

**GOLDER RANCH FIRE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC NOTICE AND AGENDA
BUGET STUDY SESSION**

**Wednesday, April 23, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
1600 E. Hanley Boulevard Oro Valley, AZ 85737**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairperson Cox Golder called the meeting to order on April 23, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

Staff Present:

Fire Chief Tom Brandhuber, Assistant Chief Grissom, Assistant Chief Perry, Assistant Chief Cesarek, Deputy Chief Rutherford, Deputy Chief Wilson, Deputy Chief Jarrold, Fire Marshal Akins, Finance Director Christian, IT Director Rascon, HR Director Delong, Division Chief Taylor, Battalion Chief Spanarella, Battalion Chief Hastings, Captain Port, Media and Community Relations Supervisor Camarillo, Board Services Supervisor Ortiz, Billing Supervisor Massie, Project Manager Holland, Fleet Maintenance Supervisor Raney, Finance Supervisor Sargent, and HR Supervisor Noland

2. SALUTE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Those in attendance said the pledge of allegiance.

3. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public issues presented at this time.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. APPROVE AND ADOPT THE AGREEMENT WITH IMPAIRMENT SCIENCE INC.

MOTION by Vice Chairperson Vette to approve the April 23, 2025, Consent Agenda.

MOTION SECONDED by Board Member Shellenberger

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. BUDGET STUDY SESSION

Chief Brandhuber thanked the Board for attending the special budget study session. He thanked staff for all of their hard work including Finance Director Dave Christian, Assistant Chief Eric Perry, and Finance Manager Jeff Sargent.



Assistant Chief Perry explained the new budget style. He said budget managers worked hard to convert the old budget into the new budget style.

Finance Director Christian presented the draft budget for 2026. He said the proposed expenditures were \$54,699,981. He said there were two areas with the largest increases, they were labor costs and capital improvements. He explained there was a re-alignment of codes such as professional services and maintenance. These were moved to different codes so there might appear to be increases in different line items but it may just be a re-alignment of the budget codes.

Director Christian explained the revenue portion of the budget. He said revenues were budgeted at \$54,699,981. This was a 9% increase. Staff was asking for a flat mil rate. The property tax was budgeted at \$2 million more than last year. Ambulance revenue increased to \$5 million. The FDAT (Fire District Assistance Tax, marijuana tax) did not increase, interest revenue was budgeted at \$400,000. The line item 'Fees for Service' was budgeted for \$681,583. EMS Membership was budgeted for \$60,000. Interest revenue was budgeted for \$400,000. The ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) grant was reserved for the purchase of the ladder truck, which the District will receive in 2026. There was also a small contingency reserve.

Director Christian stated it was a conservative revenue projection. He said the proposed budget had a flat mil rate and expressed his opinion that it was a fair and reasonable budget. He said it met the priorities of the District, board, chiefs, and leadership. Director Christian explained a pie chart that showed 72% of the budget was labor. He continued to say CIP (Community Improvement Projects) and labor costs were 81% of the budget.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked if people who retired received raises.

Director Christian replied, for those who retired in the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS), suppression personnel, the retirement was largely flat, there was a small increase but it was minimal. He continued to explain; for those in the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) they received COLAs (Cost of Living Adjustments) but the adjustments were minimal.

Director Christian stated the major programs of the budget were Fire Response which was 52% of the budget, Fleet 8.5%, and Administrative Overhead 6%, this was because the debt service line item was included in the Administrative Overhead program's budget. Administrative Overhead appeared large, but it was actually a lot less than that. Property tax was 78.9% of the district's revenue. He explained the four different bond sales. Staff was requesting the board to raise the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) rate from \$2.54 to \$2.55 and lower the bond rate from \$0.12 to \$0.11 which would keep the net mil rate at \$2.66, the same as FY24/25. The District would request the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to approve a net mil rate of \$2.66.



Chairperson Cox Golder asked if the Board of Supervisors (BOS) ever adopted something other than what was requested.

Director Christian replied, to his knowledge, the BOS has not done anything other than what districts request, as long as the districts remain within their statutory limitations. Golder Ranch Fire District (GRFD) could raise their mil rate up to \$3.75, so the District was well below the statutory limits. This was in part why the District had such a strong bond rating because it had so much more capacity above the current rate.

Director Christian explained labor costs increased, this was due, in part, to rising health insurance costs.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked what extra duty was.

