

# The ROBERTSON REVIEW

Providing premier Fire & EMS services with transparency & fiscal responsibility.



Always Ready.  
Proud to Serve.

**TWO YEARS AFTER THE HISTORIC RECALL ELECTION, THE DISTRICT IS STILL HERE AS PROMISED AND IT'S GETTING BETTER EVERY DAY!**

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## GREETINGS ROBERTSON RESIDENTS!

Welcome to the Robertson Fire District newsletter meant to keep you up to date on your service and what sets us apart from other fire districts.

Our goal is to deliver you with the best quality Fire & EMS services, provide our employees with fair (but not excessive) pay and benefits, and keep your tax rate low!

I hope you read this newsletter so you can understand the many struggles we have encountered, the vast improvements we have made, and how hard we have worked to stop the MANY abuses that were occurring with your tax dollars. It has not been easy and there's still work to be done!

It's been exciting watching the last two years materialize into the new RFPD! **Your property tax rate went down 20¢ and yet we have made building improvements, purchased a new ladder truck, and made substantial upgrades to nearly all of our medical equipment, all while increasing our net position by \$4.8 million.**

of employees at RFPD are doing an amazing job helping us change the District for the better by improving the work environment and District services. However, change takes time.

Thank you always for your encouragement and support as we continue working for you the resident, you the taxpayer.

Jennifer Guyton  
Chairwoman





**ABOVE:** CREW POSE FOR PICTURE AFTER VEHICLE EXTRACTION TRAINING.

## New Board & Administration clean up District finances, while investing in lifesaving advancements to improve your service.

Shortly after taking office in November 2022, one thing became clear to the newly elected Directors, Jennifer Guyton, Steve Field and Maggie Sieve: *our District's buildings and equipment were suffering from years of neglect and lack of investment.* District tax dollars were clearly not being spent on services.

Hiring an all new topnotch Administration, now retired Fire Chief Dave Herman, Assistant Chief Adam Long, Fire Marshal Kenneth Hughes and former Medical Officer now Fire Chief, Robert Sievers, together as a team with the board, began working to reform every department, every policy, and every financial fund within the District.

### DISTRICT FINANCES & TRANSPARENCY

To reform the District's finances, the new fire board's first step was to hire a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) without a conflict of interest to provide an objective analysis of spending and financial health. With Sikich LLP accounting firms help, improved policies and a new Office Manager, Suzette Stoyanov, ***according to the District's two most recent audits, our expenses reconciled/matched-up to the banking statements for the first time since at least 2017. What does this mean? It means auditors were able to verify receipts of purchases to bank transactions for the first time in 6 years!***

**Exciting Things are Happening!**

**Two Years After the Recall Election, the New Board of Directors is Focused on YOU!**

**Investing in Our Future & Your Safety!**

### BETTER SERVICES & FINANCES AFTER 20¢ TAX RATE ROLLBACK!

Furthermore, the District has seen its net position (overall assets and funds to debt and liabilities ratio) increase by \$4.8 million since the new board took office. While there's still work to be done, we are finally on the right path.

### Robertson's Net Position Increases by \$4.8 Million since Recall Election.

To implement full transparency to the public, Board Directors began live streaming and posting all board meetings in early 2023, including Labor Contract Negotiations with the International Fire Fighters Association (IAFF), Local 2665.\* The District posts videos of meetings on our website through YouTube, as well as on Facebook. Additionally, the District now makes all agendas, meeting minutes, budgets, audits and financial statements available on our website.

***\*All open board meeting video recordings with meeting minutes can be found at [www.rfpd.org/board-meetings](http://www.rfpd.org/board-meetings).***

### FIRE & EMS SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

**Medical Equipment:** Despite voters approving multiple bonds to ensure equipment quality and maintenance, ***nearly every piece of medical equipment at Robertson FPD needed replacement due to neglect and lack of investment, with an estimated upgrade cost of ~\$1.8 million.*** To put that cost into perspective, that is the same price as our custom built Pierce Ariel Ladder Firetruck. Additionally, the District lacked basic lifesaving equipment such as automatic external defibrillators (AEDs).



Researching the issue, MO Sievers helped invest into the Stryker 360 leasing program allowing us to upgrade all EMS equipment at once and again every 5 years, while spreading the payments out over 10 years, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars while keeping up with the latest advancements. The program included power chairs (*far left picture*) and power stretchers, AEDs, defibrillators, a chest compression system, modems, monitors, and more.

## RFPD goes from ZERO Automatic External Defibrillators to EIGHT following reforms— YOUR tax dollars now being spent on YOU!

