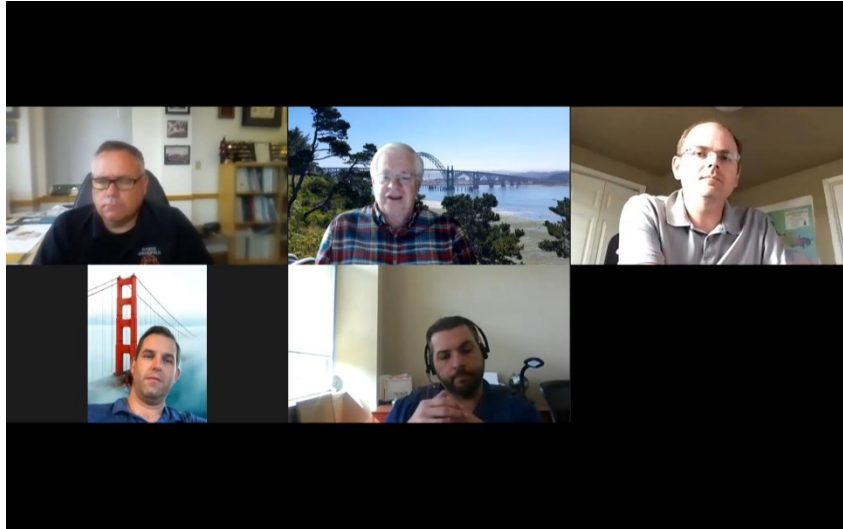


The Springfield City Council has placed renewal of the existing Fire Levy on the November 3 ballot. On September 24, Springfield Ward 1 Councilor Sean VanGordon, Interim Eugene-Springfield Fire Chief Chris Heppel, and Local 855 IAFF President Mike Caven providing a briefing to City Club members on the levy.



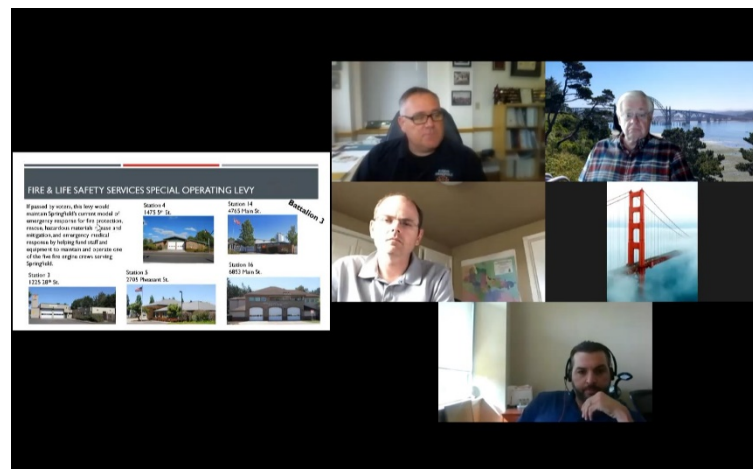
The proposed levy would impose a property tax of \$0.38/\$1,000 assessed valuation on properties within the City, beginning July 1, 2021. It replaces a levy which now imposes a tax at the rate of \$0.36/\$1,000 and is the successor to a series of levies that first began in 2002. The current levy expires in June of 2021. The average assessed valuation of homes in Springfield is \$164,000, which

would result in an annual tax of \$62.32. (Councilor VanGordon pointed out that the typical assessed value is about one-third of the actual market value of homes.)

Mr. Caven said that the need for the levy was based on an increase in demands for service by over 900 percent in the past decade, with no significant increase in resources. Chief Heppel added that neither department had expanded its fleet significantly in over 20 years. When questioned about the cause of the additional demands for service, Mr. Caven said that it was mostly in the area of emergency medical services, not fire suppression. He pointed to growth in population, as well as an aging population which has significantly more complicated medical issues. The failure of the health system to provide adequate service for all members of the community is also a concern, since it means that many people have limited access to health care, making emergency services their last and only resort.

Much of the questioning from the audience revolved around the cost of providing emergency medical services. Typically, the response to an emergency medical call involves one ambulance and one engine.

Mr. Caven said that in some cases of cardiac arrest and motor vehicle accidents, two fire trucks (one engine and a ladder truck) will respond. He said that response was called for because of the complexity of managing individuals in cardiac arrest and the need, at times, to use complex extraction equipment. He said that the additional equipment and personnel did not result in additional cost, because the personnel are already in paid status.



In fact, he said, the operational merger of the two agencies, which began several years ago, actually resulted in savings because when additional calls for service arose, it was much less likely that a department would need to recall additional firefighters on overtime. He said that the increased level of response had resulted in a survival rate for cardiac events increasing from the low teens to over 50 percent.

Councilor VanGordon said that for several years the City had been attempting to move off a serial levy to incorporate more fire costs into the General Fund budget. He said that the first attempt was thwarted by the recession of 2008, and that the most recent study had been undermined by need to respond to the pandemic. The goal, he added, remains an interest of the Council. He said the Council is not presently looking at any attempt to move the fire service to an independent district, although Mr. Caven said that, from a labor perspective, that could be seen as a more efficient approach.