

RURAL METRO PRESS RELEASES

"Rural in SHOCK" - See Exhibit "A"

The real "SHOCK" is that Flowing Wells Fire District in Tucson dunked Rural Metro July 1, 1988.

Another "SHOCK" is that another Pima County District will do everything in their power to clear up a "RURAL MESS".

Another "SHOCK" several calls to Sun City from Scottsdale, another Rural client asking "Are you taking applications for firefighters in Sun City"?

Another "SHOCK" certain entities near a large fire district in Tucson, a Rural client there, will bid against Rural to provide this district's fire protection.

Two other Rural served fire districts in Maricopa County have expressed dissatisfaction with Rural's operations.

"SHOCKS" to many citizens of Maricopa County and Pima County. Innumerable "LAYOFFS" of many key personnel connected with Rural's fire protection.

Another quote: RURAL METRO RESEARCH INDICATES OVER 80% OF SUN CITY POPULATION HAPPY WITH SERVICES PROVIDED BY RURAL.

REBUTTAL: 80% of the people in Sun City still don't know what they and NOT Rural own. See attached sheet- "WHAT DO YOU OWN".

Another Quote: "RURAL METRO APPALED BY THE MOVE IN LIGHT OF GOOD FAITH DEALINGS."

Reubttal: In contract negotiations for four years all of Rural negotiators have been unbending and in one mans case, arrogant.

Another quote: "SUN CITY BOARD WILL IMMEDIATELY RAISE SALARIES OF SUN CITY MEN TO EQUAL THOSE OF PHOENIX".

Rebuttal: This is the joke of the century. We made announcement of our intentions to employees here. If I was to relate their reaction they probably would be fired. Corporations work this way.  
Attest: Other firings.

RURAL'S FULL PAGE AD IN THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC OF 9/19/88 WILL BE DISCUSSED AT LENGTH.

(over)

VF SC Fire Dept

A REVELATION TO MOST CITIZENS

YOU OWN THE LAND AND BUILDINGS AT THE TWO (2) FIRE STATIONS ON 99TH AVENUE.

YOU OWN ALL THE FIRE TRUCKS AND FIRE EQUIPMENT IN THESE STATIONS.

YOU OWN EVERYTHING, REPEAT EVERYTHING IN THESE STATIONS RIGHT DOWN TO THE LAST PENCIL STUB.

THE AMBULANCE SERVICE IS A SEPARATE BUSINESS OF RURAL METRO. THIS FIRE BOARD HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

THE FIRE STATION ON 111TH AVENUE IS OWNED BY LOUIS WITZEMAN, THE FOUNDER OF RURAL METRO.

DEL WEBB SOLD IT TO HIM FOR \$1.00

WE (YOU) ARE CHARGED \$12,000 A YEAR TO HAVE ONE OF OUR FIRE ENGINES THERE.

WE (YOU) PAY THE SALARIES AND BENEFITS OF OUR OFFICERS AND FIREFIGHTERS, THEN WE ARE CHARGED AGAIN FOR FUNCTIONS THAT THEY REFORM HERE SUCH AS:

TRAINING  
FIRE PREVENTION AND INSPECTIONS  
PUBLIC RELATIONS  
RECROD KEEPING  
AND MANY OTHERS

THIS FIRE BOARD LABELS THIS "DOUBLE-DIPPING"

NOTE: SEE RURAL METRO EXPLANATION OF BUDGET ITEM "STATION MANAGEMENT", COST TO US \$50,000

MONEY

A Rural Metro press release says "It will cost 2 million dollars if Sun City gets rid of Rural Metro Fire Protection Contract".

The Fire District Budget for fiscal 1988-89 was published in the NEWS-SUN in May, 1988. The total budget including Rural Metro's cost was

\$1,796,896.00

Rural's claim - a \$203,104.000 increase!

Rebuttal:

This fire board's study reveals that we can save

\$ 245,653.00

QUITE A DIFFERENCE!!!!

Also, over \$40,000 can be removed from the overall fire district budget because repairs to our parking lots will be paid this year.

You are looking at savings of close to

\$ 300,000.00

I hope we are slowly but surely convincing you that your MONEY is being watched and spent wisely.

Also, that this Fire Board has a genuine interest in saving your lives and property.

Please read, and believe in us.

(over)



RURAL METRO  
SUN CITY FIRE DISTRICT  
CONTRACT PROPOSAL  
1988/89

	Number of Positions	Unit Price	<u>Total Price</u>	<u>Fire Board Study Our Savings to You</u>
<u>MANPOWER:</u>				
District Chief	1	\$ 59,250	\$ 59,250	
Fire Marshall	1	48,150	48,150	
Station Captain	2.5	116,750	291,875	
Firefighters(38 Kelly Days)	4	89,130	356,520	
Firefighters(26 Kelly Days)	1	81,500	81,500	
Medic	2	94,160	188,320	
Reserves	5	1,600	<u>8,000</u>	
SUBTOTALS			\$1,033,615	\$ 80,528.00
 <u>STATION OPERATION:</u>				
Direct Operational Costs			\$ 11,978	the same
Communication Services--2,343 calls @ 13.50			31,630	the same
Station Management			<u>50,000</u>	<u>50,000.00</u>
SUBTOTALS			\$ 93,608	\$ 50,000.00
 <u>VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT:</u>				
Vehicle and Equipment Cost			\$ 4,440	the same
Vehicle Operational Cost (Maintenance, Fuel and Supplies)			<u>58,795</u>	<u>the same</u>
SUBTOTALS			\$ 63,235	the same
 <u>OTHER OPERATIONAL COSTS:</u>				
Insurance			\$ 32,273	11,410.00
Other Costs			<u>5,460</u>	<u>5,460.00</u>
SUBTOTALS			\$ 37,733	\$ 16,870.00
Management Fee			\$ <u>98,255</u>	98,255.00
TOTAL OPERATIONAL COSTS			<u>\$1,326,446</u>	

This figure is the total savings to you that the Fire Board study has revealed.

\$ 245,653.00



REASONS FOR OUR STUDY AND GOING ALONE

Savings of \$245,000 or more, guaranteed.

Refusal of Rural Metro to honestly identify costs.

Unbending, even arrogant contract negotiations.

Recent layoffs of key Rural Metro fire personnel all over Arizona.

Attempt to transfer the two top officers in our (your fire department). Seems they are punishing us.

Unjustified, unused, and unneeded services which we (your) are charged for.

Charging the Fire District for assisting their ambulance service.

Unrest and dissatisfaction with Rural Metro in most fire districts in Maricopa and Pima Counties. "We have quotes".

Defection of Rural firefighters to larger department.

Rumors that Rural will get out of fire protection business.

Citizens demands in an unincorporated area north of Phoenix that Rural Metro be replaced with adequate fire protection. These citizens won their court battle.

Profit or Fat or Excessive charges in budget items, not labeled profit.

Failure to recognize the expertise, knowledge and competence of this Board as relates to fire protection.

Hiring of Public Relations firm to discredit this Board.

Manipulation of contract line items to hide discovered overcharges.

NEED WE SAY MORE???

(OVER)

RURAL METRO AMBULANCE SERVICE

ONE OF THE FINEST IN THE U. S. A.

ONE OF THE FINEST IN THE U.S.A.

RURAL METRO AMBULANCES WILL NEVER LEAVE SUN CITY; IT IS TOO LUCRATIVE AN OPERATION

NOT PART OF THE SUN CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT.

A SEPARATE DIVISION OF RURAL METRO

NONE OF THE AMBULANCE PERSONNEL ON OUR PAYROLL

WE RECEIVE NO MONETARY BENEFITS FOR ASSISTING THEM

INSTEAD WE ARE CHARGED FOR OUR HELP

THEY ARE CHANGING THE NAME TO A.M.T. - ASK THEM WHY.

4 December 20, 2017 | Sun City West Independent | [www.yourvalley.net](http://www.yourvalley.net)

# Community

To report news or suggest story ideas, email [WVnews@newszap.com](mailto:WVnews@newszap.com)

## AFMA



### New fire truck

The Arizona Fire & Medical Authority took delivery of a new 2017 Toyota Tundra 4x4 truck. The truck, valued at \$51,000, was donated to AFMA by the Toyota Arizona Proving Grounds in conjunction with the TAPG Fire/Rescue Department. Larry Miller Toyota in Peoria handled the delivery and processing of the donated vehicle. Pictured with the truck are, from left, AFMA Assistant Chief Tim Van Scoter, TAPG Fire Chief Danny Hunt and AFMA Assistant Chief Troy Maloney. The new truck is assigned to the AFMA Operations Division and will be available for response to incidents by command staff. [Submitted photo]



NEW TRUCKS

# Beefing up the fire fleet

## Sun City fire board eyes new engines

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

There could be two new fire engines added to the Sun City Fire and Medical Department fleet by this time next year.

Fire district board members heard a proposal from

Fire Chief Ron Deadman during the Dec. 12 workshop meeting about purchasing two new engines using voter-approved bond funds. The board was expected to act on the proposal during its Dec. 19 regular business meeting. Results of that action were not available at press time.

The new trucks would



Ron Deadman

replace aging vehicles in the Sun City fleet.

"We have an aging fleet," Mr. Deadman said.

Sun City fire officials took delivery

of a refurbished truck in November and has their ladder truck in Nevada now being refurbished by Firetrucks Unlimited. However, part of the \$10 million

**IF YOU GO:**

**What:** Sun City Fire District Board of Directors

**When:** 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 19

**Where:** Fire district administrative office, 18602 N. 99th Ave.

bond request approved by in November 2016 called for fire officials to purchase two new trucks.

Acting on the recommen-

» See Trucks on page 3

VF SC Fire Department



# Trucks

» From page 1

dation of the department's apparatus committee, which included five firefighters, Mr. Deadman proposed purchasing two trucks from Sutphen Fire Apparatus. The proposal was a departure of sorts from past practice when most new trucks came from Pierce.

One of the factors in recommending Sutphen was more access to parts, according to Sun City Fire Capt. Rob Schmitz.

"That was one of the factors we looked at," he said. "Right now it takes quite a bit of time to get parts for a Pierce engine because they are very proprietary."

Fire officials are experiencing that with the refurbished truck received in November. The truck was damaged in a collision when a driver blew through a traffic signal.

"That is a pierce truck and we have been waiting on parts for a while," Mr. Deadman said. "They say they are in the process of allocating those parts."

Sutphen vehicles have more common parts that can be obtained at an auto parts store that handles commercial vehicles, the Mr. Schmitz explained.

He added the committee considered vehicles from Sutphen, Pierce and Rosenbauer. Each company brought trucks to Sun City to allow committee members to see them firsthand, Mr. Schmitz said.

Dave Scott, Sun City fire board member and a former firefighter in the East Coast, added his recommendation for the Sutphen trucks.

"My experience with Sutphen is that it is a very reliable brand," he said. "They are well built."

Cost was another factor as committee members and Mr. Deadman were able to negotiate the price to less than \$500,000 per truck for a 196-inch wheelbase pumper truck.

"We can get them for \$492,626 each," he said.

Further, Sun City officials can reduce the cost another \$7,902 per truck if they are paid for in full at time of purchase, making the cost \$484,724.

That cost would include a modification to the current truck design that would have a storage compartment on



Dave Scott



Jack Leonard

the back of the truck for firefighters' turnout gear — the heavy fire retardant clothing they wear during fires — rather than in the truck cab. Mr. Deadman said gases absorbed by the clothing during fire incidents tend to stay in the clothing if stored in a compartment inside the cab, a second enclosed space. However, if stored in a compartment on the back of the truck they

would have the opportunity to air out more being in a less air-tight environment.

"That reduces the exposure to the firefighters," Mr. Deadman explained. "If we move forward with these trucks, eventually we would modify our existing vehicles with the same storage outside the cab."

Fire board member Jack Leonard questioned why department officials were advocating purchasing new vehicles rather than continuing to refurbish existing trucks.

"I thought the refurbished trucks were supposed to be as good as new," he said.

Mr. Deadman said the ISO rating criteria call for refurb

» See Trucks on page 15

# Trucks

» From page 3

bished trucks to be redone after 10 years while a new truck would have a lifespan of up to 20 years. The availability of parts also comes into play for

refurbished vehicles.

"That is why our refurbishments are taking longer than we expected," he said.

Mr. Scott also said a refurbishment does not replace every item on a truck, it is mostly center on rebuilding

engines, transmissions and other mechanical power train systems.

"We have had some issues with our refurbishments because they don't replace wiring, piping for pumps and other cab components," he said.

If the fire board approves the purchase it could take 7-11 months to receive the trucks as they are custom built from the wheels up, Mr. Deadman said.

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com).



UF SC Fire Department

FIRE

# Ambulance service shaping up

## Officials get past equipment, billing issues

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sun City Fire District's ambulance service has cleared nearly all hurdles to move its ambulance service full-steam ahead. Some equipment and billing issues linger, but those should be cleared up soon,

according to Ron Deadman, Sun City fire chief. Equipment issues include replacing the district's computer servers. "This is a last-minute thing," Mr. Deadman told the board Sept. 12 during a special meeting. The district's four servers were damaged during



Ron Deadman

routine maintenance by a previous information technology provider. Mr. Deadman said the problem was exacerbated when that provider tried to correct the error. Now the district's four servers operate slowly and there are some connectivity issues between facilities. The problem was caused by an over-

heated server, which affected the other three, according to Mr. Deadman. "It is a small crack in the dam, but I am afraid it will burst if we put too much pressure on it," he said. District board members said they understood the problem. "I tried to get on some-



Dave Scott

thing earlier and it took forever," said Dave Scott, board president. Board member Bob Luger said he noticed similar problems. The board approved spending \$18,408.86 to purchase a single server that will do the job of the existing four and have  
» See Fire on page 4

at | Sun City Independent | September 20, 2017 7

## Fire

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it installed by the district's new IT provider, Sun State. Mr. Deadman was at district headquarters, 18602 N. 99th Ave., twice in a 24-hour period before the meeting to reboot the servers — late Sept. 11 and early Sept. 12. "We can't keep expecting the chief to do that," Mr. Luger said. "We need to get this done." Mr. Deadman said if left unattended, fire officials risk not being able to reboot the servers. "We have all our personnel information, among other things, on there," Mr. Scott said. "We have to get this taken care of now." Mr. Deadman told board

members Sun State could get the new server up and running in five to seven days after board approval.

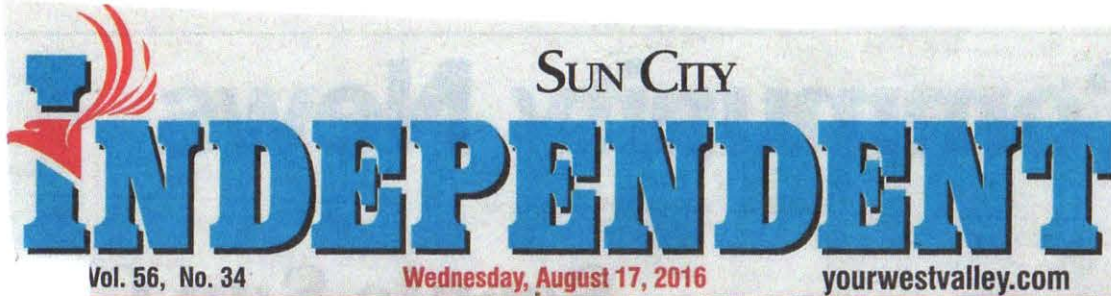
### Ambulance, billing

Sun City fire officials completed their third ambulance academy and expected to have all three ambulances operational and in service by Sept. 18. An ambulance having a new box mounted on the chassis is expected to be back in Sun City by the end of September, giving the department a reserve vehicle, according to Mr. Deadman. That is 60 days ahead of schedule. "I made a call and re-emphasized we are a vehicle down as we are still dealing with issues with the am-

balance that was in an accident," Mr. Deadman explained. An engine that is in Nevada being refurbished is expected to return to duty around Thanksgiving, Mr. Deadman said. Ambulance service collections continue to go well, according to the chief. Previous billing issues with the department's former billing contractor are nearly all cleared up, he added. "We are still working some issues from that former company," Mr. Deadman said. "But so far we have had no complaints from residents since we switched companies."

