

Tax Assessment Overview

In recent years, the Muir Beach Volunteer Fire Department has operated with income averaging about \$70,000 per year. Two-thirds of this comes from grants, with the rest supplied by net income from the BBQ and sale of MB apparel. Looking forward, a multi-year assessment of the Department's needs for covering firefighting, fuel abatement and emergency preparedness shows that the Department should be operating with an annual budget of \$104,000. This means the MBVFD is short nearly \$34,000 in necessary funds in its yearly budget. A \$200/yr parcel tax will generate approximately \$30,000 and reduce the projected annual shortfall to \$4,000—a deficit that hopefully will be filled by increased efforts to secure grants.

The significant increase in the needed level for the annual budget has been brought about by three related issues:

1. California legislation now requires volunteer fire departments to provide equipment, training and proficiency levels equal to the State's paid firefighting units.
2. MBVFD recently added emergency preparedness (\$8,750/year) and fuel abatement programs (\$11,250/year) to its list of responsibilities. At first this was paid for by grants, but we now need to pay for it ourselves.
3. Currently, there are no regular funding sources to replace the major capital equipment used by the volunteers (two fire trucks, chipper, splitter, tractor and trailer). Both fire trucks have already outlived their 20 year life expectancy ... a Quick Attack Mini-Pumper replacement for the squad truck will cost \$150,000 and is budgeted for replacement within 5 years. No plans have been made to replace the larger Pumper Truck, but when the time comes, the cost could exceed \$300,000. At the very least, \$35,000 needs to be set aside annually to make sure funds are available to replace capital equipment when necessary.

Muir Beach is the *only* near-by community in West Marin that does not rely on local tax assessments to fund volunteer firefighting units. The community relies solely on the BBQ/apparel sales and grants for funding—both are undependable sources of revenue.

Currently there is a Reserve Fund totaling \$90,000 that is intended to maintain firefighting operations in the years the BBQ and/or grant funding fails to cover operational costs. In all likelihood much of this "insurance" reserve will be spent to replace the squad truck (Mini-Pumper cost \$150,000) that is already failing and long overdue for replacement.

Should the \$200/year Assessment be rejected by our community, the Emergency Preparedness and Fuel Abatement programs will be abandoned and our MBVFD will be forced to work with equipment that is both prone to failure and fails to provide adequate protection for our neighbors who volunteer to protect our family, friends and property. In the short term both our community and our Volunteers will be placed at risk. In the long term it is within the realm of possibility the MBVFD could be disbanded and firefighting responsibilities would be reassigned to the county's Throckmorton Ridge Fire Station, which may be too far away to save the life of someone we really care about.