Director Christian explained anything over the FLSA was considered extra duty. He continued to explain the proposed budget. There were five new full-time positions and 15 part time positions requested, they were: Budget Analyst, Wildfire Risk Coordinator, Media Specialist, Operations Administrative Assistant, Systems Administrator, and fifteen part time Community Resource Technicians (CRTs).

Director Christian explained the need for a Budget Analyst. The main reason was to train divisions on how to record performance metrics.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked why the position was requested to start in December and why budget metrics would only be gathered for six months.

Director Christian said the position was requested to begin in December so as to not overwhelm Human Resources (HR). There would be a recruitment process for an academy in the fall and other divisions would be asking for positions so the position was being requested in December so HR would not be overwhelmed with hiring so many new positions.

Chief Brandhuber clarified, that even though the position will not be posted until the fall, metrics will still be gathered.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked when the academy will begin.

Assistant Chief Grissom replied he hoped to conduct a recruitment in the fall and start the academy in early 2026.

Captain Port and BC Spanarella explained the need for a Wildfire Risk Coordinator. Captain Port said the purpose of the position was to serve the community. In an effort to protect the community, this person could help homeowners identify wildfire risk as well as assist the fire marshal's office with risk assessments.



Media and Community Relations Supervisor Camarillo explained her need for a Media Specialist. She said this past year \$30,000 was paid for outsourcing. She said the Media Specialist could do the tasks that were outsourced the past year. Supervisor Camarillo said the Media Specialist could assist with outreach on different platforms.

Vice Chairperson Vette noticed the line item for professional services did not decrease, he asked if money could be saved in this line item since certain services would no longer have to be outsourced.

Supervisor Camarillo replied it could.

Chief Rutherford described the need for an Operations Administrative Assistant including scheduling, payroll assistance, and NFIRS reporting.

IT Director Rascon explained the need for a Systems Administrator position.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked if they would be promoting someone or hiring someone new.

IT Director Rascon answered this would be a new hire.

Assistant Chief Perry said there was a significant savings by using Community Resource Technicians (CRTs), which was two civilian personnel on a truck assigned to respond to public assist calls instead of a four-man crew on an engine.

Board Member Shellenberger asked if the CRT program was a 24/7 operation.

Assistant Chief Perry said the positions would be eight hours a day during peak times. This would change depending on the season.

Director Christian said the total proposed for the Capital Improvement Plan was \$4.7 million. The sources of revenue for this included: O&M levy, CIP sinking fund, the CIP Reserve Fund, Grants/Special Revenues, and Capital Lease Funding.

Director Christian described the requests for the CIP which included: painting of stations, SCBA bottles, 2 fire hydrants, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) units, appliances, roof recoating, garage door replacements, extrication tools, cabinet refurbishment, ladder truck (funding from ARPA grant), asphalt and concrete replacement, fleet ground lift, floor refurbishment, IT equipment, dump trailer, extricator platform, fuel island card reader, CPAT supplies and equipment, battalion chief (BCs), Emergency Medical Services (EMS) captain vehicle replacements, and station air monitoring.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked what CPAT supplies were.



Assistant Chief Grissom said the CPAT was a candidate physical agility test firefighters take before they get hired.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked if the air monitors were in the bays.

Assistant Chief Cesarek clarified the air monitoring expense was to pay an industrial hygienist to test the air quality at the stations. It cost \$10,000 to \$12,000 per station and the stations with the most apparatus would be done first.

Director Christian explained apparatus and vehicles in the CIP Sinking Fund including a Type 1 Class A Pumper, Type III Engine, a Class A Pumper, and an ambulance.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked if the pumper needed to be replaced since it had 20,000 plus miles.

Assistant Chief Cesarek explained that the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines recommended not to have apparatus, older than 25 years, in service regardless of the mileage.

A member from the audience, Lee Mayes, asked if the replacement of the chassis was an option.

Assistant Chief Cesarek replied the District would have to be extremely cautious on how it was done.

Board Member Shellenberger asked where the surplus funds were allocated.

Director Christian explained the proceeds from the sale of apparatus were applied to the general fund. He continued to explain the sinking fund and said the total sinking fund was \$1,281,666.

Director Christian explained CIP Lease Schedules. The leases included: a mechanical compression (CRR) device, cardiac monitors leases (25), Enterprise Fleet Leases (non-emergency vehicles), 2- Stryker Power Cot leases, and Canon Copier Lease (for copiers at all facilities). The total for leases was \$613,100.

