

Buncombe County Government
 Summary of Budget Request



Budget Request and Justification	
Entity	<i>Riceville Volunteer Fire Department</i>
Budget Request	<i>Requesting an increase fire tax rate from <u>\$ 0.11</u> to <u>\$ 0.128</u></i>
Purpose of Request	<i>The request is a 1.8 cent increase that will be applied to assist in rectifying personnel and staffing needs. A pay scale comparison study was performed last fall with departments of like kind and revealed that Riceville firefighter wages were below state averages between 10% to 21%. The main objective is to support our staffing needs and provide a sustainable living wage that will ensure employee retention and decrease high cost in turnover. The increases will be applied to the employees that are in most need to meet their basic need of employment.</i>
Key Drivers for the Request	<i>Riceville Volunteer Fire Department has reduced the Insurance Services Office (ISO) response rating Classification from a 5 in 2003 to a 4 in 2016. This has had a drastic effect on insurance premiums to Riceville tax payers. According to North Carolina Department of Insurance 10% of the ISO rating is based on the community's emergency communications capabilities and dispatching systems. Additionally, 50% of the rating reflects the quality of the fire department, sufficiency of staffing, level of training and the geographic distribution. The remaining 40% is based on the water supply in the area. With an increase in population growth, call volumes have increased. Riceville Volunteer Fire Department must reflect this evolution with meeting the required staffing needs necessary to provide quality services to the community. Riceville Volunteer Fire Department employs 8 full time, 16 part-time and 15 volunteers. Riceville currently provides at least 2-4 personnel 12 hours during the day and 2 personnel 12 hours at night for a district of 6,000 citizens. Due to cost of living in Buncombe County, most employees must resort to secondary employment which decreases availability of staffing during call backs of major incidents or significant events. Most employees that have resigned from Riceville Fire Department to seek employment elsewhere stated it was due to low wages in comparison. Funding for employee retention through competitive wages and benefits will boost professional quality and service while easing burdens on employees and their families. This in turn will discourage relocating or residing outside of Buncombe County.</i>



Communication

Riceville Volunteer Fire Department has been publicized in regular scheduled open session Board of Directors Meetings. The request has been previously mentioned in a past work session with County Fire Department Chiefs and County Commissioners that specifically covered the need for wage increases across Buncombe County. Riceville Volunteer Fire Department also utilizes and maintains a website as well as social media outlets.