

SEELEY LAKE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING 6:00PM FIRE HALL
MEETING DATE: October 15, 2019
MINUTES FOR: September 17, 2019

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

PRESENT

Scott Kennedy, Chair
Gary Lewis, Vice Chair
Connie Clark
Rita Rossi
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:

Scott Kennedy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Four trustees were present along with the Fire Chief and District Administrator.

Also in attendance was community members Shirley Goudzwaard and Darlene Les; fire department member Michael Richards and Andi Bourne with the *Pathfinder*.

III. MINUTES:

Gary Lewis made a motion to approve the July 16, 2019 board minutes. Connie Clark seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposing or abstaining. There were no minutes from August 20 as the meeting was cancelled due to not having a quorum.

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

Shirley Goudzwaard stated she had a couple of concerns to address to the board. After losing another seasoned firefighter, Shirley questioned the board if they actually meet with them and find out why they left the department and if not, don't they think they should to find out why in case there's an issue that should be addressed? Shirley is also concerned about the insurance billing that was discussed in a past meeting where an article in the newspaper stated the billing wouldn't be covered by insurance. Shirley stated she's concerned that people won't want to call as they're afraid they're going to receive a huge bill.

Andi Bourne questioned if John Kimball was on the board as he was approved by the commissioners. Trustees stated yes, he is on the board but hasn't been given the oath of office and couldn't attend tonight's meeting due to being out of town.

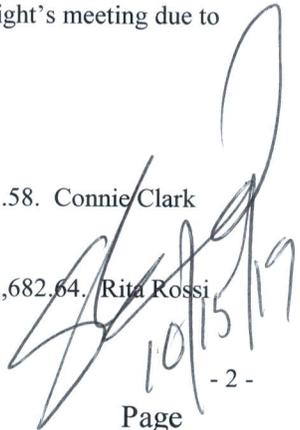
There was no correspondence reported on.

V. FINANCIAL REPORT AND APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:

Rita Rossi made a motion to approve the July 2019 financial report in the amount of \$30,592.58. Connie Clark seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposing or abstaining.

Gary Lewis made a motion to approve the August 2019 financial report in the amount of \$45,682.64. Rita Rossi seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposing or abstaining.

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VI. REPORTS:

1. Call Volume – Chief Lane reported call volume has been increasing as there were 55 calls in July 2019 compared to 44 in July 2018. In August 2019 there were 35 calls compared to 23 in August 2018. Total calls for 2019 is 222 compared to 167 in 2018.

2. Recruitment – Chief Lane reported recruitment is very challenging. The cadet program has one member but a few more youth has expressed interest. During Fire Prevention Week in mid-October, the department is planning on teaming up with Stageline Pizza to deliver pizzas on Saturday which will enable the department to talk to the community along with checking smoke alarm batteries if wanted and 15% of the proceeds will be donated to the volunteer membership. There's several recruitment flyers around town plus the "Pathfinder" ran the poster for a few weeks but have not received any feedback. Had a few recruits show a lot of interest but they never completed the on board process. Another thought is conducting an open house where the community can come in and visit to have a better understanding about what we're doing.

3. Grants – Chief Lane reported the department was involved with a Missoula County grant through the Department of Emergency Management which gave guidance for active assailant training along with being supplied two sets of ballistic protective equipment and will receive another in the near future; the cost is approximately \$1,000 per set. As tactics are changing, in our area, the first responsibility will be to provide care to responders and second to by-standers.

The department has been awarded the AFG Grant for \$75,000 with the government paying 95% and the department will pay 5%. The grant will provide the installation of a new self-disconnecting exhaust system for the vehicles at Station 1 as diesel exhaust is one of the biggest cancer causing elements to firefighters. The department purchased a new washing machine in last year's budget to extract the carcinogens from firefighters turn out gear as well.

4. Updates /Actions – Scott Kennedy stated in regard to Shirley Goudzwaard's concerns with the personnel issue, it was addressed and Scott did speak with the subject and unless it's obvious, individuals are spoken with. Gary and Rita also stated they spoke with the individual as well.

Chief Lane reported the department received requests to send one of its tenders out to work on two separate large fires in the area which made income of approximately \$8,000. Last year, for some reason, the department was shown out of service which Chief Lane corrected at the end of last season and made sure the department was active for this fire season.

5. Membership Report – Michael Richards reported the department received excellent trauma training with the Simms Trailer which uses realistic and dynamic manikins and the trailer will be coming back again in the near future for pediatric overdose training.

VII. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Employee Pay Raises – Scott Kennedy stated in the trustee's packet there's a list of the chief's accomplishments along with a salary proposal and asked for discussion.

Rita Rossi stated Chief Lane has proved himself as he responds to almost every call and puts in a lot of overtime. Rita stated she hadn't realized all his accomplishments listed plus he has found several ways to save the district money along with improving medical billing and has received several grants so would like to propose a salary of \$70,000 per year.

