

Missoula Rural Fire District
Board of Trustees
Missoula, Montana 59804

November 14, 2023

The Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD or District) Board of Trustees (BOT) met in regular session at the Station 1 Headquarters meeting room and via a "Zoom" video conference on Tuesday, November 14th, 2023.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Murphy called the meeting to order at 16:00 hours.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Present: Chairman Ben Murphy, Vice-Chairman Larry Hanson, Secretary Dick Mangan, Trustee Jeff Merritt, and Trustee Dan Corti.

READING OF THE MINUTES: Trustee Merritt moved to accept the minutes as written. Trustee Corti seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed with 5 ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There were no members of the public in attendance.

CLAIMS: Trustee Mangan asked what the claims with Lt. Paulsen's name in the description were; Melissa Schnee responded that they were for charges from the California wildland fire assignment and that there was not a fire camp available, so they had to pay for lodging. Trustee Merritt moved to accept the claims as submitted. Vice Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed with 5 ayes.

COMMUNICATIONS: Raquel Wilkinson conveyed that communications consisted of a thank you from the Plains-Paradise Rural Fire District, a letter from Chief Newman regarding his retirement, two DFM Reports, a Public Relations Outreach Breakdown, and a Calls for Service Report.

TRUSTEE REPORTS: There were no reports, but Trustee Corti did have a question regarding the Fire Chief selection process. Melissa Schnee stated that she had emailed the BOT regarding the process and additional information with specific details will be emailed out by the end of the week. Trustee Corti also asked about the external Chief who will sit on the Fire Chief's Interview panel. Chief Newman said that Chief Osbourne, from Butte-Silverbow Fire Department, will be the external Chief. Trustee Corti also asked why someone local wasn't sitting on the panel. Chief Newman said that it was better to go outside of Missoula County because of the closer relationships with the local Chiefs. The interview date for the Fire Chief's interviews is scheduled for December 4, 2023.

STAFF REPORTS:

Volunteers Association: No report. There weren't any members of the Volunteer's Association present.

Local 2457: Speaking on behalf of the Local Union 2457, Captain Ballard had nothing to report.

Battalion Chief (BC): Acting Battalion Chief, Captain (Capt.) Huleatt reported that the month had been busy. There was an increase in calls from last year's 279 calls to 304 total calls for the month of October. Capt. Huleatt mentioned that we sent a crew to California for a wildland assignment. He also spoke about the more significant incidents throughout the District.

Finance and Human Resources (HR): Melissa Schnee reported that the District is balanced with Missoula County through September. We have completed and submitted all fire billing except for the California wildland assignment. Melissa Schnee has also been working with the Auditor to complete the audit for FY21, but the Auditor needed more time and hopes to present the audit to the BOT at the December BOT meeting. Melissa Schnee reminded the BOT the next audit is a the 2-year audit so FY22 FY23 will be done together in order to get MRFD's audits up to date. Melissa has also been doing a lot of work with the hiring process for the administration Chief positions.

Assistant Chief of Operations: Chief Finlay reported that the training calendar is in place and includes training with the Missoula Fire Department (MFD). Our administration wants to continue to foster our relationship with MFD for years to come, which is reflected in the training calendar. Chief Finlay discussed a monetary demand he received for damage to a building from the use of a fire hydrant. The hydrant was put in place years ago to provide training and a water source for fires in the area. While using it, there have been some issues, which were recorded on video, of the hydrant shaking. Missoula City Water was notified of the issues and the City rebuilt the hydrant. The District continued to use it from that point without any issues. Chief Finlay said this has been turned over to the District's insurance company. Chief Finlay stated that he and Melissa Schnee are a part of a working group that will change the CPAT process within the state and bring it back to a local level instead of hiring an out-of-state company. He believes they can do a nice job with the testing and bring in more local candidates. Chairman Murphy inquired about who owned the hydrant, and Chief Finlay responded that Missoula City Water owns it. Chief Newman provided the history regarding the easement and hydrant.