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.





# AMBULANCE SERVICE ON THE WAY

## Medicare gives Sun City department early approval

**By Rusty Bradshaw**  
Independent Newsmedia

**S**un City Fire and Medical Department could be rolling ambulances in the community by Oct. 1.

Fire district officials got word last week that Medicare officials approved the service for operation. It is expected ambulance ser-

vice could start as late as Oct. 1, if not earlier, according to Ron Deadman, Sun City assistant fire chief.

"We got information from Medicare that they are still in the process of reviewing our proposed operation, but they said everything looks good and we could start operations immediately," Mr. Deadman said. "And we got it

in writing."

Sun City Fire and Medical officials could not start hiring personnel for the ambulances until they received the approval from Medicare.

"They have said they will pay any charges we send them, and that sets the ball rolling for

See **Service** — Page 10



## Service

Continued From Page 1

the other billings — Medicaid, AHCCCS and others," he explained.

Fire district officials are also still working to integrate its billing system with the ambulance billing provider, Intermedix.

"We told them we wanted that operational by Sept. 1," Mr. Deadman said.

Fire officials have 30 candidates for am-

bulance positions they are preparing to interview, according to Mr. Deadman. They will hire six to man the first operational ambulance, to be operated from Station 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave. That vehicle is purchased, repainted and equipped for service — including a power lift system for the gurney.

Sun City has two other ambulances, one now being prepared for inspection that will serve as a backup to the frontline ambulance. A third ambulance, purchased from the Daisy Mountain Fire District, is also

awaiting replacement of the rear box.

Mr. Deadman said a second frontline ambulance will be purchased and equipped, and will eventually be operated from Station 132, 11401 N. 99th Ave.

"Our long-term goal is to have four frontline ambulances for the rotating shifts and a fifth for day overload calls," Mr. Deadman explained. "We thought that might be four years down the road, but the way things are progressing, that might be reached in two."

Fire district officials expect to have two frontline ambulances by Jan. 1, but it could come as early as Nov. 1, according to Mr. Deadman.

Getting the OK for ambulance operation could not have come at a more opportune time. Mr. Deadman said trends are for more overnight and early morning calls in recent

weeks.

"Bob Luger (fire board member) and I can attest to that," said Walter Lind, fire board member. "When we patrolled in the Posse, a lot of our calls came at those times. But we see by the numbers it has gotten higher."

Dave Scott, fire board president, was mystified at the trend. As an ambulance crew member in Tucson some years ago, he saw much fewer overnight and early morning calls.

"That was in a city of about 350,000 people," he said. "What is happening here in our community of about 45,000 people that we are seeing more overnight and early morning calls?"

*Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2723 or rbradshaw@newszap.com*



Independent Newsmedia/Jacob Stanek

The Sun City Fire and Medical Department's recently acquired paramedic ambulance is pictured in this June 21 photo at Sun City Fire Department 131 in Sun City.





SUN CITY

# INDEPENDENT

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suncityindependent.com

## Sun City gets OK for ambulance

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

**T**he Sun City Fire and Medical Department is now cleared to go into the ambulance business.

Arizona Department of Health Services Director Dr. Cara Christ emailed Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief, April 26 that the department's certificate of necessity received its initial approval.

"The next step is getting our ambulance outfitted and inspected," Mr. Thompson said.

In March department officials purchased a used ambulance from a town in Oklahoma. That vehicle has been repainted and some equipment has been installed. The fire district board also approved purchase of a power-lift system for the unit.

In addition, the board approved buying up to three more used ambulances.

"We will spend less than \$20,000 on these three (additional) vehicles," Mr. Thompson said. "They are all in good shape."

The vehicles are available at such

See CON — Page 30

### Continued From Page 1

low cost because they are older. But Mr. Thompson said they would not be purchased unless they passed inspections and test drives by district personnel.

The vast majority of Sun City Fire and Medical Department calls are for medical situations. In February, the latest month for which statistics are available, of the 960 incident calls, 861 were for emergency medical incidents.

Sun City fire officials filed for the CON in September 2014, but the action drew opposition from Rural Metro, the private ambulance company that had served Sun City. Rural Metro officials filed an intervention to Sun City's request, but that was removed earlier this year after American Medical Response purchased Rural Metro and Sun City fire officials signed an agreement with AMR.

Once the intervention was rescinded, it eliminated the need to conduct a public hearing.

NF SC Fire Department





Sun City firefighters Drew Holzer and Anne Giamundo check equipment in the lockers in the truck bay at Station 133. The tight fit requires the truck to be driven out in order to work on the equipment. Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

# ADDRESSING CRAMPED CONDITIONS

## Bond will fund new fire station, truck purchases

By Rusty Bradshaw  
 Independent Newspapers

**F**irefighters stationed at Sun City Fire and Medical District's Station 133 can look north on 111th Avenue and see where they could find a new work place. They may even hope Sun City voters help make it happen.

But for the time being, they must continue to endure cramped conditions in an out-of-code structure that has outlived its usefulness.

"When I was stationed here, I could lay in my bunk and see through the brick wall where the mortar had worn out and watch people walk by," said Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief. "I would sometimes even say 'hello' and watch them look around trying

**What do you think?**

Do you have an opinion on this issue? Share your comments.

•Email: [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com)

to find the person talking to them."

While the building has been remodeled since then, it remains poorly suited to house a modern fire and medical company.

To address that, Sun City Fire and Medical District officials will ask district voters in the November general election to support

a \$10 million bond that will, in part, build a new station. The bond will also fund the purchase of two new trucks to replace aging vehicles, and a smaller portion will address deferred maintenance needs at the district's other three locations — Station 132, 11401 N. 99th Ave.; Station 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave.; and the administration office, 18602 N. 99th Ave.

Station 133, 13013 N. 111th Ave., was built in the early 1960s as a two-man, one-truck facility, according to Mr. Thompson. Del Webb, the developer behind Sun City, wanted the station to blend in, so built it to look similar to surrounding homes. While that worked well in the beginning, as Sun

See Bond — Page 14

vlf se Fire Department



outside is distracting when firefighters are in them trying to rest.

In the living spaces, where firefighters spend their time between calls, conditions are just as cramped.

"I can't imagine 2-3 people around our one small stove trying to cook their meals," Mr. Rivas said. "The day area is OK for just lounging, but it is too small if we are trying to do classroom training or have a demonstration."

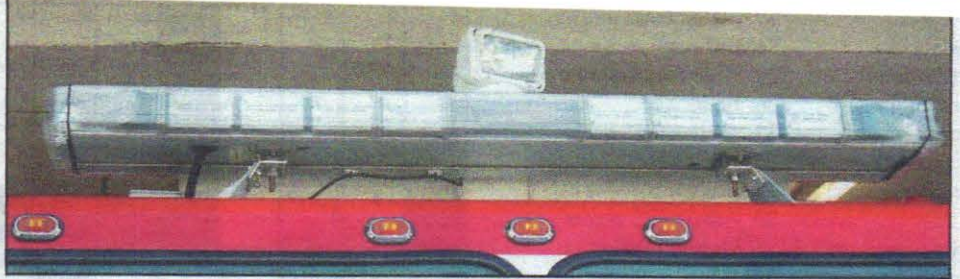
The station now houses four firefighters and one truck. The main bay was renovated to include lockers for firefighters' equipment. But while that solved one problem, it created another — tighter quarters when the truck is inside.

"The cabinet trim and a vent have been damaged when truck doors are opened," said Drew Holzer.

When firefighters need to get to the equipment in the lockers for cleaning or other maintenance, the truck must be driven out because there is no work space.

In addition, the truck must be backed into the station after calls to allow for a quick exit on the next call. There is no opportunity to drive the truck in through a back entrance, as is possible at the other Sun City stations.

"Backing the truck in is a safety hazard because we block 111th Avenue, which is pretty busy at times, and we have guys in the street acting as spotters for the driver," Mr. Rivas explained.



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

The fire truck barely clears the roof and door frame at Station 133 during exits and entrances.

Backing in and pulling out must also be done with special care because the height of the bay is enough to just barely clear the top of the truck.

"The driver also has to be very careful to make sure he can see the spotter guiding him in at all times," Mr. Rivas said.

If the bond is successful and a new station is built, it will cross 111th Avenue and be in Youngtown on property purchased by the fire district — which serves Sun City, Youngtown and the Citrus Point area — about three years ago specifically to eventually build a new station. This is something that has created some concern with residents.

"We have gotten several calls from people afraid that if we build in Youngtown and the town annexes out of the district for some reason, the town will get the station," Mr. Thompson said. "That is simply not the case."

Youngtown mayor Mike LeVault agreed.

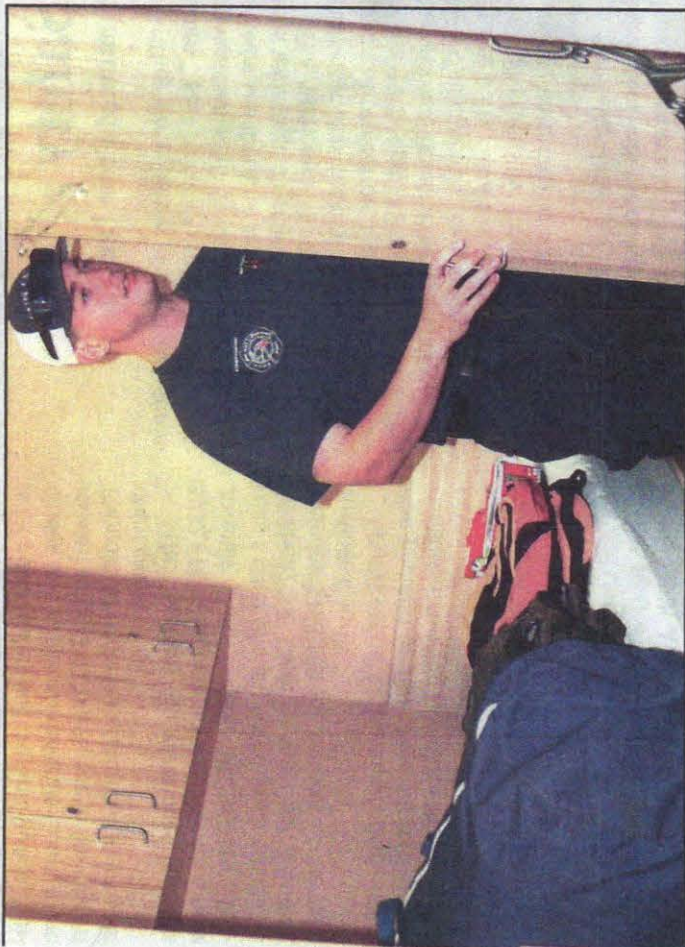
"That is property owned by the fire district and will remain the property of the district," he said. "Besides, Youngtown is a good shape, probably better than most cities and towns, and Youngtown is not going anywhere."

Youngtown officials joined with others to form a political action committee to support the bond.

"We will be raising awareness and money for the bond campaign," Mr. LeVault said.

The mayor also said the proposed station location is beneficial for the entire fire district because it is surrounded by three streets, giving firefighters added entrance to and exit from the station, and it is closer to Grand Avenue.

"It is important that people not get hung up on the location," he said. "It is just one-tenth of a mile from the current station location."



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City firefighter Drew Holzer shows the cramped conditions in the bunk rooms at Station 133.

## Bond

Continued From Page 1

City, and fire protection needs, grew, the station became less comfortable for firefighters and less safe. Prior to the formation of the Sun City Fire District, the station was operated by Rural Metro.

"They later took it to a two-truck, three-man facility, and later to a three-truck, two-man station," Mr. Thompson said.

After the district was formed, the station was brought up to code for that time. The main bay was expanded to allow for two trucks inside at one time.

"When we had two trucks in there, you had to turn sideways to get through and the mirrors were touching," Mr. Thompson said.

Rich Rivas was hired as a Sun City firefighter 27 years ago, before the renovations.

While the modifications have helped in some aspects, the station is still cramped.

"You can't really spread your elbows," he said. "Even the bunk rooms are cramped."

Sun City Fire District officials several years ago remodeled Station 133's back apparatus bay to create four bunk rooms, shared by three shifts of four firefighters each. Even with the renovation, the station still only has one restroom with showers, and no separate facilities for men and women.

"It takes some scheduling," said Anne Giamundo, serving her second tour at Station 133. "The other day, I had to brush my teeth in the sink in the bay with the truck because the captain was in the other restroom that has a sink."

While she said the bunk rooms, which have curtains instead of doors, are not horrible, they are confining, and the noise from

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VF SC Fire Dept

# SUN CITY INDEPENDENT

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yourwestvalley.com

## SAFETY

# MERGER ON HORIZON?

### Sun City fire officials study possibility

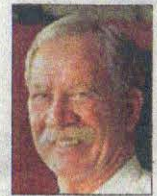
By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sun City Fire District officials are studying the possibility of a merger with another North Valley district.

The Sun City fire board approved having Gabe Baldra, the district's contracted finance director, to conduct a study of the feasibility and potential benefits or disadvantages of merging with the Daisy Mountain Fire District. Daisy Mountain officials also have someone looking into the possibility.



Mike Thompson



Mark Nichols

"This is not to say we will merge, we are just looking at the possibility," said Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief.

Both fire districts have experienced financial restric-



Sun City firefighters put away their equipment after a minor incident in the community. Sun City fire officials are studying a potential merger with another North Valley fire district. [Submitted photo/Sun City Fire and Medical Department]

tions since the 2008 housing market crash that created what some call an economic depression. That, combined with Proposition 117,

a limitation on property tax approved by state voters in 2012, reduced revenue to entities dependent on that resource for funding, like fire

and school districts. "We will be looking at all aspects to see if a merger would be more efficient," said Mark Nichols, Daisy Mountain fire

chief. Daisy Mountain serves areas including New River, Anthem, Cave Creek, Carefree  
» See Merger on page 7



# Merger

» From page 1

and Desert Hills, all north of Carefree Highway. The district also serves Black Canyon City after Daisy Mountain consolidated with BCC.

"We are trying to keep things afloat without going to overrides," Mr. Thompson said.

The Sun City chief said Arizona legislators have passed and are considering more laws to make it easier for districts to merge. State lawmakers also in 2016 approved law that allows fire districts to seek a tax rate override that would increase the cap from \$3.25 per \$100 of assessed value to \$3.50. An override, if approved, would be in place for five years.

"Legislators did this to give themselves time to study alternative funding formulas for fire districts," Mr. Thompson said. "But the way they are pushing mergers, I don't think they are really interested in finding a different formula."

Sun City fire officials rejected seeking an override last year because they were already asking taxpayers to approve a bond to build a new fire station and replace aging

**RELATED LINKS:**  
[www.suncityfire.com](http://www.suncityfire.com)  
[www.daisymountainfire.org](http://www.daisymountainfire.org)

equipment.

"We did not want to burden the taxpayers any more than we had to," Mr. Thompson said.

Voters approved a requested \$10 million bond, although Sun City Fire and Medical District had a bonding capacity of up to \$19 million.

If the study finds merger is not the best option, the two districts will continue with intergovernmental agreements that include shared staff and purchasing — and others could be added. Mr. Nichols also said the district boards could also consider a joint powers authority.

"We could see some increased efficiencies with a merger," Mr. Thompson said. "But a merger may not be the best way to go; instead it might be shared services. That is what this study will tell us."

Mr. Nichols said the study will be geared toward financial issues, most prominently retirement programs. Sun City Fire Department's sworn firefighters participate in the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System and non-

sworn employees, including office staff and ambulance personnel, participate in the Arizona State Retirement System. Daisy Mountain is a PSPRS participant only.

"We are a young department, personnel-wise," Mr. Nichols said. "So that means the dual pension system may not work as well for us."

He added the IGAs — shared maintenance and purchasing — between Daisy Mountain and Sun City are working out well so far.

"We have managed things well, so we don't have to rush into anything," Mr. Nichols said.

He shares Mr. Thompson's pessimism there will be legislative reform of fire district funding.

"Anything that revolves around property tax no one is willing to take on and make adjustments," he said.

