



October 25, 2024

To the Residents of the West Licking Joint Fire District,

Today we resume our journey into the inner workings of your Fire District. As in previous letters, we have shared letters to provide detailed information about the District's proposed levy and the logistical side of the District. In today's correspondence, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you where the funds that the District receives are acquired from and what they must be used for.

The Fire District's budget

The District receives funds through two major avenues; EMS 'soft billing' and voter approved property tax levies.

Let's discuss EMS billing first. In the early 2000's EMS billing started to become the norm for a way to supplement tax-based revenue for fire departments that provided transport to a health care facility. It generally works like this. Most health insurance policies and even some automobile policies allow a billable fee for transport to an emergency room. As with most policies, the insurance company pays what they deem to be a reasonable fee, the rest is generally charged to the policy holder. Where the term 'soft billing' derives from is that many fire departments that bill for transport don't bill their residents for anything that is over the allowable limit set by their respective policies. A few fire departments bill for partial payments above what the insurance pays, and some will force collect the entire invoice. **Our District is 100% soft bill for residents of West Licking Fire District.** Occasionally, one of our citizens will receive a bill or E.O.B. (Explanation of benefits). We tell the residents to simply ignore the bill as the District is the only one that can force collection, and we do not elect to do this.

In those earlier years, hospitals would allow us to exchange or re-stock our medics with supplies that were used in patient care at no expense to the District. That trend came to an end and fire departments were required to purchase their own supplies. EMS billing allows this expense to be covered by another source of revenue, not from our tax base funds.

The District choose in 2012 to start this process. It had been discussed for many months as the District was hesitant to start this process. After much research, it was determined that 'soft billing' could be a method to supplement our budget and help our citizens by lowering one of our levies from 2 mils to 1.5 mils, thus giving back to District's households.

Next, we will discuss the levies that the District uses for its operations. We have two types of levies: General fund and Special fund or commonly called Capital Funds. All of the District levies are pulled from property taxes. We do not have an income tax and are almost always excluded from tax abatements, Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), and Community Reinvestment Area (CRA).

General fund levies can be used for any type of expense the District has. These general funds are most often used for employee compensation packages, technical contracts, non-capital items, fuel, training and continuing education, and day-to-day expenses.

Please note in the above paragraph, I stated ‘non-capital’ items. Capital expenditure includes items that are substantial in cost but more importantly investments that the District will use for a period of ten years or longer. The second levy that I noted was the Special levy or what we refer to as Capital funds. These funds can only be used for items such as fire trucks and emergency medical transport units, tools that are needed on these specialized units, buildings, major repairs, support vehicles, breathing air packs, heart monitors, and PPE or personal protective equipment more commonly known as bunker gear.

While the two fore-mentioned means of revenue are considered more permanent, we do seek all types of assistance we may find from the State and Federal Government. Our most successful grant in the history of the District was the award of the FEMA SAFER grant from the Federal Government. The grant award of 2.9 million dollars will reimburse the District for 9 firefighters over a three-year period. We have also received additional FEMA grants such as the AFG or Assistance to Firefighters grant. Our current grant of over one hundred thousand dollars allocated funds for the District to purchase three breathing air compressors and fill stations for our SCBAs, (self-contained breathing apparatus).

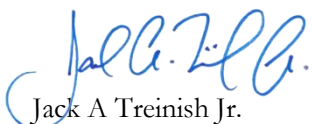
We continue to look for private businesses and major corporations to supplement our needs. The District has also been very fortunate to receive funds through some local non-profits such as the Shriners, Lions, F.O.E., and the Licking Memorial Health Foundation.

Additionally, if you look around you see massive warehouses and distribution centers all over our District. The District has approved a fee schedule for the permit application and inspections to cover the cost of the Fire Marshal that oversees and approves the systems involved in keeping these buildings as safe as possible.

Lastly, the District also looks for donations of equipment from private businesses to supplement our needs. The District has also been very fortunate to receive funds through some local non-profits such as the Shriners, Lions, F.O.E., and Licking Memorial Health Foundation.

This is a very brief summary of how we are funded. Please tune in Monday for the presentation of the budget over the last five years. We will be open with what we have received, where it goes, what we do not get to collect, and what the District does to stretch those dollars. Stay safe out there!

Yours in service,



Jack A Treinish Jr.

Fire Chief

Proud Resident for over Twenty Years

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