

**SEELEY LAKE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING 6:00PM FIRE HALL**  
**MEETING DATE: March 16, 2021**  
**MINUTES FOR: February 16, 2021**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING**

**PRESENT**

Scott Kennedy, Chair  
Gary Lewis, Vice Chair  
Rita Rossi, Secretary  
Connie Clark  
Jon Kimble  
Dave Lane, Fire Chief  
Lynn Richards, District Administrator

**ABSENT**

**I. PLEDGE OF ALEGIANCE:**

Chief Lane led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. REGULAR MEETING CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:**

Chairman, Scott Kennedy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Five trustees were present along with the Fire Chief and District Administrator. Scott thanked all the volunteers, members and staff for their service.

In attendance were Darlene Les; Shirley Goudzwaard; Cristine Matheny; Lavonne Dunster; Kristy Pohlman; John Baker and Michael Richards. Also present was Andi Bourne with the *Pathfinder*.

**III. MINUTES:**

Gary Lewis made a motion to approve the January 19, 2021 board minutes. Jon Kimble seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposing or abstaining.

**IV. VISIT WITH GUESTS/PUBLIC COMMENT FOR MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA/CORRESPONDENCE:**

Andi Bourne stated she saw the board packet and was curious if correspondence related to Sole Stone would be discussed. Scott stated there was and he would address it.

Correspondence included a Missoula County Proclamation for Klaus Von Stutterheim Day and also a thank you note from Kathy Davis. (See attached)

Scott stated regarding Sole Stone, he did receive correspondence and intends to review it with legal counsel and respond to the letters request including raising the prior concerns that we have about the billing and private funds.

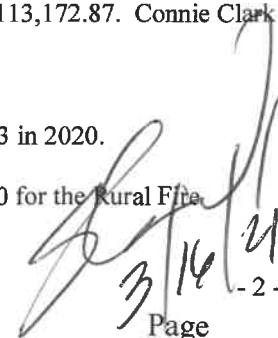
**V. FINANCIAL REPORT AND APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:**

Rita Rossi made a motion to approve the January 2021 financial report in the amount of \$113,172.87. Connie Clark seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposing or abstaining.

**VI. REPORTS:**

- 1. Call Volume** – Chief Lane reported there were 26 calls in January 2021 compared to 23 in 2020.
- 2. Recruitment** – Nothing new was reported.
- 3. Grants** – Chief Lane reported the department received reimbursement of over \$2500.00 for the Rural Fire Capacity Grant. Still waiting for reimbursement from the CARES funding.

Minutes For February 16, 2020

  
3/16/21  
Page - 2 -

4. **Updates /Actions** – Nothing new was reported.

5. **Membership Report** – Michael Richards reported the foundation requested him to visit the high school in regard to the Ogden Memorial Scholarship as no students have been applying.

**VII. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. District Operations Manual/SOPs Approval – There were no new SOPs submitted.
2. County Commissioner Correspondence – Chief Lane stated the article in the newspaper didn't capture what he wanted to say completely so read a written response as far as his feelings regarding the letter to the county commissioners which was forwarded to the district. Chief Lane read his statement. (See attached).

Chair Scott Kennedy read his statement. (See attached). Scott stated his statement will be copied to the county commissioners and to Sam Hunthausen, State Board of Medical Examiners.

Kristy Pohlman questioned if Scott's statement was written by him or by the board as a whole. Scott stated it was from him in response to his interaction with the county commissioners. Kristy also asked if anyone has talked with East Missoula as they are staffed 24/7 with volunteers; they always have at least two volunteers at the station. Kristy feels it's always good to talk with other people as to how they make it work; Chief Schaffer took that department from four volunteers to having a waiting list of volunteers.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. There was no new business.

**IX. NEXT MONTH AGENDA ITEMS:**

Reports; District Operations Manual/SOPs

**X. ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING:**

Upon motion duly seconded, the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:20 p.m. The next regularly scheduled monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 16, 2021.

