

Buncombe County Government  
 Summary of Budget Request



Budget Request and Justification	
Entity	<i>French Broad Volunteer Fire &amp; Rescue, Inc.</i>
Budget Request	<p><i>Increase Tax Rate <u>.14</u> to <u>.165</u></i></p> <p>FBFR has not requested a tax increase since 2011</p>
Purpose of Request	<p><i>To increase employee pay to the state average. Our employees are paid well below what one would consider a living wage. Our wages have not had any increase since we established paid employees in 2012.</i></p> <p><i>2017-2018 Firefighters start at \$29,910; Officers starts at \$36,228.</i></p> <p><i>With the proposed request, 2018-2019 Firefighters will increase to \$34,086; Officers will increase to \$41,860.</i></p>
Key Drivers for the Request	<p><i>We are losing employees to other departments due to higher pay and benefits that are offered by departments in larger areas. FBFR spends time and money training new employees who end up having no choice but to move to other departments, that offer a slightly higher wage or better benefits, in order to better their families situation. In our exit interviews with former employees all of their reasons went back to wages and benefits. Over the past 2 years we have lost 7 full time employees due to these issues. With this tax increase we will be able to match other departments who are also reaching out to increase their wages to the same state average.</i></p> <p><i>Recent guidelines have changed that require more frequent replacement of protective equipment and those associated costs have doubled over the past 10 years. The combination of that and the day to day operational costs of our Fire &amp; Rescue station have prevented us from finding funds from our budget for a pay increase. Our request is for this tax increase will only go towards the pay of our employees. This increase will ensure that we have the ability to pay our employees a living wage and keep our current qualified individuals in our department that know the area and the community. It will also help many employees who are currently working additional part time jobs just to meet their financial needs. The employees of all of our Buncombe County Fire Departments do their jobs not just for the pay, but for their love and commitment for the communities that they work and live in. it's time that the county and communities make a commitment to them for their sacrifices.</i></p>



## Communication

*We will be communicating with the community about any tax increases through social media and our website. In addition to this we will create an informational handout to provide to the community. Our board meetings are always open to the community where we can also have an open dialog about any changes and the reasons for them. One area that we have already started the process of helping our community with any tax increase is by requesting a review by the NCDOT/OSFM to lower our current ISO rating of 9E. We are looking to achieve a class rating of 6 which would help the community with their cost of their home insurance. The potential savings on their home insurance would be more than the increase in taxes. In order to achieve this rating we need trained Firefighters that know the equipment provided by FBFD and have more than one year in the fire service. The entire 2.5 cent increase will go directly to payroll so that FBFR can pay our employees at the state average pay and keep our qualified employees who will help us achieve this lower ISO rating.*