

Missoula Rural Fire District
Board of Trustees
Missoula, Montana 59804

December 13th, 2022

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, December 13th, 2022.**

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. Vice-Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed.

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

CLAIMS: Secretary Mangan made a motion to accept the claims as submitted. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed.

COMMUNICATIONS: Raquel Wilkinson conveyed that the communications consisted of seven thank-you letters, two annexation approval letters from the Board of County Commissioners, two DFM reports, a Public Relations Outreach Breakdown, and a Calls for Service Report.

TRUSTEE REPORTS: Trustee Merritt reported that he attended the retirement breakfast for BC Cowan and had a good time socializing with the folks there.

STAFF REPORTS:

Local 2457: Engineer Kottwitz reported that the Coats for Kids campaign, led by Engineer Noble, was done a little differently this year. Typically, they go into the schools to give out the coats, but the schools have requested that it not be done like that because they felt the kids were singled out. They are trying to find other ways to get the coats to the kids who need them. Engineer Kottwitz thanked everyone who attended the retirement breakfast for BC Cowan, and a special thanks to BC Orr, who organized the event. The Local has expressed a want to do events like that more often. At the end of January, three local members will attend an Affiliate Leadership Training Summit Convention in Las Vegas. Another conference will be held in Helena next month, discussing upcoming legislation that may affect MRFD. Chairman Murphy asked if Engineer Kottwitz had any knowledge of specific legislation that might impact MRFD. Engineer Kottwitz said he has yet to have a chance to look at what's coming up. He also mentioned that there is support from Local 2457 for Willis Curdy as a representative who has been a big proponent of MRFD. Chief Newman asked if he had heard anything about the community paramedicine. Engineer Kottwitz said he hasn't heard anything about it but will find out at the convention in Helena to learn what's coming up.

Resident/Volunteer Coordinator: Lieutenant Paulsen provided the Board with a report that showed a breakdown of what the residents and volunteers have done in the last year. Six received the Firefighter 1 Certificate, four received the Water/Tender Driver Operator Certificate, and one received the Wildland Driver Operator Certificate. A resident recently completed Paramedic school, and another six are enrolled. Two residents are currently enrolled in the Fire Science program through Columbia Southern. Four EMT

Basics and two are pending, with a total of twenty-five certifications issued in 2022. There was a total of 2,143 hours for hands-on training and 1,210 hours for book learning, with a total of 3,353 hours of training. The shift hours residents have contributed for the year so far were 23,151 hours.

Battalion Chief (BC): Captain Huleatt reported that they continue to see an increase in call volume, which has resulted in a 7% increase for the month of November compared to November 2021 with a 12% decrease for this calendar year than where they were at last calendar year.

Finance and Human Resources: Melissa Schnee reported that MRFD is balanced with the County through October. The month of November was primarily focused on retro pay calculations. Since negotiations went longer and there were additional longevities and incentives, it created additional pay increases that were challenging to calculate. Retro pay direct deposits will be going out with pay period 14. Melissa also reported that they are preparing for year-end W2s and 1099s. They have attended training to review the information and any updates for the upcoming tax year. Melissa has been working with the Training Officer Crocker, Chief Finlay, and Raquel Wilkinson to review the training Standard Operational Guidelines, forms, and budget processes for FY23. She's also been working with BC Lubke and Captain Berry on evaluations. Melissa will get an introduction to accreditation and begin the process by attending meetings with Accreditation Manager Horsens, Chief Newman, and Chief Finlay. They will attend the Center for Public Safety Conference (CPSE) at the end of February.

