

Year 2013 Budget Statement

Function:

Although the East Side Fire Protection District No. 5 only has the legislated responsibility of providing fire suppression services to the citizens of its fire protection district, East Side strives to provide many more services to the public, including:

- Protection of life and property from the perils of fire and other emergencies,
- Execution of the latest methods of effective rescue techniques as required to protect life,
- Administration of pre-hospital medical care to the sick and injured,
- Education of the public in effective fire prevention means,
- Inspection of commercial facilities to assure compliance with the latest edition of the Life Safety Code,
- Provision of facilities suitable for use by civic associations and other groups, and
- Provision of training facilities suitable for use by the fire service as well as other public safety agencies.

The primary fire station on Old Hammond Hwy. was completed in September, 1995 and includes facilities adequate for civic association meetings and well as normal departmental training. In excess of 500 non-fire department personnel use these facilities every month. The newest station on South Harrell's Ferry Rd. was first occupied in December, 2007.

The training structure on Old Hammond Hwy. was completed in January, 1999 and allows live fire training as well as high angle rescue, confined space rescue and other public safety oriented training. The East Side Fire Protection District as well as several other local fire departments, the Baton Rouge Police Department, the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office and the Louisiana State Police utilize the structure and training grounds regularly.

Engine 920 was placed into service in March, 1999 and moved to reserve status in 2011. The custom Smeal engine is based on the six man Spartan Gladiator chassis with a 430 hp Detroit Diesel engine and has a 1500 gpm single stage pump as well as a 20 kw hydraulic generator, class A foam injection, a telescoping light tower with 9 kw of lights, a pre-piped Hurst "Jaws of Life" power unit and a complete set of extrication tools.

Engine 930 was placed into service in early 2002 and moved to "third-out" in 2010. The custom Ferrara engine is based on an HME custom chassis and includes a 330 hp Cummins engine, 1500 gpm single stage Hale pump, 3" deck gun, electronic governor, 1000 gallon polypropylene tank, and a Class A foam system.

Tower 918 was received in October, 2006 at a cost slightly in excess of \$700,000.00. This aerial apparatus was mandated by the Property Insurance Association of Louisiana as a requirement to maintain our Fire Protection Classification 2 status. It is based on the Spartan LFD six-man cab and is powered by a 515 hp Detroit Series 60 turbo-charged engine. This tower extends to 104 ft above grade and the apparatus weighs nearly 79,000 lbs. It is equipped with a Hale 2000 gpm single-stage pump, a Harrison 20 kW hydraulic generator and includes a 6000 psi SCBA fill station as well as an assortment of firefighting and rescue equipment. When purchased it was only the second tower in service within East Baton Rouge Parish and was the tallest.

Engines 913 & 923 were purchased in 2009 to replace Engines 910 & 940 (26 and 29 years old, respectively) and were placed into service in 2010 & 2011. Both engines were modeled on the Smeal engine purchased in 1999 and include a hydraulic generator, elevating light tower and extensive extrication equipment.

Significant Capital Payments:

The following significant bonds & leases have been paid off:

- The training tower was paid off in 2004
- Engine 920 was paid off in 2005
- Engine 930 was paid off in 2006
- Station 90 was paid off in 2008

The following significant bonds & leases will be paid off:

- Station 92 in 2016
- Ladder 918 in 2016
- Engine 913 in 2017
- Engine 923 in 2019

Goals & Objectives:

East Side has an ISO (Insurance Services Organization) Public Protection Classification rating of 2 and is the only internationally accredited fire department in Louisiana.

