

Buncombe County Government
 Summary of Budget Request



Budget Request and Justification	
Entity	<i>Swannanoa Fire Department</i>
Budget Request	<i>Increase Tax Rate from .129 to .14.</i>
Purpose of Request	<p><i>Describe how the increased funds will be utilized. Examples may include changes to existing services, or new services that will be offered.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>In early 2018, a pay study was conducted by the North Carolina Fire Chief's Association depicted pay rates of other fire departments throughout the state of North Carolina. After reviewing this pay study of comparing firefighters' pay in our county to other NC counties with the same demographics it was determined that we need to increase the salaries of our staff members. Our department ranked near the bottom as it pertained to the salaries of our staff. The growth of the community did not permit the allowance for budget items and the raising of salaries to a more competitive range.</i>
Key Drivers for the Request	<p><i>Describe the drivers for this request. Examples may include increased service calls, aging equipment, needs for new equipment or facilities, etc.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Over the last year the Buncombe County Fire Chiefs have participated in meetings with county leadership about the needs facing the Buncombe County Fire Service. The fire chiefs were encouraged to make sure that we include as a need, the salaries of those who put their lives on the line for their communities. It has been mentioned that Buncombe County firefighters do not earn a living wage and the fire chiefs need to look at how to correct it.</i> <i>The salary range of county firefighters in as much, makes it hard to live in the county due to the cost of living in the county. This is driving our firefighters to leave the communities that they serve and live elsewhere, some in other counties. This puts a burden on the staffing levels of the fire department, because a lot of our off duty firefighters will not return for incidents unless it is a major incident that requires mandatory call back. In the past, we were able to supplement staffing with off duty personnel, now we rely more on part-time employees.</i>



- *Firefighting is a great profession. Serving your community is a privilege. Training young firefighters in hopes that they will move through the ranks of the department until one day, they are the leaders is priceless. Unfortunately, our younger generation is always looking for something better. For several years, we have hired and trained firefighters for our ranks, only to lose those firefighters to other departments because of money and or benefits. It would be nice to be able to utilize the services of those firefighters you train; we just need to be competitive in our salaries and benefits. The community would benefit from the highly trained firefighter who is ready to serve and the department would benefit because we are getting a huge return in our investment of training. We would not have to start over with new people as much as we do now.*

Communication

How the Department will discuss the changes with the Community during the following meetings:

Our monthly board meetings are open to the public and are advertised on a calendar that is on the department's website. The meeting minutes from each board meeting is posted at both of our fire stations in public viewing areas. At our main station the posting is outside on a locked bulletin board. At our Bee Tree Station the posting is just inside the building in the foyer area of the station that remains unlocked 24 hours a day. At the bottom of our meeting minutes an announcement of when the next meeting date is printed on the minutes. The agenda for each of our monthly meetings grants fifteen minutes for public comment. In addition to our monthly meeting minutes, the budget report is posted alongside the minutes. This monthly report shows the summary of revenues collected and expenditures expended. The next fiscal year budget will be posted in the same manner once it has been adopted.