

Erin Nelson

From: Lois Young [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, May 23, 2026 8:06 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: Message for Town email

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Gary Lichtenstein [REDACTED]
Date: Fri, May 22, 2026 at 9:15 AM
Subject: Message for Town email

Please distribute the message below on the Town email. Thanks very much.

From: Gary Lichtenstein, [REDACTED]
Re: TC Proposal for a \$50k Property Tax increase for an emergency services admin

Greetings neighbors,

I write to share strong concerns that I've heard echoed by others about the Town Council's (TC) proposal to raise property taxes by \$50,000 to fund an Emergency Services Administrator (ESA). In rushing to meet Truth in Taxation deadlines, the TC has proposed creating a new position that lacks clarity about its purpose or value. I believe that the \$50,000 increase is way too high to manage emergency services administration for our small town, and far too low to address significant operational gaps in the Bluff Fire Department and EMS.

As Bluff Fire's Assistant Chief until fall 2024, I spent two years exploring ways to design and support a sustainable fire department in Bluff. I met with Chiefs and administrative officers throughout the state in jurisdictions similar to ours, as well as representatives of the Utah Association of Special Districts, Utah Local Government Trust, and Utah State Tax Commission. I resigned my position when I found no interest among town leadership to address our significant challenges to Bluff Fire operations and administration.

I applaud the new TC for finally tackling issues that face both Fire and EMS. Yet after reviewing the available documents and attending the budget Open House on 5/19, I believe the TC is leading in the wrong direction.

The Town Council is moving towards a \$50k increase in property taxes without having:

1. A job description for the proposed position
2. A plan or even a plan to make a plan to design sustainable emergency services in our town
3. Any conversations with San Juan County leaders, who have primary jurisdiction over Fire and EMS in Bluff. Administrative and operational efforts locally must integrate with existing County-led chain-of-command. Recent turnover in the County Administrator post and an upcoming election would inevitably delay such discussions for months.

The TC is hasty in creating a permanent position without these three elements in place.

The TC lists several administrative needs the proposed position could address. Those needs have existed for years and many are/have been addressed by volunteers and in the case of wildland-urban interface mitigation, town members as well. Administrative support is definitely needed, but not to the tune of a \$40,000

position. Furthermore, our Fire- and EMS-related operational needs overshadow our administrative needs and the proposed position does little to address those.

If the TC is ready to explore ways to strengthen our emergency responsiveness, let them invest the time and energy to do so strategically, rather than fund an ill-defined position with ill-defined intermediate- and long-term benefits. Let the TC fund a temporary position responsible for managing key administrative tasks while exploring sustainable options for Fire and EMS protection, as well as initiate discussions with SJC leadership regarding how to integrate local and County emergency services administration and operations. Existing budget surplus could easily fund a budget for such planning, without raising taxes for a permanent position.

This proposal will only be voted on by Town Council members. So if you have concerns, reach out. Urge them to take time to assess and then address strategically the full scope of the emergency services challenges we face as a small, rural, community striving to provide the best EMS and fire protection that we can to serve residents, businesses, neighbors, and visitors.

Sincerely,
Gary Lichtenstein
Bluff resident