

Gaston County Unified Fire Protection Service District Budget Recommendation and Contract Update

Supporting Fire Service in Gaston County and
Strengthening Accountability



Purpose of Presentation

- Provide historical context on the Unified Fire Protection Service District
- Highlight the value of the volunteer fire model
- Outline the County's process for reviewing budgets
- Share the Fire Commission's funding recommendation
- Present updates to the fire service contract and new accountability measures
- Look ahead to future areas of collaboration and improvement

Why was Gaston County Fire Protection Service District Created

- Sustain long-term funding to strengthen service delivery.
- Provide a higher level of equity in levels of service delivery across the unincorporated areas of Gaston County.
- Establish a strengthened governance structure with both fire service and resident involvement.

Why was Gaston County Fire Protection Service District Created (continued)

- Develop dynamic funding formulas to reflect hazard and risk for each area and maintain balance with municipalities.
- Establish a more equitable level of fire service taxation across the unincorporated areas of Gaston County to support these core, essential services.

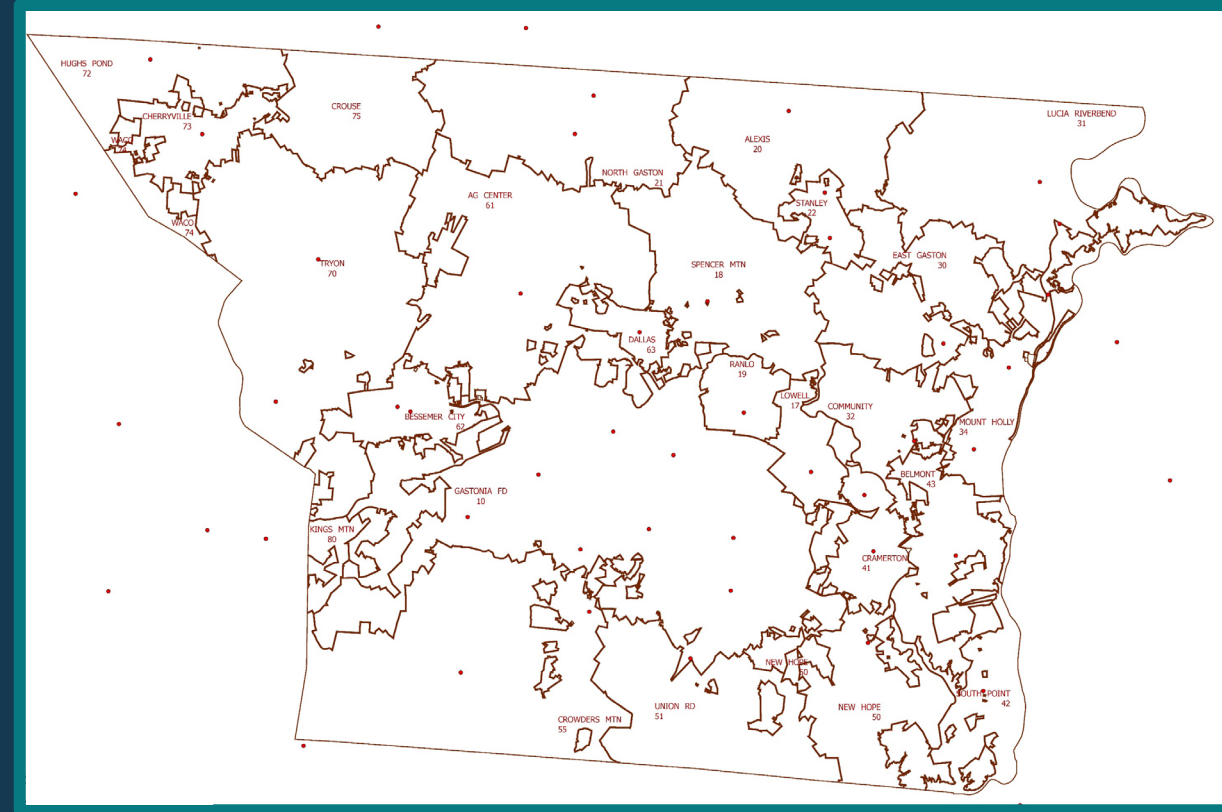
Volunteer Fire Service Model

- Provide essential coverage, often in areas with no full-time staff
- Deep ties to the community and strong commitment to service
- Challenges: recruitment, training requirements, retention, daily staffing

