
From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2026 3:36 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: John Hughes

Your Email: John@auroracharters.com

Subject: Lowering Bear Creak mill rate

Message:

Hello,

I am formally asking you to lower the mill rate. Other areas on the peninsula have had their mill rates reduced after an increase for a short time. Our rep asked for the mill rate to be reduced and the assembly voted it down. I am tired of my property taxes going up EVERY YEAR. The Bear Creek Volunteer Fire building should be paid off. You should be using taking the \$200,000 surpluses and applying it to the the buildings bond. Instead you're buying and outfitting an ambulance THAT ISN'T even needed. The Seward Ambulance core has THREE ambulances outfitted and ready to go AND covers the area. We should have a say in what happens when it's going to affect us.

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 8:03 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Lori J Landstrom

Your Email: ljlandstrom81@gmail.com

Subject: Lowre mill rate for Bear Creek Fire Service Area

Message:

Please support an ordinance to lower the mill rate in the Bear Creek Fire Service Area. As a resident and tax payer in this area I don't understand why our mill rate hasn't gone down before. This budget doesn't need to keep going up. The bond can be covered and our mill rate can do down. Please support lowering our taxes. Thank you.

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 10:47 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Kim Gaines

Your Email: Kim.gaines10@yahoo.com

Subject: Bear Creek mill service area rate

Message:

Please lower the Bear Creek mill service area rate. The money required to fulfill the bond requirement is significantly lower than what the current mill rate generates

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 5:30 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Maya Moriarty

Your Email: mayabenavente.mb@gmail.com

Subject: Bear Creek Area service area 1% mill rate

Message:

A Bear Creek 1% mill service area rate was approved by the voters in 2007^(OBJ) to build the Bear Creek Fire multi-use building. The bond payment on the facility is less than \$90K per year. Projected revenue from the 1% is \$299,903 (see Budget Projection and ballot proposition summary) There is no sunset.

There are enough funds from the 1% to cover the bond payments. The excess is projected at \$209,903 this year and increases every year as our assessments go up.

The 2007 ballot proposition summary stated that the 1% was for the CAPITOL improvement project which is the building:

“ The bond proceeds would be used for the purpose of paying the costs of planning, designing, acquiring property for, site preparation, financing, constructing, acquiring, renovating,

expanding, installing and equipping the proposed new Bear Creek Fire Service Area facility” and

“Voter approval of this bond proposition authorizes for each \$100,000 of assessed real and personal property value in the Bear Creek Fire Service Area (based on the estimated 2007 tax year assessed valuation) an annual tax of approximately \$100.00 an amount equal to approximately 1.0 mill) to retire the proposed general obligation bond debt.”

(Ordinance 2007-24)”.

The Assembly is misrepresenting the purpose of Ordinance 2007-24 by using the excess for other purposes besides capitol. The Bear Creek community deserves a service area mill rate decrease of 50% with a sunset clause. You are pulling from Peter to pay Paul from the excess of overtaxing our community.

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 5:44 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Michael Moriarty

Your Email: m_moriarty@yahoo.com

Subject: Lower BCC 1% service area mill rate

Message:

KPB has been collecting excess funds on the 1% service area mill rate for YEARS! Shame on you for not supporting the minimal decrease that our rep, Cindy Ecklund, brought forth. Please do the right thing and vote to decrease the BCC service area mill rate by 50%

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 6:00 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Margee Starr

Your Email: marmik96@hotmail.com

Subject: Taxes

Message:

Lower my taxes

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2026 6:03 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Kristie Harris

Your Email: Krisharris50@hotmail.com

Subject: Borough property tax

Message:

Bear Creek resident 11495 Raven Lane
Lower our property tax rate!

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 11:21 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Amy Hankins

Your Email: inalaska73@hotmail.com

Subject: Bear Creek Service Area

Message:

Dear Assembly,

I am writing today to ask you to lower the 1% mill rate that currently pays for the Bear Creek fire Bond payment. When I voted for the bond, it was to pay for the building, not for services not approved by residents.

