This brief is being provided to inform the board, staff and public of the details of an agenda item that requires action from the board. The President of the Board will provide board members, staff, and the public the opportunity to ask questions about this topic when this agenda item is announced.

**Date: 21 Sep 2021**

**Agenda Item #:**

**Originator:** Rich McLaughlin

**Purpose**: To discuss use of Fire Reserve funding

**Supporting Documents Included: Yes**

* Fire Break Maintenance proposal (TBD)

**Desired Action by the Board:**

Review the District’s current Fire Reserves with the objective of making decisions on the use of these Reserves to achieve maximum benefit for the community.

1. **Background:**

* The CSD is currently contracting with EPRFD for fire and EMS. EPRFD is experiencing recruitment short falls and members of the community are expressing concern regarding EPRFD meeting contract obligations. Note that EPRFD has never missed an emergency call within the district and continues to support non-emergency requests.
* The CSD is currently engages in a fire district consolidation effort with four other Districts in Eastern Plumas County. Should this effort succeed, GMCSD will relinquish our Fire Protection duties and become part of the new District. Other tax related actions related to annexation or consolidation would be required if this comes about.
* If the redistricting is unsuccessful, GMCSD will have three options:
  1. Continue to contract for services with an established district
  2. Annex to an established district
  3. Work on a new consolidation plan with other districts
* LAFCO has advised the CSD that in the event consolidation is successful, either the current effort or some future effort, or if we Annex into a District, not only would we relinquish our fire duties, all fire assets, including Fire Reserves, would likely transfer to the new District in accordance with the redistricting or annexation agreement.
* As the GM community has been adding to Fire reserves since voting in the self-imposed Fire Tax in 2006, we have $229,000 in reserves earmarked as follow:
  1. Annexation Reserve - $30,000
  2. Fire Break Maintenance Reserve $20,000
  3. Community Building/Firehouse Reserve $120,000
  4. QAV Replacement – 20,000
  5. Undesignated - $39,000

1. **Description:** Considering our efforts to achieve a more permanent solution for the District’s Fire and EMS needs, and LAFCO’s suggestion that we invest community FIRE reserves in initiatives that directly support the district, we have a number of immediate options.
   1. Fire Break Maintenance – we have an immediate opportunity to spend our Fire Break reserves on the current HFT project. See Attachment 1
   2. QAV replacement – our current QAV is a homebuilt solution and has minimal capabilities to support any ignition event. The QAV is currently experiencing mechanical and age issues that will require repairs. Bill Robinson has been investigating used purpose built units that would provide significantly increased capability. Such units are on the market for between $40k and $80k.
   3. Build a QAV storage building. Early plans for the district included a community building and fire house on our Gemstone property. The initial draft plans represent a $1.5 to $2M project in today’s dollars. The CSD and EPRFD have discussed moving the Iron Horse building to the Gemstone site which may still be a possibility. A purpose build 2-stall steel building capable of housing two pieces of Fire apparatus could be built for between $100 - $150k. Having a suitable building on site would improve the chances of having any future Fire District assigning an engine to our community. The building would immediately provide protection and better access for our QAV.
   4. Use Fire dollars via a formal loan instrument to self-finance moving the CSD offices from Portola to the District in a permanent modular office space.
2. **Reason for Recommended Board Action:**
3. Fire break maintenance provides an immediate benefit to the community to help us become more resilient to both ignitions and future fires. The equipment is on site, and we have a shovel ready plan to execute.
4. Action needs to be taken to either repair or replace the QAV. As the QAV is not a structural protection vehicle, there is a high probability that the community would keep the vehicle in its QAV role in any future annexation or consolidation. We would need to build this into the terms of any future effort
5. The Community deserves to keep fire reserves accumulated from their self-imposed fire tax in initiatives that directly benefit the District. Applying funds today to projects in the District would provide those direct benefits.

1. **Anticipated Impacts to the District (negative and/or positive) -** (*Consider financial impact, change in procedures, customer and staff communication and effect if recommendations are not adopted*):

Using the Fire Reserves today would guarantee providing direct benefits to the district and prevent these dollars from being siphoned off to some future agency. Improving our local fire facilities and equipment in the district makes it much more likely that some future district would place resources in our community. The cost of any improvements continues to increase each year; spending dollars today will buy more than it will in the future.

1. **Anticipated Impacts to the Customer – Standby, Residential, Commercial:**

All the options listed will improve our resilience to wildfire in or around the community. Building a fire facility with apparatus may have a positive impact on ISO ratings.

1. **Recommendation (s):**
2. Board Action Item: Approve $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fire Break Maintenance reserves to complete HFT work on the District’s southern boundary.
3. Open discussion on a plan to replace or invest in repairing the QAV
4. Form a committee to examine investing Fire reserve funds in a permanent Administrative and QAV storage facility on the Gemstone site.