The Board took a brief recess at 10:19 a.m.

The Board resumed the special session at 10:33 a.m.

Director Christian explained the next portion of the budget packet was the 2026 Operations and Maintenance Rollup and Program Details. He explained this section outlined the budget requests for each individual program. It included a summary of each program's budget. Questions the Board had regarding programs could be asked at that time. Director Christian briefly stated the departments and how they were listed in the organizational matrix.



Assistant Chief Perry explained the divisions' budgets were program-structured performance-based budgets. The performance of a division would help justify needs in the future.

Chief Brandhuber stated the Office of the Fire Chief proposed a \$1,403,520 budget which was a continuation of the current funding level aside from a \$11,330 inflationary increase. He mentioned \$9,996 was cut from the training and elective travel. He asked all divisions to cut their training budgets, and he only saw it fit to cut the Chiefs' as well.

Project Manager Holland presented the Project Management budget.

Board Services Supervisor Ortiz presented the Board Services budget.

Director Rascon presented the Technology budget. The proposed budget was \$1,939,647 a \$295,880 increase to enhance IT services critical to public safety. The funding would address challenges such as resource constraints, technology integration, cybersecurity threats, user adoption, and data management.

HR Director Delong presented the Human Resources budget. HR was requesting a \$1,104,499 budget, a \$116,969 increase from the current funding level. The increase was intended to support the expected increase in personnel as well as new software, Document Locator, which Board Services used for records management, to support moving from a paper-based to a digital filing system. The other portion of the increase was not a budget increase but budget monies reallocated from other divisions budgets to support moving programs into HR, such as the policy program which had previously been under Chief Perry's budget and the Craig Tiger Act which had previously been under Health and Safety's budget.

Finance Director Christian said the Finance program increased due to an increase in labor for the Budget Analyst position.

Media and Community Relations Supervisor Camarillo said there was an increase in her budget due to the requested Media Relations Supervisor position.

Finance Director Christian said the program for Administrative Overhead included the debt service and administrative assistant position which covered the front desk at Fire Headquarters.

Assistant Chief Perry explained the Community Engagement Program included costs for station tours. There were no labor costs associated with this program because it relied strictly on suppression personnel.

Assistant Chief Perry stated the Community Education Program proposed a \$353,242 budget to allow educators to provide safety and instructional programs to meet the needs of the residents at schools, adult care homes and businesses.



Fire Marshal Akins stated Fire Prevention's main goal was to reach 100% of annual fire prevention inspections. This was because it was something they could control. The increase in the budget was to allow for two possible promotions. At this time there are an Inspector Apprentice and an Inspector 1, both could test and promote to Inspector 1 and Inspector 2 (respectfully). Fire Prevention was requesting a \$1.2 million budget with a \$19,000 increase which is a 1.5% increase.

Deputy Chief Jarrold explained the Health and Safety budget. He said the increased costs were mainly attributed to the costs of physical evaluations, which had not seen an increase in the past two years. Health and Safety began regularly offering these evaluations to administrative personnel. Health and Safety also budgeted for personnel that met certain criteria to evaluate their cardiac health. Deputy Chief Jarrold also mentioned, the following month, some personnel would be sent to Vincere, a cancer detection facility, to conduct in-depth cancer screenings.

Supervisor Raney stated the Fleet Program was requesting a \$1,710,579 budget, a \$29,000 increase. The increased costs reflected the increased expenses of sending personnel to training, increased costs of vehicle parts, tires, and sublet budgets to compensate for inflation.

Division Chief North said Facilities was requesting a \$1,692,254 budget an increase of \$225,640 from the previous fiscal year. The increase included purchasing a facilities specific module in Operative IQ software which would give the Facilities Program a better tracking mechanism for fixed assets to develop preventative maintenance schedules and cost tracking of assets so a replacement plan could be developed. The increase also included a new object code for the repair and maintenance of concrete and asphalt assets.

Division Chief North stated the Procurement Program requested a \$1,439,916 budget. This was a continuation of the funding level from the previous fiscal year. Although the budget showed an increase in staffing, this was a reallocation in personnel from the previous fiscal year to align with the district's strategic goals. The three positions were previously accounted for in overhead but were applied to the Procurement Program.

