

What does that money get used for?

That is the most asked question. The answer is it pays for the manpower needed to respond to the emergencies called into the 911 center every day. The line item for personnel in the budget is normally around \$695,000. This includes all of the full-time personnel and part-time personnel. If the district does not renew the levy override, that money will not be there. By default the program has to end due to lack of funding. The base levy rate without the override was established when the department was an all-volunteer force and that is all it could support.

Will the fire department still be there?

Absolutely, and it will be just like it was prior to 2007. Since the funding for all of the full time personnel and all of the part time personnel come from the override, those personnel will need to find someplace else to work. A new group of volunteers should be able to duplicate the services provided prior 2007 successfully after some time. The district won't be out of money by any standard, but the property tax funding provided without the override will only support an all-volunteer service.

When I have an emergency Star or Caldwell always comes, not Middleton, even though I live in the Middleton District. This override failing won't have an effect on me right?

The communities of Caldwell, Middleton and Star have been cooperating in an agreement called automatic aid. This agreement allows the 911 center to send the closest qualified unit to an emergency call regardless of what district it is in. This only works because of the full-time staffing, provided by the override, making a crew available 24/7. If the community of Middleton doesn't provide a crew for the automatic aid, the surrounding communities are not going to spend their tax payer dollars protecting Middleton patrons. The leadership of those communities have made that very clear.

Will this raise my property taxes?

This override will raise the property tax from the base rate of .000915 to .001972 for a period of two years if it passes. This is less than it has been since it was voted in by the voters in 2008. It has historically been around .0023 since it started. If this passes your property taxes for the fire district will be lower than you paid last year on the same property. **The district is not asking for additional taxes, only an extension of the override originally approved by the voters in 2008.**

Why does our community have to do this election every two years and other communities don't?

This was done as a temporary experiment to start with, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of full-time staffing. With feedback from the community the program has been declared a success. The commissioners of the district are in the process of long range strategic planning in order to bring a permanent solution to the voters of the district in the very near future. For now the best solution for continuing the level of service currently being provided is the two year temporary override.

Middleton Rural Fire District



YOUR VOTE
IS
YOUR VOICE

VOTE May 19, 2015

Fire District Board of Commissioners

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Temporary Levy Election Information

What is the history and why is the Middleton Rural Fire District having an election for another Temporary Levy Override?

The Middleton Rural Fire District was formed by the voters of the District in November of 1957. By design the District is a separate, tax supported entity from the City of Middleton because of the large areas it covers. In 1960 the district built its first fire station at the corner of Dewey and Star Blvd. This was the primary place of business for the district until it replaced station 1 in 2002 as a result of a bond election that was passed by the voters in 2000. That election passed with a majority of voters which was 80%. This time period in history is when the area of the Middleton Rural Fire District was experiencing a significant growth in population. With population growth come increases in request for service for the public safety agencies such as police, ambulance and fire. At the time the district had employed personnel only for the purposes of maintaining the equipment and assisting the building industry with fire code compliance. All of the emergency response personnel were volunteers or paid on call.

On February 1st of 2007 a fire broke out at the Middleton High School in a part of the building that was not protected by fire sprinklers. The resulting fire took 127 firefighters from 21 neighboring departments and agencies over 30 hours to extinguish. The fire ultimately destroyed 49% of the school.

After the fire, a post incident analysis of the fire looked at ways the fire could have been made less destructive. Multiple factors were included in the analysis including; fire department response, community insurance rating by the Idaho Insurance and Rating Bureau, fire department staffing patterns, fire department personnel training levels, and the communities expectation of protection from the fire department. The analysis also compared the Middleton Rural Fire District to 13 other communities of similar size, from both inside and outside of Idaho, to determine the level of protection for other communities. At the end of the analysis the following recommendations were given to the elected officials.

First, most communities the size of Middleton had an ISO or ISRB rating of between 3 and 5. The ISO or ISRB rating is how the insurance companies know how much to charge for fire and casualty insurance. Middleton had a rating of 7 in town and ratings as high as 9 out in the rural areas. The worst rating you can get is a 10 which indicates unprotected.

The biggest difference between those other communities and Middleton was the use of full-time firefighters in their stations as opposed to Middleton, which used only volunteers. It's not that the volunteers lacked enthusiasm or training, they just had to work someplace else for a job to support their family and pay bills. When ISRB examined the records for the previous 10 years it was determined that the minimum number of 12 firefighters never arrived on scene of a working structure fire. The first engine on scene of the structure fire didn't have more than 2 people on it. Those two items had a serious impact on the rating.

Examining other communities revealed they maintained staff at their fire stations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Those personnel are able to make huge impacts for the communities they serve in fire prevention and suppression duties, as well as the items that get inspected for the communities ISO or ISRB rating. Those impacts typically resulted in a decrease of the ISO rating of 3 to 4 points. If an average point made up 5-7% of the insurance for the year that meant a drop of 15-28 % in rates for insurance. When interviewed, most of the Mayors, City Managers and Commissioners stated unanimously that the money spent by the jurisdiction on the full-time firefighters resulted in more savings in the insurance premiums than the increase in taxes it took to transition to full-time staffing.

This was the information the public and the elected officials had when they decided to hold an election for a levy override in an effort to improve emergency response for the citizens of Middleton. The goal was to provide enough funding to completely change the staffing patterns to include both part-time and full-time firefighters, sustain the operation and reevaluate it at the end of two years to see what the impact had been. The election was held in 2008 and passed with a significant majority.

At the end of the two year trial the results were big. The ISRB rating for Middleton went from a 7 down to a 4. Response times for fire and EMS calls went from 26 minutes to 6 minutes on average, and the total dollar loss for fires was reduced by over 90% during those two years. Most of the home owners and business owners interviewed had their insurance premiums drop more than twice as much as their property tax increase had been. Overall the experiment was judged to be a success. When the levy was set to expire in 2010 the public asked the commissioners not to let it expire.

The commissioners have run the temporary override as an extension every two years since. The very first override was for the amount of \$998,575 but each subsequent override has seen a reduction as time has gone on and the taxable value of the district has increased. The amount of the 2015 override has dropped down to \$670,599. This significant decrease comes mainly from running as lean as possible to keep taxes as low as possible and still maintain the level of coverage the citizens have come to expect.



For more election information visit

www.middletonfire.org

- **Sample Ballot**
- **Call Volume Table**
- **Town Hall Meeting Schedule**
- **General Election links & Information**