

**SEELEY LAKE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT**  
**REGULAR BOARD MEETING 6:00PM FIRE HALL**  
**MEETING DATE:** October 20, 2020  
**MINUTES FOR:** September 15, 2020

**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.

In attendance were community members Alex Pitman; Zoey & Cristine Matheny; Lavonne Dunster; Rick Weidner; Al & Donna Rios and John & Julie Bittel. Lynn Jungers arrived at approximately 6:01. Department volunteers Michael Schnakenberg arrived at approximately 6:02 and Michael Richards arrived at 6:18. Also in attendance was Andi Bourne with the *Pathfinder*.

**III. MINUTES:**

Gary Lewis made a motion to approve the August 18, 2020 board minutes. Connie Clark 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:**

Lynn Richards read a thank you note from Jeanne Koester. (See attached)

LaVonne Dunster stated she lives and works yearlong in Seeley Lake and supports the fire department and it would make her happy to see this department become one of the preeminent departments in the state. She has nothing but appreciation for the volunteers who put in hard hours and her complaints are directed to the paid employees and the board. The only things she has ever said on Facebook about this fire department, was a post encouraging everyone to attend the pancake breakfast as we have always done a fantastic job and a reminder about tonight's meeting. She was very disappointed to how much energy the department spends on Facebook and wonders why several are so invested with what's happening on Facebook but she realizes the board is using all the drama as a handy deflection tool. When real people in front of you speak about real issues, you blame your trouble on Facebook; deflections, destruction and denial. People were told at the last meeting to just come in and talk to Dave in person. People came in and talked to Dave in person, about the speeding incident on July 6<sup>th</sup> and they were completely ignored. The issue was then brought to the board only to be met with a reply of, "I don't think it happened." She stated she witnessed the incident and was appalled to the blatant brush off by the board. What she expected to hear was along the lines of, we reviewed our speed policy and refreshed our memories of appropriate speeds in heavy pedestrian areas, something like that but no; blatant, un-researched denial. Whoever is carless with the truth in small matters cannot

Minutes For September 15, 2020

Page

2 -

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10/20/20

be trusted in important affairs, Winston Churchill. This is the pattern with any complaint brought forth. Dear board, you're either disconnected or in denial with what is actually happening on calls. She understands that this fire department has had to be rebuilt and no one expects perfection in the beginning but she does expect the leadership be teachable enough during this time of rebuilding. Claiming everything always went great on every call is a red flag to anyone who knows the industry. Things goes sideways a lot during emergency calls. Errors can be recognized and teachable and can be corrected but there's always denial with any complaint. The board has a responsibility to learn more about why people are upset with services received. Start asking questions, not just from the guy that tells you what he wants you to hear; to do otherwise would be negligent on your part. Among the complaints of bubbling of procedure and protocol, getting lost often, not being able to respond and in general under performance of duties, some of the members of the department and board are also behaving like bullies. The day after she voiced her concern with how this department is being ran, Lynn Richards showed up at her work and was asking questions as to who her boss is. She has done this to several people who has spoken out concerns. A mafia mentality and strong arm tactic are not healthy. For every one person who has gathered the nerve to come down here and speak about a concern or problem, many others have stayed silent. Start asking questions. Why do other neighboring departments snort laugh when the Seeley Lake Fire Department is mentioned; I find that disconcerting and you all should too. She stated she wants to be behind the department but the department needs to be willing to be better.

Cristine Matheny stated she has lived in the community a long time. At the last meeting, she spoke about some legitimate concerns as did other community members but after the meeting she was left with more questions and even more concerns. She's here tonight to speak about intimidation and why people may not want to come to these meetings. You, the board, are accountable to the public; holding a public office is a public trust. We as a community should have confidence that our elected, act with integrity and character. There are a lot of contradictions here. It was said at the meeting to come and talk but in doing so, some have been targeted by Lynn, a paid county employee, to harass with intimidation tactics. Being so arrogant as to making phone calls to people's employers, showing up at businesses asking questions which are not any of her business, then making comments of how they wouldn't be doing business there. Is she speaking for the whole department? Some people on the board have businesses, are they okay with her behavior; is the board okay with this behavior as she is the face and front of this department. Maybe the sign-in sheet should include the place of employment so that she doesn't have to research contact numbers on company time. The chairman decides to address a bar incident involving a family who is a huge part of the community. They are the main reason she's here as mentioning the incident was in poor taste as none of them were here to defend themselves. Stated you were offended by name calling; you and your friends were innocent. Not everyone is going to like everyone, you can't take any heat that may come with your position and conduct yourself in a professional way since you're a public figure and maybe you should resign. Also, it's inappropriate for your friends to go up to people at their places of work; talking about the speeding issue, that seems very inappropriate; your friends harassing community members as well on your behalf. Do you think that makes the community members feel comfortable and have confidence in this department? A lot of the community feels the same way. There's a lot that was mentioned about drama and social media; it was allowed to go on and on about a Facebook page and I honestly couldn't believe the tone and the rant and the board seemed okay with that too. It seems that this department is ridiculously concerned about social media more than some public concerns. She actually caused a lot of people to go to the Facebook page that she was referring to. It seems like the drama that kept getting referred to over and over, is being caused by conflicts of interest here in the department and by some of you as well. She personally doesn't have anything against anyone here, she definitely doesn't want the department to fail. We all live here, it's a small place and I think we care about each other. She has always given community support and is involved in the community in many ways but is not easily intimidated. She feels the leadership and lack of concern about issues by the board and the complete arrogance in this department is a huge problem. She will be at more of these meetings and will talk to community members and a small group of concerned citizens can make changes.

