East Grand County Fire Protection District #4
Workshop Notes – Tuesday January 6th, 2026

Board and Staff present: Garth Hein, Donald Maurais, Rachel Hoyhtya, Richard Kramer, Ryan Barwick, Todd Holzwarth, Steve Waldorf, Kristen Rybij, Ryan Mowrey, Jed Henry, Jordan Ennis, Ricardo Loza, Christopher Cheevers and Andrea Jovanovski.

There were no additions to the agenda and no public present.

The Board reviewed the workshop notes from 2025.

Staffing, Call Volume, and Operational Readiness

Staffing levels remain stable at 42 volunteers, which aligns closely with the department's operational sweet spot and helps avoid both understaffing and unnecessary overhead. At the same time, call volume has increased sharply, reaching 523 calls in 2025, 100 additional calls compared to the prior year, reflecting a 23% year-over-year increase and growing community demand. Staffing additions have therefore been made cautiously, ensuring they align with workload increases while preserving response quality. The short-term rental inspection team has also contributed positively by helping manage workloads effectively and supporting strong community engagement.

The sustained growth in call volume underscores the urgency of evaluating long-term staffing needs and planning for a potential transition toward combination or paid staffing models. Calls rose from 424 in 2024 to 523 in 2025, continuing a long-term trend that represents an average annual growth rate of approximately 7.3% over the past 23 years. Planning discussions have increasingly focused on operational trigger points, with projections indicating that reaching 800 annual calls by 2031 would require the addition of a full crew of approximately 15 firefighters. In the interim, "stair-step" staffing models are being considered to allow for incremental personnel increases that balance volunteer availability with operational demands. Additionally, staffing coefficient analysis suggests a need to over-hire by 25 to 50 percent to account for absences and maintain reliable coverage, a factor that will significantly influence future budget planning.

Strategic Planning and Capital Replacement

The strategic plan includes updated cost projections and capital replacement schedules, revealing that apparatus costs are increasing more rapidly than previously budgeted and requiring earlier procurement and revised funding strategies. Apparatus replacement costs were initially underestimated, with ladder trucks now projected to cost approximately $2.5 million by 2030, more than double the current budgeted amount of $1.1 million. In response to escalating prices and extended manufacturing lead times, early ordering is recommended to mitigate financial and operational risk. Strategic triggers have also been identified, including the formation of build committees beginning four years prior to planned replacement dates to ensure adequate preparation. Replacement schedules and organizational charts have been updated accordingly to reflect more realistic timelines and expected costs.

The draft strategic plan further incorporates assigned costs, projected completion dates, and impact fee considerations, allowing for clearer and more accurate financial forecasting. Staffing growth is shown to correlate directly with increases in call volume, with corresponding impacts on administrative workflows and support functions. Ongoing revisions to the plan focus on refining financial assumptions, human resources policies, and governance structures to better align with evolving operational realities. Once finalized, the strategic plan is expected to guide discussions with the URA and provide a strong foundation for future negotiations.

TIF Negotiation and Risk Assessment

The department's presentation for upcoming TIF negotiations centers on data-driven analysis linking increases in call volume to seasonal population shifts and visitor activity, emphasizing the financial strain created by unrealized revenue under the current TIF structure. Call volume trends closely mirror taxable sales and seasonal population fluctuations, underscoring the direct impact of resort-driven growth on fire service demand. Data shows that most calls are generated by daily visitors and commuters rather than permanent residents, supporting the need for revenue mechanisms that scale with growth areas. Projected call volume growth of 7.3% annually suggests a doubling of calls approximately every ten years, with critical staffing thresholds anticipated at 800 calls by 2031 and 1,600 calls by 2040. Graphical modeling further illustrates that, without TIF revenue, staffing and budget deficits are projected to emerge by 2037, with those gaps widening if growth accelerates beyond current projections.

The presentation also highlights the concentration of call volume within the TIF area, particularly at the South Station, which responds to a disproportionately high number of incidents involving hotels, multifamily housing, and commercial properties. Increased lodging units have a direct and measurable impact on emergency response demand. To support this argument, the department includes detailed breakdowns of call types and geographic distribution to demonstrate the outsized impact TIF developments place on department resources. The analysis concludes with a clear “before and after TIF” scenario to illustrate how development has accelerated service demand while exposing funding gaps that must be addressed to maintain service levels.

Sales Tax Revenue Diversification Strategy

With new state authorization in place, the department is evaluating a 0.25% sales tax increase as a diversified revenue source to address growing financial needs, strategically timed to align with TIF outcomes and overall community sentiment. At this rate, the sales tax increase has the potential to generate approximately $600,000 annually, providing a meaningful supplement to existing revenue streams. While previous ballot attempts were unsuccessful, recent statutory changes now allow special districts to pursue this funding mechanism. The feasibility and likelihood of success are strongly influenced by election timings such as midterm versus off-year elections, and public acceptance. As part of this approach, the department plans to leverage the outcomes of TIF negotiations as an educational tool during election campaigns to clearly communicate funding needs and build community support.

Additional considerations include election costs, administrative logistics, and voter sentiment, requiring a careful balance between the urgency of funding needs and political realities. The department is exploring phased approaches, such as starting with a smaller sales tax increase to gauge community support before scaling based on results. Historical mill levy rates remain comparatively low when measured against similar districts, providing further justification for potential increases to maintain service levels. Over the long term, a blended strategy may be pursued that alternates between sales tax and mill levy adjustments, allowing the department to sustain revenue growth while minimizing voter fatigue and preserving public trust.

Public Comment Policy and Meeting Conduct

The Board refined its public comment procedures to limit speaking time to five minutes per person and to emphasize public comment rather than dialogue, with the goal of keeping meetings efficient, focused, and on track. This change is intended to prevent extended back-and-forth discussions during public comment periods, while still allowing individuals the opportunity to share input. Board members have committed to not engaging in real-time debate during these sections, reserving discussion for appropriate agenda items. Moving forward, concerns requiring deeper discussion or follow-up will be addressed through scheduled agenda items or separate meetings rather than during public comment. To ensure transparency and consistency, the Board will clearly communicate public comment rules by including them in meeting agendas and reading them aloud at meetings. Board members are encouraged to uniformly support and enforce the updated policy to avoid uneven treatment of speakers. Overall, the intent is to strike a balance between meaningful public input and meeting efficiency, while preserving a respectful and orderly forum for community engagement.

Ending Notes:

We ended 2025 with 523 calls for service. The most calls in a year to date! A 23% increase from 2024.