Gaston County

- 17 Contract Fire Departments
 - 15 Gaston County
 - 1 Lincoln County
 - 1 Cleveland County
- Covering **275 square miles (primary response area)**
- Covering **313 square miles (primary mutual aid area)**

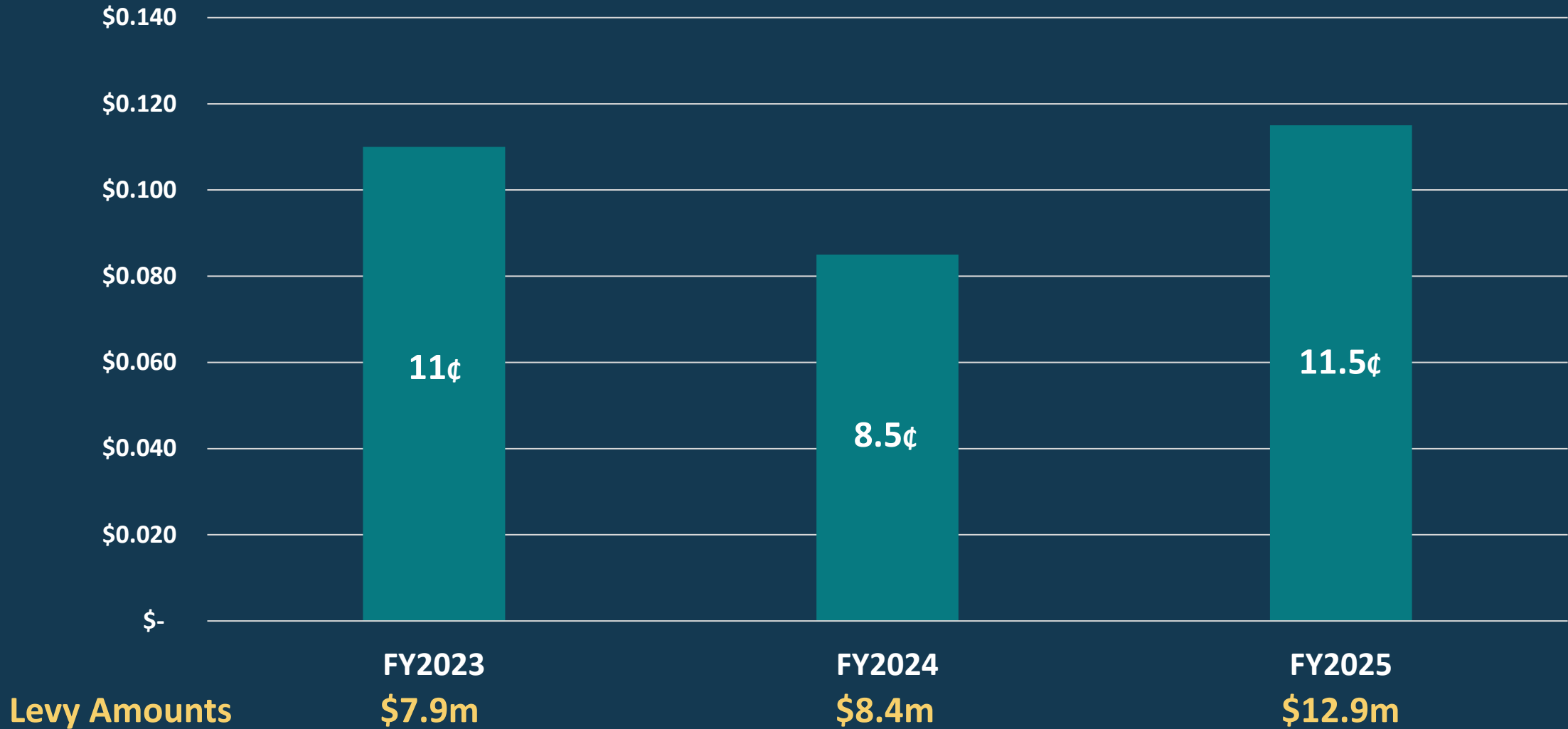
YEAR	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TOTAL	5279	5641	6128	6941	7742	8813	9882
INCREASE		7%	9%	13%	12%	14%	12%