Approved:



Chair of the Board



Clerk of the Board



3/16/21

# PROCLAMATION

## MISSOULA COUNTY

**WHEREAS**, Klaus von Stutterheim has been instrumental in revitalizing the Seeley Lake Community Council in a manner that helps residents successfully and enthusiastically address important issues such as transportation, public safety, human health, economic development and environmental quality; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus leads by example in bringing together diverse community viewpoints in a friendly way that allows everyone to be heard, understood, appreciated and welcomed, through his personal life, through his work with nonprofits and through his work with his "We're on Facebook!" beloved community council; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus recognizes the difficulties facing local landowners relative to the multitude of public and private agencies managing land in the Clearwater and Blackfoot watersheds; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus continues to successfully bring diverse land managers together in a collaborative manner to help Missoula County residents find solutions to complex bureaucratic issues; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus quietly played a significant role in the acquisition of more than 310,000 acres of Plum Creek land by national land trusts in western Montana; and,

**WHEREAS**, those Montana Legacy lands are now in the capable hands of the public, and the resources they house will benefit generations of residents and visitors to Missoula County and Montana well into the future; and,

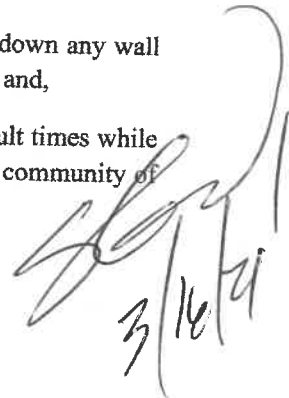
**WHEREAS**, Klaus is one of the first local residents to bring Missoula County to the table with a group of landowners to outline a years-long plan to protect the lands, waters, agriculture, wildlife and the way of life of those fortunate enough to live in and around The Meadow at Woodworth; and,

**WHEREAS**, by helping initiate the process to protect The Meadow, Klaus introduced community conservation to private sector land trusts that now work countywide on land conservation for all interested landowners; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus is a devoted fundraiser for the community who never fails to generate dollars for worthy causes, going so far as to proudly auction off pieces of the Berlin Wall alongside his personal stories of how he acquired those items of worldwide significance; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus is a compelling and persistent motivator who takes down any wall that hinders all humans rights to democracy, equity, inclusion and justice; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus helps people laugh, often uproariously, during difficult times while never underplaying the seriousness of the issues facing individuals in the community of Seeley Lake or Missoula County; and,



Handwritten signature and date: 3/16/19

**WHEREAS**, Klaus derives a great deal of his strength and wisdom from his partner Beate, a woman who in her own right has made Montana a better, more welcoming place to live and visit; and,

**WHEREAS**, while you may have disagreed with Klaus on matters of importance, you can never, ever, fault him for providing free pizza and drinks at community council meetings (pre-COVID of course); and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus knows and loves Montana because of Popcorn, a horse of many hands belonging to Jack Rich, a horse who brought Klaus into and out of the Bob Marshall Wilderness and introduced him to the land of awe that Klaus has only enriched with his love of life, people and the wild; and,

**WHEREAS**, Klaus and Beate value their treasured sense of peace found on top of their well-loved horses, riding remote trails in the shadows of Montana's majestic mountains.

**NOW THEREFORE**, the Missoula Board of County Commissioners hereby declares February 16, 2021, as

## **KLAUS VON STUTTERHEIM DAY**

in Missoula County. We urge all Missoula County residents to emulate the example of Klaus, and give back to their friends, neighbors and community in a way that leaves this place better than we found it.

### **BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MISSOULA COUNTY**

DocuSigned by:

*David Strohmaier*

David Strohmaier, Chair

*Josh Slotnick*  
Josh Slotnick, Commissioner

DocuSigned by:

*Juanita Vera*

Juanita Vera, Commissioner



*[Handwritten signature]*  
3/16/21

01-20-2021

Box 106  
Seeley Lake, MT  
59868  
(406) 677-2476

Dear Fire Chief Lane,

Dist. Chair Scott Kennedy,


& Seeley Lake Emergency Responders,

Thank you for the quick & professional response for my daughter, Patty

Dillree, this month. You were all concerned & knowledgeable about her heart health & well-being.

We are so lucky to have this high quality of medical care and

quick response

Thinking of you  
and thanking you   
for being so thoughtful!

in our community. Those that don't understand your dedication need to walk in your shoes. Sincerely,

Kathryn Davis

  
3/16/21

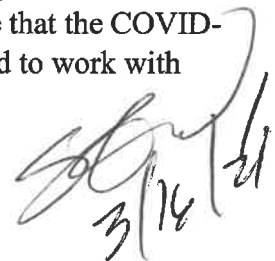
Thank you for this opportunity to respond publicly to “concerns” alleged by a group of Seeley Lake citizens regarding the Seeley Lake Rural Fire District Ambulance Service. First, I would like to give a little background of these citizens to give some context as these people have shown a trend of only telling part of the story.

