

Missoula Rural Fire District
Board of Trustees
Missoula, Montana 59804

November 9th, 2021

The Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) Board of Trustees (BOT) met in regular session at the Station 1 Headquarters meeting room and via a "Zoom" video conference on **Tuesday, November 9th, 2021**.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Murphy called the meeting to order at 19:00 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. Vice-Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. Motion voted and passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Oath of Office for the new residents and volunteers:** Robert Lubke and Luciano Beaton were sworn in by Chairman Murphy as new Resident Firefighters along with Brandon Bostick as a new Volunteer Firefighter.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No one from the public was available for comment.

CLAIMS: Trustee Merritt asked if there was an amount at which MRFD is required to go to bid. Melissa Schnee answered yes. Secretary Mangan moved to accept the claims as submitted. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. Motion was voted and passed.

COMMUNICATIONS: Melissa Schnee reported that the communications included two announcements of intent to retire: Battalion Chief Blaine Cowan, who will retire in December 2022, and Captain Forest Brown, retiring in January 2022. Communications also included a thank you letter, an annexation resolution, an IT Report, District Fire Marshal (DFM) Reports, and Call for Service Reports.

TRUSTEE REPORTS: There were no Trustee reports at this time.

STAFF REPORTS:

Local 2457: Captain Burgess reported that the Fill the Boot campaign raised \$15,881.15, which was \$3,000 higher than their previous record. Captain Burgess also said that he was approached by Ricky Walsh, President of the International Fire Fighters, to take on eight Airport Public Safety Officer Firefighters. They were part of the Teacher's Union and felt like they weren't represented appropriately. They are now Local 2457 members, and contracts are being drawn up. Accepting the new members will not affect MRFD and only adds a bargaining unit. Captain Burgess also reported that Local 2457 voted in favor of the rebranding of MRFD.

Finance and Human Resources (HR): Melissa Schnee reported meeting with the auditors who are scheduled to present the auditor report at the December BOT meeting. MRFD is balanced with the County through September. Schnee reported that the Administration had attended webinars for HR Policy and Leadership. Schnee said she had been preparing for many of the items under New Business discussed later in the meeting.

Battalion Chief (BC): There were no Battalion Chief reports at this time.

Assistant Chief of Operations: Assistant Chief Finlay reported that MRFD responded to a challenging water rescue call that ultimately became a recovery. MRFD received a new Type V Cab Chassis that is in the process of being assembled. Resource Manager Brian LaForest has done an excellent job of ensuring that the schedule for that build is maintained. Chief Finlay reported that he took part in an informational meeting with the Insurance Services Office (ISO) to prepare for MRFD's scheduled re-rate in spring of 2022. Chief Finlay had also attended the Active Attack Integrated Response monthly meeting. Chief Finlay reported that he participated and added insight to the Captain and BC Academy held a couple of weeks ago to bring up new leadership within MRFD. Chief Finlay reported that he attended an elevator meeting to discuss MRFD's responsibility and thoughts on elevator emergencies within the District. Chief Finlay also took part in the Run Card meetings as MRFD continues towards accreditation. Chief Finlay stated that he emailed a report to each BOT member at the request of Secretary Mangan for information related to assignments in both wildland and COVID-19, task book signoffs, and future endeavors of MRFD. Secretary Mangan requested to meet with Chief Finlay and Training Officer Cowan in the next couple of weeks to discuss long-term planning of the task book focus on what MRFD needs as a department.