Budget Review and Accountability Process

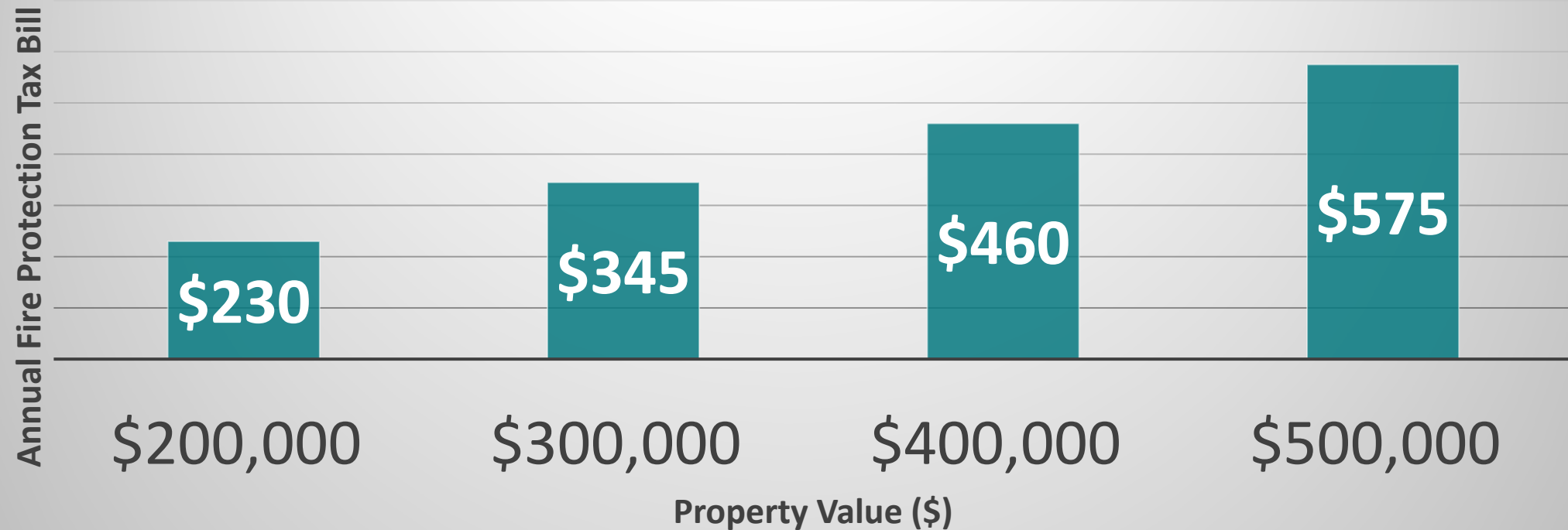
- Every department's proposed budget closely scrutinized
- Collaboration between County staff, finance, and the Fire Commission
- Focus on standardization, justification of increases, and financial clarity
- Ongoing goal: balancing support, service, and sustainability with fiscal responsibility

Historic Tax Rates and Levy Amounts



Cost to Taxpayer

Estimated Unified Fire District Tax Bill (Based on Recommended 11.5¢ Rate)



Fire Commission Recommendation

- Recommended Fire Tax Rate for FY26 = 11.5 Cents (No increase)
- Summary of their rationale:
 - Operational needs
 - Fairness across departments
 - Budget discipline balanced with service expectations
 - Reflects the Commission's consensus after thorough review
 - **Original VFD Budget Request: \$15,485,924**
 - **Fire Commission Recommend Budget: \$13,014,656**
 - **Fire Commission Budget Cuts Total: \$2,471,268**

Fire Department Budget Recommendation (11.5¢ Rate)

Ag Center	\$ 933,521
Alexis	\$ 739,430
Community	\$ 905,568
Crouse	\$ 134,136
Crowders Mtn.	\$ 1,599,832
East Gaston	\$ 927,594
Hughs Pond	\$ 555,616
Lowell	\$ 643,182
Lucia-Riverbend	\$ 729,560

New Hope	\$ 815,873
North Gaston	\$ 648,408
Ranlo	\$ 892,217
South Point	\$ 694,462
Spencer Mtn.	\$ 994,414
Tryonota	\$ 950,729
Union Road	\$ 789,114
Waco	\$ 61,000

Contract Updates – Operational Alignment

- Creates uniform expectations without unnecessary burden
- Emphasizes safety, competence, performance and realism
- Helps bridge communication and ensure policy compliance
- Supporting performance monitoring and funding decisions
- Aims to strengthen consistency and collaboration
- Keeps assets in Gaston County

Looking Ahead – Continued Improvement

Focus areas for the coming year:

- Enhancing reporting consistency
- Continued collaboration with the Fire Commission
- Exploring additional support for recruitment and training
- Reviewing service delivery models as the County grows

Thank you!

