

**Letter from the Treasurer and Board Director**

**April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

I am Kerri VanMeveren. I was elected June 2020 to serve on the Western Cass Fire Protection Board as a Director and the Board then elected me as the Treasurer in April 2021. I attended WCFPD board meetings for nearly 2 years when I started noticing grave misuse of taxpayer funds and property. The Board refused to answer the most basic of questions as they were planning on asking the taxpayers a ballot measure that would double our tax levy. The lavish spending on remodeling and pet projects when there was critical safety gear out of date and significant deferred basic maintenance for our buildings and vehicles.

Within 3 weeks after I was sworn in as a Director, Bill Franse (former Fire Chief) and 4 of his closest friends on staff went missing. This sent the District into a free fall because the Board was so out of touch with how the District was being managed, or lack thereof. This was followed by 2 sexual harassment complaints, and it was quickly becoming evident there was not even the most basic employee policies that placed the District and our firefighters at great liability and risk.

I thought after being on the board for nearly a year as a Director that I had a pretty good idea of all the issues that faced the District, however, I couldn't have been more wrong. When I was elected Treasurer in April 2021, the former Treasurer, Ed Summer refused to turn over any records for 2 months- records which ended up being a shoebox of haphazard papers.

Since April 2021, I continued to find failures to comply with state and county reporting requirements, multiple unauthorized merchant accounts, lost bank accounts, accounts controlled by employees paid for by the District, purchases without receipts, no protection for taxpayer money beyond the FDIC limits, over collection of taxes to pay off the bonds just to name a few.

**Here are just SOME of the problems I walked into after being sworn in as Director**

- Missing District Property, computers deleted of all files/ software	- Loss of the District's website, email, and Facebook due to to personal email accounts
- Unprotected Bank accounts beyond FDIC limits	- Firefighter Gear out of date not compliant with national fire protection standards
- No inventory records for anything or even maintenance records for buildings/ equipment	- Dispatch radios soon to be out of date with no plan to replace them- estimated cost \$160,000
- Merchant accounts opened without Board approval, missing receipts, no accountability	- Apparatuses (District vehicles)- no oil changes in 7 years!!
- Board Chairman Tom Reintjes refused to take state directed Board training & others before him	- Illegally performing medical procedures without required oversight by a Doctor
- Previous Treasurer, Ed Summer filed incorrect paperwork with the State, causing significant over taxation to YOU as the taxpayer	- Failure to turn in mandated state and county reporting
- Ghost bank accounts, nobody knows who owns or what they are from	- Holding public meetings at one of the stations in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act

**Here is just SOME of what I've been trying to change since becoming a Board member and Treasurer**

- Restoring financial records and state/ county reporting requirements	- Secured new email and document repository not tied to personal individuals
- Put into the 2022 budget to replace out of date Firefighter Gear	- Tried to push for getting Project to inventory of District property finally approved (not enough board support to act)

- Obtained bid 10/14/21 to replace out of date dispatch radios (not enough Board support to act)	- Working with the District attorney to correct out of compliance board term lengths
- Shut down unapproved accounts; protected taxpayers by securing their money above FDIC limits	- Reduced expenses on wasteful spending (automated bill pay/ employee pay, obtained free internet, reduced monthly disposal costs, etc.)
- Streamlined the District's bill pay process, creating checks and balances protecting taxpayer \$\$\$	- Working with CPA to track District expenses so we can better track where the \$money is being spent
- Paid off the debt service bond more than a year early and working to correct the over taxation from incorrect filings with the state	- Working on fixing issues found by MO State Audit, e.g., converting firefighters from contractors to employees to avoid IRS penalties and interest
- Tried to get CPR and smoke detector programs for our community (not enough Board support to act)	- Tried to get a newsletter for the community started (not enough Board support to act)

**The plan going forward**

I remain committed to being part of the solution and bringing our District back into compliance, following the law, and ensuring that we are providing the absolute best services our District can offer.

We have 2 new board members joining the board on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 that are also committed to restoring the District to operating legally, compliant with the regulatory agencies, and most important— providing the services to YOU, the tax payer deserve.

This means demanding accountability from Board Members and employees alike. The District has been out of compliance on multiple levels for more than a decade. The Board approved hiring Monte Olsen, to start working with the District January 1, 2022. Monte has 30+ years' experience in emergency services, former district manager for multiple fire protection districts, and court-appointed special master and receiver of a fire protection district. He is also an Honorary Member and past President of the MO Association of Fire Protection Districts and is currently the Executive Director of the National Association of Fire and Emergency Officials. Monte has already made great progress to restore much needed policies and procedures that will protect the District from further liability that has been jeopardizing YOU as the tax payer.

Fixing a decade plus of mismanagement will not be fixed overnight. I ask for your patience while the new Board works to address the issues.

I am here to answer your questions, unlike past Board administrations. Please feel free to reach out to me at [kvanmeveren@westernassfire.org](mailto:kvanmeveren@westernassfire.org) or 816-260-1067 for any questions. Thank you.

Thank you,

Kerri VanMeveren, Director & Treasurer  
[kvanmeveren@westerncassfire.org](mailto:kvanmeveren@westerncassfire.org)  
816-260-1067