Scott Kennedy stated the chief currently receives \$55,000 after receiving a \$5,000 raise after six months and wanted to remind everyone that when the district was advertising for the chief's position, no one would even talk to them as the salary was below \$65,000 and stated it's more of an adjustment for services rendered rather than a raise. Chief Lane stated after doing some research, the \$70,000 came from the state average for fire chiefs which is closer to \$75,000 and the average salary doesn't account for chiefs being a paramedic. Chief Lane stated to date, he has responded to 65% of the calls. The raise would increase the chief's paycheck about \$350.00. Chief Lane stated if his salary is adjusted now, he won't request anything in the future but cost of living. Chief Lane expects the medical billing to be in the range of \$120,000 to \$150,000 per year as the call volume has increased 30%. Scott agreed saying Seeley's call volume is much larger than the closer surrounding areas.

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Gary Lewis stated the average salary comes from areas that are much larger than Seeley and the \$70,000 is way too much but agreed that Chief Lane is doing a great job but the membership has gone down. Rita stated the decrease in membership hasn't affected call responses. Scott stated he believes in paying for performance as the chief has performed well.

Connie Clark stated she is self-employed and doesn't receive a cost of living raise but doesn't want to discount the service that Chief Lane is providing either and as he can't be held accountable for the lack of recruitment, it is a concern and there's a lot of smaller surrounding communities with bigger departments than what we have. Chief Lane stated volunteerism across the country is decreasing. Connie stated Chief Lane did receive a raise after six months when the board agreed to wait a year.

Rita Rossi made a motion to increase the chief's salary to \$68,000. Scott Kennedy seconded the motion. Voting by voice, Rita and Scott voted Yes; Connie Clark and Gary Lewis voted No.

Gary Lewis made a motion to increase the chief's salary to \$60,000 as it's only been a year and a half. Motion died for lack of a second.

Scott Kennedy made a motion to increase the chief's salary to \$65,000. Rita Rossi seconded the motion. Voting by voice, Gary Lewis and Connie Clark abstained. (No vote). Chief Lane stated the board paid the interim chief \$40,000 in six months and he didn't accomplish near what Lane has accomplished.

Lynn Richards stated the trustees have a list of accomplishments which Chief Lane has completed in just a year and a half where the previous chief didn't even come close to a quarter of those in the three years he worked here and he was paid \$50,000.

As this year's budget has already been approved, Andi Bourne questioned if the chief's pay raise was within the budget. Scott stated yes with probably some slight adjustments plus there's good capital in reserves.

Gary stated the district knew what chief's salary could be afforded and the past whatever doesn't mean anything and yet we all agree Chief Lane is doing a great job but the increase is too much and the other towns our size don't have paid chiefs and Chief Lane knew when he accepted the job what the pay was. Chief Lane stated he did understand what the starting pay was but thought if he did an outstanding job, he would be compensated for it properly. Gary stated he would like to see Chief Lane compensated properly but not to the average as the district can't afford it.

Scott asked for Michael Richards' opinion as a senior member of the department. Michael stated he thinks the board is getting caught up in a small town mentality but the department finally has an honest, productive, efficient and hardworking chief that actually is here where a past chief was rarely in the department and was getting paid. Michael stated he hoped the board could come together and make an agreement with the chief to meet half way and if he can prove himself in this budget period, the salary number isn't out of sight and maybe pay half now and the other later as goals are completed. Seeley is a small town but in the summer time Seeley becomes a very large town. In regards to recruitment, it seems the only way you're going to get people to join is to become a part paid department which will triple the cost of this department. Dave has the experience and background to take this department to that level. Chief Lane has managed the budget very well and has maintained the equipment and would like to see it continue.

Connie stated the \$16,000 raise is a heck of a raise and there's people in town that only live on that much. Scott stated it's a critical infrastructure.

Gary Lewis made a motion to increase the chief's salary to \$62,000. Connie Clark seconded the motion. Voting by voice, Gary and Connie voted yes. Rita stated the chief is worth more than that. Gary stated no one is disagreeing with that but just doesn't think it should be done in one big jump. Scott and Rita voted No.

Rita Rossi made a motion to increase the chief's salary to \$63,500. Scott Kennedy seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion passed with none opposed or abstained.

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In regard to Lynn Richards' pay raise, Gary questioned what the current wage was and how many years of service. Lynn stated \$16.34 per hour and has been working for the district for 12 years in November. Scott stated 3% is roughly \$.50 and 5% is \$.81 as a reference.

Rita Rossi made a motion to give Lynn Richards a 5% pay raise. Gary Lewis seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposed or abstained.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business reported on.

IX. NEXT MONTH AGENDA ITEMS:

Reports; District Operations Manual/SOPs

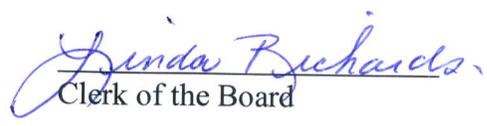
X. ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING:

Upon motion duly seconded, the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:52 p.m. The next regularly scheduled monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 15, 2019.

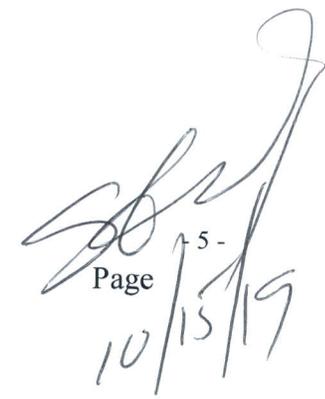
Approved:



Chair of the Board



Clerk of the Board



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