



## **ENKA CANDLER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT, INC.**

### ***Enka Candler Fire & Rescue 2017-2018 Tax Rate Justification Talking Points***

*12 April 2017*

#### **Current Residential Tax Rate:**

We at Enka Candler Fire & Rescue Department and the Enka Candler Fire & Rescue Board of Directors respectfully request that the Buncombe County Commissioners retain the current tax rate for the Enka Candler Fire & Rescue Service District remain unchanged for the fiscal year 2017 through 2018 at 9.0 cents based on the following information referred here out as agree too justifications. Enka Candler Fire & Rescue. At current tax rate; Enka Candler Fire Service District is the lowest in the county. We have maintained the lowest or one of the lowest rates since organizational inception. We are doing this while also experiencing call volume of one of the busiest service districts in the county. Last year (2016) Enka Candler had an increase of 357 calls over 2015 and we are on track to surpass 2016 call volume this year (includes all hazards type calls).

#### **District Growth:**

The Enka Candler Fire Service District has in the past experienced small percentages of growth; as we speak that is rapidly changing. Currently there are three high capacity extended height apartment complexes in various stages of construction and I have concept plans for an additional 4 apartment complexes that have not yet started; one includes combination commercial and apartments that are planned to be 4 stories in height.

In addition; Biltmore Lake Community is currently constructing an addition. This addition is planned in two phases, one of which has 40+ single family homes (SFH) in various stages of construction. Both phases are planned to have 200+ SFH once complete.

Also, a new neighborhood is in initial construction as we speak just off Smoky Park Hwy and adjacent to the Nakon Motel. This development is planned for 164 homes with 40 being SFH and the remaining being classified as "patio or cottage" type structures.

A planned I-40 Interstate Exchange has been approved and scheduled for beginning construction in 2019/20. This exchange is expected and will surely promote growth at the exchange and through its termination at the only direct route to the Blue Ridge Parkway on our west side. This exchange is planned to terminate on Dogwood Road near the Smoky Park Hwy intersection.





## **ENKA CANDLER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT, INC.**

At present there is also a large sports complex in construction that includes 7 ball fields. This additional activity in our district is expected to result in a significant increase of First Responder calls.

Lastly and although not physically in the Enka Candler Fire Service District; the area in and around the old Enka Plant is in planning for significant commercial development and this area of response is under joint-response agreement with City of Asheville FD resulting in another expected call volume increase.

### **Cost of Business:**

Providing emergency response services isn't a cheap venture. Our organization requires personnel to fight your fires and respond to your worst of days with trained, certified and properly equipped personnel. Providing adequate personal protective equipment is just the beginning; that beginning is approximately \$3000.00 per firefighter. Firefighters have to be not only trained, but certified also; and those certifications must be maintained – it is not a “one-time” deal. Cost of training a new firefighter is expensive and requirements are ever changing resulting in increased costs. In addition to this; and like any other “business type” organization; personnel costs are our biggest expenses (inc.: salary, insurance, compensable and retention benefits) which are difficult to maintain competitive postures for long-term employments.

Facilities; fire departments are in theory supposed to be positioned (located) to provide the fastest response to a fire scene. There are several determining factors that include response time, response distance, fire behavioral indicators, and insurance regulations to name a few. In addition to those factors and another important fact is that many, to include Enka Candler's fire stations do not meet existing building codes nor NFPA Standards for fire station design. Also, fire apparatus is not getting smaller, as fire trucks grow in size, fire stations remain the same; that results in limitations and often less adequate apparatus procurements. But, most significantly is the insurance regulations (DOI requirements) which directly relate to our tax-paying customers. Approximately 30% of those served in the Enka Candler Fire Service District are outside the 5-mile insurance regulated response area. Enka Candler Fire & Rescue is planning for two additional substations; land has already been acquired for one. Estimated costs for two fire substations is approximately 1.5 million. Two additional fire substations will result in 99% of Enka Candler residents being within the 5 mile service district.