Division Chief North presented the Logistics Overhead Program which requested a budget of \$513,939, a \$327,374 decrease from the previous fiscal year. The decrease was due to the reallocation of resources to other programs. The program supports other programs and has no family of measures on its own.

Deputy Chief Rutherford explained the Fire Response Program requested a budget of \$28,396,000, an increase of \$1,112,886. He attributed the increase primarily to inflationary pressures and market pay comparisons, which led to necessary payroll adjustments across operations. The adjustment supported not only retention and competitiveness but also the district's broader strategic and financial planning efforts.



Division Chief Taylor said the Emergency Medical Response Program was requesting a continuation of the current funding level. The current resources allowed the program to continue to support its EMS managers and providers, allowing the EMS Division to maintain the CAAS accreditation, the survivability rate, and the district's status as a premier provider with the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS).

Battalion Chief Hastings stated the Special Operations Program requested a budget of \$220,063. The O&M line was re-allocated which reflected a \$132,653 reduction.

Battalion Chief Spanarella and Captain Port presented the Wildland budget. Captain Port said the Wildland division requested an increase of \$57,358 for a total budget of \$290,578. Captain Port explained the gaps that would be addressed with an increase in the budget, they included on-call pay for the busiest six months of fire season. The second gap was the training shortfalls of the program and the entire organization. As the most threatening natural disaster that could affect the entire community it was imperative the organization get more education on the risks they were faced with. The third gap included training and supplies to support the drone program.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked if they could partner with other divisions for the drone program.

Battalion Chief Spanarella explained they absolutely could and planned on doing so. The plan was to make it a dispatchable resource.

Captain Port concluded the last gap was to support the new Wildland Risk Manager position.

Division Chief Leslie said the Professional Development Program requested a \$1,285,107 budget, which reflected a \$55,222 reduction from the previous year's funding level of \$596,727. This decrease was primarily attributed to fewer personnel attending out-of-district trainings and conferences, as well as strategic reductions in overall travel-related expenses such as airfare, lodging, and per-diem allowances. The budget included a \$55,000 increase in labor costs to account for backfill to maintain operational readiness during training activities.

Deputy Chief Rutherford presented the Operations Overhead Program. He explained the program reflected a requested 40-hour support position within operations. This addition was outlined in the 5 panel.

Director Christian explained the 2026 Debt Service. He said the General Fund debt service costs would decrease by \$24,000 resulting in a total cash outlay of \$3.56 million. This amount covered both interest and principal payments on four obligations held with PNC, National Bank, and US Bank. He continued to explain the General Obligation (GO) bonds, debt service was levied separately, and the funds were restricted exclusively to servicing the GO bonds. These bonds were not secured by specific assets but were backed by the full faith and credit of the District. The proposed mil rate to support these



bonds was .11 cents, representing a .01 cent reduction from the current .12 cent rate for fiscal year 2025. The 2026 fiscal year marked the final year of the debt service for the 2017 refinanced issuance of the 2007 GADA bond sale.

Director Christian explained the capital lease maturity schedule and the bond maturity schedule.

Director Christian presented the 2026 revenue and proposed mil rate. He said the proposed mil rate for the FY 2026 draft budget was \$2.55 for the operations and maintenance (O&M) rate and .11 for the debt service. With a required levy of \$43,174,779 and a net assessed value of \$1.693B the requested mil rate would provide the necessary funding to fulfill the mission of the District.

The Governing Board took a recess at 11:27 a.m.

The Governing Board reconvened the special session at 12:08 p.m.

Chief Brandhuber thanked everyone for their hard work on the budget, and their presentations. He thanked Director Christian, Supervisor Sargent, and Assistant Chief Perry for their work on the budget.

Chairperson Cox Golder thanked staff for their budget presentations. She asked what the next part of the process was.

Board Services Supervisor Ortiz replied, the tentative budget would be presented to the Governing Board at the May regular session meeting Tuesday, May 20th. If the Board adopted the tentative budget, it would be posted for a minimum of 20 days. After that there would be a public hearing at the June meeting. After the hearing, the Governing Board could adopt the final budget.

Board Member Brady thanked everyone for keeping the mil rate the same.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Vice Chairperson Vette to adjourn the meeting at 12:14 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Chairperson Cox Golder

MOTION CARRIED 5/0


Sandra Outlaw, Clerk of the Board
Golder Ranch Fire District