That could spell doom for fire districts as the pressure to continually cut budgets to match shrinking revenue remains. Mr. Nichols said under current conditions it would take his department until 2028 to regain funding levels it had in 2008. Mr. Thompson said the Sun City department's date to reach those

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## Merger

» From page 7

levels is only slightly less.

### Progress and setback

In an effort to continue its savings trend, the Sun City fire board approved another IGA for purchasing.

The district will enter the agreement with Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority.

"This will allow us to do central purchasing with Yavapai," Mr. Thompson explained.

District officials could see as much as a 40 percent savings on purchases through the IGA compared to transactions on their own. However, that savings would be limited to office supplies, accord-

ing to Mr. Thompson.

"We get that same kind of savings on equipment and medical supplies through our other arrangements," he said.

District officials are also looking to contract with a billing agent after terminating their contract with Intermedix.

"I believe we can get someone for about \$75,000 per year compared to about \$110,000 we would be paying a billing company," Mr. Thompson said. "We would also have direct control."

District officials terminated the agreement with Intermedix after a number of ambulance billing problems.

The district did have a setback earlier this month when \$52,000 worth of equipment

was stolen from the Conex storage area at Station 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave.

Sun City firefighter Rob Smitz said crews were returning to the station after a call and noticed a white Ford pickup and a man entering it backed up to the gate leading to the rear of the station. The gate is locked unless vehicles are going into the lot behind the station.

"We didn't think much of it at first, thinking someone was just parked there or checking on something in the area," he explained. "But as he was pulling out we saw the reflectors on turnouts in the back of the truck."

Fire personnel called Maricopa County Sheriff's Office immediately, but depu-

ties were not able to find the pickup. Mr. Thompson said most of the equipment stolen was used in extracting victims at vehicle accidents.

"He (the suspect) must have jumped the fence, and it was obvious he made several trips to get all the stuff in the truck," Mr. Smitz said.

Mr. Thompson said a week later his nephew had some tools stolen and he went to a swap meet to buy some more. A bag he purchased had "Property of Sun City Fire Department" written on it.

"So that equipment is starting to show up," he said.

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com). Continue the discussion at [www.yourwestvalley.com](http://www.yourwestvalley.com).



UF SC Fire Department

LOC

## Sun City ambulance calls rise

Activity for the Sun City Fire and medical District's new ambulance increased in its second week of operation.

Through Oct. 18, the ambulance responded to more than 100 transports, to average 10 per day. That was right on target with fire district officials' projections, according to Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief.

Part of the rise in calls can be attributed to working out protocols with the Phoenix dispatch center, but residents are also getting used to calling Sun City's service, he added.

Mr. Thompson also said the Surprise ambulance service is operat-



# SUN CITY INDEPENDENT

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ELECTION

## SUN CITY FIRE BOND PASSES

By Chris Caraveo

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Residents of Sun City, Youngtown and Citrus Point approved a bond for the Sun City Fire & Medical District which will provide for a new fire station and equipment.

The \$10 million bond passed by 63 percent. The bond will fund construction of a new fire station to replace Station 133, 13013 N. 111th Ave., and purchase two fire engines to replace vehicles well past their replacement dates. The new station will be located along the same street it is now at but within the boundaries of Youngtown.

"It was a great victory for the residents in the Sun City fire district," Youngtown Mayor Mike LeVault said. "I have great faith in the people if you provide the facts. They'll make the right decision."

Fire District Board of Directors expects to pay back the bond over a 20-year period to keep the tax rate as low as possible at about \$27 per household per year.

Three weeks ago Fire Chief Mike Thompson explained the property tax situation within the district after he



The Sun City Fire & Medical District will begin selling \$10 million in bonds after residents approved the measure on Tuesday, Nov. 8. [Independent Newsmedia Jacob Stanek]

said he received several calls from irritated citizens stating that property taxes had risen every year.

While the bond has passed, the board will still need to sell them to investors before beginning construction of the

new station. However, Mr. LeVault said he expects that to happen soon, with a completion date sometime in 2017 on the radar.

"One of the goals is to put ambulances at all stations," Mr. LeVault said. "I feel they'll

want to move pretty quickly."

Mr. Thompson and Assistant Fire Chief Ron Deadman were reached for comment but were unavailable by press time. Spokeswoman Mary Dickinson said they would be back Monday, Nov. 14, which

is when Independent Newsmedia contacted them again. Read their comment at [yourwestvalley.com](http://yourwestvalley.com).

Contact Chris Caraveo at [ccaraveo@newszap.com](mailto:ccaraveo@newszap.com) or 6876-2531.

WESC Fine Dept



PUBLIC SAFETY

# Sun City Fire now in ambulance business

## Opening week produces 60 transports

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sun City Fire and Medical Department is now in the ambulance business.

The service began Oct. 3 and through the first week of operation the single ambulance made 60 transports, according to Ron Deadman, Sun City assistant fire chief. The service encountered no transport or operation issues through the first week, he added.

"We had some glitches, but nothing that would hamper service," Mr. Deadman said.

Sun City officials were last week still working out pro-

ocols with the Phoenix dispatch center.

"The way we want ambulances called out is not the model used by the Phoenix center," said Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief.

Sun City Fire and American Medical Response, the company that merged with Rural Metro, have an agreement on which agency is called depending on the severity of the situation. Sun City also will continue to dispatch a fire truck with two assigned paramedics on board to do an initial evaluation of patients, and the ambulance is then dispatched if necessary, according to Mr. Thompson.

"That keeps an ambulance from rolling out only to be turned back before it reach-

es the scene because an ambulance is not needed," he explained.

If patients are transported by ambulance, one of the truck paramedics will join the ambulance paramedic on the transport until the patient is with a doctor, Mr. Thomson said.

"That is all about continuity of care," he added.

There were instances in the first week when a call was made for an ambulance while Sun City's was already engaged. That will be eased when the department adds to its ambulance fleet.

"We expect to have our second frontline ambulance delivered Oct. 17," Mr. Thompson said Oct. 11. "We are shooting for Jan. 1 as start of service for that second

vehicle."

In the interim, the ambulance must be equipped and certified, and personnel hired and trained, the chief explained.

With the exception of some startup costs from the district's capital improvement fund, the ambulance service will be self-sufficient, with revenue coming from transport and other service charges, according to Mr. Deadman. Funds used for those startup costs will be reimbursed to the district's capital improvement fund as the ambulance service gets on its feet, he added.

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com). Continue the discussion at [www.yourwestvalley.com](http://www.yourwestvalley.com).

VF SC Fire Department



PUBLIC SAFETY

# Fire district takes pension hit

## Board prepared after setting aside funds

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Sun City Fire and Medical District will take a hefty hit when Sen. Debbie Lesko's pension reform law kicks in. The good news is the district board prepared for it by setting aside \$500,000 to help pay down its Public Safety

Personnel Retirement System debt. Sun City will see a 10.22 percent increase in the district's contributions to personnel pensions. That amounts to \$425,000. "The board has the capacity and ability to address this," said Gabe Baldra, the district's contracted finance director. While its hit seems large, there are those departments

that will see a larger increase. Mr. Baldra said the Phoenix Fire Department increase will be 22 percent, amounting to \$75 million. He added a 1 percentage point increase in the amortization is another factor in the increase. Fire district pension contributions are adjusted annually. However, Sun City fire dis-



Ron Deadman

trict officials will not see this kind of increase in at least the next 10 years, according to Mr. Baldra. "It is supposed to level off to an average of 1 percent to 2 percent per year in the next 10 years," he explained. Fire district officials are pushing ahead with plans to build a new station and replace aging equipment following the voters' approval of a \$10 million bond. The district board, during a Dec. 12 spe-

cial meeting, passed a resolution to sell the entire bond amount at one time, rather than in smaller increments over a five-year period. Ron Deadman, assistant fire chief, said the move was undertaken to save taxpayers' money. "By selling them all at once, we can lock in the existing interest rate, rather than get varied rates in different years," he said. "We could save as much as \$1 million

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## Pension

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over the life of the bonds." That savings would be passed on to taxpayers with a slightly lower bond payment on their tax bills. Mr. Deadman said some residents have asked if they could buy bonds. He said that was possible for a minimum of \$5,000. Call 623-974-2321. The bond will fund building a new station at 111th and Michigan avenues in Youngtown to replace the existing station, 13013 N. 111th Ave., Sun City, which is cramped and does not meet current building codes. The bond will also fund replacement of two trucks and other equipment

past its useful life. Mr. Deadman said soil testing and surveying have already begun at the new station site. "During the bond campaign we said we would get this done as quickly as possible," he said. Fire department officials are preparing lists of equipment that need replacement. Sun City fire officials also put a second ambulance into service Dec. 19. In the first two months of ambulance operations, the district averaged 200 runs with the single vehicle. There were 203 runs in October and 200 in November. "In that time we only had three cancellations, so our dispatch protocols seem to

be working," Mr. Deadman said. "The first day with the new ambulance it was sent on a call within a half hour of going into service, and that was because the first unit was already on a call." Mr. Deadman said the department is now starting to collect funds for the ambulance service. The operation was funded with monies borrowed from the department's capital improvement fund, and those funds are to be reimbursed from the ambulance account as it begins to receive revenue, according to Mr. Deadman. Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com. Continue the discussion at www.yourwestvalley.com.



PUBLIC SAFETY

# STAYING AHEAD OF REVENUE DROP

## Sun City Fire officials study shared services

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

In their continuing effort to stay ahead of shrinking revenue, Sun City Fire District officials are researching more options for shared operations with other districts.

Sun City Fire officials earlier this year concluded an agreement with the Daisy Mountain Fire District to share fleet maintenance. That arrangement is right on target for the savings projected, according to Ron Deadman, Sun City assistant fire chief.

"We had projected about 23 percent savings, and that is about what we have seen so far," he said.

With that success, district officials are researching the possibility of sharing other operational aspects with Daisy Mountain, and Black Canyon Fire District, which is managed by DMFD. Those operational areas include administration, billing, payroll and purchasing.

Mr. Deadman said the dis-

trict could save another 10 percent through bulk purchases of apparatus and other larger equipment and about 18 percent through bulk purchases of EMS supplies.

While Daisy Mountain and Black Canyon are the only fire districts Sun City is actively conducting shared services with, there could be more, according to Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief.

"There are other districts that have contacted us to talk about this for the future," he said.

Similar shared operations were discussed with the Surprise and Sun City West departments several years ago but nothing came of it, according to Mr. Thompson.

If shared services are concluded with other districts and in other areas besides maintenance, Sun City fire officials will not layoff personnel, but see additional savings through attrition when employees leave or retire, according to Mr. Thompson.

"Down the road this could lead to district mergers," he added.

» See Share on page 7



A Sun City firefighter hoses down an overturned car on 99th Avenue to prevent fire while two Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies watch for other traffic. [Submitted photo]



## Share

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The Show Low, Linden and Pinetop fire districts merged to form the Timber Mesa Fire District and realized a \$2 million savings in the first year, according to Mr. Thompson.

Sun City fire board member Jack Leonard asked if all districts who expressed interest in working with Sun City have ambulance service and, if so, were they making a profit. Mr. Deadman said not all have ambulance service, but none have lost money on that service.

Sun City fire officials received a certificate of necessity to provide ambulance service and purchased some used ambulances and had them refitted for service. Mr. Deadman said the EMT Academy is expected to conclude Monday, Sept. 26, allowing Sun City to be available for ambulance

transports by 8 a.m. Monday, Oct. 3.

However, the ambulance service is not a financial boon for the district. The ambulance service must be self-sufficient, according to Mr. Thompson.

"Once we get going, we won't be using taxpayer money to fund the ambulance," he said.

Like other fire districts, Sun City officials have felt a financial pinch since the 2008 economic downturn. Following the housing market crash that year, Sun City Fire District officials have seen a 48 percent reduction in property values within the district, which includes Sun City, Youngtown and the Citrus Point area.

"If we go through another 'mini recession' and lose 25 percent to 40 percent of property valuation, we won't make it financially," Mr. Thompson said. "That's why we are looking at all options

that will help us survive."

Fire districts are forced to live with a tax rate cap of \$3.25 per \$100 of assessed property value. Arizona voters approved Proposition 117 that allows districts to recoup up to 5 percent per year of revenues lost. The Arizona Legislature this year approved a measure that allows fire districts to request voters to approve a five-year budget override. But none of those measures help reform fire district funding in the state.

Mr. Deadman said the most any district has been able to recoup in a year is 4.1 percent — and that was not the Sun City district.

"I had the county assessor, in a four- to five-hour session, explain tax revenue and Proposition 117 to me, and she told me we would never see the 5 percent in our lifetime," Mr. Deadman said.

Sun City fire officials considered the override but rejected it because they are al-

ready asking district voters to approve a \$10 million bond to fund building a new fire station and replacing aging fire trucks.

"We don't want to burden the taxpayers more than we have to," Mr. Thompson said. "We may still do the override, but we want to really study it and do it right, if it comes to that."

The override would sunset in five years.

The new station would replace Station 133, 13013 N. 111th Ave., Youngtown, which does not meet current building codes and is too cramped to adequately house firefighters and more than one truck. Sun City's fleet is aging and several vehicles are past the point of optimum replacement.

Sun City officials have tried to stem the tide by purchasing a refurbished truck. Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com). Continue the discussion at [www.yourwestvalley.com](http://www.yourwestvalley.com).



## BUDGET

# HOLDING THE FIRE LINE

## Sun City fire budget sees slight increase

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

On the scale of budget increases, the Sun City Fire District's proposed 2017-18 spending plan will seem like a feather barely brushing skin.

The district's budget for next fiscal year was revealed for the first time during a special board of directors meet-

ing May 9. Spending in the district's general fund is expected to increase by \$44,504 — a 0.4 percent increase. It is only the third time since the 2008-09 budget year district officials proposed a budget larger than the previous year.



Ron Deadman

"We are in pretty good shape financially for the coming year," said Ron Deadman, Sun City assistant chief.

However, fire officials continue to find ways to save on expenses as a legislative funding reform

does not seem likely, accord-

ing to Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief.

"The Legislature does not seem to want to help," he told Sun City Posse members during their May 2 meeting. "They seem more interested in passing laws to push us toward mergers with other districts."

To that end, district offi-

cialists contracted with Gab Buldra, district finance officer, to study the feasibility of merging the Sun City district with the Daisy Mountain Fire District.

"That may or may not happen; we are just studying it to see if it would be beneficial for both districts," Mr. Thomp-

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### Online book sales

Jim Geiger, left, and Mary Anne McDonald, both Friends of the Sun City Libraries board members, discuss potential books to select for the new online sales program the group hopes to have up and running by June 1. [Independent Newsmedia/Rusty Bradshaw]



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son said.

Sun City and Daisy Mountain officials are participating in intergovernmental agreements for shared staffing, purchasing and ambulance billing moves that are already showing some savings.

### 2017-18 budget

Sun City Fire District officials were expected to consider the budget for tentative adoption at their regular business meeting May 16. Results of that meeting were not

budget is balanced — and revenues match expenses — and calls for \$11.4 million in expenditures for fire department operations. That is slightly up from the 2016-17 budget of \$11.3 million. This is the first budget cycle in which the Sun City district has separate fire and medical budgets.

"This is a tight but balanced budget, and we are meeting all community needs," Mr. Buldra said.

While district officials will lose a significant portion of

ambulance operations and budget savings will ensure the fire department does not experience a staffing shortage.

"We will only have six months of the SAFER grant left, but we will maintain all those positions," Mr. Buldra said.

The SAFER grant funded 12 additional firefighters for a two-year period.

Line item increases in the budget proposal are 5 percent for tax revenue, 7.3 percent for personnel, 1.1 percent for administration, and 21.3 percent for fire prevention. Line item decreases include 30.2 percent in non-tax revenue (mostly the SAFER grant), 17.2 percent in buildings and equipment, 17.5 percent in training, 0.2 percent in communications and IT services and a whopping 86.5 percent in professional services.

"The decrease in professional services is the \$499,000 we set aside for the unfunded PSPRS liability," Mr. Buldra explained. "We won't have that expense in the future because we will be paying the actual cost, which is built into the budget."