Thank you for your service,

Amy Hankins

15088 Que Sera Drive

Seward

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 11:23 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Amber Olson

Your Email: amberolson9696@gmail.com

Subject: 1%mil rate

Message:

My name is Amber, I live outside of Seward city limits on Herman Lerrier. Im writing regarding the 1%mil rate that is currently bringing 200k excess, paid for by us to bear creek fire. This 1% was to be used towards the new bear creek fire department. The bear creek fire stations 1% additional has expired and currently still in place. We would like to lower the mil rate for the bear creek division. Remove this additional 1% for 2027 please. I speak for my whole neighborhood on eagle lane. Without any maintenance or improvement on my home the property taxes keep going up. There is no room to improve if this is the new standard. With inflation it's hard for any family to live here year round. There is no reason for bear creek fire to add any additional costs without a constant revenue, that is above the expenditures, which seward/bear creek will never provide. The contract with Seward volunteer fire should be renewed. That cut costs across the board and provided ample service to our area. Please consider reducing our mil rate to increase potential residents. We are losing people quicker then we are gaining. This year has been a doozy. Thank you for your time. Amber Olson

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 11:49 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Aimee Leatherman

Your Email: aimeejo31283@gmail.com

Subject: Bear Creek Seward

Message:

Please lower the mill rate 1%

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 11:51 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: John Moriarty

Your Email: jbmoriarty01@gmail.com

Subject: BCC 1% service area mill rate

Message:

This tax has been collecting more than the bond payment for years. That excess should have been 1. given back, or 2. rate lowered, or 3. communicated to the entire BCC community to decide what priorities they wanted to spend the excess funds on. The Bear Creek Fire Board does not speak for the community when it comes to the excess funds. Issue refunds or lower our mill rate and do it during this budget vote.

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 4:10 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Celeste Lemme

Your Email: celestelemme@hotmail.com

Subject: Mil Rate

Message:

It is getting harder and harder to live in the Kenai Peninsula Borough due to the cost of living and increase property taxes every year. I encourage the assembly to vote for a mil rate deduction for the Bear Creek area in Seward. They have a surplus every year and that should go back to the residents. And why did the mil rate go down everywhere else except for the Bear Creek area? This is isn't right. Thank you for your time.

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, April 24, 2026 4:28 PM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: John Eavis

Your Email: jhe@arctic.net

Subject: Bear Creek FD Mil Rate

Message:

I am a property owner in the Bear Lake Service Area. I am writing to encourage the Assembly to lower the Mil Rate for the Bear Lake Fire Department to better match the needed funds to make the payments on the bond for the construction of the building housing the fire department. I understand the current mil rate raises \$200K more than is needed. This needs to be adjusted. Thank you for your consideration.

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2026 3:43 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Margaret Minkin

Your Email: margemink@yahoo.com

Subject: Lower the Bear Creek Mill rate

Message:

The 2007 BCC vote to build the Bear Creek fire building currently collects over \$200,000(projected) in excess of the annual bond payment. Lower the 1% service area mill rate. There is no valid reason for making hard working families pay more money than needed in this difficult economy. Raising property taxes was a hard enough hit. Do the right thing.

From: Mark Beals <flightandfire@live.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2026 10:45 AM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Re: Mill rate reduction for the Bear Creek FSA.

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Correction

I am requesting that the assembly approve a mill rate reduction in the Bear Creek FSA from 3.25 to 2.50, a 0.75 reduction.

Mark

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From: Mark Beals <flightandfire@live.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2026 1:04:49 PM
To: assemblyclerk@kpb.us <assemblyclerk@kpb.us>
Subject: Mill rate reduction for the Bear Creek FSA.

Dear Assembly Members

I am requesting that the assembly approve a mill rate reduction in the Bear Creek FSA from 3.25 to 2.25, a 0.75 reduction.

Bear Creek voter approved the bond in 2007 for a new fire station; it was estimated it would bring in \$100,000 a year for the payment. The bond was refinanced and the payment is now \$89,995 for FY27. One mil now brings in about \$284,875 thus there is almost \$200,000.00 that is being used for other items, such as operating and capital, that was not approved by the votes for in the bond approval.

Property tax assessment has increased almost 300% in the Bear Creek area, putting many homes out of reach of young families needed to maintain our community and its schools, an example is the recent closure of the Seward Middle School next year.

I personally with the other volunteers of the past Bear Creek Volunteer Fire Department, told people that once the building was paid for the mill rate would be reduced as that was our believe and plan.