Other improvements include Veraton GlideScopes for laryngoscopy, bronchoscopy and dual-view airway procedures (*picture lower center*), narcotics safes to secure and track controlled substances, and Handtevy System for quicker and more accurate medication dosing during pediatric calls. All these upgrades allow for better, more efficient medical care for you and your family during an emergency.

**Ambulances:** The District has ordered two new ambulances with anticipated arrival in May 2025 and early 2027. Rather than buying two ambulances at once like in the past, spreading out vehicle replacement allows for more effective budgeting and smoother maintenance costs.

**Ladder Truck:** Robertson FPD ordered a Pierce Ariel Ladder Firetruck in March 2022. To offset this purchase, the District sold its older ladder truck in August 2023 to

Central Fire & EMS of Abbotsford, a more rural, lower call volume fire agency in Wisconsin (*old 5025 pictured below being loaded for delivery to a new community*).

**Rescue Boat:** Following historical flash flooding in 2022 and multiple water rescue calls, former Chief Herman and battalion staff felt investing in water rescue services for our large flood zones and 6 miles of riverfront was essential, something that had been under consideration since 2011. Following the purchase, Chief Herman worked with the St. Louis Area Regional Response Systems (STARS) program to help store a large inventory of water rescue gear and equipment for the District to use when needed. Currently, we're investing in training for employees as water rescue is one of the most dangerous services provided.

**Fire Marshal Bureau:** Under the management of Fire Marshal Kenneth Hughes, the department has seen a complete transformation in two major ways:

1. **Safety** by **implementing the smoke detector inspection program, our key lock box program (residents can get a free key lock box providing dispatchers access to your residence in an emergency\*)** as well as updating ordinances and Fire & Building Codes to the latest versions, better protecting our residents and businesses.
2. **Efficiency** by hiring Inspector Dave Clemons to help businesses and residents get inspections within a timely manner, digitizing plan reviews and building permit processing, and going paperless through online



**FAR LEFT:** ROBERTSON CREW MEMBERS PRACTICE WORKING WITH NEW STYKER XPEDITION POWER CHAIRS. THIS NEW ADVANCED CHAIR LIFT ALLOWS THE TRANSPORT OF PATIENTS UP OR DOWN STAIRS WITH EASE. THIS INVESTMENT PROVIDES SAFETY FOR BOTH PATIENTS AS WELL AS EMPLOYEES FROM AN AVOIDABLE INJURY. **TOP RIGHT:** SURPLUS LADDER TRUCK BEING SHIPPED TO WISCONSIN AFTER SALE TO OFFSET NEW LADDER TRUCK PURCHASE. **BOTTOM CENTER:** VERATON GLIDESCOPIES FOR LARYNGOSCOPY, BRONCHOSCOPY AND DUAL-VIEW AIRWAY PROCEDURES. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** NEW ALWELD RESCUE BOAT WITH 90HP MERCURY MOTOR FOR WATER RESCUE IN THE DISTRICT LARGE FLOOD ZONE AREA AND 6 MILES OF RIVERFRONT.





## MEET THE CREWS

### Robertson Fire's Firefighter-Paramedics



#### Two Fully-Staffed Firehouses:

1. Hazelwood House:  
12641 MO Bottom Rd
2. Bridgeton House:  
3820 Taussig Rd

payment systems. All this helps promote growth and development in the District.

FM Hughes was also instrumental in helping organize and design the District's new website with Weinacht Consulting Group at a fair price to the taxpayers.

*\*For a smoke detector battery change or inspection, or to sign up for the free lock box program, please contact Fire Marshal Kenneth Hughes at khughes@rfpd.org.*

#### TRAINING & OPERATIONS IMPROVEMENTS

Acting as the District's training and operations chief, Assistant Chief Adam Long has completely restructured our department. Prior to his appointment, few policies existed, many dating back to the early 2000's (example: prior to reforms, employees were able to write their own drug and alcohol policy).

Today, the District has completely overhauled nearly every policy and procedure through AC Long's hard work implementing Lexipol Public Policy Management System. This process has taken over a year and is ongoing, but has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and labor cost while bringing our Standard Operating Procedures up to date. This protects the District from liability while keeping our employees and residents safe.

AC Long has also improved employee preparedness through relationships with the Lambert International Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting department and North County fire departments for more comprehensive and consistent training as well as creating a thorough hiring process.

## Where's my RFPD Calendar?

### The DISASTROUS 2023 RFPD calendar...

In October 2022, former Robertson FPD Management rushed to send out a 2023 calendar. This calendar was riddled with embarrassing errors such as two January 28th's and by July, the year was off by an entire week rendering it effectively useless. As comical as this sounds, we have to consider the taxpayer money that went into this. The new board found the calendar cost over \$10,000 to produce and mail. This does not include the roughly \$23,000 annual retainer for the former PR firm who created the calendar.