Al Rios stated he doesn't have Facebook but he keeps hearing the chief was speeding. He doubts anyone was there holding a certified radar detector, so for us to say he was speeding, he doesn't understand where everyone is coming from.

Cristine denied saying anything about the speeding. LaVonne stated she can tell from the side of the road, 50 or 70 or 30; but can't say 51 or 55 but she can sure darn say it was 70 by the Ice Cream Place, packed with pick-ups; thank God no kid squirted out. Cristine stated he wasn't there. Al stated he wasn't but has been involved in race car driving and doesn't believe he was driving 70. LaVonne stated the point is community members are uncomfortable and it should be addressed; it shouldn't be denied as everything is denied.

Scott Kennedy stated this issue has been discussed many times; people are going to be prudent and slow down. Professional people will hear something and take it and correct it. LaVonne told Scott he denied the incident. Scott stated he did not deny the incident; he denied the 70 mph. LaVonne stated it has gotten better and she appreciates it. She understands you need to speed through town but the rate he's been doing last month, it's much safer now.

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

Rita Rossi made a motion to approve the August 2020 financial report in the amount of \$42,121.96. 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 39 calls in August 2020 compared to 35 in 2019. Total calls for 2020 is 201 compared to 222 in 2019; down about 9% but we've been averaging two to three calls a day for the past two to three weeks.

**2. Recruitment** – Chief Lane reported there's been interest but no one has turned in their applications. One of the newer members was out on assignment on a fire and is working on getting his EMT certification.

**3. Grants** – Chief Lane reported we did not receive the MDT Grant for the EKG monitor. Historically the state receives approximately a million dollars to disperse to EMS department to help fund equipment. This year there were 4.5 million dollars in requests. A couple of department in the state had requested new ambulances which ate up a large chunk of that money. Still waiting on the Town Pump Grant and the RCA Grant and looking for new grant opportunities.

**4. Updates /Actions** – Rita Rossi stated she wanted to respond to Cristine Matheny's statement from the last board meeting and there's a copy of a text in the trustee's packet. Rita stated during the call with Cristine's daughter, Rita did not text or make any calls. While assessing Cristine's daughter, her daughter received a call from Shelley Johnson. Rita waited until December 27<sup>th</sup>, three days later, at 9:29 a.m., Rita texted Shelly and asked her to please wait until after a call to contact a patient. Rita did not tell anyone who they could or could not talk to and Rita's text was for future calls that the department may be on and Rita feels it's disruptive to patient care.

**5. Membership Report** – Michael Richards stated the department's been busy. There was training on the burn/smoke trailer that's sitting outside last week and will again tomorrow night. More people are needed on the department.

#### **VII. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. District Operations Manual/SOPs Approval – Chief Lane stated there will be one for next month's meeting.

#### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS:**

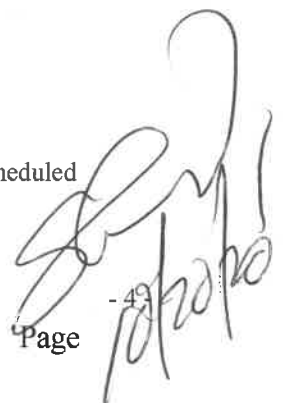
1. Board Assigned County Attorney Contact – Rita Rossi stated after reading the letter from the county attorney, one person needs to be assigned as a main contact. Rita made a motion to have the chairman be the designated representative in all communications to the county attorney. The chairman may designate the chief in certain situations as needed. In the chairman's absence, the vice-chairman would fill the role. Jon Kimble seconded the motion. Voting by voice, motion carried with none opposing or abstaining.

#### **IX. NEXT MONTH AGENDA ITEMS:**

Reports;

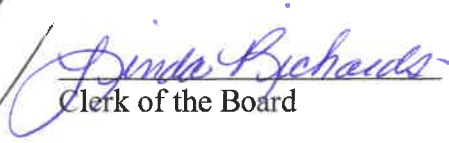
#### **X. ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING:**

Upon motion duly seconded, the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:19 p.m. The next regularly scheduled monthly meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20, 2020.

Page  -43

Approved:

  
Chair of the Board

  
Clerk of the Board

received

9/14/2020

To Seelye Swan Fire Dept. Ambulance Crew,

I am sending my deepest gratitude to each of you for your amazing support for me in returning from the swamp and woods on Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. As you ~~could~~ could see, my health conditions made me quite vulnerable in an already bad situation.

Your generosity and purpose in coming out in the night brings awe and thanks. It is common to hear of people's gratitude and debt toward those who save them - I really get that now. You will be forever with me in gratitude.

Jeanne Koester



10/20/20