Sadley, with the increasing in revenue the current Fire Administration and Mayor have decided it upon themselves to maintain the current 3.25 mill rate, despite public request to lower it which could have been done slowly over the past few years.

Thus, this request to provide the Bear Creek community with relief, due to increased assessments and almost \$200,000 that was approved in the bond, no longer going towards the bond payment. Call volume for services has not increased and services provided has actually decreased, such as no dive team and not routinely being called out on the Seward highway for extrication services with other agencies increasing capability.

Another item is purchase on a new ambulance and expanding Emergency Medical Services and cost. The Bear Creek Fire Service Area has been provided Advances Life Support Ambulance Service even before the service area started by the Seward Volunteer Ambulance Corps since before 1953, the year of incorporation.

Sincerely,

Mark Beals, RN/EMT CEN CFRN

Former member 1979 to 2014 and Fire Chief

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From: Christel Sayegh <christelcollabos@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2026 10:32 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Please forward to Assembly

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Dear Borough Assembly,

I'm writing as a community member and supporter of our local Bear Creek volunteer fire department to express strong concern regarding any proposed reduction in its funding.

Our firehouse plays a critical role in public safety, and cutting its budget would directly impact the effectiveness of the department in several key ways.

First, funding supports the effectiveness of staff, including proper training coordination, ongoing maintenance, and the ability to maintain efficient response times during working hours. These are not optional—they are essential to ensuring that responders are prepared and able to act quickly when emergencies arise.

Second, volunteer shift funding is vital. It helps reduce response times during non-working hours, when coverage would otherwise be limited, and it contributes to maintaining a strong, reliable, and family-oriented volunteer environment. Without this support, recruitment and retention of volunteers will suffer, ultimately weakening emergency response capabilities.

Additionally, continued investment is necessary for apparatus and equipment replacement. Emergency response depends on reliable, up-to-date equipment, and deferring these needs increases long-term costs and risks to both responders and the public.

Finally, funding enables training opportunities, which ensure that personnel remain qualified, capable, and aligned with current safety standards and best practices.

Reducing funding in any of these areas would compromise public safety, increase response times, and place unnecessary strain on a system that already operates efficiently with limited resources.

I respectfully urge you to reconsider any efforts to cut funding to our volunteer fire department and instead support the continued investment in a service that our community depends on every day.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Christel Sayegh
Camelot Subdivision, Seward

From: Kenai Peninsula Borough <webmaster@kpb.us>
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2026 10:30 AM
To: BoroughAssembly; Mayor's Department
Cc: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: New Public Comment to Assembly Members

Your Name: Cynthia A Ranta

Your Email: cindyaranta@gmail.com

Subject: Bear Creek mill rate

Message:

It is my understanding that the Bear Creek fire building currently collects approximately \$200,000 in excess of the annual bond payment. I am requesting the Kenai Peninsula Borough assembly, reduce the mill rate for residents in the Bear Creek area, to align with the actual cost necessary to meet the bond needs.

From: Anna Milligan <ajmilligan07@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, May 2, 2026 8:57 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER>Please forward to assembly

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the KPB system. Please use caution when responding or providing information. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, know the content is safe and were expecting the communication.

Dear borough assembly,

I am writing this letter in support of keeping the mill rate where it is and not pursuing a reduction. Why? The current budget for BCFSA is not only setting up the future success of fire and emergency services, it directly impacts the service provided to the community. If the budget is cut as drastically as is being projected the effectiveness of the fire department will decrease substantially. The current budget supports three main objectives. 1. Response time. Adding the volunteer shift has decreased the amount of time it takes to show up to someone's house fire or cardiac arrest or child choking. These are life and death situations. Don't you want first responders to arrive as soon as possible? And provide the best care possible?

2. Training Opportunities. Our trainings equip and prepare us to be the best that we can. We want to provide the best medical care. We want to effectively preserve life and property. This is the mission of the fire department. To do so, we need to be getting hands on, practical, skill building time learning and practicing.

3. Apparatus and equipment maintenance and replacement. This should be self explanatory and is also in jeopardy if the budget is cut.

Unavoidable costs have gone up. Everyone is experiencing this, from heating fuel to gas to groceries. It is no different for the fire department. What would be dangerous and irresponsible is electing to cut the crucial foundation the department is built on. Again, the mill rate reduction is, at its core, going to hurt the fire departments capability of performing life and property saving service.