While reevaluating the calendars, it came to the new board's attention that the prior administration had not been providing our firefighters with service awards and stars they had rightfully earned, a well-known fire service tradition. Employees with 5 to 35 years of service had not been recognized for their service to the community for years.





**ABOVE:** SERVICE AWARDS FOR ROBERTSON FIREFIGHTER-PARAMEDICS FOR SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY. SERVICE STARS NOT PICTURED.

Putting all this together, the decision was made to use the calendar funds to right this wrong. All and all, the District provided 30+ service awards (pictured above) and stars owed to District employees in a now annual award ceremony for our firefighters and their families. While the calendars may be revisited in the future, the expense of \$33,000 feels excessive, especially when the cost to honor our employees hard work comes at a fourth of the cost. We hope you understand.

Welcome Fire Chief Sievers

New Fire Chief. New Vision.



## ROBERTSON RESIDENTS ARE IN GREAT HANDS!

Many Hazelwood and Bridgeton residents may already know Fire Chief Sievers from his incredible work reshaping the District's EMS Department as Medical Officer, his 20 years of service working in the Emergency Department at DePaul Hospital, or his service as a firefighter-paramedic with the Robertson FPD, St. Charles County Ambulance District and Hazelwood FD.

Fire Chief Sievers' goal for the District is to bring premium fire safety and emergency preparedness along with advanced medical care to our residents through community outreach and education, along with investments in cutting-edge equipment and specialty training for all personnel. Ultimately, he wants to ensure we continue a vision of positivity allowing for all residents, businesses and employees of the District to prosper.

## Letter from the Fire Chief

Hello Residents of Robertson Fire Protection District,

My name is Robert Sievers, and I'm honored to introduce myself as your new Fire Chief. I look forward to working and serving all of you in the community. As an experienced and dedicated firefighter/paramedic, I am committed to ensuring your safety and well-being. I, along with the firefighter/paramedics within Robertson Fire Protection District, am eager to continue providing the best fire protection and emergency medical services.

Looking forward to 2025, I would like to reintroduce providing First Aid and CPR classes for the residents, infant/toddler car seat installation, and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), free of charge to the residents. Also, in 2025, the district expects delivery of our newest ambulance, replacing one of the two in service.

I extend my gratitude to each person within the community, the Robertson Board of Directors, and all of the employees for the support they give.

If anyone has any questions, comments, or concerns, my door is always open or you can reach me at [rsievers@rfpd.org](mailto:rsievers@rfpd.org).

Sincerely,  
Chief Sievers



# How is the current Robertson Fire Board different?

## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHEN YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY COME FIRST...

For decades in St. Louis and St. Charles County, the transparency of fire protection districts have gone down while their tax rates continue to climb. Why?

Firefighters' unions pour hundreds of thousands of dollars in elections for directors of their choosing. Once elected and contract negotiations begin, if a board member doesn't provide the pay and benefits desired by the shop, unions begin filing lawsuits and running candidates against them. This is why at many fire districts firefighters making 6-figure salaries, have over 100% free healthcare for the employee and family, and are not required to contribute one dime towards their retirement.

Many times fire boards then use your tax money to give themselves 100% free healthcare, life insurance and pensions for their public service knowing any criticism from the public doesn't matter as long as they have the unions support and financial backing. Much of this originally came to light in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch series "Burning through tax dollars" where Robertson FPD made multiple mentions<sup>1</sup> ([www.rfpd.org/burning-through-tax-dollars](http://www.rfpd.org/burning-through-tax-dollars)).

At Robertson FPD, not only did the firefighters' union help fund all three board members' past elections, **in 2022 the union spent over \$17,000 on an anti-recall election campaign, fighting against the residents to keep a board of directors accused of corruption in power. That same union and fire board approved a new 5-year labor contract the night before the recall election** (currently being litigated in court which resulted in the current ongoing contract negotiations between shop and district).<sup>2</sup> Ask yourself...WHY?



Recalled Board authorized RFPD Union Labor Contract that allowed taxpayers to fund:

- Up to 1.3 years of paid time off for vacation, sick and "personal leave."
- Over 132% HEALTHCARE coverage for ENTIRE family including:
  - 100% FREE health insurance premium coverage.
  - 100% FREE copay and deductible coverage.
  - Up to \$7450 extra in rollover health reimbursement accounts with little to no restrictions covering even over-the-counters like bandaids & Tylenol.
- Up to 10 years of 100% free retiree health insurance for employee AND spouse.
- Sick-time cash out of as much as \$62,000 into tax-free accounts.
- Retirement plans that require 0% contribution required.
- Multiple end-of-the-year BONUS checks.
- Even providing stipends for food.

