

MISSOULA RURAL FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Missoula, Montana

January 13, 2026

The Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) Board of Trustees (Board) met in regular session at the Station 1 Headquarters meeting room and via a "Teams" video conference on **Tuesday, January 13, 2026**.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Murphy called the meeting to order at 16:00 hours.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Chair Ben Murphy; Secretary Dan Corti; Trustee Dick Mangan

Absent: Vice Chair Jeff Merritt; Trustee Melody Cunningham

PUBLIC COMMENT (on any public matter that is not on the agenda and that is within the jurisdiction of the Board):

There was no public comment.

1. Approval of Minutes for Regular Board Meetings held on December 9, 2025.

The Board reviewed the minutes of the December 9, 2025 regular Board meeting. No revisions were requested. There was no public comment. Secretary Corti moved to approve the minutes as presented. Trustee Mangan seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 ayes, 0 nays, and 0 abstentions.

2. Discussion and Decision on Approval of November and December 2025 Claims.

The Board reviewed the November and December 2025 claims as presented in the Board packet. There were no questions from the Board and no public comment. Secretary Corti moved to approve the claims as presented. Trustee Mangan seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 ayes, 0 nays, and 0 abstentions.

3. Communications / Correspondence.

Office Manager Raquel Wilkinson reported that the communications and correspondence in the Board packet included an IT report, a Deputy Fire Marshal report, a Public Relations Outreach Breakdown, and a Calls for Service Report.

4. Trustee Reports.

Chair Murphy reported that negotiations with IAFF Local 2457 continued, with a meeting held the prior week and another meeting scheduled for February 2, 2026. He noted progress and expressed appreciation for continued dialogue. There were no additional trustee reports.

5. Fire Chief and Staff Reports.

Local 2457: Max Kottwitz, President of IAFF Local 2457, reported that the "Coats for Kids" program concluded for the season, with more than 200 coats distributed to children in the community. Additional donations of shoes and socks were received, and Local 2457 will coordinate with local schools to identify children in need. A donation of quilts was also received for use on calls. Upcoming fundraising events were announced, including a joint fundraiser at Peak Health & Wellness on February 18, 2026, a fundraiser at Cranky Sam's Bingo Night on February 23, 2026, and the Fire and Ice hockey game on February 7, 2026. Recognition was given to the former Volunteer Association for a donation of nearly \$12,000 to the Local's benevolent fund.

Battalion Chief: Battalion Chief Ron Lubke reported December 2025 call statistics, noting 298 incidents compared to 283 in December 2024, representing an increase of slightly more than five percent. For calendar year 2025, MRFD responded to 3,824 total incidents, a decrease of just under five percent from 2024, which was attributed in part to significant wind and wildfire activity in 2024. December included two significant mutual-aid responses to Frenchtown Rural Fire District, one for a structure fire and one for a rope rescue. A wind event on December 17, 2025, resulted in approximately 30 weather-related calls and included temporary disruption of 911 service. Response-time performance was reviewed, including meeting structure-fire turnout goals 92 percent of the time and EMS turnout goals approximately 82 percent of the time. Staff plan to adjust turnout-time goals in the first quarter of 2026.

Finance Director: Finance Director Melissa Schnee reported that MRFD is balanced with Missoula County statements through June 2025. She has been working with County Finance to reconcile the remaining statements. Work is ongoing with the auditor on a joint audit of fiscal years 2022 and 2023.

Deputy Chief: Deputy Chief Cory Horsens reported on Community Risk Reduction activities, including participation in the accreditation site visit and partnerships with the American Red Cross to support smoke-alarm installation. Crews continued recertification efforts in Advanced Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, and CPR. He reported that MRFD had been recommended for accreditation and would appear before the Commission on Fire Accreditation International at the March 10–13, 2026 conference in Orlando, Florida. Trustees were invited to attend. Grant activity was discussed, including pending delivery of equipment purchased through an Assistance to Firefighters Grant and submission of a Montana Emergency Tourism Assistance Program grant application for powered watercraft to enhance safety and efficiency during swift water rescues. Leadership training by Dr. Candace Ashby was announced for January 20 and 21, 2026. The MRFD annual banquet was tentatively scheduled for April 17, 2026, and will be finalized based on interest.

Assistant Chief of Operations: Assistant Chief Kirk Paulsen reported on attendance at wildfire-preparedness meetings in the O'Brien Creek Upland Trail, Horseback Ridge, and Saddleback areas, addressing past fires, home ignition zones, evacuation strategies, modeling, and mitigation options. Follow-up meetings are planned.

