



NEWS



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County fire tax topic of MAC meeting

Staff Writer, Daily Press

Posted: August 10, 2018. 9:06 p.m.

Next week's meeting of the Lucerne Valley/Johnson Valley Municipal Advisory Council will feature an extended discussion of the proposed San Bernardino County fire tax.

The MAC meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 16, at the Lucerne Valley Community Center, 33187 Highway 247 East, Lucerne Valley.

San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig and Deputy Chief John Chamberlin will be on hand to explain this FP-5 Service Area assessment of all parcels in unincorporated areas of the county. The cost would be \$157.26 per year and can increase by 3 percent annually.

The proposed tax can be defeated if more than 50 percent of affected property owners protest when notices are mailed out. If at least 25 percent of affected property owners protest, the tax will have to be placed on the ballot.

There will be at least 15 minutes set aside for questions from the MAC board and at least 30 minutes set aside for questions from residents. The meeting also will feature the swearing in of new MAC member Harriet Brashear.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20180810/county-fire-tax-topic-of-mac-meeting>

Arson suspected as cause of Hook Park, Brentwood blazes

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: August 10, 2018, 7:23 a.m.

VICTORVILLE — Officials are continuing to investigate a series of fires at Hook Park and the Brentwood area suspected to have been caused by arson late Wednesday night and early Thursday morning.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department officials said no suspects have been apprehended in connection to the incidents, which began when firefighters responded to reports of a blaze at Hook Park just after 10 p.m. Wednesday.

San Bernardino County Fire Department Cpt. Jeff Allen said the first arriving firefighters found a shed engulfed in flames.

"Firefighters were successful in containing the fire to a small storage building," Allen said. "The fire was knocked down in approximately 10 minutes."

At 12:12 a.m. Thursday, fire crews responded to calls reporting fires in the Brentwood area.

"Callers reported numerous spots burning, with structures threatened, off Gopher Canyon and Arabian Run," Allen said. "Additional callers also reported another fire near Amethyst Road and Hook Boulevard."

With homes potentially threatened, fire crews immediately took action, requesting additional resources to douse the flames. They were able to keep the flames from spreading to nearby homes, Allen said. No injuries were reported.

Fire investigators determined that the cause of both fires was arson, according to Victorville Sheriff's station spokeswoman Mara Rodriguez. No suspect information was provided and no suspect was in custody as of Thursday evening.

The investigation is ongoing, and anyone with information is urged to contact the Victorville Sheriff's Station at 760-241-2911. Persons wishing to remain anonymous can contact the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or online at www.wetip.com.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180810/arson-suspected-as-cause-of-hook-park-brentwood-blazes>

Firefighters jump on multiple spot fires set along walking path in Victorville

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: August 9, 2018



San Bernardino County Firefighters knockdown multiple spot brush fires in Victorville. (Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Firefighters with **San Bernardino County Fire** jumped on multiple spot fires burning close to homes in the community of Brentwood and quickly gained the upper hand.

At about 12:13 am, on Thursday, August 9, 2018, 911 dispatch received multiple reports from callers reporting small fires throughout the neighborhood near the 14000 block of Clydesdale Run in Victorville.

Responding firefighters located multiple spot fires burning along a walking path between Arabian Run Lane and Shire Circle along Showhorse Lane.

Due to the nature of the reports, firefighters sent a full first alarm response. "One of those reports turned into a possible structure fire on Gopher Canyon Road so we added additional resources to the response," stated County Fire Spokesman Eric Sherwin.

The reports ended up being another brush fire that caught several large trees on fire coming dangerously close to a home and the structure was not actually involved.

Homeowner Hector Ramirez said he and his family were asleep when they were woken up by strangers warning them about the trees burning next to his home. “Thanks to the people who drove by and woke us up so we could get our family out of the house. I ran to my backyard and used the water hose to try to slow down the fire,” stated Ramirez.

“Thankfully the firefighters showed up right on time. What a scary thing to wake ho too. I hope they catch the idiot or idiots that did this,” stated Ramirez.

Sherwin told Victor Valley News, a total of four separate spot fires were located, the largest was 50×200 feet and all fires were out just before 1:00 am.

According to Sherwin, witnesses reported juveniles possibly running through the area before the fires were set. “The fires are suspicious in nature and the investigation continues.”

Anybody with information is asked to contact the Office of the Fire Marshall and callers can also remain anonymous by calling 1-800-47 ARSON.

Sherwin reminds the public of the County Fire campaign Vision for Safety and if you see something, say something.

<https://www.vvng.com/firefighters-jump-on-multiple-spot-fires-set-along-walking-path-in-victorville/>

County fire faces financial Hobson’s choice

Kurt Schauppner The Desert Trail

Posted: August 9, 2018, 9:51 a.m.



Residents gather at the Wonder Valley Community Center to hear more about a proposal that could raise their fire assessment fees to \$157.26 a year per parcel.

WONDER VALLEY — After burning through most of a \$43 million reserve fund in four years, **county fire** officials have found themselves faced with a financial Hobson’s choice, raise revenue by increasing fire assessments or cut costs by closing stations.

This has left property owners in Wonder Valley with a similarly difficult set of alternatives, see their annual fire protection assessment rise from \$35 to \$157.26 or lose the fire protection services, which currently consist of a fire crew stationed in Twentynine Palms, they still have.

At stake is a proposed expansion of Service Zone FP-5, which would take Wonder Valley out of Service Zone FP-4 and create a uniform annual \$157.26 per parcel assessment to pay for county fire services.

