Road was the first structure on that block of land. People in the Hill Street area built their homes next to an existing school and fire station, but now appear to be opposed to expanding the fire station. It is reminiscent of building next to an airport and then complaining about aircraft noise.

A few of these same neighbors have stated things like:

- Go buy the POT FARM and build your station by “those” people.
- Can’t you see how much money we have spent on “our” homes?
- We would rather have a middle school there, it would be less intrusive.
- You firefighters are going to pay a deep price for supporting this!
- We will never support you owning this property; we are going to fight you at every step!

It seems ironic that some of the opponents who profess to keep Plain “rural” own multiple homes in the area, rent their homes to vacationers, or are involved in businesses that bring thousands of people to our valley every year. They are contributors to the growth that is fueling the increase in emergency services here in the Upper Valley.

Another interesting fact is that they incorrectly state that the fire district will raise taxes to purchase the land, but they proposed a “parks and recreation” tax to fund their proposal to develop a park on the property. However, when soccer fields were proposed on the site they opposed them as well.

Included in their opposition is a statement that “they” don’t think we should fight fires on federal lands. The cohesive strategy for fighting fires anywhere in the United States is the closest available resources get on it quickly before it gets out of hand. Anyone, who has lived here, knows that firefighters from all over the country including privateers, federal, state, career and volunteers have come here to help protect us from catastrophic fires. They have come to help us and we will go to help them!

Those of you who have lived here or have visited here over a period of time see the changes that are occurring. Volunteer firefighters are becoming harder to train, equip, retain, and the costs of meeting these needs is skyrocketing. Volunteers used to receive limited classroom and practical training; now they must attend a regional academy with practical and written exams. They are expected to obtain the same training as career firefighters. Eventually, this

area will require seasonal, residents or career firefighters to meet the community's needs. In order to provide housing, store apparatus, and provide training facilities we will need to increase our footprint.

Acquiring this parcel centrally located, co-joined to existing property and a buildable site will reduce taxpayer expenses at the time of development. It will also be large enough to increase setbacks, build screening (to address impact issues) and leave space available for public use. It will also allow a large enough parcel to jointly address the need for a refuge or community meeting space.

We are the second lowest funded fire district in the county at 0.61 per thousand and dropping. We strive to be good neighbors, good stewards of your tax dollars, and be transparent about our actions. Those opposed to us acquiring the land would like to portray us as none of those. Their desire for us to design a station and then acquire the property. This is neither feasible nor economical.

Attached you will find letters of support from folks who have lived in this valley for many year in close proximity to our proposed acquisition.

I know this is a lengthy read but hopefully it will clarify our desires and expose the degree of misinformation and fear mongering being spread by the opposition.

Stay Safe

Chief Mick