Equipment; emergency response apparatus is expensive and increase approximately 7% annually. The last fire apparatus purchases Enka Candler Fire Department made were in 2010 that included two fire engines and one tanker. To date these two fire engines are exceeding 50,000 miles each. In addition, in the last two years we have experienced significant “down-time” and repair costs of these two fire engines in excess of \$200,000.00. The experiences of these out of service and repair events have resulted in Enka Candler soliciting bids for a new fire





## **ENKA CANDLER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT, INC.**

engine at the cost of \$715,000.00. We expect to go through a similar process with a second engine in the near future ensuring reliable emergency response equipment to service our customers.

As mentioned, our service district is experiencing significant growth that has been unseen for years past. Some of this growth are facilities greater than 3-stories in height. This presents a significant problem since our closest aerial device or apparatus is located on Haywood Road, Asheville City Station 10 (and currently Quint 10 is out of service) due to an accident. Provided Q-10 is in service their call volume matches Enka's. The next closest is located at Skyland FD (also AFD), and that is 13 miles. The next closest is AFD Station 1; similar distance. After studying this ECFR has determined that ECFR will have to have an apparatus capable of elevated rescue and firefighting with a reach greater than 75 ft. That cost is estimated to be approximately \$1,000,000.00. ECFR has submitted for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) but likelihood of receiving a grant for an apparatus is at a reduced percentage.

### **SAFER Grant Income:**

In 2016 Enka Candler Fire & Rescue was awarded a staffing assistance grant for recruitment and retention of Volunteer Firefighters for the amount of \$237,040.00 allocated over a 4-year period. This SAFER Grant award (divided by 4 (\$59,260.00)) is included in our proposed budget solely for equipping "new" volunteer firefighters in protective firefighter clothing and providing "some" compensation for standby time, response to emergency incidents and training for all our Volunteer Firefighter staff; important to note that this SAFER Grant has no other effects(s) regarding our proposed 2017 – 2018 budget..

Also, accounted for in our 2017 – 2018 budget proposal is an anticipated \$5000.00 interest income.

### **Emergency Response:**

Enka Candler Fire & Rescue collects response data metrics monthly to measure our capability and service delivery provisions. One metric is overlapping calls or multiple call simultaneously. We are averaging overlapping calls varying 34 to 44% monthly. Also, as mentioned earlier, our call volume is increasing and is expected to continue that trend based on the baby-boomer population coming of age as well as increased growth we're experiencing. Response times are important; but with increased populations our response times will continue to be reduced unless we are proactive and meet increased populations and resulting traffic obstacles that are sure to come. The only way to do so is to have an enhanced or increased presence with and at strategic locations within our service district. Currently our average response time from wheels turning to on scene is in the 7.5 minute range. Standard is 5 minutes based in fire behaviors such as



## **ENKA CANDLER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT, INC.**

flashover times that still continue to be reduced based on current construction methods and interior configurations and materials used in current furniture manufacturing (or) fire loads.

Lastly, insurance ratings, Enka Candler Fire Service District is currently rated at a 5/9 service district and we have a small percentage in a class 10 service district. Those residing outside of the 5 mile district are experiencing significant increase in insurance costs, often doubled, even though they maybe way less than 5 miles from a physical fire station (not Enka Candler) - (Stradley Mtn & Starnes Cove areas). Our goal is to provide like services to each Enka Candler tax payer. To do so, to the highest percentage possible, to get all our tax payers under that 5 mile umbrella. To achieve this goal, we have to have facilities located at strategic locations with trained, certified personnel and equipped with appropriate apparatus.

In closing, Enka Candler Fire Service District takes pride in the significance of having the lowest fire service district tax rate in the county. That said, reducing our tax rate by proposed 1.0 cent to 8.0 cents will have significant impact of our goals and will take years to recover and return to our current level of emergency service delivery verses maintaining our current rate of 9.0 cents. This will also result in long-term fiscal hardship on our residents in order to maintain emergency service delivery at the level we currently provide and looking forward; long term visions indicate that if tax rate is reduced to proposed rate of 8.0 cents will result in future increase in tax rate to "catch-up" in efforts to meets minimum requirements of future growth further burdening our tax based customers.

Very respectfully,

  
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