

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Citizen input has been a cornerstone to the entire conversation regarding the evolution of Fire and Emergency Services within the Town of Carefree. The initial appointment of a citizen committee (the Public Safety Advisory Committee) and subsequently approximately two- dozen public meetings were held with nearby first responding agencies to seek clarity in the difference between Mutual and Automatic Aid and the services provided by the respective agencies. A joint public meeting of the Council and the Public Safety Advisory Committee was held in February 2022. At this joint meeting the recommendations of this citizen committee were shared and broadcast through the Town’s newsletter, social media and printed media. Based upon these publicly vetted recommendations, experts in the area of Fire and Emergency Services and public fiscal modeling were retained to conduct a deeper dive into the compiled information. This information was then shared through a series of five public workshops which were advertised in printed media, social media and digital newsletters (Appendix D, E, F). In addition, Council members handed out invitations to these workshops at the post office. Those that chose to participate in these community discussions consistently agreed that if the Town moved to Automatic Aid, a stable and predictable revenue stream needed to be considered by the community to offset the additional annual financial commitment to pay for the cost associated with becoming part of the Automatic Aid emergency dispatch system (Appendix J).

Conclusion:

As an outgrowth to this citizen driven process, it is recommended that the Town Council place a question on the ballot for the residents to consider a primary property tax to responsibly fund in a sustainable and solvent manner the long-term financial commitment to participate in the regional Automatic Aid emergency dispatch system. It is important to note that pursuant to Arizona Revised Statute, the only time a community may consider a property tax is during the month May. In order to meet this deadline, the ballot language must be conveyed to the County Elections office no less than 150 days prior to the May election. The action before the Council would be to refer a question to the registered voters in Carefree to consider a primary property tax levy of \$2.0 million to fund the long-term financial commitment to participate in the regional Automatic Aid system. If the residents approve the assessment of the primary property to fund a partnership with Daisy Mountain Fire Department to ensure acceptance into Automatic Aid, such tax assessment will begin in July of 2023 and will be due with the first Maricopa County collection in October 2023. It is further recommended that the Town conduct a fiscal analysis in approximately ten years to review the performance of these revenue streams to cover any escalation of costs to ensure a solvent position for the next ten-year period.

Attached to this report are:

- Resolution 2022-18 which calls for a special election in May 2023 to consider a primary property tax to enable the community to support the long-term commitment to become part of the Automatic Aid Consortium.
- Resolution 2022 -19 which will restrict the funds collected with the primary property tax to fund the contract for Fire and Emergency Services.