



# NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Spring 2021

We trust this letter finds you safe and well. Spring is just around the corner and we are all anticipating returning a step or two closer to "normality." 2020 was challenging for all of us in North Routt County, and we look forward to putting the experiences behind us.

## **COVID-19**

By the time this letter reaches you, the COVID-19 vaccination programs in Routt County will have been well underway and a significant portion of residents will have received one of the approved vaccines. It is also expected that our local businesses will have moved closer to a "business as usual condition" and we'll be closer to resuming pre-pandemic activities. If you have questions specific to the vaccine or the status of COVID related restrictions, a great source is <https://www.covid19routtcounty.com/>. The Board of Directors is still conducting its meetings on the Zoom platform, but also looks forward to returning to in-person meetings. Recall that the Board meets on the second Tuesday of every month, and the meeting venue is indicated on the meeting agenda which is posted on the NRFPD website 3 – 5 days in advance of the meeting. The public is always welcome at our meetings.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

In previous newsletters we discussed our efforts to hire two paid, part-time EMT/Firefighters and while interviewing potential candidates, we were consistently told that finding affordable living accommodations in the area for the time they would be working was next to impossible. The Board, to address this housing problem, elected to finish the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Station 2 into a "bunk room", for which it was originally designed when the Station was built. We advertised for bidders, selected a contractor, commenced construction in October last year and finished the project in March. The general/carpenter contractor, Snowcap Construction, along with their subcontractors did a great job and we are all pleased with the final product.

We are now in the process of furnishing the 6 bunk rooms and have established a custom gift registry for interior furniture (i.e., bed frames, mattresses, linens, lockers, etc.). The registry, on Amazon, may be viewed at: <https://www.amazon.com/registries/custom/2Z2VDBQ1CS02Q/guest-view>. A number of items have been purchased by donors and we ask that you give consideration to helping the District on those items remaining to finish the furnishings. Please keep in mind that all donations to the NRFPD are tax deductible! Feel free to "check out" the finished project; it's not fancy, but it will well serve the purpose intended!

## **BOND REFUNDING**

In 2002 the residents of the District approved the NRFPD issuing a General Obligation Bond in the amount of \$1,250,000 for the purpose of building Station 2 and funding other capital projects including equipment. The 2002 bond was refinanced in 2011 at lower interest rates. Thanks to the efforts of Director Slivon and Treasurer Standish, the existing bond was refunded once again in December 2020 to take advantage of lower interest rates. As a result of their efforts we reduced principal, reduced the interest rate from 4% to 1.6% and ultimately reduced the district bond cost by \$55,000. The bond will be paid in full in 2026. The other benefit to all of us as taxpayers was to reduce the Bond Mil Levy of \$2.456/\$1000 of assessed value to \$2.031/\$1000 of assessed value for 2020.

### **EMERGENCY CALLS FOR SERVICE**

Below are the historical number and types of calls through year end 2020.

#### **Yearly Call Volume by Incident Type**

DESCRIPTION	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Structure Fires	4	3	8	2	5	3	3	1
EMS	39	29	34	45	43	45	30	56
MVA	16	17	18	12	11	10	9	13
Illegal Burn								15
Wildland Fires	13	5	6	8	15	15	1	8
Service Call	7	50	35	32	29	29	44	36
Rescues	6	9	6	8	2	7	5	4
False Alarms	32	26	21	46	27	34	28	39
Totals	117	139	128	153	132	143	120	172

### **VOLUNTEERS AND PERSONNEL**

As indicated above, the number of calls in 2020 well exceeded any of the previous 7 years. Our volunteer roster currently stands at 13 and consists of 6 EMT/FF's and 7 FF. Included are 2 volunteers who are currently probationary, and we expect they will achieve Active Status in the next few months. One of our long time Volunteers has announced his retirement, which will take effect in May. Scott Andre, who has been a Volunteer since 2001, is retiring from Active Status. Scott has filled many roles over the years; in addition to being a FF/EMT, he has served as Chief, Assistant Chief, Capital Planning Committee member, Pension Board Member, and other roles in which he has helped to shape and maintain the District's capacities. He will continue on the Reserve Roster and will help when he is able. We cannot express enough thanks to Scott and his family for his 20 years of service to the community. We will have a celebration in honor of his service later in the year and as COVID restrictions allow.