District officials are seeing less repair and maintenance costs due to newer equipment having been purchased and the shared maintenance IGA, according to Mr. Buldra.

The general fund will also be the beneficiary of about \$389,000 in additional funds transferred from the ambulance operations budget.

"The ambulance is operated as a profit, but those funds exceeding operating expenses will be transferred to the district general fund," Mr. Buldra said.

The district's ambulance budget is a bit misleading as it shows an increase in all line items. However, that is because the 2017-18 fiscal year will be the first full year of ambulance operations. Sun City began running its own ambulances in October 2016.

The ambulance proposed budget calls for \$1.382 million in expenditures, with the same amount of projected revenue.

### Ungoing expenses

As the current fiscal year winds down, fire officials are dealing with some unexpected costs.

Mr. Deadman reported insurance will cover replacement of some items stolen — permanently borrowed, as he put it — from Station 131,

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## Fire

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17017 N. 99th Ave. Replacement of saws was estimated at about \$5,000 and other extraction equipment at about \$36,000.

There were also 10 sets of turnouts — firefighters' protective clothing — taken in the heist, but those will be replaced as part of a planned program drawn out over a short period of time, the chief added.

"I expect to replace within the year a second set of turnouts for 64 people," said Capt. Jason Casey, in charge of the replacement program.

He explained that several years ago department officials began replacing the turnouts on a rotating basis so they all did not expire at the same time. Turnouts have about a 10-year

life span, which depending on care and exposure to certain elements could be as short as seven years, Mr. Casey explained.

"Some things wear out sooner than others," he said. "But we are taking steps with storage at the stations to extend the life of these items to closer to the 10-year span."

A full set of turnouts — including boots, pants, coat, helmet and other pieces — is about \$3,000.

District officials are also waiting for insurance approval for repairs to an ambulance that was involved in a traffic accident when a vehicle struck it at 111th and Florida avenues while responding to a call with lights and sirens operating.

Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or [rbradshaw@newszap.com](mailto:rbradshaw@newszap.com). Continue the discussion at [www.yourwestvalley.com](http://www.yourwestvalley.com).



PSPRS

# Fighting more than fires

## Sun City officials to appeal PSPRS decision

By Rusty Bradshaw  
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sun City Fire District officials will appeal a Public Safety Personnel Retirement System rejection of a request to amortize district premiums over a 30-

year period. PSPRS officials two years ago went from the 30-year span to the 20-year amortization that created a debt for the Sun City district of about \$500,000. Sun City officials anticipated the debt and set aside \$500,000 to pay the over-



Ron Deadman

Sun City fire officials also applied to PSPRS to return to the 30-year period. But state officials rejected the



Jim Fox

request. "They did not approve it over issues of wording, is our understanding," said

Gabe Buldra, the fire district's contracted finance director. PSPRS officials rejection was difficult to understand for Ron Deadman, Sun City fire chief. The request had to come in the form of a district board resolution accompanying a letter requesting the change.

"They forwarded the template (for the letter). We copied the template, added our name and mailed it," he said. The rejection and appeal will not put the district in a position of owing PSPRS again, according to Mr. Buldra. "We are projecting a budget surplus this year (2017-18)."  
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## PSPRS

» From page 1

18) and if we don't win the appeal, we just won't have a surplus," he said. "We would still have enough to cover our expenses, just not any left over."

Even if the 30-year amortization is eventually not approved, the district will be affected positively in future years.

"That is because we have paid the unfunded liability," Mr. Buldra said.

Sun City Fire District officials saw a 10.22 percent increase in its PSPRS contributions for 2017. While that increase seemed large, other fire departments saw larger increases, according to Mr. Buldra. The Phoenix Fire Department increase

was 22 percent, amounting to \$75 million, he added.

Fire district pension contributions are adjusted annually. However, Sun City Fire District officials are not expecting to see this kind of increase in at least the next 10 years, according to Mr. Buldra in a December 2016 report to the fire board.

"It is supposed to level off to an average of 1 to 2 percent per year in the next 10 years," he said.

A fight district officials do not have to wage is getting its new station constructed. Crews began turning dirt last week for the underground "wet" utilities — water and sewer. The district board handled a piece of financial business in its Oct. 17 meeting to continue the process. The board ap-

proved selling the remaining \$230,000 in bonds for the project.

Mr. Buldra said district officials held back a portion of the bond sales to assure they did not exceed the \$10 million approved by voters. Now that the guaranteed maximum price is set for the entire project, the remaining bonds can be sold, he explained. The bonds will be sold privately, rather than on the open market, to the Maricopa County Treasurer's Office. While this has a shorter payback period — five years — than the other bonds — 20 years — it will see a tax rate less than was presented to voters in the 2016 election.

"In the Voters Pamphlet we said it would not go above a 7 percent return

rate and we are still well below that at less than 3 percent," Mr. Deadman said.

Jim Fox, Sun City fire marshal, said during the excavation of the fire station site at 111th and Michigan avenues in Youngtown, sewer and water lines were discovered that was unknown to crews. He said one was the former sewer line for Tequilla Willy's, the business that had been on the site, that was planned to be capped offsite and removed during demolition of the former restaurant and bar but was overlooked.

"Any time you dig into the ground you find things you didn't expect," Mr. Fox said. Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

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January 27, 2016

# AMR

Continued From Page 1

major insurance carrier – Medicare – and everyone wants a piece of the pie,” said Ron Deadman, Sun City assistant fire chief.

The tentative agreements would establish a partnership between Sun City Fire and Medical Department and AMR in which, eventually, the entity with the closest ambulance to the call would respond, according to Mr. Deadman. However, that would be after Sun City acquired its own ambulances.

Mr. Deadman said the plan is for the department to purchase one ambulance, as early as the current fiscal year, if the DHS director approves the agreement. In the following budget year the department would purchase two more ambulances.

“We would evaluate the program after each purchase to determine the needs,” Mr. Deadman explained.

District officials set aside \$250,000 in a capital reserve fund for ambulance purchases.

Mr. Deadman explained DHS officials have up to 90 days to review the proposed contract between the department and AMR. Once that decision is made, there would be an appeal period of up to 30 days and the DHS director would then have up to 30 days to make a final decision.

To prepare for a positive response to the agreement, the Sun City Fire District Board of Directors approved working with Intermedix for ambulance fee billing. The company will set up a system to be ready to put in place should DHS approve the agreement between Sun City and AMR.



Mr. Deadman said there would be no cost for service to Sun City Fire District if DHS rejected the agreement.

“We need to get started on this because getting onto Medicare

could take up to six months, and most Sun City clients are on Medicare,” said Gabe Baldra, Sun City Fire’s finance director.

He added Intermedix works with several of his other fire district clients.

“They are the best business for this, by far,” he said.

Sun City is not alone in seeking an ambulance CON. Surprise had a certificate approved last year. The city’s process went quickly because of an existing agreement with Rural/Metro to have one of the latter’s units stationed in a Surprise fire house and city officials worked out a second agreement defining service by both agencies. Peoria is in the final stages of its own CON request.

Mr. Thompson said Sun City’s desire to operate its own ambulances was not based on potential revenue.

“We are looking at this from a patient care perspective,” he said. “Instead of waiting for an ambulance to arrive, which can take up to 10 minutes under current operations, we can care for and transport, if necessary, the patient quicker.”

Another aspect was the fear there would be no ambulance service if Rural/Metro, at the time the only ambulance provider for Sun City, suddenly went out of business. That fear was fueled by the company’s finances that led to the bankruptcy.

AMR, a new to the area ambulance company that received a CON last year, proposed a merger with Rural/Metro. The merger gained state approval.

# Sun City, AMR reach agreement

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire and Medical Department could be rolling out its own ambulances within the year.

Tentative agreements were reached between the Sun City Fire District and American Medical Response officials and those terms are now in the hands of Arizona Department of Health Services officials, according to Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief.



Mike Thompson

“This process could be complete in a month or two, but at this point we are not certain,” he said.

Sun City was the first fire district or municipality to seek a certificate of necessity for ambulance service following Rural/Metro officials filing bankruptcy. An application was submitted in the fall of 2014 and initial public hearings were scheduled for August of 2015 after Southwest Ambulance, through its parent company Rural/Metro, filed an intervention. Since then, AMR has purchased Rural/Metro.

“We have a major hospital and a

See AMR — Page 8

## Related Links

- [www.suncityfire.com](http://www.suncityfire.com)
- [www.amr.net](http://www.amr.net)
- [www.valleymetro.org](http://www.valleymetro.org)
- [www.azdhs.gov](http://www.azdhs.gov)



# Fire district CON request on track

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire District's effort to bring its own ambulance service to the community continues to move through the state pipeline.

Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief, said the application has completed the financial review and now moves to a managerial review. When that is complete, it will be scheduled for a hearing. However, there is no indication when the next review will be completed and a hearing set, Mr. Thompson explained.

There has been no opposition filed to the Sun City application so far, according to Mr. Thompson.

"We know that Surprise filed a non-intervention form, and that AMR and Rural Metro both filed interventions to Glendale's CON application," he said.

A filed intervention is an indication an entity plans to oppose a CON application, he added. Even if no intervention is filed against the Sun City application, it must go through the interview process.

"These hearings are run just like a trial," said Gabe Buldra, Sun City Fire District financial officer.

The hearing is presided by an administrative law judge who makes a recommendation to DHS, which makes the final decision, on acceptance or denial of CON requests. Mr. Thompson believes even if the administrative judge rules against Sun City's request there could still be hope.

"It seems that DHS is siding with fire departments because they reversed an ALJ's recommendation to decline a CON to Golden Valley," he explained.

Sun City's would fall into the Phoenix-rate group of entities that already have or applied for ambulance service through Arizona's Department of Health

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VFSC Fire Department Independent April 29, 2015

## CON

Continued From Page 2

Services. That means that if one member applies for and is granted a rate increase, all other members in the group can have the same rate increase, according to Mr. Thompson.

Sun City Fire District officials want to bring ambulance service within the district to improve response times and service. There will be a revenue component, but the increase would be small, according to Mr. Thompson. District officials established an auxiliary to handle donations. The auxilia-

ry's 501(c)3 nonprofit status was approved and about 20,000 letters requesting donations were sent last week, according to Dave Scott, Sun City Fire District board president.

"We hope this generates more revenue," Mr. Scott said.

District officials have cut their budget for the past five years, and are facing increased demand on district assets and personnel.

"In the first three months of 2015, our call volume is up 25 percent," Mr. Thompson said. "We have had days when our crews are not seeing a bed."

Calls are also increasing in severity, as well, he added. There were two serious vehicle accidents in recent weeks, both involving vehicle fires.



# CON

Continued From Page 1

ro employees this year threatened to strike. "If they were to go down, there would be no service," Mr. Thompson said.

Valley Metro, through its subsidiary companies Southwest Ambulance and PMT, provide ambulance service to the majority of the Northwest Valley.

Surprise has already been awarded a CON without a public hearing because the city's Fire and Medical Department officials

## What do you think?

Do you have an opinion on this issue? Share your comments.

• Email: rbradshaw@newszap.com

completed an agreement with Valley Metro leaders and the latter did not intervene in Surprise's CON request. The agreement calls for Surprise to handle all basic and advanced life support calls while Rural Metro handles some basic and all medical transport calls.

# Sun City Fire may get CON without hearing

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire District may not face a public hearing to get a certificate of necessity to operate its own ambulance service.

With the completion of AMR's acquisition of Valley Metro two weeks ago, Sun City fire officials are in discussion with AMR leadership to work out an agreement to not only avoid the public hearing, but speed up the process of securing the CON.



"We met with AMR's people, along with our attorney, and they (AMR) are interested in working out an agreement, which includes them offering service in some way, so we can avoid going to court," Mike Thompson, Sun City fire chief, explained.

Valley Metro officials had, earlier this year, filed as an intervener in the Sun City CON case, which forced the scheduling of a public hearing. The original hearing was scheduled for August, but then moved to January when Sun City fire officials requested an extension to allow them more time to prepare their case.

Mr. Thompson said AMR officials did not file as an intervener after gaining a countywide CON or during discussions with Valley Metro.

"They had indicated to us that they would not intervene in our CON request," Mr. Thompson said.

Several cities and fire districts sought CONs in the wake of Rural Metro's bankruptcy filing, and when Rural Metro

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SUN CITY  
**INDEPENDENT**

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### Reaching for the sky

Workers were busy last week laying block on the exterior walls of the Sun City Fire District's Station 133 being built on the northwest corner of Michigan and 11th avenues in Youngtown. The new station will replace the existing station, 13013 N. 111th Ave., Sun City that can house only one engine and is overcrowded for personnel. The new two-story station will include three vehicle bays living quarters for a full shift. Fire district officials expect a July completion. [Rusty Bradshaw/Independent Newsmedia]



VF SC Fire Department

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# SUN CITY INDEPENDENT

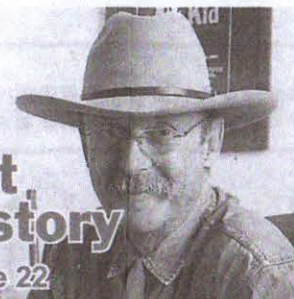
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Art  
history

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## Sun City fire wants ambulance service

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

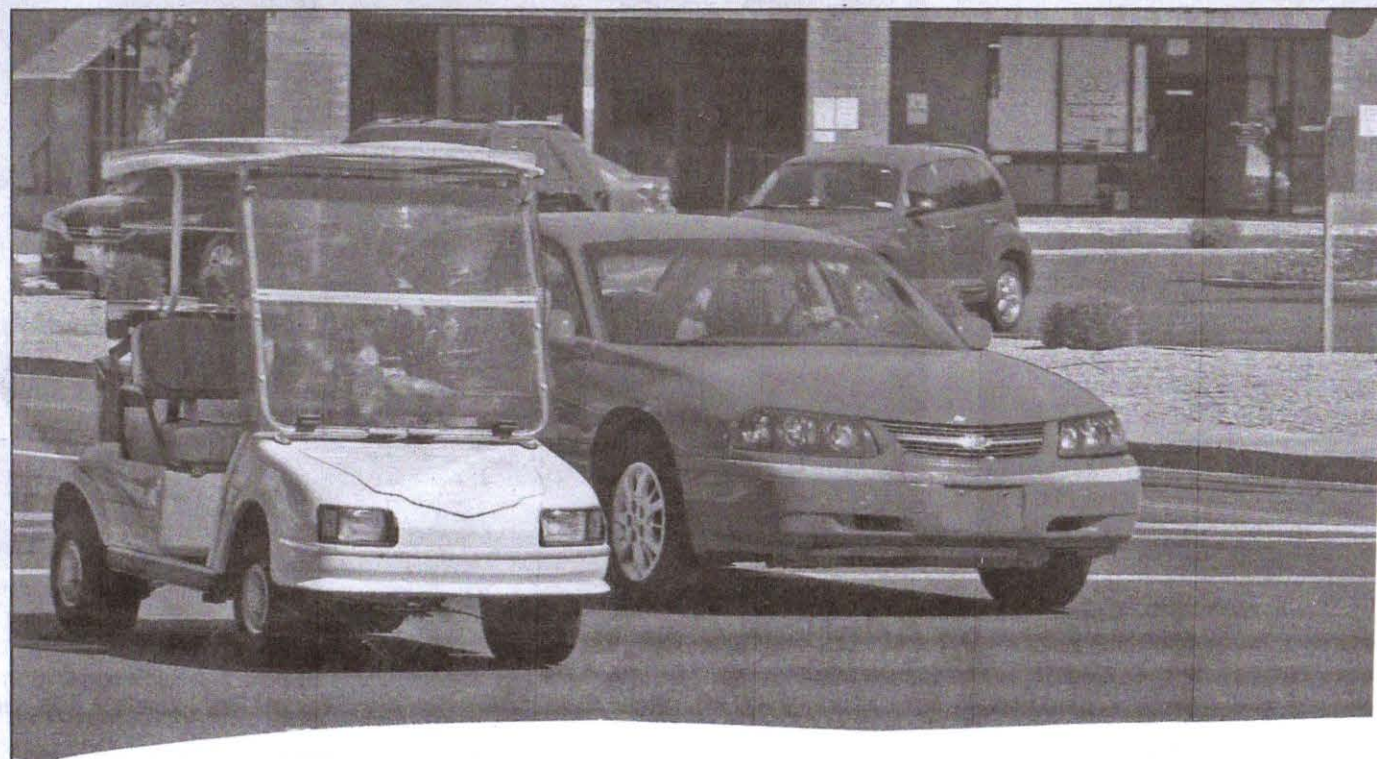
Sun City Fire District may be running its own ambulances some time in the future, if the state Health Department approves.