**Remember, this is what you, the taxpayer were paying for while your equipment and services were being neglected (see pages 2-4).** With such a lucrative contract, it's understandable why the union would allegedly violate Missouri's sunshine and contract law to cement a contract against the will of the voters. It should be noted that many of the employees who conspired with the board are no longer with the District. The majority of employees are helping make our services better. Read the contract for yourself on our website at [www.rfpd.org/union-contracts](http://www.rfpd.org/union-contracts).

### **So how is your current Robertson Fire Board different?**

We, the board of directors, support labor organizations, have loved ones in unions, and won our election through the support of current and former members of the Postal Workers' Union, Carpenters' Union, Utility Workers of America Union, American Federation of Teachers, etc. However, we believe there should be ethical lines drawn when sitting on a three-person fire board.

**While we believe everyone should be afforded fair, competitive pay and benefits, the current fire board also believes we should not accept money or campaign contributions from the same employees we are negotiating**

**with over pay and benefits.**

This stops conflicts of interest and quid pro quos. It means the fire board works for you the resident, you the taxpayer—not the district's employees.

Furthermore, we don't use your tax dollars for free health insurance for ourselves like our predecessors and are the lowest paid fire board in St. Louis County by choice. Your tax dollars are meant to fund your fire and EMS services, and that's what you're going to get under our leadership.

**Robertson FPD  
Board of Directors:**

**Jennifer Guyton  
President**

**Steve Field  
Treasurer**

**Maggie Sieve  
Secretary**

1. Weich, S., & Holland, E. (2004, August 20-29). Burning through tax dollars, parts 1 - 4. St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

2. Barker, J. (2023, September 11). Fire district board passed union contract on eve of recall. St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Retrieved at [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/government-politics/north-county-fire-district-tries-to-void-contracts-ok-d-by-ousted-board/article\\_98e99984-4cfa-11ee-9511-8780c5d2505e.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/government-politics/north-county-fire-district-tries-to-void-contracts-ok-d-by-ousted-board/article_98e99984-4cfa-11ee-9511-8780c5d2505e.html).



# Hazelwood Dispute, District Legislation, & Local 2665 Labor Contact Negotiations

## WHAT ALL THREE HAVE IN COMMON...

As many residents know, the City of Hazelwood has been disputing Fire & EMS service payments with the Robertson FPD for over 30 years leading to a still unresolved breach of contract lawsuit against the City in 2018 for nonpayment.

In December 2022, Robertson FPD, Florissant Valley FPD and the City of Hazelwood filed legislation in the State Senate that would allow annexation of certain property into the Robertson FPD, transferring the majority of Hazelwood's service payments while the City would continue to pay emergency services for residents and farmers. This legislation would allow Robertson to receive their full revenue and lower Hazelwood's payments by \$4.6 million, money that could be used to better our community.

***In an attempt to leverage the new board for pay and benefits, Robertson's Union representation along with District resident and State Representative Paula Brown, told the District's lobbyist both herself and the Union would kill the legislation meant to help the City, District and public at large if the Robertson fire board didn't give in to their demands in labor contract negotiations. What were their demands?***

## FIREFIGHTERS' UNION TRIES TO LEVERAGE NEW BOARD BY KILLING LEGISLATION MEANT TO HELP BRIDGETON/HAZELWOOD RESIDENTS

***The Robertson Shop and Local 2665 leadership were demanding what's known in contract law as an evergreen clause. Not just any evergreen clause, a specific type that essentially:***

- 1. Allows the contract to never expire as it mandates automatic renewals. As long as they never agree to a new contract, the union can guarantee their contract will continue on indefinitely. (Please see page 6, column 2 to see why the union does not want changes to a contract provided to them by the recalled directors).***
- 2. This in turn gives the union a form of veto power over the board in contract negotiations, which is really veto power over you, the voter.***

"It feels as if the taxpayers of the city of Hazelwood and the Robertson Fire Protection District are being extorted" Director Guyton told the St. Louis Post Dispatch in April of 2024.<sup>1</sup> As a fire board that ran on an anti-corruption platform, your directors refused to bow to the union's demands in order to protect our

taxpayers and disincentivize future actions by employees. It should also be noted that no one understands the dangers of agreements with no end date quite like a Hazelwood/Robertson resident—that's how the City and District got into this quagmire. ***Read more about evergreen clauses at <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/subsidies/the-wonderful-evergreen-clause/>.***

Robertson FPD is hardly the first fire district to struggle with this issue. Monarch FPD went all the way to the appeals court challenging their evergreen clause in 2013 after 2 years of negotiations with the firefighter's union.<sup>2</sup> One of the most recent cases was City of Webster in 2023 where the union sued after being presented with a "last, best and final offer" after the parties had reached an impasse in negotiations.<sup>3</sup> This lawsuit against the City was made possible by the same evergreen clause being demanded at Robertson.