Fire Chief Mark Hartwig and several other county fire officials faced a room full of unhappy Wonder Valley residents at a community meeting at the Wonder Valley Community Center on Wednesday, Aug. 8.

Hartwig wanted to discuss the need for more county fire revenue to close a large and continuing budget gap which forced him to spend down his reserve or cut services for the past four years.

Though he was asked several times how this happened, Hartwig only replied that he was given the choice of spending down the reserve or cutting services.

“That is the urgency with which I come to you today,” he said, adding that he will not have enough left in reserves next year unless he sees a large increase in revenue.

“If I can’t fund services, the only other option is to cut services,” he said. “They is the urgency I come to you with today.”

He suggested that the Wonder Valley fire crew, now housed in Twentynine Palms, might be lost if the new assessment is not approved.

Many in the audience, which numbered between 50 and 60, wanted to find out if and when the Wonder Valley fire station, closed because of concerns about water quality, would reopen.

When fire officials said they did not know if they would be able to reopen the station, many in the crowd took this to mean no, the station would not reopen.

The Wonder Valley fire station closed in 2017 after some firefighters assigned to the station complained about being exposed to unsafe water there. The water was reportedly found to be contaminated by more than a dozen substances, including arsenic, Chromium 6 and fluoride levels thousands of times too high. It was evacuated, and firefighters moved to the downtown Twentynine Palms station, on Sept. 22, 2017.

Hartwig also described a process by which property owners can protest the proposed new fire assessment and possibly force the issue to a vote.

If at least 25 percent of affected property owners submit protests, the issue will go to a vote and if more than 50 percent submit protests the proposal will be killed outright.

Public notices will be mailed to parcel owners on Sept. 14. They will have until Oct. 16 to walk in protest letters or until the close of business Oct. 15 to have their protest letters received in the mail.

The county board of supervisors will hold a public hearing on the matter at 10 a.m. Oct. 16 in the San Bernardino County Government Center, in the First Flood Covington Chamber.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/the_desert_trail/news/article_6ba1debc-9bf4-11e8-b3b7-6b90d7425723.html

Smoke From Holy Fire Continues to Blanket the Victor Valley

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: August 9, 2018



(Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)

Victor Valley, Calif. (VVNG.com) — The Smoke Advisory issued on Tuesday morning due to smoke impact from the Holy Fire remains in effect until further notice.

Air quality in the Victor Valley continues to remain extremely poor and has gotten even worse as of Thursday night at about 8:00 pm.

Residents living in the communities of Phelan/Pinon Hills are reporting heavy ash falling along with a strong smell of smoke that has blanketed the area prompting 911 to receive multiple reports of an alleged fire nearby.

Firefighters with **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to the area of Snowline Drive and Sonora Road in Phelan to investigate the reports and crews were unable to locate any active fires in the area. It was determined to be residual smoke from the Holy Fire.

As of 10:00 pm, the Holy Fire has scorched 10,236 acres and is only 5% contained. The fast-moving blaze prompted Gov. Jerry Brown to declare a state of emergency for Orange and Riverside counties Thursday night. The brush fire started on Monday and has destroyed 12 structures. Forrest Gordon Clark, 51, was arrested on suspicion of felony arson in connection to starting the blaze.

According to a news release, wind modeling data shows much if not all of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District (MDAQMD) jurisdiction is likely to continue to experience similar smoky conditions Friday as we have over the last two days intermittently. Please keep in mind this is based on modeling estimates and conditions can change quickly with little warning.

“We continue to encourage children, seniors, physically active adults and those with heart and respiratory issues to significantly reduce outdoor activity or remain indoors all together to limit exposure to the smoke,” according to a release.

Unless conditions improve significantly, MDAQMD expects to keep the smoke advisory in place over the weekend and will reassess the situation on Monday morning.

You can view the Smoke Advisory as well as outdoor activity recommendations for adults and students at <http://mdaqmd.ca.gov/air-quality/health-smoke-advisories>.

Fire strikes house, cars

Kurt Schauppner, The Desert Trail

Posted: August 9, 2018 11:55 a.m.



County firefighters battle a house fire on Bailey Avenue south of El Paseo Drive Thursday morning. Aug 9

TWENTYNINE PALMS — A house and at least one car parked in front of the home, were heavily damaged by a fire that struck in the 6100 block of Bailey Avenue, south of El Paseo Drive, here Thursday morning, Aug. 9.

A neighbor, Anthony Alday, noticed the smoke and called 911 at about a quarter to 11.

“I went to check my mail, I saw smoke from the square on the top of the roof,” he said, adding that when he called 911 and said there might be a fire, he was put on hold

Another neighbor, Bill Dozer, said the battleship gray, single-story house was home to a man, his wife, one or two children, and a friendly dog named Smokey.

“A decent family,” Dozer said, though he admitted he could not remember their names. “He has no trouble helping neighbors.”

He said the family has lived in the house for at least two years.

In addition to several county fire engines, the fire, which sent black smoke high into the air, drew curious residents from several blocks away.

It also drew sheriff’s deputies and California Highway Patrol officers who did their best to keep people at a safe distance

City Code Enforcement Officer Jim Thornburg was on hand assessing the situation. He noted that he will have to contact the property owner to make certain the property is secure and cleaned up.

He added that he did not recall getting any code enforcement complaints about the property.

Cause of the fire is under investigation.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/the_desert_trail/news/article_ce717ec4-9c05-11e8-86a9-9b66827e1efa.html