

LOCAL & REGION

Ambulance District drops 2010 mill levy

Taxpayers will save about \$680,000 next year

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EDWARDS — With a new building in Avon complete and its budget under control, one local taxing district is going to drop its property tax rate for 2010.

The Eagle County Ambulance District Board of Directors recently approved its mill levy, or property tax rate, for 2010. The new, lower rate — a drop from 2 mills to 1.75 mills — will save district taxpayers \$680,000 next year, district operations manager Pete Brandes said.

According to a press release from the district, the drop in the tax rate is temporary, and can be reversed if needed in the future.

But the state's "Taxpayer Bill of Rights" or TABOR amendment to the constitution, requires taxpayer approval of any increased tax rates. How is the ambulance district different?

"That's the legal opinion we have," Brandes said, adding that voters allowed the district to exempt itself from some TABOR rules several years ago.

The release from the district states the 2010 tax rate reduction is possible due to increased assessed-property valuations.

i What it is

There are two ambulance districts in this part of Eagle County. The Eagle County Ambulance District collects taxes from roughly Wolcott to East Vail. The Western Eagle County Ambulance District collects taxes from roughly Wolcott to Dotsero.

"We believe the board's sound planning and budgeting has allowed us to take this action," district manager Fred Morrison wrote in the release. "The timing was right, as we have just completed our most pressing capital project, with the building of the Traer Creek station."

Brandes said the district's board evaluates its budget and tax rates every year. But with the Traer Creek station complete, "They felt this was an opportune time to do this."

While property values recorded with the county rose this year — due primarily to taking a "snapshot" of values in 2008 — the next county revaluation promises a significant drop in values.

That's why the ambulance district dropped its tax rate for 2010 only.

"If needed, we can go back," Brandes said.

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