***The District's union firefighters decided to let their own collective bargaining agreement expire after the District offered multiple extensions, even an offer with a raise. Why? The evergreen clause offered by the District allowed the contract to continue on in negotiations but not indefinitely (see recording of Labor Negotiations from July 1, 2024 available on website and YouTube).***

For those unaware, these negotiations stem from a lawsuit against the firefighters' union after the former board of directors and union shop agreed to a new labor contract the ***night before the recall election***,<sup>4</sup> which would subvert the will of the voters. The District continues to negotiate in good faith and are dedicated to providing a fair and competitive contract to our employees. All contract negotiations are streamed publicly and recordings of negotiations can be found by going to [rfpd.org/board-meetings](https://www.rfpd.org/board-meetings). To our knowledge, Robertson FPD is the only fire district to make labor negotiations available to the public.

Following the legislative session, the District and City returned to mediation. Unable to reach a compromise, the parties now look to the courts for the ultimate decision in the matter expected in early 2025.



1. Barker, J. (2024, April 3). Bill to cut hazelwood's fire district payments stalls amid union contract talks. St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Retrieved from [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/government-politics/bill-to-cut-hazelwood-s-fire-district-payments-stalls-amid-union-contract-talks/article\\_e83c6cc4-ed4d-11ee-aae2-f7d9b71db5e8.html#?nems-source=login](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/government-politics/bill-to-cut-hazelwood-s-fire-district-payments-stalls-amid-union-contract-talks/article_e83c6cc4-ed4d-11ee-aae2-f7d9b71db5e8.html#?nems-source=login).

2. Lippman, R. (2016 July 26) Appeals court says length of Monarch fire district's contract with union is OK. Retrieved from <https://www.stlpr.org/government-politics-issues/2016-07-26/appeals-court-says-length-of-monarch-fire-districts-contract-with-union-is-ok>.

3. Mowers, J., & Murphy, K., E. (2023, March 27). Suit Filed Against City By Union Representing Webster Firefighters. Labor Tribune. Retrieved from [https://www.timesnewspapers.com/webster-kirkwoodtimes/suit-filed-against-city-by-union-representing-webster-firefighters/article\\_4319cd34-c989-11ed-96b8-17b1657155a8.html](https://www.timesnewspapers.com/webster-kirkwoodtimes/suit-filed-against-city-by-union-representing-webster-firefighters/article_4319cd34-c989-11ed-96b8-17b1657155a8.html).

4. Barker, J. (2023, September 11). Fire district board passed union contract on eve of recall. St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Retrieved from [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/government-politics/north-county-fire-district-tries-to-void-contracts-ok-d-by-oust-ed-board/article\\_98a89984-4cfa-11ee-9611-8780c5d2505a.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/government-politics/north-county-fire-district-tries-to-void-contracts-ok-d-by-oust-ed-board/article_98a89984-4cfa-11ee-9611-8780c5d2505a.html)

5. Wright, J. (2015, January 28). The Wonderful Evergreen Clause. Show-Me Institute. November 21, 2024. <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/subsidies/the-wonderful-evergreen-clause/>



# Robertson FPD Newsletter

**12641 Missouri Bottom Road  
Hazelwood, MO 63042**

Recipient Name  
4321 First Street  
Anytown, State ZIP



*www.rfpd.org*  
*Hazelwood-Bridgeton MO*



## Breakfast with Santa

December 14th, 9:30am-12pm  
Firehouse 1, 12641 MO Bottom Rd, Hazelwood

## Santa's 2024 Schedule

5:30pm to 8:00pm on the following days:

### December 3rd

Heritage Heights, Hurstborough Manor/Court  
& Cedarbrook Neighborhoods

### December 5th

Dunn Rd., Cortena Steets & Woodcrest Lane

### December 7th

Ville Maria South (MO Bottom to Ville Maura)

### December 10th

Ville Maria North (Ville Maura to Dunn Rd)

### December 12th

Streets of Bridgeton  
(Gallatin, Carrolton Apartments & Carrolton Ct.)

Santa's routes will be posted on our website,  
facebook and Nextdoor. If you miss Santa, you can  
always meet him any time on any route!