Unified Fire Tax District

Presented by

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Strategy & Innovation

Current Fire Service Funding Model

- Buncombe County contracts with and funds fire protection through 20 fire service districts
- Those districts are served by 19 local fire departments (independent fire districts/departments that are governed by their respective boards) to provide fire protection services in the unincorporated areas of the county.
- Fire Protection is mostly funded through property taxes levied in each district.

Challenges with Current Fire Service Funding Model

- Uneven financial sustainability across Buncombe County Fire Departments
- Challenges that fire departments have in recruiting and retaining firefighters
- Uneven fire service standards throughout the County combined with uneven property tax rates

Current Tax Rate Overview

Fire District	Tax Rate
Asheville Special	8.36
Asheville Suburban	8.97
Barndardsville	22.00
Broad River	16.00
East Buncombe	10.69
Enka-Candler	13.50
Fairview	16.00
French Broad	22.70
Garren Creek	13.84
Jupiter	12.75

Fire District	Tax Rate
Leicester	14.03
North Buncombe	12.27
Reems Creek	15.07
Reynolds	13.11
Riceville	16.60
Skyland	9.80
Swannanoa	15.00
Upper Hominy	20.60
West Buncombe	15.00
Woodfin	10.59

Project Goal

Create a unified fire tax district in Buncombe County



Why have a unified tax district for Fire Service?

1. Improve safety of firefighters and community members
2. Reduce loss of property
3. Increase fire system resiliency through a more sustainable funding mechanism
4. Ensure a basic level of fire protection in Buncombe County

County's that have undergone similar changes

County	County
Bertie	Avery
Scotland	Vance
Durham	Person
Surry	Iredell
Moore	Transylvania
Wake	Caswell
Cleveland	Gaston
Johnston	Forsyth
Bladen	Stokes
Cumberland	

Project Goals

1. Basic Service Standards for fire departments operating in that district - **DONE**
2. Multi-year funding strategy to achieve Basic Service Standards
3. Unified Fire Tax District with a single tax rate starting in FY27: no changes to individual service districts and response areas
4. Updated contracts for Fire Departments

Adopted Basic Standards

Department Type	Standard	Notes
Suburban	22 firefighters on scene within 10 minutes, 80% of the time.	Clock starts at en-route and stops at on-scene
Rural	22 firefighters on scene within 25 minutes, 80% of the time	Clock starts at en-route and stops at on-scene
All	Complete CPSE Community Risk Assessment 4 firefighters on scene within 8 minutes, 80% of the time	Departments can count mutual aid firefighter's towards meeting the standard

Engagement with Fire Depts To Date

1. October- present: Biweekly meetings between County Staff and Fire Department Chiefs
2. January 29th: Met with County Fire Chairs/Board members

Engagement with Community

1. November 13th: Presentation to County Commissioners at Budget Retreat
2. February 17th: Presentation at County Commissioner Briefing
3. February 26th 6-7:30pm: Community Town Hall
   - Location: Koontz Intermediate School
     - 305 Overlook Road, Asheville, NC 28803

What is the process for creating a single district and rate?

- March 17th: Findings Report presented to County Commissioners
- March 18th: Notice of public hearing mailed to all property owners in proposed district
- April 21st: Public hearing at County Commission Meeting
- April 21st: Ordinance vote by County Commissioners

Questions?