Sun City Fire Chief Mike Thompson filed two weeks ago for a certificate of necessity to allow the Sun City district to respond to 911 ambulance calls. Rural Metro now holds the two certificates for the Sun City area.

"My board of directors has wanted to do this for several years," Mr. Thompson explained. "When I came on board, they asked me to aggressively look into it, and I have."

As Rural Metro now holds the certificates for Sun City, that for-profit company is the only one that can pro-

See Ambulance — Page 17





## Ambulance

Continued From Page 1

vide ambulance service for the community. However, Rural Metro bought seven ambulance companies in Maricopa County, and is now the only provider in the county, according to Mr. Thompson.

Rural Metro officials reserved comment on the application until they have discussed it with Mr. Thompson.

"I have a meeting set with the chief to discuss this," said John Karolzak, Rural Metro vice president of operations. "There are collaborative opportunities we can research."

The original certificates of necessity were issued to Southwest Ambulance and EMT Ambulance. These companies were later purchased by Rural Metro, but the state at the time of purchase did roll the certificates into one and allow for another second certificate for the area, Mr. Thompson explained. Since that time Rural Metro filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

"We are being told that the Arizona Health and Human Services Department is taking another look at the certificates," Mr. Thompson said. "We are told that if we are going to apply for a certificate, now is the

time."

The state was prompted to re-examine the certificates of necessity after AMR Ambulance applied for a certificate to serve the entire county, according to Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Karolzak said it was important for organizations in an ever-changing health care environment to adjust to the changes.

"We have had a good collaborative working relationship with the Sun City Fire District for years," he said.

Sun City Fire District does not own ambulances, but would, if granted a certificate, purchase four vehicles, according to Mr. Thompson. Each of the three fire stations would have an ambulance and the fourth vehicle would be held in reserve, he added. The ambulances would be funded from the district's capital reserve, which contains just over \$2.5 million, Mr. Thompson said.

"We could also do bonds and loans, but we prefer not to put an extra burden on the taxpayers," Mr. Thompson said.

Sun City's application is being reviewed, but it will be some time before there is a decision.

"Our attorney tells us it usually takes 12-18 months, if everything goes smoothly," Mr. Thompson said.

*News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.*



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Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

# Fire district ready to activate disaster trailer

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire District is ready to put its mass-casualty trailer into service. The trailer, purchased with a \$10,000 donation from Royal Oaks, is stocked with mass-casualty materials to be used in an extreme emergency in the area. The supplies were donated by the city of Peoria, which had the materials but no place to store them.

The trailer will be available countywide through the mutual-aid agreement, according to Jim Haner, Sun City fire chief.

"This came at no cost to district taxpayers, and we were more than willing to take it on," Mr. Haner said.

The trailer was on display at a recent Royal Oaks expo.

"They were very pleased with what we have done with this project," Mr. Haner said.

Fire district officials plan to have the trailer

See Trailer — Page 6

## 20 years on the job

Jim Haner, right, Sun City fire chief, presents Ed George, fire district board president, with a plaque recognizing his 20 years of service to the district. Mr. George started with the Sun City Fire District in 1993 as a volunteer and was later elected to the district board.

## Trailer

Continued From Page 2

er on display at other community events.

District staff also were able to free up some space at Station 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave., with delivery of a La France antique fire engine to the Arizona Hall of Flame, 6101 E. Van Buren St., for its museum.

"They are not going to restore the truck, it is just in too bad shape for that," Mr. Haner explained. "But they will be using some of its parts for other vehicles and projects."

He added the truck cab had been targeted for use in the museum children's area.

It was also reported in the Nov. 19 regular board meeting that volunteer and staff fire inspectors are now using iPads during their work in the community. Jim Fox, Sun

City fire marshal, said the portable computers make the inspections more efficient and cuts down on paper work.

"Now, when they come in, instead of having someone transcribe their written reports, they just download them into the (main computer filing) system," Mr. Fox explained.

Sun City fire officials will also be re-vamping their financial policies in coming months. Gabe Buldra, district finance director, said he will bring suggested changes for different sections from the policy manual to each board meeting for members to analyze, then consider changing at the following meeting.

"I have worked with agencies that had no policies at all," Mr. Buldra said. "But the fire district has policies, they just need to be more robust."

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

V F SC Fire Department



# Sun City may fight own fires

## Private pact might end in January

By **Connie Cone Sexton**  
*Phoenix Gazette*

SUN CITY — The fire district board plans to end a 28-year association with Rural/Metro Corp. and create its own fire department.

Members of the Sun City Fire Board are expected Tuesday to OK plans to begin operating a fire department Jan. 1. Members of the fire board expect to lure away a number of Rural/Metro employees to their new department.

Rural/Metro officials were surprised at the board's plan. "We have been blind-sided by this," Larry Oehlert, manager of marketing research and support services, said Thursday.

"The very fact that they are intending to keep all of our personnel shows that the quality of service is not an issue here," Oehlert said, adding he does not understand why the board wants to end its contract.

Such astonishment amazes Brayton Willis, clerk of the Sun City fire district board. He said Rural/Metro has known since May that the Sun City group was exploring options for service.

The decision to do some research into the cost of running its own fire department has been on the minds of the fire board members for several years, Willis said. Impetus to start such a study came when about a \$120,000 cost increase was announced by Rural/Metro this spring during the yearly contractual agreement with the fire board.

"We got insurance quotes, maintenance quotes, pay scale figures, we studied pension plans and would you believe when we got all

through we found we had a lesser budget," Willis said.

He said the fire board's estimated budget came in about \$1,033,000. Rural/Metro said its one-year cost would be \$1,326,444.

Jim Pryor, chairman of the fire board, said the members believe they have enough management ability not to have to pay someone else to do it.

Willis agrees. "We have well over 100 years of experience," he said.

Three of the board members are former fire chiefs: Willis, Pryor and Cy Rengel. Another member, Everette Johnson, is a former fire commissioner and member George Lange, was an electrical engineer who installed fire alarm systems.

"Unlike the other 84 fire districts in Arizona, we have some people that know a little bit about running a fire department," Willis said.

"Even though this is like David and Goliath, the little guy vs. the big corporation, we are confident," he added.

Until the fire board makes a formal decision, Rural/Metro has given the district a 120-day extension for service. Willis said the board plans to notify Rural/Metro the first of October of its actions. With a decision to end service, Rural/Metro will have to continue operation in Sun City for 90 days, Willis explained, which will take them into 1989.

Fire board members addressed the issue of pulling out from Rural/Metro during a study session last week. A formal vote will be taken at 9 a.m. Tuesday at the Sun City fire station, 17017 N. 99th Ave.

Members of the fire board say they have added ammunition for running a fire department: the fact that Sun City residents own its own fire equipment and two of the community's fire stations.

Rural/Metro provides manpower, planning and management expertise to Sun City. Willis said

See ■ Fire, Page 2



## ■ Fire

From Page 1

the board expects to hire a number of current Rural/Metro employees, who will retain their positions, therefore not altering service to the community.

Rural/Metro officials contend a switch in management would cause an increase in taxes for Sun City residents.

"When we developed our contract proposal last year, we estimated that it would cost Sun City approximately \$2 million to create a typical municipal fire department for a city of its size," Oehlert said. "Our contract proposal provided for a one-year cost of

\$1,326,444. A three-year contract would have provided significant cost savings over that amount."

In a statement released Thursday, Rural/Metro argued that, through its service, Sun City residents "enjoy the lowest per capita cost for fire protection for a city their size in the state of Arizona."

Their figures state that residents paid about \$28 per person for fire protection, compared to a national average of about \$65 per person for a community of similar size to Sun City.





Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City firefighters give a demonstration of a vehicle accident extrication during the Youngtown GAIN event last fall. An Arizona Senate bill and a study of a merged administrative operation between Sun City and Sun City West fire districts could see major changes in fire protection in the West Valley communities.

# Bill, study leave burning questions

## County officials not ready to assume fire protection

**By Rusty Bradshaw**  
Independent Newspapers

Sun Cities residents will, in some form or another, see some major changing in their fire protection districts.

If legislators approve a pending Senate bill, the districts will be eliminated in favor of a countywide fire protection agency operated by Maricopa County. Even if the bill does not become law, officials from the two districts are discussing sharing some administrative positions and merging their resident boards of directors

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- [www.suncityfire.com](http://www.suncityfire.com)
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under a Joint Power Authority.

Senate Bill 1282 proposes bringing fire protection services throughout the unincorporated areas of Maricopa County together to serve as one organization. That will put about 15 separate fire districts out of business, according to Jim Haner, Sun City fire chief.

The bill's primary sponsors are Dist. 6 Sen. Chester Crandell (R-Heber) and Rep. Brenda Barton (R-Payson); Dist. 5 Rep. Sonny Borrelli

(R-Lake Havasu City); and Dist. 22 Sen. Judy Burges (R-Sun City West). It had a first reading Jan. 30 and a second Jan. 31. It was scheduled for a Feb. 18 Government and Environment Committee hearing.

Mr. Crandell said his aim with the bill was to alleviate abuse of power his has witnessed within fire districts in his area. He also believes there are too many taxing districts in the state.

"This may not be an issue in the Sun Cities, but it is in other areas," he said. "When the fire district system was set up in Arizona, it may have worked well because things were so spread out. But the demographics have changed."

The senator is also hoping the bill will gener-



# Burn

Continued From Page 1

ate discussion of various options.

If approved, the bill would require, beginning Jan. 1, 2014, individual fire districts to provide access to their financial and employment records, and a list of their liabilities, to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. In turn, county supervisors must have a service plan in place by July 1, 2016, when the county would begin responsibilities of providing fire service in unincorporated areas of the county.

"This comes from someone in a more rural area; they believe it would work up there," Mr. Haner said.

If fire service were spread out throughout the county, there would be some concern about how management would utilize the assets, he added.

"Residents (within existing districts) would lose local control," Mr. Haner added.

Mary Dalton, Fire District of Sun City West assistant chief, believes the bill is simply a response to statewide financial challenges.

County officials are not eager to take on fire protection responsibilities.

"Currently, the counties have no resources, expertise or financial mechanisms to provide fire and emergency services," Max Wilson, Dist. 4 Maricopa County supervisor, stated in an e-mail.

However, as protecting people's lives and property is the most important function of government, county officials will move forward with the difficult task if the bill passes this session, according to Mr. Wilson.

"Our fiscal 2014 budget will already be in place and there is no plan to raise taxes, so there is no funding available to pay for this new proposal," he stated.

Under a JPA, both fire district boards would remain, but a third board, consisting of existing board members, would be created to oversee the joint operation. That would allow administrative staff to be cut in half, according to Mr. Haner.

"It is adding a layer of bureaucracy, but board members are volunteers," Mr. Haner said. "From an administrative side, there would be cost savings."

Sun City West fire personnel are conducting research of JPAs in other areas. Ms. Dalton said there have been successes and failures, the latter mostly due to political squabbles and power plays. JPAs in California, Colorado, Oregon, Washington and several states in the eastern portion of the

country are being studied.

The feasibility study of a JPA includes the two Sun Cities fire districts, but more agencies could be involved. Ms. Dalton said her group has researched JPAs ranging from two to 26 entities. In a JPA, each individual organization pays its share of the costs to the JPA of providing service, rather than each paying equal amounts, according to Ms. Dalton.

"The critical point is to see if we can do this and still provide the same level of service," she explained.

In the meantime, fire district officials are preparing their agencies for the future based on the status quo. For both, that means some budget trimming as funding continues to shrink.

"We are now being told that property values in the district will be down 10.5 percent, which is much lower than the earlier projections of about 9 percent," Mr. Haner explained.

That means Sun City district officials will have just under \$1 million less revenue for the 2013-14 fiscal year than was available in 2012-13, he added. The Sun Cities districts are in the second year of a tax rate cap override, but that will end June 30, 2014.

Mr. Haner said county officials project a 2.8 percent increase in assessments next year, but he is wary of that prediction.

"Their poor projections for this year calls into question the reliability for that," he said.

Ms. Dalton said Sun City West fire officials face similar budget constrictions, although their assessed value decrease is half what Sun City experiences.

Sun City fire leaders are looking into other ways to increase revenue. Board member Bob Luger suggested a donation request mailing, similar to what the Sun City Posse does annually. Mr. Haner said that is one option being researched; another is partnering with Global First Response to put advertising on fire trucks.

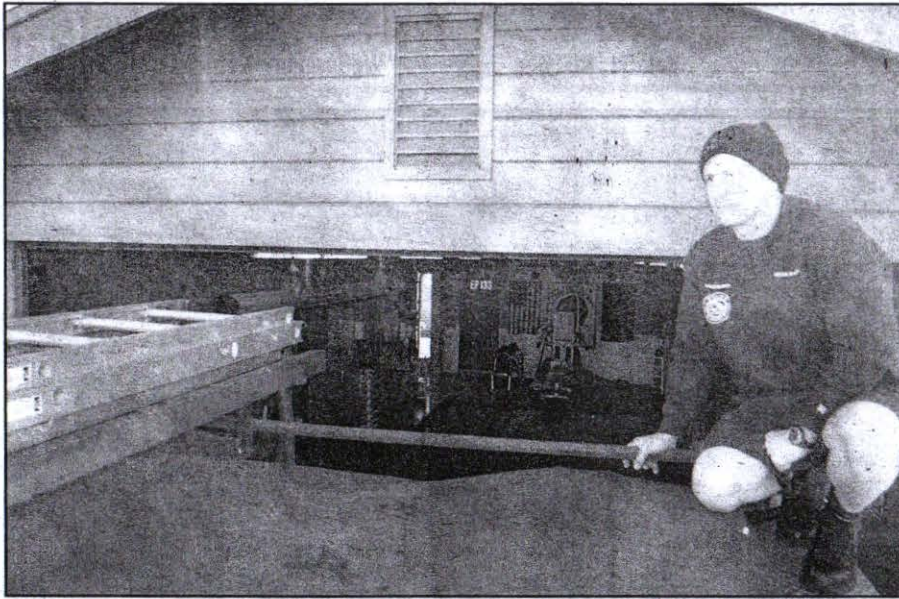
Board member Walter Link suggested the Posse's donation request is in a different category as the Posse is a nonprofit agency, while the fire district is not.

"I'm not saying this would be a permanent thing, just temporary until we can get out of the current (economic) situation," Mr. Luger said.

Ms. Dalton said Sun City West officials are also researching additional revenue streams, including grants and changes in ambulance service charges.

*News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.*





Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Sun City firefighter Mike Rapps shows one of the disadvantages of Station 133. There is no drive-through bay as the station is a converted house. The truck must back in and there is so little clearance a spotter is necessary to make sure it clears the garage opening whenever the truck leaves or returns to the station.

## Fire district wants to buy land for future relocation

By Rusty Bradshaw  
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire District is negotiating to purchase a piece of property with anticipation of relocating one of its fire stations in the future.

The district board reached a tentative agreement Feb. 8 with Willy Ritter, owner of Tequilla Willy's, 13232 N. 111th, Youngtown, to buy his lot there for \$375,000. The lot is planned to be used for the new site of Fire Station 133, 13013 N. 111th Ave. But district officials emphasized the relocation, if the land sale is finalized, may

not happen for three to five years.

"We have known for a long time we needed to do something, but there were few opportunities for property," said Jim Haner, Sun City fire chief.

District officials plan to pay for the cash purchase from the capital improvement fund and expect to close the transaction by the end of March.

"With the economy down and property values down, we felt this was a good time to secure the property," Mr. Haner said.

See Station — Page 6

## Station

Continued From Page 2

Mr. Ritter cautioned that the deal was not final and that either party could still back out. He had no other comment on the proposed sale.