Fire Chief: Chief Newman referenced the October Call for Service report showing 265 calls, which averages over 3,000 calls for this year. That is significantly over MRFD's highest year in the past. Chief Newman reported that the appraisal for the existing Station 4 had been submitted. Chief Newman noted that the Captain and BC Academy went well and received positive feedback from those who attended. The new Station 4 substantial completion date was moved to Wednesday, November 17th, 2021. There had been minor issues getting materials, but the builders were working diligently on getting it complete. Chief Newman said that the Community Risk Reduction Team had been out of the office for some time, so he stepped in to perform the necessary duties. He also reported that he continues work on the Community Risk Assessment Standard of Cover. The final module was submitted to CPSE and will be finished with the station location study, including drive times, population density, and historical call volumes. Chief Newman reported that he attended the ISO meeting with Chief Finlay. Chief Newman had been working on the job description for the Resident and Volunteer Coordinator new position, which was sent to the attorney for final review. The last thing Chief Newman reported on was that MRFD is looking into doing station rotations and feels that it can be valuable to the District. Chairman Murphy asked about call density location and if there had been a shift over the years for where the heaviest call volumes came. Chief Newman answered that the historical data MRFD used was from the last three years, and the highest call volume came from the Station 1 area. Chairman Murphy wanted to know if there was a way of weighting those calls by severity for things like the Hwy 93 s-curves. Chief Newman said that the final report would show the calls color-coded according to call volume, but was not aware of a method to track severity.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **MRFD Rebranding:** Engineer Muir, Captain Burgess, and BC Lubke each took an opportunity to speak in favor of the name change. Captain Burgess reported that Local 2457 held a vote at their last meeting, and roughly 95% supported the idea of rebranding. He said that MRFD is no longer a volunteer department, but a career department supplemented by a small number of residents and even fewer volunteers. BC Lubke believes that the name change to Missoula Valley Fire-Rescue would represent who MRFD is now. Vice-Chairman Hanson commented that he does not want the change to be "search and rescue" since there is already an agency with that name. Secretary Mangan, Trustee Corti, and Trustee Merritt suggested reaching out for community input. Secretary Mangan asked if MRFD is having trouble recruiting and retaining firefighters due to the "rural" name. Chief Newman reported that when MRFD participated in the Candidate Physical Ability Test, he spoke to a potential recruit who almost passed on MRFD because of the perception that "rural" meant volunteer department. Chief Newman also spoke to other Chiefs who had gone through a similar rebranding from a rural department. The feedback they gave was that the

recruiting numbers skyrocketed because of the change. Trustee Corti would like a couple of months before deciding and would like to see community involvement. Secretary Mangan would also like some time to think this over. After speaking with the firefighters and administration, Chairman Murphy reported that he was impressed with the depth of feeling behind this issue and is curious about the name change's legal ramifications. Trustee Corti commented that it's important to take a deeper look into this change from a morale standpoint.

CLOSE OF THE OPEN MEETING

CALL TO ORDER THE PUBLIC MEETING for Resolution 2021-9 Disposition of real property not necessary for the conduct of Fire District business and authorizing its sale by public auction for the appraised value of \$585,000.00: No one from the public was available for comment.

CLOSE OF THE PUBLIC MEETING

CALL TO ORDER THE OPEN MEETING

NEW BUSINESS:

2. **Resolution 2021-9 Disposition of real property not necessary for the conduct of Fire District business and authorizing its sale by public auction for the appraised value of \$585,000.00 (S27, T13 N, R18 W, C.O.S. 1344, ACRES 0.386, EXEMPT):** Vice-Chairman Hanson moved to adopt the resolution. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. Motion voted and passed.
3. **Bid review and selection for a Type 1 Engine:** Chief Finlay reported that MRFD received a bid from Rosenbauer for a total cost of \$434,952. Trustee Merritt moved to approve the bid for the new Type I engine. Vice-Chairman seconded the motion. The motion was voted and passed.
4. **Administration Contract for Jenn Culp:** Vice-Chairman Hanson motioned to accept the contract for Jenn Culp. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. The motion was voted and passed.
5. **MRFD Organizational Chart Update:** Chief Newman proposes a change to the organizational chart by eliminating the second Assistant Chief position after Chief Christopherson retires and adding a new position for Resident/Volunteer Coordinator. With the new residents moving into the new Station 4 next month, the residents will make up 15% of MRFD staff. As the program continues to grow, there is a greater need to fill that position to ensure its success. Chairman Murphy asked if Chief Newman would oversee the different divisions. Chief Newman confirmed that the division managers would report directly to him. Secretary Mangan asked how this would affect the budget. Chief Newman said that initially, MRFD would see a benefit because Chief Christopherson's position is a higher-paid position than the Resident/Volunteer Coordinator position. Vice-Chairman Hanson made a motion to approve the change to the organizational chart. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. Motion was voted and passed.
6. **November 2022 BOT Meeting-Reschedule for Wednesday, November 9th, 2022, due to the holiday on Tuesday, November 8th, 2022:** Trustee Merritt motioned to reschedule the November 8th, 2022, meeting for November 9th, 2022. Vice-Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. Motion was voted and passed.

ADJOURNMENT: Secretary Mangan made a motion to adjourn. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. Chairman Murphy adjourned the meeting at 20:08 hours.

Respectfully submitted,




Jenn Culp, Administrative Assistant
Missoula Rural Fire District



John (Ben) Murphy, Chairman

12/15/21

Date



Dick Mangan, Secretary

12/15/21

Date