Our paid personnel, Chief Swinsick and Assistant Chief Mathisen, have been busy managing the upstairs finish project so that we can hire 4 part time staff to bolster the roster and work shifts during the busy season out of Station 2. Job announcements will be posted in April. We are in **DIRE** need of Volunteer Firefighters/EMT's. If you have the time to commit and are in good physical condition, we would really love to hear from you!! Stop in or contact our office about becoming a volunteer firefighter/EMT!

### **EQUIPMENT STATUS**

While a number of units in our fleet are older, our fleet remains in good working order. This is in part due to a few extremely talented volunteers and our paid staff who possess the mechanical skills and talents to keep our fleet in good repair. These volunteers give of their time and talents to ensure the equipment is always available for use. We thank them for their efforts and hard work!

### **BUDGET and other FINANCIAL MATTERS**

In the fall newsletter it was noted that the Board and Chief Swinsick, led by Treasurer Jim Standish were working on the 2021 Budget. The Budget was completed and adopted at the December Board Meeting. The Budget is balanced. Revenues equal Expenses and projects \$586,974 in revenues, of which \$81,519 is for paying down the refunded bond.



Worthy of comment is the State of Colorado's action specific to the Gallagher Amendment. Recall that this State Constitutional Amendment called for a cap on residential property tax revenues across the State based on a ratio between residential and non-residential taxes. Most recently, the Residential Assessment Rate (RAR) for 2019 was 7.2% which meant that a residential home with a market value of \$200,000 was assessed at \$14,400; this is the value that the mill levy is multiplied by to determine total taxes. The Colorado legislature has frozen the RAR at 7.15% going forward and commencing with the 2020 assessment. Freezing the RAR means in future years, the NRFPD will not need to adjust its operating mill levy to make up for loss of tax revenues due to a decrease in the RAR.

Lastly, the Board is undertaking an extensive project to revise and update our future equipment needs by updating our Capital Budget. We expect this effort to be concluded by the end of 2021 and will keep you abreast of its progress.

#### **BURN PERMITS – CAMPFIRE PERMITS**

Through a joint effort of the Fire District, Routt County Environmental Health, and the State Air Pollution Control Division, we continue to follow the Routt County Open Burn Plan and can issue you a burn permit at **no cost!** In an effort to make all pile burning safer, piles must be burned with snow on the ground and are prohibited from burning after May 1st. Once the snow leaves the ground, we will be available to issue you residential campfire permits. Feel free to give us a call and we can go over all of the details.

#### **WILDLAND FIRE PREPAREDNESS**

Snowfall this season is below average, and while there is still snow on the ground, it is not too early to be thinking about WILDFIRES. There is a genuine concern that we are entering a dryer summer and it is important for all of us to revisit the safe guards and steps that we as residents and property owners need to take to be prepared for the wild fire season. Remember to clear under growth around and near your structures to have a good clear defensible space around it. Additionally, have a "go kit" ready in the case of a mandated evacuation in the event of a wildfire near you. There is good information and recommendations located on the NRFPD website (<https://northrouttfire.colorado.gov/>) under the Wildland Fire Safety tab. Furthermore, as we move into the Wildfire season, an excellent source for the statuses of wildfires is: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/> and [www.facebook.com/RouttCountyOEM/](https://www.facebook.com/RouttCountyOEM/)

#### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Obviously, due to the concerns and restrictions associated with the pandemic, hosting our fund-raising annual dinner of 35 years and our relatively new "Barbeque Barn Dance" has not been possible. However, as we continue to become vaccinated, and COVID incident rates decrease, there is reason to be optimistic that we will be able to start these events back up. When we are able to host either or both of these events, we will do everything we can in order to inform you of the event! In the interim, NRFPD always welcomes gifts and donations!

If you haven't signed up for the Routt County weather/special warning system, please take some time and view the website for details on how to sign up and what notifications are available.

<https://member.everbridge.net/892807736727602/login>

Stay well, be safe and have a great spring and summer in North Routt County!

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