

Godfrey Fire Protection District puts rescue referendum on November ballot

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District seeks to preserve cost-effective emergency services

GODFREY - The Board of Trustees of the Godfrey Fire Protection District will give voters a chance to weigh in on a rescue referendum on the November ballot. Despite several cost saving measures, including the loss of three career firefighter/EMT positions through attrition, the District is faced with expenditures that have outpaced

revenue. The recession has deeply affected the financial health of the District and decimated reserve funds.

Over 95% of funding for the District comes from local property taxes. GFPD is not allowed to collect sales tax or charge fees for service to residents. The District seeks a levy increase of just 5 cents which would amount to an additional \$160,000 in revenue. If applied to the current tax rate for most of Godfrey (7.57), it would be less than a 1% increase (7.62). For the owner of a \$200,000 home, this would cost less than three dollars a month. It is important to note that GFPD receives only nine cents out of every property tax dollar. The school district receives the lion's share at 64 cents, and other taxing bodies such as Madison County, Lewis and Clark Community College, Hayner Library, Village of Godfrey and Godfrey Township make up the rest.

A common misconception is that the Godfrey Fire Protection District is part of the Village of Godfrey. In fact, GFPD was established 45 years before the Village of Godfrey and is a completely separate organization with an elected board of trustees. GFPD provides emergency services, business inspections, building plan reviews, fire code enforcement, and other services to the Village of Godfrey, but receives no funding from them.

This referendum seeks to preserve hard earned advancements. While operating on an ever tightening budget, the District has implemented a philosophy of continuous improvement across all four of its core service areas.

Fire Protection: In 2016, the Insurance Services Office reduced the fire district public protection classification from 4/9 to 3/3x placing GFPD among the top 10% of fire departments nationwide. One Godfrey Firefighter saw a premium reduction of over \$50 to his home owner's policy as a result of this rating improvement.

Emergency Medical Service: In direct response to an aging population, GFPD has dramatically improved its response to medical calls. Several new interventions and types of equipment have been implemented over the past few years. GFPD was the first in the state to launch ResQCPR, the most advanced system available to combat sudden cardiac arrest. Another major advancement in medical care will be rolled out in October.

Public Education: The District has embraced an aggressive public education campaign that focuses on fire safety and community CPR. Our annual open house continues to grow every year and our 2nd grade public education program is well established. Firefighter/EMTs participate in a multitude of community events and enjoy educating the public.

Emergency Management: Through the efforts of the District and the Village, Godfrey is now recognized by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency as a “ready to respond” community. Godfrey is only the second community in Illinois to receive this designation.

“Our citizens, with their vote, will ultimately decide the level and quality of service that GFPD provides to the community,” said Chief Erik Kambarian. “Our May 31st, 2016 financial report showed the general fund balance at -\$157,881.85 (yes, negative). Until the first new property tax revenue was received in June, we were operating completely on reserve funds that are earmarked for building and equipment replacement. This is a very lean organization, and I would invite any Godfrey citizen to meet with me so they can see how cost-effective our service is. The \$160,000 in anticipated revenue from this referendum would simply ‘fill in the hole’ and allow us to preserve what we have.”

The referendum is designated specifically for “rescue crews and equipment.” If approved, the District seeks to preserve current staffing, and replace a fire engine and vehicle extrication equipment that are no longer viable for front-line service.

For more information about the Godfrey Fire Protection District you can visit our webpage at www.godfreyfire.com, “like” us on Facebook, or visit us in person.