

11/17/22 - Citizen Workshop Recap

Location: Zoom/Online

Facilitator: Matt Lehrman

Facilitator: John Little

AGENDA:

- Welcome (this is the first of 5 workshops)
- Why is this important now?
- What are the options & costs/benefits?
- How would we pay for transition to a new service model
- When/where/how will this be decided?

PANELISTS:

- Gary Neiss, Carefree Town Administrator
- Peter Burns, resident & public finance expert, P&Z commissioner
- Chief John Kratz, Fire Chief, Retired
- Luis Cordova- Rounds consulting group has done fiscal analysis

Matt opened the meeting by explaining that this is the last of 5 workshops. Emphasized that 'no decisions have been made at this point' The goal of the evening is to have an open dialogue discussing the options available to the Town of Carefree and get questions answered.

Introduced the panel as being here to inform and to LISTEN. This is not a sales presentation.

Gary provided an overview of Automatic Aid and how it works in comparison to Mutual Aid.

Matt asked the group if they fully understood what Mutual/Automatic Aid is – Chief Kratz provided some recent examples of emergency response and how they were responded to.

Matt asked the group to review the 4 options. The panel explained the nuances between the different choices.

Matt asked what sensitivities or feelings the group has around Automatic/Mutual Aid terms?

CITIZEN QUESTIONS:

- Citizens responded to an online/text chat with their questions & concerns – these were discussed as they were submitted in view of the audience. (Below are questions submitted)
- If Carefree starts its own, it feels like we will be chasing personnel and quality standards that Scottsdale already has. Carefree personnel will likely choose the option with more benefits.
- What is the opinion of the Hampton Inn, being a tall new building in Carefree?
- It is unclear if we go with automatic aid what the difference besides price is if we go Daisy Mt versus going with Scottsdale. How do they differ?
- If going to auto aid is going to bankrupt the town, then that seems to make our choice for us. Under current conditions, we can't afford to go to auto aid.
- Given the loss of available Mutual aid resources, isn't sticking with Rural Metro really a situation of paying more for less?
- Totally against property taxes. It becomes a slush fund. Do a clear fee for fire that residents can track. Many people left states because of crazy property taxes

- If we go with Automatic Aid will someone, please explain the difference in going with Daisy Mountain versus Scottsdale besides the annual cost difference?
- What about higher property taxes for part time residents, lower sales tax for summer when full time residents are here in exchange for higher sales tax rate and include some police coverage while we are at it. Or will we be meeting next about the sheriff?
- Why would we even consider Scottsdale? if the same but higher cost.
- I think competition between the two top choices would still be an issue. Could that drive up our costs in the long term?
- What is the reason Fountain Hills has terminated its contract with Rural Metro? If a for-profit fire company is not making money, could and would they terminate the contract and move out of the area?
- What is the schedule for moving forward now that you have completed this series of workshops?
- Comparing Daisy Mtn and Scottsdale, does one have more equipment than the other and is there any difference in response time/travel time in servicing an event?
- For the record, it is not true that the only way to pay for improved fire services is through property tax, as was stated. That is an opinion, not a fact. This is a promotional campaign by current leadership, for better or worse, to institute a property tax in Carefree. I'm not taking sides, just reflecting the truth. It's a community debate we need to have, and there is more than fire protection at stake, in my opinion.
- appreciate the town doing these sessions. thanks

We will be discussing this topic at a special town council meeting on December 13th (this date is critical to meet the State Law requirements for the special election)

The council will consider putting this item on the special election ballot to occur in May.

One citizen mentioned they had attended all the workshops and still didn't understand the options presented (got lost in the data).