Fire Chief: Chief Newman reported that he has been continuing to work on the Station Location study and ESCI has been selected to do the study. Currently, this study has been placed on a brief hold because Missoula Fire Department (MFD) might also be doing a study. Chief Newman spoke with MFD Fire Chief Gordy Hughes, about possibly doing a parallel study. Chief Hughes is interested in doing that. As both MRFD and MFD look to the future for years to come, station locations in this valley will be very critical and both feel doing the parallel study is the right thing to do. There have been a lot of discussions on apparatus replacements, and costs are rising at a pace like no one thought they would ever see. There will be more discussion later in the meeting about this with the New Business items. A lot of work on position descriptions from Firefighter I up to Chief has been done to ensure they are accurate and align with MRFD's task books for each position. Chief Newman also mentioned that the Chief and Deputy Chief promotional processes are underway. Chief Newman gave kudos to the Training Officer, Lieutenant Ben Crocker, on the latest new hire academy. The academy went great, and Lt. Crocker did a fine job on this round of new hires. The pinning ceremony went well, and it was great to see the family and friends who attended.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) New Resident Volunteer Firefighter (RFF) Introduction and Oath of Office - RFF Andrew Thompson and RFF Morgan Meatovich:** Chairman Murphy read the Oath of Office to the new residents.
- 2. MRFD New Career Firefightre Oath of Office - Megan Bunnell, Jacob Lapinski, Wil Aitchison, and Clint Dregalla:** Chairman Murphy read the Oath of Office to the new hires.
- 3. Discussion and Decision on Resolution 2023-16 to Purchase an Ambulance through Cooperative Purchasing:** Chief Finlay proposed that MRFD purchase an Ambulance that would cost the District half of what a Type I Engine costs. The cost for an ambulance is about \$226,200.00 not outfitted with necessary equipment. The equipment would cost approximately \$130,000.00. Chief Finlay is also figuring another \$5,000.00 to cover any rising prices that might happen by the time it is completed. It is about an 18 month timeline for the build. Chief Finlay also presented

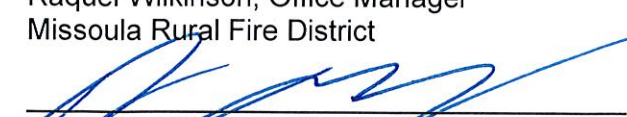
benefits of MRFD having an ambulance such as being able to transport patients quicker, being able to send the ambulance out on wildland fires staffed and saving wear and tear on the Type I Fire Engines on medical calls, which are about 75% of MRFD's call volume. There was a discussion of where the new ambulance would be stationed and it will likely be at Station 4 in Bonner. Secretary Mangan made a motion to approve the resolution. Vice Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed with 4 ayes, 0 nays and 1 abstained.

4. **Discussion and Decision on Resolution 2023-17 Adoption of the State of Montana VEBA Health Benefit Plan and Trust Policy:** Melissa Schnee conveyed that this is an annual item that once a group is formed, it is in place for a year. Then that group has the option to change it, keep it or disban it. All of the eligible retirees had the opportunity to vote and it has been decided to keep it as it is. Trustee Corti made a motion to approve the Resolution. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed with 5 ayes, 0 nays and 0 abstains.
5. **Discussion and Decision on Memorandum of Understanding between MRFD and Local 2457 regarding the continuation of MRFD VEBA group:** Trustee Corti made a motion to sign the MOU. Vice Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed with 5 ayes, 0 nays and 0 abstains.
6. **Dicussion and Decision of Chief Newman's Reitrement and Contractual Provisions:** Chief Newman spoke on the letter that he presented to the Board regarding his retirement in 77 days from the date of the letter and requested that the Board waive the one year notice requirement that is included in his contract and approve the payout of the additional 50% of his sick leave, making his total sick leave payout at 75%. Chief Newman stated the same language is in CBA and the amount was included in the budget. Trustee Corti stated that his concerns were about setting a precedent and did not believe 77 days was adequate notice to receive the 75% payout absent extenuating circumstances. Questions were asked on whether the notice had been waived in the past and under what circumstances. Trustee Corti made the motion to approve Chief Newman's retirement date of December 29, 2023 but not approve the 75% payout of sick leave. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed 4 ayes and 1 nay and 0 abstains.
7. **Presentation of FY24 1st Quarter Budget vs. Actual Report.** Melissa Schnee stated that there were no unexpected expenses.
8. **Discussion and Decision on Annexation Approval for 10260 Bear Run Creek Rd., Missoula, MT 59803:** Secretary Mangan had concerns regarding this property's annexation from the information he read on the criteria sheet. Chief Newman explained that 14 other properties in the same area have annexed into the District in the past and that Deputy Fire Marshal Giardino has been working with the property owners in the area to make it more accessible for the District fire trucks. Trustee Merritt made the motion to approve the annexation. Vice Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed 4 ayes and 1 nay and 0 abstains.
9. **Discussion and Decision on the General Release of Liability for Dontation of Extrication Equipment to Helmville VFD:** A power unit, a ram, cutters and spreaders as well as various hydraulic hoses will be donated to Helmville VFD. Trustee Merritt made the motion to approve the donation. Vice Chaiman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passes with 5 ayes, 0 nays and 0 abstains.

ADJOURNMENT: Trustee Merritt made a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. Chairman Murphy adjourned the meeting at 17:41 hours.

Respectfully submitted,


Raquel Wilkinson, Office Manager
Missoula Rural Fire District



John (Ben) Murphy, Chairman

12/13/23
Date



Dick Mangan, Secretary

12/13/23
Date