Fire Chief: Fire Chief Paul Finlay introduced Jason Prinzing as MRFD's new Human Resources Director and reported that Mr. Prinzing attended the Candidate Physical Agility Test the prior month with Chief Finlay and Finance Director Melissa Schnee. He discussed his attendance at multiple Board of County Commissioners and public meetings related to Targeted Economic Development Districts (TEDDs) and Tax Increment Financing, as well as a Missoula City Club meeting regarding TEDDs impacting the Wye area, including their effects and potential benefits. He reported ongoing coordination with the Montana State Fire Chiefs' Association, upcoming participation in a 911 Advisory Meeting in Helena, and progress on the ambulance bay project, which was nearing completion but delayed due to weather. The Fire Chief also reported that a joint meeting with Frenchtown Rural Fire District had been postponed and would be rescheduled, and that continued coordination with Missoula Fire Department leadership was ongoing.

6. Presentation by Chief Horsens on Impact Fees.

The Board next considered a presentation on impact fees. Due to technical difficulties, the Chair temporarily deferred the presentation and proceeded to the next agenda item. Later in the meeting, the Board returned to the impact fee discussion. Deputy Chief Horsens introduced Karen Hughes from the Missoula County Office of Planning and Sustainability, who was present to assist with technical questions. The Deputy Chief provided an informational overview of impact fees as a potential funding mechanism to address growth-related infrastructure needs within MRFD. He explained that impact fees are one-time fees assessed at the time of building permit issuance and are intended to offset growth-related capital costs associated with new development. Deputy Chief Horsens reviewed the process required to implement impact fees, including completion of a district-specific impact fee study, review

by the Missoula County Impact Fee Advisory Committee, and consideration by the Missoula County Board of Commissioners. He reported that the estimated cost of conducting a district-specific impact fee study would be approximately \$24,000 and that the study would take approximately six to twelve months to complete. He further reported that Missoula County and the City of Missoula have utilized TischlerBise, a consulting firm based in Boise, Idaho, to conduct impact fee studies, and that future coordination with the County could allow for shared study costs. He noted that MRFD could independently conduct a district-specific study prior to the next County study cycle. The Deputy Chief reviewed County-provided projections indicating that, had MRFD participated in impact fee collections in 2025, estimated revenues could have ranged between approximately \$231,000 and \$307,000, based on development activity and comparable calculations for Frenchtown Rural Fire District. Ms. Hughes responded to Board questions regarding when impact fees are assessed in the development process, applicability to different types of development, and how capital improvement plans are used in calculating proportionate share and eligible expenditures. Board members discussed potential benefits, limitations, and timing considerations associated with impact fee adoption. No resolution or formal action was requested or taken. The Board indicated that the matter would be revisited at a future meeting.

7. Discussion on FY25 Fourth Quarter Budget vs. Actual.

The Finance Director presented the FY25 fourth-quarter budget-versus-actual report, noting that revenues and expenditures were largely consistent with expectations and that wildland activity exceeded projections. Board members asked clarifying questions. No action was taken.

8. Discussion and Decision on Resolution 2026-1 Disposal of Surplus Equipment.

The Board considered Resolution 2026-1 authorizing disposal of a nonfunctioning KitchenAid dishwasher at Station 1. There was no public comment. Secretary Corti moved to approve the Resolution. Trustee Mangan seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 ayes, 0 nays, and 0 abstentions.

9. Closed Executive Session - Litigation Strategy (IAFF Local 2457).

District legal counsel stated that the next agenda item involved a discussion related to litigation strategy and that, pursuant to § 2-3-203(4)(a), MCA, a meeting may be closed to the public to discuss a strategy to be followed with respect to litigation when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the Fire District's litigating position and the other party is not a public entity. Chair Murphy made the required findings and closed the meeting to executive session, stating that if any decisions were necessary, they would be made in open session upon the Board's reconvening.

The Board then proceeded to enter executive session at 17:00 hours.
Chair Murphy reconvened the open portion of the meeting at 17:50 hours.

Based on discussions with legal counsel during the closed executive session, Secretary Corti moved to authorize the District's legal counsel to initiate appropriate legal proceedings in district court relating to the arbitration request from IAFF Local 2457. Trustee Mangan seconded the motion. There was no public comment. The motion passed with 3 ayes, 0 nays, and 0 abstentions.

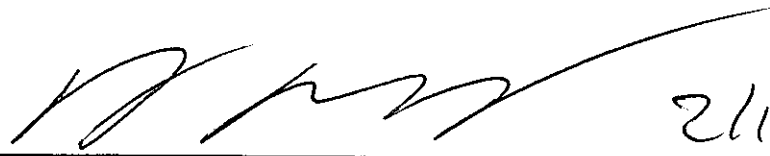
ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Murphy adjourned the meeting at 17:55 hours.

Respectfully submitted,



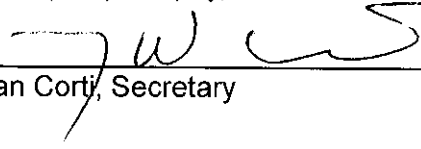
Emma Christman, Administrative Assistant
Missoula Rural Fire District



John (Ben) Murphy, Chairman

Date

2/14/26



Dan Corti, Secretary

Date

10 Feb 2026