Mr. Haner said the existing fire station is in a converted house and is not suitable to be used as a fire station any longer. He explained the crew quarters are cramped and the facility has only one restroom.

"That makes it hard to accommodate the multi-gender fire crews," he said.

In addition, the building is showing its age, he added.

District officials do not plan to use the existing structure on the Tequilla Willy's lot for the new fire station, but will construct a new facility from the ground up, according to Mr. Haner. The purchase proposal to the Sun City Fire District Board of Directors included demolishing the existing structure, he said.

"That way we would not have maintenance on an empty building," he explained.

Mr. Haner said district officials will build up funds in the coming years to cover the cost of constructing the new station. They will also look for other funding sources, he added.

"We will be looking for grant opportunities," he said. "When we actually start building could be determined by how many grants are out there we can get."

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.



# Sun City Fire Department honored for volunteer effort

**By Brent Whiting**  
THE REPUBLIC | AZCENTRAL.COM

The Sun City Fire Department has captured a second honor for an inspection and safety program that is staffed by nearly 20 volunteers.

The agency is to receive a community service award from the Area Agency on Aging, a non-profit group that plans, develops and delivers more than 60 programs to older adults, persons with disabilities and those with long-term care needs.

Laraine Stewart, chief operating officer for the Phoenix agency, said the award will be handed out during a luncheon Oct. 3 at the Pointe Hilton Resort at Tapatío Cliffs, 11111 N. Seventh St., Phoenix.

It is the agency's way of recognizing people and programs responsible for outstanding volunteer work, she said.

In Sun City, Fire Department volunteers donate about 6,000 hours each year, said Ken Rice, Sun City deputy fire marshal.

Rice announced the award last week during the monthly meeting of the de-

*In Sun City, Fire Department volunteers donate about 6,000 hours each year, said Ken Rice, Sun City deputy fire marshal. Rice announced the award last week during the monthly meeting of the governing board.*

partment's governing board.

Last month, the volunteer program was singled out for a community service award by the International Code Council, a building-safety and fire-prevention group based in Washington, D.C.

The award will be presented by the council during a conference in Minneapolis on Sept. 14-23.

In Sun City, the volunteers perform business inspections and home-safety surveys and install smoke alarms, emergency lock boxes and fire extinguishers.

In addition, they reach out to about 5,000 people a year by offering public presentations on a variety of topics, including fall prevention and fire, heat, electrical and candle safety.



# Sun City Fire Department loses chief officer

**ANNIE BOON**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

For the first time in Sun City Fire Department history, the district will lose a chief officer.

Battalion Chief Tim Van Scoter is leaving the department Friday after 24 years of service. He is moving to Show

Low where he will work as Division Chief of Operations for the Lakeside Fire District.

"It's going to be hard leaving. I have a lot of friends here, but we'll keep in touch," said Van Scoter, who credits his experience with the SCFD for allowing him to land the job in Show Low. "It's great here, and I've learned a lot."

He said he'll miss the Sun City residents who also have taught him some important lessons.

"I've met a lot of neat people that did a lot of great things in their life that we may never get to do," he said. "Just talk to these people here you won't believe what

they've done in their lives."

Van Scoter began his work in the Sun City Fire District on May 1, 1982, even before the district, established in 1966, began hiring employees as part of the Sun City Fire Department, which was formed in 1988. He has been active in firefighter training

and has served as a wildland firefighter.

Also breaking department history this year is Sherry Neely, a firefighter who was promoted to captain in January. Neely is the department's first female captain.

*Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).*



# Fire district moving north

By Matt Loeschman  
Independent Newspapers

With their new administration building purchase agreement signed, sealed and delivered, Fire District of Sun City officials look toward moving into their new facility.

"We are ready to go, but there are some loose ends that must be tied up before we can move over there," explained Assistant Chief Steve Morrow. "Today, the fire district board approved about \$55,000 in funding to do some demolition and bring some things up to speed in the new building. For one thing, we have to have functioning restrooms."

The Sun City Fire District Board of Directors unanimously voted in late February to enter into a purchase agreement to relocate its administrative offices in a building at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive.

Original plans called for

addition of a second story to Fire Station No. 131 at 99th Avenue and Bell Road. But various problems including escalating costs and ADA compliance issues forced fire officials to seek another alternative.

Officials were happy to find an available building near Station No. 131.

"We found out the owners were willing to sell the building," Fire Chief Jim Sebert explained. "So we paid \$1.1 million and it is ours."

The chief said the price tag to add a second story and renovate the remainder of Station No. 131 escalated above \$3 million.

"We could've gone to the public seeking more funding, but we didn't want to do that," Chief Sebert said.

The fire district inquired about the vacant building at

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## Expansion

Continued From Page 1

18602 N. 99th Ave. that had previously been used both as a church and as a storage facility. About a month later, the deal was done.

"That was the first linchpin in this whole process," Chief Morrow said. "Now we've got to bring in temporary housing for our crews at Station No. 131 — we hope to have that done within the next couple weeks."

The relocation of administrative services to the new location allows for conversion and expansion of several areas inside Station No. 131, giving firefighters some much-needed room. During that construction, crews will stay on site in temporary buildings.

"We want to run the fire station from the same location," Chief Morrow said. "Moving people around just created too big a headache."

Board Chairman Irv Mitchell

said the fire station renovations are long overdue.

"Actually, we should have done this several years ago," he said.

Chief Morrow said both projects are progressing slowly — the move and the renovation.

"We have to get out of this building before that renovation starts," he explained. "We may be sitting on orange crates at the new location, but that's the way it's gotta be."

"The moving plan is pretty flexible," Chief Morrow added. "It kind of changes from day to day. But eventually everyone will be situated and the community will see a big difference."

The conversion at Station No. 131 will expand living quarters to 14 dormitories. About 4,000 square feet of space will be freed up at the fire station.

There are multiple problems associated with Station No. 131, including clogged drain lines, water lines not providing proper water pressure and a lack of elec-

trical power to meet the department's technological and training needs. Appliances in the current facility are not commercial grade.

All those problems will be corrected in the fire station renovation, expected to cost about \$1 million in addition to the \$1.1 million paid for the vacant building.

With approximately \$200,000 budgeted to renovate the new administration building, the total cost of the new project is expected to be slightly lower than the original \$2.7 million slated to add the second story to Station No. 131.

"We are saving money," Chief Morrow said. "We view it as a win-win situation."

It will take at least five to six months to complete renovations to Fire Station No. 131, Chief Sebert said.

Post your comments on this issue at [www.newszapforums.com/forum29](http://www.newszapforums.com/forum29).  
Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or [mloeschman@newszap.com](mailto:mloeschman@newszap.com).

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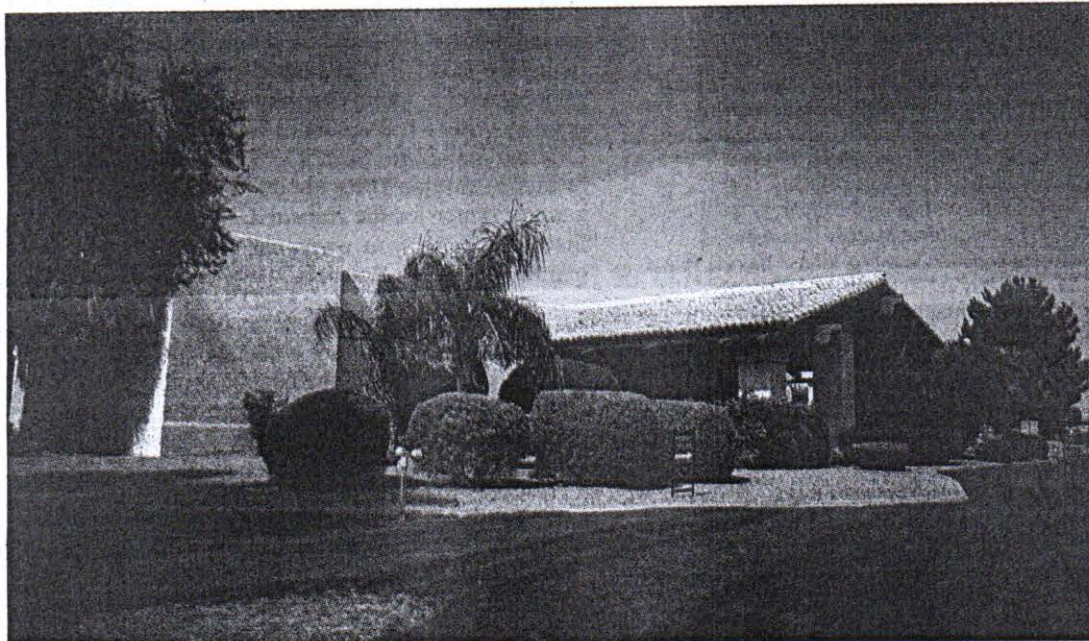
FIRE DEPARTMENT

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

April 26, 2006



DAILY NEWS-SUN



THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City Fire District wants this building at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive for use as its administrative center.

## Sun City Fire District switches gears

### Board OKs buying building

MITCHELL VANTREASE  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Fire District Board unanimously approved Tuesday a \$1.1 million purchase and sale agreement to buy a building at 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive that would house its current administration offices.

In return, the space left in Station 131 at 99th Avenue and Bell Road is expected to be converted to expand the firefighters' living quarters. New dormitories and kitchens will replace meeting rooms and offices, along with a much needed upgrade.

"We feel the public will be very proud of it when we're all

finished," said Fire Chief Jim Sebert. "It's a radical change, but we're going to stay under one roof."

The plan approved Tuesday will save \$200,000 compared to the original proposal, according to officials.

Originally the district planned a \$2.7 million renovation to add a second-story, Sebert said. But because of safety code restrictions, an alternative was sought.

SCFD officials chose a stand-alone building, which had been a church and a bank, at the northwest corner of 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive. The district is waiting for the building's owners to sign a purchase and sale agreement. After that, Sebert said it might take at least 60 days. All of the administrative offices, including the community relations, would relocate to

the new office space.

"It's going to move as fast as we can make it move," said Irv Mitchell, chairman of the SCFD board.

Sebert believes the building will be more of a convenience to the public.

"There's more parking space, and it'll be a lot easier to get to us," he said.

Having a new administration building makes room for more firefighters at the station. Sebert said an architect has begun redesigning the facilities.

There will be a number of upgrades to the electrical lines, sewer and water. New dorms and kitchens are expected to be converted from vacant office space.

Along with the administration offices, the project will cost \$2.5 million versus \$2.7 million projected for the addition of a second story.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 22, 2006



## Sun City Fire District braces for revenue reduction

JEFF DEMPSEY  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Fire District board will present a budget next week that is lower than the current spending plan and prepares for a potential revenue reduction that could cost the district up to \$140,000.

"The budget is a 3 percent decrease from last year," Fire Chief Jim Haner said at Tuesday's fire board workshop. "We're doing a good job."

Details of the budget have not been released, but Haner did say a

contract between the city of Peoria and Professional Medical Transport could cost the department money.

"We have a contract with Southwest Ambulance to assist in patient transports all around the West Valley," Haner said. "Better than 90 percent of those calls are in Peoria. The city has entered into a contract with PMT, and we do not yet know if we will work out a similar arrangement with them."

Haner said the contract with Southwest Ambulance brings in

about \$10,000 a month. In a worst-case scenario, he said, the department could stand to lose as much as \$140,000 next fiscal year.

"We know Peoria has asked PMT to consider a similar agreement with us, but we have not been in contact yet," he said. "We certainly will try to put that deal together."

Haner said the contract with Southwest also is in the process of renewal and no resolution is expected for at least a couple of months.

"I would suggest we reduce that

line in the revenue portion of the budget by \$100,000 just to be safe," he said. "PMT might be generous and we might not lose any of this money. We'll budget without it and if it does come in we'll put it in capital improvement."

The Sun City Fire Board will meet at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday at the department's offices, 18602 N. 99th Ave. For more information, call 623-974-4977.

*Jeff Dempsey may be reached at 623-876-2531 or [jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com](mailto:jdempsey@yourwestvalley.com).*



# Fire district changes plans

Administration moves to nearby building

By Matt Loeschman

Independent Newspapers

Upon further review, there will be no second story added to Sun City Fire Station No. 131.

The Sun City Fire District Board of Directors unanimously voted last week to enter into a purchase and sale agreement to relocate its administrative offices in a building at the intersection of 99th Avenue and Union Hills Drive.

"We had originally planned to build another story onto the current Station 131," explained Sun City Fire Chief Jim Sebert. "But it quickly became obvious to us that to meet the ADA requirements in the firefighters'

[www.suncityfire.com](http://www.suncityfire.com)

areas, it was just going to cost too much.

"Plus, we would never have a wheelchair-bound firefighter," the chief added. "This didn't make much sense to us so we sought an alternative."

The chief said the price for adding the second story and renovating the remainder of the fire station had escalated above \$3 million.

"We could've gone to the public seeking more funding, but we didn't want to do that," Chief Sebert said.

The fire district inquired about the unused building located at 18602 N. 99th Ave. It had previously been used both as a church and as a storage facility.

"We found out the owners

See Fire — Page 10

## Fire

Continued From Page 1

were willing to sell the building," the chief explained. "So we're going to pay \$1.1 million and it will be ours."

The relocation of administrative services to the new location will allow for conversion and expansion of several areas inside Station No. 131, allowing firefighters some much-needed room.

Board Chairman Irv Mitchell said the renovations are now a necessity.

"Actually, we should have done this several years ago," Mr. Mitchell

said. "It's gotta be done and it's time we got started on it."

Chief Sebert said the current facility was designed to house six to eight people with "limited elbow room."

The conversion will expand living quarters to 14 dormitories. About 4,000 square feet of space will be freed up at the fire station.

The chief also listed various problems associated with the current facility, including clogged drain lines, water lines not providing proper water pressure and a lack of electrical power to meet the department's technological and training needs.

Additionally, appliances in the

current facility are not commercial grade. They are residential grade and do not meet the needs of the fire department, Chief Sebert explained.

All those problems will be corrected in the renovation, expected to cost approximately \$1 million.

With approximately \$200,000 budgeted to renovate the new administration building, the total cost of the new project is expected to be slightly lower than the original \$2.7 million slated to add the second story to Station No. 131.

"The combined projects will actually come in under the original price," Chief Sebert explained.

The new administration center

will be easily accessible to the public, officials said.

"Parking is more conveniently located. It will be easier getting in and out," Chief Sebert said.

The chief said the building purchase deal could be completed within one month. Fire district officials are making a final inspection of their future home.

They expect to be in the new location within 60-90 days.

It will take at least five to six months to complete renovations to Fire Station 131, the chief added.

Post your comments on this issue at [www.newszapforums.com/forum29](http://www.newszapforums.com/forum29).

Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or

[mloeschman@newszap.com](mailto:mloeschman@newszap.com).

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

March 1, 2006



## Bank One gives \$10,000 to SC Fire

Money will pay  
for disaster kits  
for residents

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

Sun City and Youngtown residents can soon have at their fingertips the necessary tools to survive a disaster.

Sun City Fire Department will use a \$10,000 donation from Bank One to put together 1,000 disaster kits that will be free to residents.

"We're quite excited about it," said Assistant Fire Chief Steve Morrow. "We didn't have enough money to implement the program but Bank One

stepped forward for us. This is our first big corporate donor."

Each kit will include items such as a flashlight, toothbrush, pill box, first-aid items and an insulated lunch bag. Information on which radio station to tune into for news and where to go for safety also will be included in the kits.

The kits initially will be available Oct. 3 at the Bank One on 10116 W. Bell Road and eventually at all Bank Ones in Sun City, said Lori Campbell, bank vice president and district manager.

The kits will coincide with the fire department's activities for the annual Fire Prevention Week.

"Fire safety is important to senior citizens in Sun City," Ms. Campbell said. "This is an excit-

ing opportunity to reach out in the community and make a difference in their lives."

Sun City West Fire Department provides a disaster check list to its residents and has no plans to follow its neighbor and provide kits, Deputy Chief Jim Heger said.

