



Jefferson County Fire & EMS

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April 25, 2023

Ways & Means Committee

Re: 2021-2023 Capital Funding Request for Jefferson County Fire & EMS

Hello, my name is Jeff Blake, First, I would like to thank those that are making the decision to fund our request. This decision is an important piece in the rebuilding of our new organization. The fire and emergency medical services in an area like Jefferson County are very important to the community and the surrounding area. We are a critical resource to the residents of Jefferson County and SW Wasco County.

On July 1, 2022, the Jefferson County Fire District #1 and Jefferson County EMS District merged all aspects of each other's organization. I have been the leader of Jefferson County Fire District #1 since February of 2022. It has been my job to build this new organization and turn it into a fire and emergency medical service that the community and the employees of this organization can be proud of.

When I came to the organization we were lacking in confidence, leadership, direction, and public trust. The internal and external relationships were suffering, and communication was very poor. In the last 11 months we have been working very hard to change this narrative. In a short period of time, we have come a long way.

We have rebuilt our relationships with our employees and our community. We have improved our service and delivery, offered 24/7 fire response, decreased our response times, and have worked on the purchase of newer and updated equipment. These efforts have been very important to our employee retention and ensuring our community gets the best service it can afford.

Jefferson County is a difficult place to work, we have a very busy system that is short staffed. Our organization covers an ambulance service area of 1100 square miles with just two full-time ambulances and a fire district of 250 square miles. We have one dedicated fire apparatus. We rely heavily on volunteer resources and will end 2022 with close to 4,000 calls for service. In addition, we must provide transfer services for a higher level of care from the Madras hospital to Bend or Redmond for both our residents and the residents of Warm Springs. In the past, it was difficult to retain employees because of this, but the steps taken above, and a

significant pay increase, have made this a much better place to work. We are no longer losing employees to other fire/EMS organizations. Our employees want to stay and serve this community.

The next step in this improvement process is expanding and remodeling the building and turning it into a building that we can grow, add employees, and improve our services. As stated in our request, we are currently short on bed space, cramped in living quarters and have a lack adequate office and training space to live and work.

Funding in Jefferson County can be difficult to improve. We have taken many steps to improve our funding and work within our existing budget to add more employees and improve our equipment. Our intention is to continue to improve our service by being innovative, efficient, and finding better ways to deliver service. The addition of more employees will utilize more of my existing budget, which will lessen our ability to improve our facilities. The fulfillment of this capital funding request will help ensure that I have the resources to improve our facilities and hire more employees.

The potential funding that you may provide is a necessary step to our organization obtaining its goals and strengthening our essential service for our community. As you can see in our request this is a priority for the county and our organization. We are committed to starting the building process in August of 2023. We are in the permitting and planning process. The only issue that will hold this process up is a lack of funding. Your decision will play a huge role in our ability to complete this project.

I really appreciate your efforts if you have questions or need more information. I encourage you to contact me. I am happy to provide anything that you need.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Blake
Fire Chief
Jefferson County Fire & EMS
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