Major goals and objectives for the next two years include:

- Maintaining the existing ISO classification (our last rating was in 2012 & we maintained our Class 2 rating),
- Improving the educational and training level of all members,

- Improving the specialized training of the technical and confined space and Dive Rescue / Recovery team members,
- Improving the public education program beyond simple fire prevention in the elementary schools to include adult training of fire prevention, first aid and CPR,
- Improved public recognition by use of our facilities,
- Continuation of the structured repair and maintenance program to ensure a longer useful life and more reliable operation of departmental equipment and apparatus,
- Continuation of commercial building inspection services with expansion to include the concurrent inspections of schools, child care facilities and medical facilities with the State Fire Marshal,
- Continuation of the new fire training structure as a major training focal point for this department as well as other parish fire departments where permitted by DEQ,
- Continued implementation of improved mapping software (GIS),
- Increased use of the capabilities of FireHouse software program.
- Maintaining the existing CFAI accreditation and participation in the peer review process with other fire departments nation-wide.

Performance Indicators:

East Side responded to 1,240 calls for emergency aid in 2003, 1,323 calls in 2004, 1,430 calls in 2005, 1,437 calls in 2006, 1,449 calls in 2007, 1,802 calls in 2008 and 1,512 calls in 2009, 1,551 calls in 2010 and 1,614 calls in 2011. It is anticipated the total number of calls will remain relatively stable in 2012 & 2013.

Budget Highlights:

The income from service fees grew dramatically in 2001 as we continued to handle our own billing and focused on pursuing those accounts which were in arrears, including hiring counsel to pursue those accounts. The lien process has continued and we are regularly receiving lien payoffs, which include our own collection fees as well as lien cancellation fees. An aggressive collection policy remains in force. As certain liened properties now have a significant balance due, we have begun more aggressive collection techniques. We have consistently collected more than 100% of the annual service fee dollars and we typically collect from in excess of 90% of the properties.

The voters of the fire district overwhelmingly approved a new 7 ½ mill property tax on September 18, 2004 dedicated to the staffing of the fire district. That money was first received in January 2006. With those funds we were able to double our off-hours staffing and increase our Monday through Friday daytime staffing by a third.

The increase in labor costs for 2009 reflected the hiring of new full-time firefighters who were protected employees under the state civil service laws. The increase in the labor budget for 2013 reflects the state-mandated annual labor increases. Although we have had personnel changes, we remain at thirteen (13) permanent, full-time employees.

Property tax collections are anticipated to increase approximately 2% over the 2012 budget, due to very little new growth in the district in 2012. Service fee collections are anticipated to remain stable. In 2010 the fire district began utilizing the EBR Parish Assessor & Sheriff's Office to collect the service fees. Although this was be slightly revenue-negative it provides a substantial relief to the day crew who before were required to answer hundreds of calls every year. It also allowed the fire district to exit the "tax-collecting game" which had been a labor and political relations nightmare for years.

The fire district issued \$2,000,000 in excess revenue bonds and entered into a lease-purchase agreement valued at approximately \$700,000 in late 2006. These substantial new debts are required to meet the ISO requirements for a new fire station and a new aerial apparatus. These new obligations are possible because the fire district has retired approximately \$250,000 in annual payments over the previous three years. Additionally, the \$450,000 in excess revenue bonds issued in late 2003 were retired in 2008. The fire district entered into two other lease-purchase contracts in 2010 in order to purchase the two new fire engines. Those payments total \$702,748 and \$193,000. The second engine (E-923) was substantially paid for with existing funds.

Our existing 5 and 10 mill property taxes, which were set to expire in 2007 and 2008 respectively, were renewed in mid 2007. Our service fees were renewed in 2011 with an 81% approval rating.

Budgetary Amendments:

The Fire Chief is empowered to expend \$10,000 for any and all purposes he deems necessary without prior Board approval and \$15,000 for recurring expenses. In an emergency and if the Fire Commissioners are not available for consultation, the Fire Chief may expend more than \$15,000, notifying the Board of Commissioners of the circumstances immediately following such expenditure. The Fire Chief may make budgetary amendments as necessary without prior Board approval.

Approved by the Board of Commissioners:



Oscar LeJeune, President
October 15, 2012