



A Timeline of the Work Behind the 2026 Ballot

A Message from Fire Chief Marcus Widener

Deer Mountain Fire Protection District has undergone significant changes in recent years as the emergency-service needs of our community have evolved. We want our community to understand that work and what has changed leading into the 2026 election.

Ballot Issue 6A did not begin with a decision to ask voters for additional funding for a second year in a row. It followed years of providing Fire and Emergency Medical Services to the community, evaluating the District's legal and financial structure, listening to the community feedback, and developing a long-term plan for the services Deer Mountain provides.

2011 The District's Current Tax Rate

The District's property-tax mill levy was last increased in 2011.

The District has continued operating under that tax rate while the services provided by Deer Mountain have expanded.

*Please note, in 2026 the mill rate went from 7.998 to 6.927 due to the Colorado House Bill 24B-1001.

2013 Emergency Medical Services Added

In August 2013, Fremont County approved the licensing for Deer Mountain ambulances.

From that point forward, the District provided both fire protection and Emergency Medical Services. However, EMS was added without a corresponding increase in the District's property-tax mill levy to provide recurring revenue for the ongoing cost of the service.

2021–2025 Emergency Call Volume Increases Alongside Rising Costs

Between 2021 and 2025, Deer Mountain Fire Protection District experienced a substantial increase in emergency call volume.

During the same period, inflation increased the cost of nearly every component of emergency response—from fuel, equipment and medical supplies to apparatus maintenance, replacement costs, insurance and other operating expenses.

By 2025, the District responded to 306 emergency calls, representing a 57% increase in call volume since 2021. Medical emergencies accounted for approximately 63% of all responses.

This meant the District was responding to significantly more emergencies while the cost of providing those services was also increasing—all while continuing to operate under the same voter-authorized tax rate established in 2011.

2025 The Community Considered EMS Funding

In November 2025, voters considered a mill-levy increase intended to support EMS. The measure fell short of approval by only five votes. Given the narrow margin, the District determined that voters should have another opportunity to consider the funding question, this time with additional information and greater context about the District's services, finances, and long-term needs.

During 2025, the District strengthened its leadership and governance structure. The District hired a Fire Chief with more than a decade of command-level fire service experience, and the current Board of Directors became fully seated.

By the time the District began the 2026 planning and ballot process, the current Board had been working together for more than a year, providing continuity in the review of District operations, finances, service needs, and long-term planning emergency services while evaluating its long-term financial and operational structure.

2026 A Broader Review of the District

Rather than simply returning the same question to voters, the District undertook additional work to define its responsibilities, evaluate its finances, understand community priorities, and establish a long-term framework for Fire and EMS.

That process included:

- Contacting the State of Colorado to determine the required process for returning the District's ambulances and addressing the associated grant requirements.
- Reviewing the District's recurring revenues and operating expenses.
- Evaluating Fire and EMS service demands, staffing and apparatus needs.
- Developing a comprehensive new District Service Plan.
- Conducting a professional community survey of District voters and property owners.
- Continuing annual financial reporting and independent audit requirements.
- Developing a longer-term framework for maintaining services within available resources.

New Service Plan Adopted

On May 20, 2026, the Deer Mountain Fire Protection District Board adopted a comprehensive new Service Plan.

The Service Plan establishes the framework under which the District provides its services, including both Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services.

Fremont County Approval

The new Service Plan was presented to the Fremont County Board of County Commissioners and approved in July 2026.

This was an important step in establishing a current, publicly documented framework for the services Deer Mountain provides to the community.

Community Survey

The District also commissioned an independent community survey conducted by Magellan Strategies.

The survey included registered voters and property owners and asked residents about Fire and EMS services, wildfire risk, District finances, staffing, equipment and potential additional funding.

The results gave the Board additional information about both community priorities and concerns before making decisions regarding the 2026 ballot.

Financial Review and Long-Term Planning

In 2026 the current mill rate went from 7.998 to 6.927 due to the Colorado House Bill 24B-1001.

The District's 2026 budget identifies a difference between recurring operating revenues and recurring operating expenses. For the fiscal year the District budgeted approximately \$418,220 in recurring revenue against approximately \$646,400 in core operational costs, a structural operating gap of approximately \$228,180.

Reserve funds are being used as a temporary bridge. The District's adopted financial framework therefore requires a longer-term decision: establish sustainable recurring revenue or adjust service levels to match available recurring funding.

Ballot Issue 6A Referred to Voters

After completing this work, the Board referred Ballot Issue 6A to District voters for the November 3, 2026, election.

Ballot Issue 6A asks voters whether the District should be authorized to levy an additional 6.9 mills, estimated to generate \$361,851 for fiscal year 2027.

The ballot language identifies potential uses including:

- Maintaining volunteer recruitment.
- Increasing firefighter and EMT availability.
- Funding Fire and Emergency Medical Services.
- Establishing a phased pathway for replacement of the District's aging apparatus fleet.
- Supporting capital and general fund needs of the District.

November 3, 2026 — The Decision Belongs to the Voters

The work leading to Ballot Issue 6A has established the District's service framework, documented its financial condition, gathered community input, and identified its operational and capital needs. The next decision belongs to the eligible electors of Deer Mountain Fire Protection District.