Thank you for your time.

Andra Woodard
PO Box 3515
10599 Fox Cir
Seward, AK 99664
907-491-1581

3 May 2026

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly
144 N Binkley St
Soldotna, AK 99669

Dear Borough Assembly Representatives,

I am writing to you in opposition of the mill rate reduction that been proposed for the Bear Creek area and to voice a concern in how the fire department has been represented in regards to its funding and long-term sustainability.

Our community was told false promises by prior fire department command, that once the new building was constructed the mill rate would be decreased. This was an unsound and unrealistic promise. The operation of the building, the staffing, and emergency services that must be provided in the future were never taken into consideration. In order to have essential reliable emergency services there must be predictable funding year after year. Suggesting otherwise would create expectations that do not reflect the true cost to maintain a functioning fire department.

The Bear Creek Fire Department is not a one-time investment. It is more than just a building. We must consider the ability to staff it, maintain not just the building but the equipment and the apparatuses, along with providing consistent training for volunteers, and be able to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. Without predictable and reliable funding all the hard work Chief Brackin and his team have done breaks down. We will be moving in the wrong direction for our community.

We cannot realistically return to an all-volunteer department. The demands that will be placed on the volunteers would be too much to ask of anyone. Expecting volunteers to meet these obligations without the support from the borough of paid staff and reliable equipment is beyond an unreasonable burden. Putting not only volunteers safety at risk but our community as well.

Prior fire department commands set the fire department up for failure by not being realistic with the demands a new department would have on long-term sustainability. They overlooked the reality of operational costs by minimizing them or not addressing them at all. The burden of these expenses have been shifted to the current leadership and hard decisions must now be made.

Lowering the mill rate would only make matters worse. It would jeopardize emergency services in our area, posing a significant safety risk to our community. If it is lowered, we risk ending up with a building and nothing more.

I strongly urge you to reject the proposal to reduce the mill rate and instead prioritize sustainable, long-term funding for our critical emergency services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AW', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Andra Woodard

From: Andy Nelson <andynelson412@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 12:25 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER> Please forward to Assembly

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the KPB system. Please use caution when responding or providing information. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, know the content is safe and were expecting the communication.

Hello,

My name is Andy Nelson and I joined the Bear Creek Fire Department last year as a volunteer. My main objective of this letter is to request no changes to the Mill rate. From my understanding, there has not been a change to the Mill rate for many years and we are not asking for an increase, just to maintain what we are at currently. It is expensive to have an operational fire department and I have seen that first hand over my short time on the department, but of all the places to cut down costs, I feel the fire department should be one of the last things to lose funding.

Chief Brackin has made it clear that he is willing to go through the budget with people if they are confused on the spending and encourages community members to get all the information about the budget and long-term plans. This should be done before making a big decision like this.

I joined the fire department because I want to be able to help the community and to assist people on potentially the worst day of their life. To do this, we need operational equipment and that costs money to maintain and replace when needed. The full time staff has been exceptional and running trainings and ensuring competency with all volunteers. There is not time to get to a fire scene and be learning, which means significant training needs to be completed regularly and the full time staff provide this service.

Again, I am asking for the Mill rate to not be changed and for concerned residents of the BCFSA to attend the monthly meetings and get the information regarding the budget and spending.

Thank you,
Andrew Nelson

Letter of Support for Fire Department Budget and Service Levels

04/30/2026

Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly

144 North Binkley St

Soldotna, AK 99669

Re: Support for Maintaining Current Fire Department Budget and Emergency Response Capacity

Dear Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly,

I am writing as a long time Seward Resident, Member of the Fire Department, and as a First Responder with over 14 years of experience in every facet of public service in various states and roles; to express strong support for the Bear Creek Volunteer Fire Department's current budgetary needs and existing emergency response capacity. I also urge you to oppose any proposed reduction in the department's budget or service levels. Fire protection and emergency medical response are essential public safety services; reductions will be felt immediately in slower response times, reduced coverage, and increased risk to residents, visitors, and firefighters.

Our fire department's ability to arrive quickly, with the right number of trained personnel and appropriate apparatus, is what prevents small incidents from becoming catastrophic events. The community depends on the department not only for structure fires, but also for emergency medical calls, vehicle collisions/fires, hazardous conditions, rescues, and disaster response. These are time-critical incidents with the potential balance of life and death measured in moments and not minutes, and maintaining current staffing, station coverage, training, and equipment readiness is the foundation of reliable service.