As several of these people have stated, they are former volunteers of the Seeley Lake Rural Fire District. What they have not told you is that they were relieved of their duties, for cause. One of them walked away from an assignment while protecting the community they care so much about. Others seem to be friends of these people that voice such negativity towards this Fire District. In fact, the only positive words from the group are when they pat themselves on the back, talking about how good the Department was when they were members. Listening to their scanners and scrutinizing every call. At every opportunity this group of people will bully and belittle anybody that has nice words for this Fire Department.

I feel that it is important to share that most recently, members from the community have bypassed the Fire Chief and District board of Trustees to make their “concerns” known to the Missoula County Commissioners. The “concerns” given to the Commissioners have been recognized as correspondence. The Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners David Strohmaier stated in this past meeting (January 2021) that “We the Commissioners do not adjudicate matters of other Boards”. Further stating that the correspondence received will be forwarded to authorities having jurisdiction. This is important to tell the whole truth. This group of “concerned” citizens is trying to lead the community to believe that there are obviously problems with the Fire District ambulance service as the County Commissioners are looking into their allegations.

A “concern” was voiced in a letter to the Commissioners that our Department cancelled an ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulance responding to an accident with a critical patient, the “concern was that this delayed the transport for the patient. Again, only part of the story. Our ALS team was on the scene of an accident at the northern end of the Seeley Lake Rural Fire District jurisdiction and cancelled the other ambulance dispatched to our call. The ambulance was coming from Missoula, 60 miles away and was not going to provide any different care than what was taking place. This in no way affected the transportation of this patient. Our patient was flown by helicopter to the hospital where later they sadly succumbed to their injuries.

Other “concerns” involved delayed response times. This a small rural volunteer Department. This is not a City Fire Department with staffed stations. Our volunteers respond from work or home at any hour. The incidents of “concern” involved volunteers responding from home. They had to get ready, drive to the station, don the appropriate PPE, and then respond to the call. During incidents, time seems to pass slow, appearing like responders’ actions are not happening quickly. Reviewing the “concerns” noted in the County Commissioners correspondence, the response times are acceptable for this volunteer Department. Also making note that the COVID-19 pandemic has not deterred our volunteers from their calls for aid. I am proud to work with such a dedicated and professional group of people as we serve our community.



Handwritten signature and date: 3/14/21

As the years pass, the negativity continues. The attacks and threats now seem to be more directed towards the dedicated elected officials of the Seeley Lake Rural Fire District, the Fire Board Chairman, the Fire Chief and the District Administrator, and volunteer officers. This Administration takes every "concern" seriously. All correspondence and public meeting comments are addressed and documented. We are currently developing a plan to improve response times and upgrade our ambulance service operating permit to ALS (Advanced Life Support). Currently we are a permitted as a Basic Life Support service with an ALS endorsement.

The time has come to put an end to all this angry behavior. Open your eyes and see that the District is moving forward and continuing to provide care to our community.

Respectfully,



Dave Lane

Fire Chief, Seeley Lake Rural Fire District



3/14/21

**Scott Kennedy**

**Subject:**

Correspondence Response/County /Fire Board Meeting

Dear Constitutes,

I am responding to anonymous public correspondence brought forward to county commissioners January 21, 2021, and at our prior board meetings.

First, recognizing that the Seeley Lake Rural Fire District is a political subdivision of Missoula county, the district board is the governing authority. Listening to public comments and concerns brought forward and to that correspondence to the county commissioners by anonymous people of the community recently which appear to question ambulance response times. The county does not adjudicate or investigate these concerns. In representing our constitutes, I have though reviewed internet data sources regarding average volunteer responses times nationwide as a guide. This research reflected rural areas nationwide indicating approximate 15 minute on scene arrival times 80% of the time, which is similarly reflected to articles found in Fire House magazine reflecting 14 minutes.