Assistant Chief of Operations: Chief Finlay added to the BC Report that there was a significant structure fire off of Forest Hill Lane. The fire was well-involved, and they sustained a firefighter injury. While chaining up, the firefighter had a bungee cord slip, and the hook caught his hand. MRFD's crews were concise, and radio traffic was good on the scene showing that the Blue Card system was beneficial. Due to the conditions on-site, a responding engine got stuck, and it took a couple of hours to get the engine out. Chief Finlay reported that he was able to attend the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section meeting. One of the issues discussed was the use of marijuana while off-duty and how it's being handled when returning to work. Chief Finlay said that much of November was focused on accreditation. MRFD held a surplus sale for the public, but there was little interest in the items being sold. Chief Finlay met with some MRFD personnel, formed an in-depth analysis concerning the potential of moving ladder truck 318 to Station 2, and sent Chief Newman that information. Chief Finlay spent some time with Missoula City and County agencies trying to develop the new Mobile Incident Command Vehicle, and the process is moving forward. Also reported was a tank failure on the 367 Tactical Water Tender. They are researching how to rework the tender to save money moving forward with the Apparatus Replacement Plan. A year ago, the cost to replace a water tender was \$333,000. They believe they can cut that cost at least in half. Chairman Murphy asked how many years the water tender has been in service. Chief Finlay answered that there were various new components and some older ones, but the tender had low mileage. Chief Newman added that it was still in excellent condition and believes they can save close to \$250,000 and have a solid rig for many years to come.

Fire Chief: Chief Newman reported that Station Alerting is ready to begin installation in January, and they will have the program up and running by March 1st, 2023. He did receive the analysis for moving ladder truck 318 to Station 2 and will review the data. BC Cowan's retirement was a great event that was very well attended. Also reported was their first strategic plan meeting post-publication of the actual strategic plan. The sub-committee decided to start with the second goal: to maintain effective staffing that ensures excellence, support, and service delivery to the District's growing community. Chief Newman attended the second Prescribed Fire Working Group meeting with Lieutenant Paulsen and Engineer Blakely. This group will bring all the wildland players from the community together to figure out how to start putting fire on the ground for private land prescribed fires. As part of the accreditation process, Chief Newman attended the Health, Wellness, and Safety, Administration, and Communications program appraisal meetings.

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:


1. **MRFD FY22 Annual Financial Report:** Melissa Schnee said the report is required to be submitted to the State annually. The report is unaudited for review and does not require a motion.
2. **2023 Ballot Certification Form and 2023-2024 Board Member Roster:** Melissa Schnee stated that Vice-Chairman Hanson's seat was up for reelection and he indicated that he will renew his candidacy. Melissa asked everyone to verify that the information was correct on the 2023-2024 Board Member Roster. All Board members confirmed that their information was correct.
3. **CPSE Letter of Understanding for Applicant/Candidate Agencies:** Chief Newman referred to the Letter of Understanding in the Board's packet that will go to CPSE in order to take the next step in the accreditation process, which will take MRFD from a Registered Agency to an Applicant Agency. This will give MRFD a mentor from CPSE to help get through the second part of the self-assessment in the late spring of 2023. Trustee Merritt moved to approve the Letter of Understanding for accreditation. Vice-Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed.
4. **Recommendations and Decision on Fire Chief Hiring Process:** Chief Newman communicated that if a Fire Chief announces their retirement, they wanted to ensure MRFD has a hiring process in place to follow. A subcommittee of the Board met to review the current process and felt there was no reason to make any significant changes. Melissa Schnee said that the biggest change she saw to the process was that previously, MRFD hadn't done it in the proper format with advertising for a quorum of the Board, but with the help of MRFD's attorney, they were able to correct that. Attorney Dinwiddie added that she believed it was a good process. Vice-Chairman Hanson made a motion to accept the process. Trustee Merritt seconded the motion. The motion was voted on and passed.

ADJOURNMENT: Trustee Merritt made a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chairman Hanson seconded the motion. Chairman Murphy adjourned the meeting at 16:36 hours.

Respectfully submitted,



Jenn Culp, Administrative Assistant
Missoula Rural Fire District



John (Ben) Murphy, Chairman

11/10/23

Date



Dick Mangin, Secretary

11/11/23

Date