

Buncombe County Government
 Summary of Budget Request



Budget Request and Justification	
Entity	<p>Name of Department/Entity</p> <p>Skyland Fire Rescue</p>
Budget Request	<p>Increase Tax Rate <u>.091</u> to <u>.101</u></p>
Purpose of Request	<p><i>The requested increase will be going to personnel. During the evaluation of firefighter pay at Skyland Fire Rescue, it was determined that firefighters were between 8% and 18% below the state average and supervisors were between 3% and 13% below state average for departments of the same demographics. The primary goal of the increase is to ensure that adequate staffing is maintained by personnel who are receiving a living and comparable wage while maintaining and improving adequate benefits to meet the basic needs of the employees. The primary increases will be going to the employees with the least time as they are the most impacted.</i></p>
Key Drivers for the Request	<p><i>Skyland Fire Rescue reduced the ISO Classification to a 5 in 1994, a 4 in 2007 and a 3 in 2017. Skyland Fire Rescue provides an economic impact to the Skyland Fire District of over \$10,407,364 in Fire Insurance savings per year or over \$100 million for the last 10 years. To maintain these savings it requires specific requirements that must be maintained through funding. Skyland has been able to maintain these items and maintain the insurance rating, however during the recession with reduced funding our financial resources were unable to maintain staffing with comparable salaries and benefits. As Skyland has maintained savings for the community through lower insurance ratings to maintain those reductions we must be able to maintain and recruit personnel through adequate pay and benefits. Currently Skyland has 50 Full Time Employees, 5 of which live in Skyland Fire District, in 2009 Skyland had 44 Full Time Employees, 20 of which lived in Skyland Fire District. The cost of living in the Skyland Fire District and Buncombe County has created an environment where the employees of Skyland Fire Rescue cannot afford to live in the district or have changed to different professions due to living cost. The location of where employees live is significant to the fire department when it is required to call people back to work or a disaster occurs, due to current wages, most firefighters live outside of Buncombe County. To maintain competitive wages and benefits will allow for Skyland to develop effective recruitment and retention, which could encourage living in Buncombe County while working in Buncombe County.</i></p>



Communication

Skyland Fire Rescue's request for increase has previously been publicized at the amount of increase by both major media outlets through multiple coverages of the fire service and the needs. All of the information for all County Departments was publicized by both major media outlets after the work session where the media outlets were informed it would likely require a \$.02 increase by most departments to meet the staffing pay issues. Skyland Fire Rescue publicizes each board meeting through our web site. Skyland Fire Rescue is also conducting meetings with all churches in the fire district to allow for communication and reasons for the increase as well as an opportunity for the attendees to be better informed about the operations of the Fire Department.