



## COLUMNS

# Notes From SEFD: What's Happening With Taxes This Year?



by Eddie McArthur  
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SEFD responded to this car engulfed in flames on Hwy 83 that caused a grass fire. Photo courtesy SEFD

Inflation persists, as we are all seeing. Previous articles have highlighted the high cost of equipment, both for personal protection, and our vehicles; the cost of attracting, training, and maintaining personnel; and even our aging building.

We could balance our budget at the current mil rate of 3.1, which means that property owners would be paying \$3.10 per \$1000 of their property's assessed value. But a slight increase in that rate puts us in a position to meet current needs and set aside funds to continue to invest in our equipment and firefighters, and to ensure we can respond to unexpected repairs and replacement of vehicles.

We work hard to find new suppliers, obtain grants and seek other opportunities for non-tax income and/or savings. Our goal is not just to get by, but to position SEFD to best serve our communities. At the May 19 meeting, the SEFD Board of Directors approved a preliminary budget with a mil rate of 3.25. That budget is posted at the Post Office and the Fire District. At the June 23 meeting, we will take public comments and vote on the final budget.

For a property with an assessed value of \$400,000, this mil rate increase will amount to approximately \$60 per year. To calculate what it means to you, every \$100,000 of assessed value multiplied by \$15 will give you a rough idea. This relates only to the SEFD mil rate increase and does not include county or other entity increases.

For a relatively small portion of your real estate taxes, SEFD provides not just fire protection but numerous other services. In April of this year we covered four fire incidents, 42 rescue and EMS services, 15 general services (such as snake removal, smoke detector installation, etc), and five "good intent" services where little was actually required of us after arrival. That totals 66 incidents total versus 51 for the same period last year.

While population in this area has not seen an appreciable increase, traffic from tourists, winery visitors, hunters and others has increased dramatically. You've undoubtedly seen an increase in large truck traffic related to the South 32 mine. That will increase substantially when the mine begins production. This is not a time we can afford to cut back on anything that impacts our service to you.

The members of the SEFD Board are all residents and taxpayers of this area. We don't make this decision lightly. We are determined to be as transparent as possible and welcome your comments, either in person or by zoom, at the next meeting. Should you wish to comment via email, please do so to [meredith@sfd911.org](mailto:meredith@sfd911.org).