FACTUAL SUMMARY

July 12, 2024

Proposed Property Tax Increase

November 5, 2024, Coordinated Mail Ballot Election

**FIRE DISTRICT:** The Hartsel Fire Protection District ***("Fire District")*** is a combination fire department with both paid and volunteer firefighters. The Fire District protects 753 square miles of land. Fire District provides fire suppression structural and wildland, fire prevention and public education, rescue, extrication, hazardous materials, and emergency medical services **("Emergency Services")** to the residents, properties, and businesses within its jurisdiction. During the summer months, the Fire District sees a population increase from approximately 2,500 to 25,000 individuals during peak visitor weekends due to visitors and second-home residents.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE: The Fire District set its mills at the original rate in 1994 and never asked the voters for an increase; however, since then, the Fire District has experienced extraordinary growth in the demand for Emergency Services. In 2023, the Fire District’s 2 paid staff and volunteer firefighters have responded to **a 100% increase in calls for Emergency Services since 2015**. Additionally, the year-round risk of wildfire and other hazards requires the Fire District and its personnel to maintain a constant state of response readiness. These factors, combined with inflation of both wages and materials, have caused **an increase of over 100% in the Fire District's operational expenses and personnel costs** over the same period.

At the November 5, 2024, coordinated election, ballot issue 6A, the Fire District will ask its citizens to approve a phased-in property tax increase of 2.0 mills being added each year in levy years 2024 (for collection in 2025), 2025 (for collection in 2026), 2026 (for collection in 2027), and 2027 (for collection in 2028) for a total of 8 mills.

**ARGUMENTS FOR** THE **PROPOSAL:** Increasing the Fire District's property tax revenues will enable the Fire District to meet the community's increasing demands for Emergency Services. In order to continue the Fire District's level of Emergency Services and response times, the Fire District must have an adequate number of highly trained paid personnel, they must use safe and well-maintained fire trucks and equipment and must be prepared for all manner of fire, hazmat, and emergency medical response. However, the Fire District's revenue shortfall is preventing the Fire District from hiring highly qualified paid firefighters. In addition, will cause the Fire District to delay the replacement of equipment and the construction of a new fire station.

If successful, the Fire District will utilize the increased property tax revenues to support its administration, operations, and personnel needs, including striving to fulfill the following priorities:

* Increase the number of personnel to permit the 24/7 full-time staffing of the fire district.
* Replace aging fire trucks and purchase additional fire trucks as needed to meet community demand for Emergency Services;
* Construction of new fire stations
* Enable Hartsel Fire to positively impact the owner’s ability to procure and maintain insurance coverage.
* Maintain and grow a Capital Reserve Fund to provide for future needs.

**How much will this cost the average taxpayer:**

As an example; on a $400,000 valued residential property, the first year will cost an additional $4.50 a month.

**ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPOSAL:** If successful, the proposal **will** increase the amount of property taxes the Fire District collects. For voters who support less and smaller government, the Fire District's increase in tax revenues may be contrary to this objective.