Mr. Bigler, Thank you for contacting all the commissioner candidates regarding the concerns and activities of the CCVESA.  Also please accept my apologies for the lateness of my reply.  I had not
intended to wait until the final day to reply but it has been a much busier than anticipated three weeks. I will admit that I am not expert on the exact breakdown and areas of the budgets for the fourteen volunteer fire departments.   I do know that many people devote many hours to the functioning of the departments including time spent on calls and time spent on fundraisers.   As to your video and requesting comments on the budget items listed at the end, I will give my best attempt given my current knowledge.

I think the construction of a local emergency services training center is a very good thing and was glad to see the support for its groundbreaking this past March.  I would certainly support this project to completion as well as expanding to include a burn building and other upgrades as determined by the departments’ needs. I also agree that there needs to be discussions about the long range future of the volunteer fire departments and how realistic it is to continue to be able to rely so heavily on volunteers.  It is certainly a service that requires a tremendous amount of time and dedication, both in the amount of training and being available at many different hours of the day and night.

As far as an increase in the county budget for the fire departments, I was a bit confused by some of this.  There was mention of a request for a 3% increase in the budget.  This certainly seems reasonable.  However, also mentioned was having a portion of county taxes going to a dedicated fund for fire and EMS services.  I wasn’t sure if this was over and above the 3% or the creation of a dedicated fund using currently approved dollars.  I understand the purpose of the dedicated funds – to be able to plan, knowing that there is a definite funding source year in and year out. I think this could be a good idea, but I am not clear about the amount you are requesting. Additionally, you speak about establishing a 24-7 Career EMS program.  I suspect that this is something that will be needed but not something that can happen in a year or two.  I would certainly support looking into this and detailing a plan. As to the LOSAP program, I do think the county should ensure that this remains solvent.  It is something that current retirees deserve and I am sure something that is an incentive for current volunteers.   While I have known neighbors who have served for the Westminster VFD and knew of the time commitment, until the past few years, I did not realize the full extent of the costs incurred, such as paying for breathing apparatuses and training.

Finally, I for one am deeply appreciated of all the countless hours spent by the many, many volunteers in the fire departments.  As County Commissioner, I pledge to help support the departments in any way we can, in the ways determined best by the departments.  Having a good working relationship will help save the taxpayers money while helping to keep residents and properties safe and secure.

Sincerely,   Maria Warburton