Budget reductions in the fire service predictably translate into fewer available units, deferred maintenance, reduced training, and—in the worst cases—brownouts or station closures. Those changes extend response times and reduce response reliability which directly impacts life safety and property protection.

Fire and EMS response is also a staffing-intensive service. Adequate crew size supports faster and safer operations—search and rescue, ventilation, fire attack, and medical care often must happen simultaneously. When staffing falls below operational needs, departments are forced to wait for additional resources or rely on distant mutual aid, both

delay critical interventions and increase risk to the public and responders. I know that under Chief Brackin and other supportive leadership within neighboring agencies, there has been significant improvement in mutual aid response and will continue to build toward immediate and effective response for service. But waiting to rely on another entity is uncertain and should not be relied upon.

Maintaining strong fire protection is also a sound financial decision for the community. Fire department capability can affect insurance costs and economic confidence, and a common budgeting approach is to emphasize not only losses, but property preserved through rapid intervention. Guidance for fire service budget justification highlights the relationship between service quality, ISO ratings/accreditation considerations, and the broader economic impact of fire protection.

The department's current budgetary needs—including replacement of aging apparatus, protective equipment, station and facility improvements, training, and recruitment/retention—should be addressed proactively rather than deferred. This department has gone from an Ineffective Fire Service to an Effective Fire Service in the time that I've been a member. (2017 to Present). The addition of paid staff, and the direction of rapid response is crucial for life and property safety. The reality of Emergencies is that they are unplanned and unpredictable. It could be you needing help. It could be you that is moments away from an irreversible condition or death. I have responded to disasters and emergencies and arrived too late to preserve life. That weight is heavy; and quadrupled when you know there could have been steps taken that would have helped improve the chances of survival. Some are as simple as a staffed station, closer assets and better training. I am proud to say that Bear Creek Fire Department is on a positive trajectory and has taken leaps forward to situate itself to be in the best available position to be an effective Emergency Response Service.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that you (1) maintain—and where necessary enhance—the fire department's operating and capital budgets, and (2) reject any proposal that would reduce staffing, station coverage, training capacity, or apparatus readiness. I appreciate your service and your careful consideration of this critical public safety decision.

Sincerely,

Mark Adams

mr.mark.d.adams@gmail.com

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Adams', written in a cursive style.

From: Morgan Woodard <morgan.l.woodard@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 4, 2026 5:14 PM
To: G_Notify_AssemblyClerk
Subject: <EXTERNAL-SENDER> Please forward to Assembly

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the KPB system. Please use caution when responding or providing information. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, know the content is safe and were expecting the communication.

Dear Borough Assembly,

My name is Morgan Woodard. I am writing to encourage you in the strongest possible way to keep the mill rate for the Bear Creek area at its current levels. There has been a recent push to lower the mill rate, consequently cutting the budget for the Bear Creek Fire Department, under the premise of lowering taxes. The argument that is made is that the building has been paid for and the mill rate is no longer needed. That argument is made either out of ignorance or in bad faith.

I have been in the fire service on this side of the peninsula for approximately 15 years. I volunteered with Seward Fire, who works closely with Bear Creek Fire Department, which gave me an opportunity to observe the Bear Creek Fire Department. I have seen them switch chiefs 3 times, and I have watched them grow. I remember when they were operating out of two small, outdated buildings. I also remember when their members were so fractured and ill trained that people were getting hurt on scene, and the public was not getting the care they expected and deserved. I remember when the former Bear Creek Fire Chief (the very same that is now leading the charge to cut the funding) was fired and caused a huge rift in the department. Bear Creek Fire Department has done a lot of work to create the professional fire service this community deserves. The department has progressed from a department that was barely surviving to one that is well trained, one that makes a difference, and one I am proud to be a part of. I started volunteering with BCFD a year ago.