"It's better for you to put together a kit because you know your specific needs," he said. The department's check list of recommended items includes a flashlight, portable radio, prescription medication, extra prescription eyeglasses, water and batteries for hearing aids, Deputy Chief Heger said.

Sun City Asst. Chief Morrow said data from disasters show

See Bank — Page 3



Independent Newspapers/Cecilia Chan

Bank One Vice President and District Manager Lori J. Campbell hands over a check to Sun City Fire Capt. Hank Oleson.

## Bank

Continued From Page 1

historically senior citizens are one of the most vulnerable groups.

"The main problem in our community is restriction of mobility or driving or being able to be transported," he said. "A lot of our residents in our community need some extra assistance or guidance on important things to do for survivability. We felt it was important to arm our citizens with as much information as we can. Bank One is instrumental in providing the community the information they need to survive."



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FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 2005

# Sun Cities budget \$18.7 million for fire districts

## Increase blamed on higher costs of fuel, insurance

By Brent Whiting  
The Arizona Republic

It will cost more to send fire-trucks rolling down the road in Sun City and Sun City West.

The fire districts for both communities have adopted proposed budgets totaling more

than \$18.7 million for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

That's an increase of \$2.8 million from the current combined operating budgets.

Higher fuel and health-insurance costs are among the reasons for the increase, according to officials for each district.

In Sun City, the fire district board has adopted a proposed budget of \$8,783,896, a nearly 9 percent increase from the current budget of \$8,088,425.

The Sun City Fire District also serves Youngtown.

Jim Sebert, the Sun City fire chief, said part of the budget would be used for the renovation of the main fire station, 17017 N. 99th Ave.

The Sun City West board has adopted a proposed budget of \$9,963,357, a nearly 28 percent increase from the current operating budget of \$7,807,490.

Jim Heger, the Sun City West fire marshal, said the proposed budget includes \$1.4 million that has been earmarked for a new fire administration building and the renovation of two

fire stations.

Part of the money for the improvements has been saved up from prior years, Heger said.

The district is close to breaking ground on the new building, which will be at Spanish Gardens and Sandridge drives, Heger said.

Work on the two stations at 19001 N. Camino Del Sol and 20622 N. Stardust Blvd. is to start in January.

The five-member Sun City fire board will vote on a final budget Tuesday. In Sun City

West, the final vote was scheduled for Thursday.

Under Arizona law, a fire district is a quasi-municipal taxing authority that uses its levies to support the services of a fire department.

The Sun City West department, unlike its Sun City counterpart, also provides an ambulance service, so the budgets aren't entirely comparable.

In Sun City and Youngtown, ambulance services are provided under a contract with Southwest Ambulance.



# SEARCH & RESCUE



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Capt. Patrick Doyle of the Goodyear Fire Department crawls through a hole he kicked in an abandoned building used for fire training Tuesday.

## Firefighters practice skills in vacant Sun Health building

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Busting through solid walls, braving pitch black smoke-filled rooms or getting trapped beneath rubble in a fiery mess are things no firefighter wants to face but must always be ready for.

That's why training is so important, and why this week, the Sun City Fire Department and departments from all over the West Valley are taking the opportunity to get hands-on training that could some day save a life — possibly their own.

Sun Health donated a building scheduled for demolition to the Sun City Fire Department for its various

training exercises, including search and rescue and forcible entry.

The building, at 103rd Avenue north of Sante Fe Drive in Sun City, used to be the Sun Health Resource Center, but has been vacant for about a year. It's being demolished as part of Sun Health's plans for future renovation.

When the 80,000 square-foot building was donated, the SCFD realized it had a golden opportunity and decided to share it with the other West Valley fire departments, said Capt. David Gerard of SCFD. This week, fire departments from several cities, including Sun City West,

Surprise, El Mirage and Peoria, are training.

"The opportunity to actually work in a real building, not a simulation, where we're using actual skills is priceless," said SCFD Battalion Chief Tim Van Scoter. "Here, it's the real thing. Crews use their tools and skills learned in basic training and put them to use."

The building is an ideal training venue as fire crews can practice life-saving exercise in facilities similar to those they may encounter in the West Valley, Van Scoter said.

Walls are made of real

See **FIREFIGHTERS, A5**

OVER



## From A1

materials, with studs throughout and hand rail attachments and wallpaper coverings on the exterior. The 30-year-old building features construction that's consistent with many of the homes and buildings built in Sun City, he added.

Live fires aren't being set for training because the building is nestled in a residential area, but fog machines are pumping dense smoke into closed spaces to challenge firefighters during search and rescue exercises.

Firefighters, armed with sledgehammers and other tools, take turns knocking down walls to crawl through or practice cutting through the ceiling and roof to ventilate a room.

Being trained in the same territory they may encounter in an actual emergency is invaluable and can't be

**'The opportunity to actually work in a real building, not a simulation, where we're using actual skills is priceless.'**

Sun City  
Fire Department  
Battalion Chief  
Tim Van Scoter

taught in a simulation or text book, Van Scoter said.

"Crews don't get to do this often," he said. "We hope to never have to use this training, but if we do, we'll have practiced for it."

Joe La Rue, executive vice president of Sun Health properties, said Sun Health is pleased to offer this kind of experience to local fire crews.

"The Sun City Fire Department is a community service organization which provides a very important and vital service to our community," La

Rue said. "Their use of the building neither increases nor decreases the cost of demolition. We saw it as a good community service to benefit another vital community organization."

Every time a firefighter responds to an emergency, a human life may be on the line, said Stacy Bodenstedt, SCFD spokeswoman.

"One of the most important elements is that the emergency responders are safe and are able to maneuver in some of the most hazardous environments," she said. "This training will not only enhance the firefighters skills in hazardous situations, it will help better serve our Sun City community overall."

For information regarding the various services the Sun City Fire Department provides, call 974-2321.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City firefighter Jaime Solo strikes a door with a sledgehammer while practicing techniques in a building slated for demolition.



DAILY NEWS-SUN

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, AND SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2005

# Traffic signal to serve firehouse

**ANNIE BOON**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

A new traffic signal is being installed at the Sun City fire station on 111th Avenue, just south of Grand Avenue, to increase safety for motorists and decrease emergency vehicle response times.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors entered into an agreement with the Sun City Fire District to install the signal, and the Maricopa County Department of Transportation will be the lead agency on the project.

"The light will do double duty," said Supervisor Max Wilson, R-District 4. "It will help cut down the response time for emergency vehicles to get to the scene of the emergency, and it will also make it safer for motorists on 111th Avenue."

Construction is slated to begin within a few weeks, MCDOT spokesman Roger Ball said. The project is

expected to cost about \$66,000, with the fire district contributing about \$20,000 toward the expense, he said. Proposals are being requested now from contractors.

Station 133 is in a residential area, about one block south of Grand Avenue.

"Motorists often aren't expecting the fire truck to pull out of a garage on the roadway as they travel along 111th Avenue," Ball wrote in a press release.

The traffic signal also will benefit fire trucks returning to the station, he added. Because of the surrounding neighborhood, the fire trucks must back in through the front door.

"Currently, firefighters must stand in the street and direct traffic while the truck is backed in," Ball said. "With the signal, traffic can be stopped while the truck is returned to the station house without the firefighters needing to stand in the roadway."



## SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT

March 23, 2005

## Fire station gets traffic light

Maricopa County will install a new traffic signal at the fire station on 111th Avenue, just south of Grand Avenue, which will make it safer for motorists.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors entered into an agreement with the Sun City Fire District to install the signal, estimated to cost \$66,000. The fire district's share is \$20,000 for the project.

"This light will do double duty," District 4 Supervisor Max Wilson said. "It will help cut down the response time for emergency vehicles to get to the scene of the emergency, and it will also make it safer for motorists on 111th Avenue."

Station No. 133 is located in a residential area, where drivers often do not expect a fire truck to pull out of a garage on the roadway as they travel along 111th Avenue. The station is about one block south of Grand Avenue.

The signal also will benefit returning fire trucks. Because of the surrounding neighborhood the fire truck must back in through the front door. Currently, firefighters must stand in the street and direct traffic while the truck is backed in. With the signal, traffic can be stopped while the truck is returned to the station house without the firefighters needing to stand in the roadway.

Proposals were requested from contractors, and the work should begin within a few weeks.



# Communities plan fire station improvements

## Sun City renovations won't impact taxes

ANNIE BOON  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Plans to renovate Sun City Fire District's Station 131 are under way, and taxpayers can relax — the improvements won't cost them a dime.

Renovating Station 131 at 99th Avenue and Bell Road has been on the SCFD board's agenda for about three years, but the timing hasn't been right until now, said James Sebert, fire chief.

Funding for the project will come out of the SCFD's capital Projects Fund specifically designed to pay for building, apparatus and equipment costs. A low-interest loan for government agencies may also be acquired by the SCFD to help offset costs, but payments won't be reflected on tax rates.

"We put money away each year for capital projects and it doesn't charge the taxpayers," Sebert said. capital projects, like station renovations, allow the fire department to save excess funds that have been carried from one year to the next, he said.

Slightly smaller than Station 131, Station 132 at 99th Avenue and Sun City Boulevard was renovated and refurnished in 2003,

using around \$800,000 of the capital Projects Fund. Since then, the fund has been built back up and now it's Station 131's turn.

As of Dec. 31, 2004, the capital Project Fund's balance was about \$380,000. For 2005, an additional \$675,000 has been budgeted for capital projects, and those funds will most likely be used on the Station 131 renovations, Sebert said.

After consulting with nearly half a dozen architects, the SCFD is ready to lay out firm plans, Sebert said. Drawings may not be final until May or June, and the SCFD can't estimate costs until the drawings are complete and contractors submit bids, he said.

There's no timeline on the construction process, but it could take up to nine months to complete, he said. Plans will not call for relocation of the fire services or staff, as operations will continue amid construction. Mold will be removed and structural damage repaired in the renovations as well.

Del Webb's original design for Sun City's fire stations didn't anticipate the increase in emergency calls or necessary staff, Sebert said. Built in 1973, Station 131 accommodates six firefighters in the living quarters and is built to function for 300

emergency calls per year, according to Sebert.

The SCFD currently responds to an average of 900 emergency calls per month and employs 10 to 12 firefighters per shift.

"The quarters are really cramped and we're trying to find the best solution to address the fire service today," Sebert said.

Del Webb's design also employed residential kitchen appliances and plumbing features, rather than commercial ones. Now, when a dozen firefighters try to make three meals a day or wait in lines to use one of the two showers, it's proof that the station needs updating.

"Del Webb was building homes, not fire departments," Sebert said. "A lot of the issues we face are trying to work with residential appliances that aren't built to take this kind of use."

Minor renovations have made improvements over the years, but the upcoming remodel will be the most major, Sebert said. Changes have already been made to include bathrooms for women and more private dormitories, but the next remodel will even further improve the living quarters.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or [aboone@aztrib.com](mailto:aboone@aztrib.com).

OVER



# SCW to construct new administration building, renovate 2 stations

AMANDA MYERS  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City West Fire District soon hopes to receive a county building permit for a new \$1.4 million administration and maintenance building.

Fire Chief Rob Biscoe told the board in Tuesday's workshop meeting that the nearly 1,200-page book from the project architect that outlines details of the new building was reviewed and adjusted last week, and changes were sent back to the architect.

Next week, Biscoe said he hopes to send the plans to the county to receive the permit, which takes approximately eight weeks. During that time, subcontractors will be hired and the financial details worked out to keep the building as close as possible to the \$1.4 million price tag set by the board.

Biscoe said once the permit is obtained, the building will be completed within five months of groundbreaking.

The building is part of a \$2.68 million capital improvement plan in the works since November 2002 that includes renovations to Stations 101 and 102, a new brush truck and pumper.

The new 9,871-square-foot administration building will be built on an approximately 1-acre empty lot at the corner of Spanish Garden and Sandridge Drive, less than a mile from the current administration building on Camino del Sol and R.H. Johnson Boulevard. It will contain 13 offices, two conference rooms, a kitchen, four bathrooms, and a multitude of storage facilities, while housing offices for the fire chief and fire marshal, emergency services, life safety and disaster planning departments, human resources, computer and technology and recordkeeping departments.

The reason for the project, say board members, is a space concern. They cite the current administration building's lack of space, which is forcing employees to share offices and storage space.

Additionally, the current maintenance area consists of an outdoor section of the parking lot covered by a tent, while plans for the new administrative building show an attached,

enclosed service bay built to hold the department's largest trucks for routine maintenance and repair.

The original administrative building will be converted into a new fitness center for Station 101.

Additional renovations planned for Station 101 and 102 were originally planned to occur after the completion of the administration building, but Biscoe said Tuesday that those plans may now be pushed up due to the worsening condition of Station 102's roof.

"It has some really bad roof leaks," said Biscoe. "It's just in need of a facelift."

In addition, both stations no longer accommodate the space needs of the firefighters, and sleeping quarters need to be divided into male and female quarters due to the increasing number of female firefighters and paramedics.

Meanwhile, Station 101 will be gutted for expansion and upgrades, Biscoe said. Station 101 is the oldest station in the district, with about 24 years of service.

The estimated cost to renovate both stations, Biscoe said, will be between \$300,000 to \$500,000 and will take about six months. If it's decided that both stations need to be renovated simultaneously, firefighters will most likely live in temporary quarters behind the station, said Biscoe.

With all of the plans in the works, board member David Wilson raised concerns in Tuesday's meeting about what he felt was a lack of public knowledge about the project. He suggested formation of a capital improvement committee of citizens.

However, Biscoe said the board members themselves were meant to be the liaisons with the community. The question was, he said, how to best get the word out.

Board member Sol Robinson voiced frustration over the lack of community involvement in the board's meetings.

"Just look at how many people from the community are here," he said, pointing to the empty chairs. No residents attended Tuesday's open workshop meeting.

*Amanda Myers may be reached at 876-2513 or amyers@aztrib.com.*



# Task force maps fire upgrades

**MITCHELL VANTREASE**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Installation of an estimated 200 fire hydrants and thousands of feet of pipe to upgrade fire protection in areas of Sun City and Youngtown may have to take place over a four-year span and cost more than \$3 million, consultants with Arizona-American Water Co. said Tuesday.

Plus, in order to pay for the improvement, Beisemeyer said the company will suggest

about a 6.2 percent increase in the water bill for Youngtown and Sun City residents.

"We really wanted to have a steady investment of funds and tried to minimize tearing up everything in the area all at once," said Brian Beisemeyer, general manager for Arizona-American.

Between 15 and 20 people formed the fire flow task force in October to develop a plan to improve hydrant coverage and the replacement of old pipes. Representatives from

Arizona-American, the Sun City Fire District, Surprise Fire Department and the Recreation Centers of Sun City are a part of the panel.

Over the summer, the Arizona Corporation Commission ordered Arizona-American to start the task force. By April, the water company will present the commission some solutions to improve the water system.

Within the first year, the water company will make some improvements to pipes

in Youngtown's residential and commercial areas. It also plans to install new hydrants in the town and Sun City.

The second year would include fixing the water flow in Paradise RV Park in Peoria, which is at the edge of the Sun City area. Consultants said the third and fourth year would be reserved for installation of 6-inch pipes in the area.

Beisemeyer said he is pleased with the schedule of improvements suggested by

the task force. A similar group in Paradise Valley, which had the same problems as Sun City and Youngtown, came up with a successful six-year plan, he said.

Each member of the task force will go back to their respective governing bodies for opinions on the proposal. A decision on whether to move forward on the project will come at next month's task force meeting.

**See HYDRANTS, A5**

## From A1

Youngtown Town Manager Mark Fooks said he's pleased that his community will be at the top of Arizona-American's list.

Fooks said he will take the information to Common Council for approval.

"I'm very glad at the results," he said. "I would have liked for it to happen in a shorter time, but you just can't tear a lot of stuff up at once."

Sun City Fire Chief Jim Sebert also agreed with the recommendations.

"We wish there was a magic wand where it could happen over night," he said. "I believe that we're all excited to see the time and commitment put into this."

Ray Dare, former president of the Sun City Taxpayers

Association, said he has been pleased that the task force and the water company can work together.

"We've found out the critical priorities which are in Youngtown and there are a lot of hydrants that should exist in our areas," he said.

