

Possible Consequences of Norwood Fire Mill Levy Not Passing, by John Bockrath

This November 5th the Norwood Fire Protection District (NFPD) will be seeking a mill levy increase of 13.2 mills. The exact dollar amount has changed due to the \$1.5 Billion property tax cut the Legislature and Governor passed in September. Unfortunately, the counties and State will not have those figures until the next property tax assessment comes out. However, fire districts across the State will take the brunt of the property tax cut.

If the NFPD does not win the mill levy increase, the current tax base of \$400,000 will drop to approximately \$310,000. With a decrease in revenue that large, the NFPD will be forced to eliminate our Wildland team and fulltime paramedic. That leaves two full-time firefighter/paramedics supplemented by an aging and dwindling volunteer membership. The remaining firefighter/paramedics cannot respond 24/7/365; it's just not possible.

With the ever-increasing calls to service, there may not be anyone available to respond to an emergency. If the on-call firefighter/paramedic is on a current call, and the other is out of town, there may not be anyone left to respond in an ambulance, let alone a structure or wildland fire. These are not meant to be threats, but reality, the truth.

With the new property tax decrease, the State is estimating that, on average, residents will save about \$265 a year on taxes. The new mill levy request from the NFPD will most likely make that up, so basically, residents of the district will not see any difference or much of a difference in their property taxes.

No one wants to pay higher taxes. Unfortunately, emergency response in our area is funded by property taxes. Yes, grants can be written and are written. However, most of those grants are 50% matching funds. In the last eight years, since the hiring of a fulltime firefighter/paramedic (Fire Chief), there has been over \$500,000 in grant money received. However, due to the requirements of the State, Federal Government and Insurance companies, fewer grants are being received. Also, until the State of Colorado recognizes EMS as an essential service, our most requested service (83% of service calls), there are very little EMS funds.

Please, for the safety of you, your loved ones and the members of the NFPD, vote YES on ballot measure 7A.