

Rescue Referendum: Godfrey Firefighters asking for public votes on referendum

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - Many **Godfrey residents** are noticing signs across their community asking them to "vote yes" for Godfrey firefighters.

Godfrey Fire Chief Erik Kambarian said the signs are encouraging voters across Godfrey to vote in favor of a "rescue referendum," which will be placed on the Nov. 8 ballot. The referendum would allow for a five-cent tax levy increase, which would allow an additional \$160,000 in revenue, according to a release from the **Godfrey Fire Protection District**. This would amount to a less than one percent increase for most Godfrey residents, with the owners of houses evaluated at \$200,000 paying an additional \$3 a month.

Currently, over 95 percent of the funding for the department comes from local property taxes. The department is not allowed to collect sales tax or charge fees for service to the

residents. From those taxes, the Godfrey Fire Protection District only receives nine cents for every dollar. The Alton School District receives 64 cents, with other taxing bodies collecting the rest.

"Our citizens, with their votes, will ultimately decide the level and quality of service that the provides to the community," Kambarian said. "Our May 31, 2016 financial report showed the general fund balance at \$157,881.85. 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 he hole' and allow us to preserve what we have."

The Godfrey Fire Protection District is not a part of the Village of Godfrey. It was established 45 years before the village, and operates as its own unit with an elected board of trustees. The district works with the village, but receives no funding from them.

Kambarian promises improvements in four areas of the Godfrey Fire Protection District if the referendum is passed.

If the referendum is passed, Kamabarian promises continuous improvement in the areas of fire protection, in which the district ranks in the top 10 percent of departments nationwide, emergency medical service, which is necessary, especially with Godfrey's aging population, the release said, public education and emergency management, which is vital to Godfrey, as it has been recognized as an Illinois "Ready to Respond" community.

More information can be found on the district's website, www.godfreyfire.com and on Facebook.