Arizona Corporation Commissioner Bill Mundell, who attended the task force meeting, said he is excited about the results so far and hopes to hear a full report soon.

"I hope that this task force is a model for other cities who have problems like this," he said.

Arizona-American acquired the water and wastewater systems owned by Citizens Water Resources in January 2002.

*Mitchell Vantrease can be reached at 876-2526 or mvantrease@aztrib.com.*



DAILY NEWS-SUN

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 22, 2004

# SC Fire helps seniors remain S.A.F.E.

**ANNIE BOON**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Sun City is in safe hands, and fire departments nationwide may soon follow Sun City's lead in senior fire education.

The Sun City Fire Department's Safe and Fire Educated Citizen's Academy program originated in the community two years ago. Public relations officer and program coordinator Stacy Bodenstedt recognized a need for a learning environment in which residents could learn about fire safety, gain a better understanding of how the fire department operates and then have participants share what they learned with others.

After speaking at two national fire safety and

education conferences this year, Bodenstedt said 268 fire departments across the country were inspired to possibly adopt the S.A.F.E program in their cities. As the population ages, she said, the U.S. Fire Administration and FEMA are putting an emphasis on protecting the most at-risk population — seniors.

The 9-week S.A.F.E. academy at Fire Station 131 in Sun City aims to showcase services and programs offered by the fire department, giving its students hands-on experience they can put to use as volunteers after graduation.

Instruction is provided in fire and life safety programs, Sun City fire department history, how the fire department operates and trains, how firefighters do their jobs, emergency vehicles, fire

extinguishment and how to stay safe when an emergency occurs, Bodenstedt said.

On Dec. 16, the graduating class of the fall semester of S.A.F.E. was honored at the Sun Valley Lodge. Graduates were presented with certificates of achievement and thanked by fire department administration. Many of the graduates will go on to serve as SCFD volunteers, a group that put in 309.5 hours of service in November alone.

"This is one of the most educational and informational sessions I have ever attended," S.A.F.E. graduate Carol Wylie wrote in her evaluation of the course. "This academy has given me a lot of comfort in knowing the knowledge and skill that is available to us in the Sun City area."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the S.A.F.E. Citizens Academy take instruction from Sun City Fire Department Chief Ron Gilbert on fire hose operations during a recent S.A.F.E. Academy class.

The spring semester of S.A.F.E. is filled to capacity with 20 students and a waiting list. Enroll now for the following semester, which

begins in September.

For information about participating in the S.A.F.E. program, call Stacy Bodenstedt at 974-2321, Ext. 19.



# Powell wins, becomes 1st woman on fire board

By Brent Whiting  
The Arizona Republic

Gloria Powell, a nurse and paramedic coordinator, was the top vote-getter in the race for three seats on the Sun City Fire District board.

Powell, 54, also is the first woman elected to the board since the district was formed in 1966.

"I feel great," Powell said after the Maricopa County officials released the results of Tuesday's fire board election.

Two incumbents, Irvin Mitchell, 70, and James Schmidt, 69, held back a challenge from other candidates and retained their seats on the five-member board.

Jim Sebert, the Sun City fire chief, said Powell's expertise in emergency medical services will be put to excellent use on the board.

"Her election is a plus for the community," Sebert said.

In Sun City West, two outsiders, Dusty Rhodes, 76, and David Wilson, 61, won two of the three fire board seats that were up for grabs.

Charles Frankel, 82, an incumbent, placed third and kept his seat. He outpolled two other hopefuls, Edward Cavello, 61, and F. Lee Paul, 90, an incumbent.

Rhodes, the front-runner, obtained 7,773 votes. He said that by winning, he will step down from a seat on the Property Owners and Residents Association board so he can devote his full efforts to the fire district.

Wilson finished second, with 6,404 votes, and Frankel placed third, with 5,711. Cavello and Paul, the losing candidates, received 5,561 and 4,889, respectively.

In Sun City, Powell, a worker at Boswell Memorial Hospital, finished first among nine candidates with 10,067 votes.

All of the results are unofficial.

Mitchell and Schmidt, two incumbents, held their seats with 7,375 and 7,218 votes, respectively.

All three winners won the backing of Sun Cities Fire Fighters, an endorsement that proved crucial, according to some of the losing candidates.

"The union made a difference," said Robert Briscoe, 71, one of three challengers who ran as a slate, vowing tighter



Gloria Powell



Irvin Mitchell



James Schmidt

budget controls if elected.

Jerry Swintek, 70, who joined with Thomas Whiston, 69, as other members of the slate, agreed. He said the firefighters worked the phones and handed out election materials at the polls, making the election of Powell, Mitchell and Schmidt a certainty.

"There was no way we could compete against that," he said.

Briscoe finished fourth, with 4,559 votes, while Swintek and Whiston received 3,539

and 2,271, respectively.

Briscoe said it was sink or swim, meaning that he and the other two members of the slate wanted to be elected collectively or not at all.

"People paid a lot of attention to what we were saying about taxes, so this is not the end of the world," Briscoe said.

The other unsuccessful challengers were John "Jack" Leonard, 64, with 4,299 votes; Bryan Hackbarth, 42, the Youngtown mayor, with 3,319; and Gerald Gonyer, 88, a current fire board member, 2,201.

Reach the reporter at  
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# SC Fire District OKs cost work

## Fire station 131 may be renovated

**By Cecilia Chan**  
Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire District Board gave the green light for a builder to do cost estimates for remodeling the aging fire house on north 99th Avenue.

The board voted 5-0 in an Aug. 10 special meeting to have FCI Constructors Inc. do the job. The district already has conceptual drawings of proposed work to Station No. 131.

"We are three months from an election," said board treasurer Tom Stroozas. "I'm a little opposed to, with the magnitude of the money we are talking about, go about with this until the new board is put in. I don't want to burden anyone else with what I did."

Board members Irv Mitchell, James Schmidt and Gerald Gonyer's seats are up for re-election Nov. 2.

"One thing we may want to take into consideration whether it's this board or a different

board make-up, someone has to come up with the numbers," Assistant Fire Chief Steve Morrow said.

He said a cost estimate will enable the board to decide if it will continue with the project or modify it. The money to pay for the project would come from the district's capital projects fund.

If the district pursues the project, it would take 210 days to complete from groundbreaking.

The fire house was built in 1972 and needs upgrading. The two other fire stations in the district already underwent renovations.

"We spent \$250,000 to remodel Station 3 in 1991 and \$800,000 for Station 2 in 2003," Fire Chief James Sebert said.

*Post your comments on this issue at [newsblog.info/0302](http://newsblog.info/0302)*

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# Sun City Fire given grant for education

**ANNIE KARSTENS**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Sun City Fire District was awarded an \$18,500 grant to support its community education programs, like the S.A.F.E. Citizen's Fire Academy.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency notified the fire department last week that the Assistance to Firefighters Grant-Fire Prevention Safety Grant had been approved. The funds were requested to support the Safe and Fire Educated academy, and other educational programs geared toward the high-risk population of Sun City.

Approximately 175 grants were given to fire departments throughout the United States in the fiscal year 2004 grant program. The grants will ultimately total approximately 8,000 and are worth nearly \$750 million in direct assistance to

firefighters, according to fire officials.

"President George Bush and I strongly support the critical mission of our nation's firefighters. Through these funds, we will ensure that our nation's emergency responders have the equipment and training they need to respond to all hazards," said Tom Ridge, secretary for the Department of Homeland Security.

"The Assistance to Firefighters grants represent a major effort by the federal government to ensure the nation's firefighters continue to have the basic capabilities they require to do their jobs, improve safety and save lives," said David Paulison, administrator of the Department of Homeland Security's United States Fire Administration.

This, the ninth round of grants, provides \$15,337,408 to help local departments purchase firefighting equipment, fund firefighter health

and safety programs, enhance emergency medical services, and conduct fire education and prevention programs, officials said.

With this funding, the SCFD can research and target its highest risk areas in order to educate those residents about fire and fall prevention, said Stacey Bodenstedt, spokeswoman for the district. Seventy-five percent of the house fires that occur in Sun City are fatal and many can be prevented, she said.

"It's not the fire or flame that kills, which is why it's so important that you have a well-planned fire escape plan and you have properly working fire safety equipment, including a battery operated smoke detector and an ABC-rated fire extinguisher," Bodenstedt said.

If any resident needs fire safety equipment or wants to have their existing equipment inspected, it's often certified S.A.F.E. volunteers

who will come to their home upon request.

Volunteers are always eager to educate the public about fire safety and addressing special needs in the event of an emergency, Bodenstedt said.

The district's Community Relations Department is enrolling participants for the S.A.F.E. Citizen Fire Academy, which will kick off its third semester Oct. 15.

The academy, which meets at Fire Station 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave., aims to showcase services and programs offered by the fire department, giving its students hands-on experience they can put to use as volunteers after graduation.

Instruction is provided in fire and life safety programs, Sun City Fire history, how the fire district operates and trains, how firefighters do their jobs, emergency vehicles, extinguishing fires and how to stay

safe when an emergency occurs, Bodenstedt said.

Through programs like the S.A.F.E. academy, the SCFD community relations department has rounded up valuable volunteers, making it possible to reach out to thousands of residents by visiting their homes, offering seminars and demonstrations of safety procedures, CPR training and first aid courses, Bodenstedt said.

Residents of Sun City, Youngtown and Citrus Point are invited, regardless of age or condition.

S.A.F.E. is free to all participants. There are only 20 spots available, so if you'd like to participate, contact the SCFD before Sept. 3.

For information on the S.A.F.E. Citizen's Academy or other questions, call the Sun City Fire District Community Relations Department at 974-2321 Ext. 19 or at [bodenstedt@suncityfire.com](mailto:bodenstedt@suncityfire.com).



# Fire district adopts budget

## District ends current fiscal year on high note

By Cecilia Chan

Independent Newspapers

The Sun City Fire District will end the fiscal year June 30 with extra money in the pot, which will pay for equipment and proposed upgrades to a station.

The leftover \$189,900 was transferred to the \$8.1 million budget for 2004-05, which was adopted unanimously June 22 by the Sun City Fire District Board.

"There's definite excess rev-

enue this year," Fire Chief James Sebert said at the board meeting. "The tax revenue was on track but the other for-fee services definitely brought in additional revenue."

The board approved spending \$57,568 of the excess revenue for computer equipment and software. The remainder of the funds will help pay for a fire truck and planned remodeling of the aging fire station on

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## Budget

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North 99th Avenue. The district oversees three fire houses.

"We are coming to the crunch of the end of the fiscal year," board President Irv Mitchell said. "Under the statutes, if we have money left over the county confiscates the money. They keep it and don't allow us to use it for anything else. So if we transfer it to capital projects for the considered remodel of the station and a truck on order, the money can continue to be used by the citizens of Sun City for Sun City purposes."

The budget for the coming fiscal year on July 1 is higher than the 2003-04 budget, which was

\$7.3 million. The increase is due to the higher cost for insurance, maintenance and wages.

Chief Sebert said increases for health and property insurance premiums came in lower than projected for 2004-05.

The anticipated 15 percent to 20 percent increase to \$60,000 for liability and property insurance premiums actually came in at a 13 percent increase to \$57,540, he said. And, the district was able to negotiate with health insurance providers to lower the 14 percent increase to 12 percent, he said.

"We are in pretty darn good shape," board member Tom Stroozas said after giving an accounting of the district's finances to date. "As long as the money keeps coming in from the county we will be in great shape."



# SC, SCW raising fire dept. budgets

## Fuel, insurance drive increases

By Brent Whiting  
The Arizona Republic

Taxpayers in the Sun Cities will have to pump out more money to send firetrucks rolling down the street.

The fire boards in Sun City and Sun City West have adopted proposed budgets totaling nearly \$15.9 million.

That's a combined increase of more than \$1 million from current operating budgets.

Officials in both communities said the hikes are primarily due to higher fuel and medical-insurance costs, as well as cost-of-living increases for fire district employees.

Fire board members said the pay increases are needed for employee retention. Otherwise, firefighters would jump to other Valley agencies.

This means property owners in the Sun Cities, as well as Youngtown, will pay more for fire protection during the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Final tax figures have yet to be calculated, but officials offer these estimates on how the proposed budget increases may affect homeowners:

■ In Sun City, the owner of a home valued at \$100,000 now pays \$241 a year. This will increase by \$24 to \$265 under the proposed budget.

■ In Sun City West, the owner of a \$100,000 home now pays \$225 a year. This will increase by \$8 to \$233.

The five-member Sun City fire board will vote on a final budget June 22. In Sun City West, the vote will be June 21.

Under Arizona law, a fire district is a quasi-municipal

taxing authority that uses its levies to support the services of a fire department.

In Sun City, the fire district board on May 18 adopted a proposed budget of \$8,088,425, an increase of \$743,026 from the current budget, or 10.11 percent.

Youngtown residents are part of this fire district.

In Sun City West, a proposed budget of \$7,807,490 was adopted May 20, an increase of \$270,770, or 3.59 percent.

The Fire District of Sun

City West serves fewer people and homes than the Sun City Fire Department, but provides its own ambulance service.

Robert Biscoe, the Sun City West fire chief, said this means the operating budgets between the two fire districts are not entirely comparable.

In Sun City and Youngtown, ambulance services are provided under a contract with Southwest Ambulance.

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# S.A.F.E.TY FIRST

## Citizens Academy teaches fire preparedness

**ANNIE KARSTENS**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

If Sun City residents ever wanted to be part of a team that could help save a life, now is their chance.

The Sun City Fire Department's Community Relations Department is enrolling participants for the S.A.F.E. Citizen Fire Academy. This is the second year of S.A.F.E. "Safe and Fire Educated," which has grown from 11 participants to 31 enrolled so far this year.

The 10-week academy, which takes place at Fire Station 131, 17017 N. 99th Ave., aims to showcase services and programs offered by the fire department, giving its students hands-on experience they can put to use as volunteers after graduation. Instruction is provided in fire and life safety programs, Sun City fire department history, how the fire department operates and trains, how firefighters do their jobs, emergency vehicles, fire extinguishment and how to stay safe when an emergency occurs, according to coordinator Stacy Bodenstedt, SCFD fire community relations specialist.

Whether in a wheelchair or with a walker, citizens of Sun City, Youngtown and Citrus Point are invited to

enroll, regardless of age.

Sun City resident Emma Kochevar, 76, is a graduate of last year's academy and said it was a wonderful experience.

"We all learned so much, and I'm always willing to learn more," she said.

Kochevar learned how to operate and inspect fire extinguishers, install security lock-boxes, check fire alarms and electrical outlets for safety and perform home inspections for any fire or health hazards.

She read an advertisement for the program last year and decided that she couldn't pass up the chance to work alongside some of the Valley's best.

"I am very grateful for our instructors," Kochevar said, "It made us all much more respectful of our fire department."

Also a volunteer dispatcher for the Sun City Posse, Kochevar is confident that she is a well-equipped asset to the community.

She hopes other residents will follow her lead and participate in this year's academy.

"I push it one-hundred percent," she said, "I'm glad I didn't miss it."

S.A.F.E is funded through the Fire Board for Public Education Programs

and is free to all participants.

Through programs like the academy, the Community Relations Department of SCFD has rounded up valuable volunteers, making it possible to reach out to 18,000 residents by visiting their homes, offering seminars and demonstrations of safety procedures, CPR training and first aid courses, Bodenstedt said, adding that the department was established only two years ago.

"With the integration of this year's graduates, we will be able to quadruple our programs," Bodenstedt said.

The academy will run two weeks longer this year and higher enrollment numbers are encouraging, with more expected to sign up.

"This program is a phenomenal way to better understand who Sun City Fire is, the service it provides, and why the fire department needs to do what we do," Bodenstedt said. "This is an opportunity to showcase everything we are able to do to save lives on a daily basis."

For more information on enrolling in the S.A.F.E Citizens Fire Academy, please call 974-2321, Ext.19. The registration deadline is Feb. 6.

OVER





MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Emma Kochevar, 76, of Sun City attended the fire department's S.A.F.E. Citizen Training Academy last year and says she learned a lot. She also is a member of the Sun City Posse.