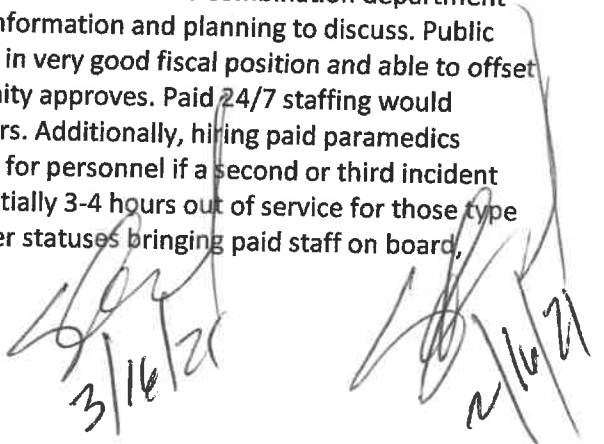
Firehouse magazine further notes overall nationwide staffing issues and referring to response times in rural demand zones, which is defined as 500 people or less in a square mile. Staffing of 6 fire personnel (paid or volunteer) and average arrival call times of 14 minutes 80% of the time (Ambulances need a driver and 1 EMT minimum). The key here in the article is staffing and the shortage of volunteers not only countywide, but nationwide. Adding paid personnel for reducing response times would be needed.

In 2020, Seeley Lake Ambulance medium response time of 4.65 minutes, nearly twice the improvement from 2017, which reflected 8.13 minutes prior to Chief Lane coming on board. Also, considering the national average of on scene times of 14-15 minutes, Seeley Lake on scene times reflect 12.53 minutes, somewhat better than the national averages.

I also want to reiterate to our constitutes to consider that Seeley Lake Fire District encompasses a large response area from Fire Station 1, which runs 17 miles north, 22 miles south into Potomac response area and potentially 40 miles to the southeast covering parts of Powell county supporting our neighbors. Approximately, the last 3 years, Seeley Lake has run approximately 800-900 calls, in which approximately 85% involve medical. There are a handful of calls that do have extended call response times for various circumstances considering time of call, distance, weather, and personnel shortages at times. In recapping and reviewing the last 4 years, Seeley Lake Ambulance has cut response times nearly in half from 8.13 minutes to 4.65 minutes, with data from on scene times reflecting 12.5 minutes. This is huge for a rural area considering paid departments response times are 2-2 ½ minutes comparing to Seeley Lake at 4.65. Please thank your volunteers and paid staff!

Just for discussion:

Also, the Chief has pointed out, we have the ability to go to a combination department with more paid staffing. The board can approve this action. This though will require the public to approve a mil levy rate. It is entirely up to our constitutes as to what level of service or advanced care they desire. We have talked about a combination department for 15 years or so. We are going to research further and provide accurate information and planning to discuss. Public comment for consideration and or if this becomes necessary. The district is in very good fiscal position and able to offset certain expenses for a paid department if implemented, and if the community approves. Paid 24/7 staffing would ensure the first call response times for fire and medical especially after hours. Additionally, hiring paid paramedics would be an asset to the community. There would or still may be shortages for personnel if a second or third incident comes in and considering transit time to Missoula. This encompasses potentially 3-4 hours out of service for those type of calls. Multiple calls are becoming more a reality. This may effect volunteer statuses bringing paid staff on board, perhaps offering volunteers positions.



3/16/21


2/16/21



In further listening to our constituents and the public comments at our board meetings, we will continue to provide the services that we always have and will improve as best we can and continue moving forward with available resources. The department is working on current avenues for increased services and personnel as mentioned. Subject to change, currently, we have approximately 14 personnel on the roster, consisting of 8 EMT's, (1 on leave with injury), includes a Paramedic, 3 non-active EMT's of which 2 indicated returning in the near future, 3 current training EMT's, 3 new firefighters in training. We will continue to building the department and seek those that want to help with the efforts and volunteering for their community.

The Seeley Lake Fire District Board has an obligation to all people of the district, regardless of who knows who or popularity. We have come a long way with changes and there is no division between volunteers, paid staff, or the board.

Respectfully submitted,



Scott Kennedy  
Chairman of the Board  
Seeley Lake Rural Fire District  
Missoula County, Montana

Cc: Missoula County Board of Commisioners, correspondance for records  
Cc: Sam Hunthausen, State Board of Medical Examineers