I know you have gotten several letters explaining how the public demands a mill rate reduction, and the letters probably paint a picture of the BCFD as frivolous spenders. Let me paint a different picture as someone who is on the ground and involved. The budget has increased, it is true. It has not increased at the rate that is being portrayed. The new building obviously costs much more than the two sheds they were in. This is a building the current administration inherited. The plans were built by administration prior to Chief Brackin (again, the very same chief that was fired and now is pushing to reduce the budget) with no thought put forward towards the new operating cost of a building much bigger and more expensive. Rather than seeking money to finish the building (that's right, it is still being finished) Fire Chief Richard Brackin worked out a plan to have volunteers finish out the upstairs, saving thousands of dollars. And when the volunteers weren't showing up to do the work, he jumped in. The Fire Chief and his staff have been diligently volunteering their time to finish the upstairs. I have seen him several times give up his weekends to put in work on the building. When I talked to him and apologized for the lack of help he simply said "if finishing this creates a space the volunteers can use, it's worth it." That is the caliber of Fire Chief we currently have at Bear Creek.

There has been a lot of consternation about the new ambulance at BCFD. Citizens are up in arms because they think that this is a move to replace Seward Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Chief Brackin has made it very clear there is no intention of replacing them. The reality is that BCFD already had an ambulance, purchased, again, by the same former Bear Creek Fire Chief that is now sowing hostility between the departments. In fact, there is a letter, signed by the former Fire Chief, that is much more hostile towards Seward Volunteer Ambulance Corps, justifying its purchase. It alleges that Seward Volunteer Ambulance Corps was failing and the expectation back then WAS to replace them. I encourage you to reach out to Chief Brackin and he can provide the proof. The new purchase was to replace outdated equipment, which is standard practice in the fire service. The old ambulance was far beyond its replacement schedule and needed to be updated. Again, this is not something conjured up by Chief Brackin. He is simply following the replacement schedule put in place before his time, by the same people who are now attacking him for it. Chief Brackin has made it abundantly clear his viewpoint on the relationship between Bear Creek Fire Department and Seward Volunteer Ambulance Corps is one of cooperation, not competition.

In response to the increase in personnel costs, it is true that BCFD has more paid staff than in the past. This paid staff has been crucial to the success of BCFD. There is a lot of daily work that was not being done prior to their arrival. Equipment wasn't being cared for, fire hose wasn't tested, and training wasn't done at the level that needed to be done. This paid staff works tirelessly to make things happen that need to be done. And again, they all give so much of their time to make it easier on the volunteers. The reality is that volunteerism has gone down nationwide. We are lucky in our area that we have such great volunteers, but it is hard to ask them to sacrifice their time for emergency response, attend training, and then to come in and do station work on top. This paid staff SUPPORTS their volunteers, not replaces them. With the paid staff, we have been able to bring standardized training to the department. In the last few years we have taught multiple Firefighter 1 classes, HAZMAT classes, Firefighter 2, Fire Officer, Fire Apparatus Operator classes. Not to mention Emergency Trauma Technician, Emergency Medical Technician 1 and 2, and intend on continuing onwards. Our citizens deserve quality trained personnel and they are getting them now. And our volunteers get training that is nationally recognized. Something that was not happening anywhere near the level it is currently.

The most frustrating thing is that recently when working on the budget, it was suggested that the mill rate actually INCREASE to help ease the burden of the department with all the things that are going on. Chief Brackin immediately said no. He did not want to increase the burden on the citizens. He was willing to work within the existing budget, to accomplish all that is being done. Now there is a push to cut our funding. What will end up being a couple hundred dollars a year for the citizens will translate into a massive setback for the Bear Creek Fire Department. Trainings will be cut, work around the station will suffer, and the community will suffer as a result. Once again, the biggest driver that I can see is the former Bear Creek Chief, who has the audacity to complain about the price of a building he built, complain about an ambulance that he started, because he wanted to replace SVAC. He is getting traction because he is hitting the buzz words of cutting taxes and "government overspending." It is hard to see this push as anything other than sour grapes.

I am as conservative as anyone. I am all for cutting taxes. Just don't do it at the expense of public safety. I would encourage each and every one of you to reach out to Chief Brackin to see the numbers for yourself. Then reach out to the other fire departments across the peninsula to see if BCFD is in anyway out of line with the industry standards. You will find that it is not, and in a lot of ways, doing much better.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and once again I implore you to not lower the mill rate at the cost of the Bear Creek Fire Department. The fire service as a whole is notoriously bad at advocating for themselves. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to see the other side of this issue.

Very Respectfully,
Morgan Woodard
Bear Creek Resident