Seeley Lake Rural Fire District
200 Firehouse Dr.
Seeley Lake, MT 59868
Special Meeting Agenda

July 10th, 2026 1:30pm

I. Call to order/Roll call

-Present: Mike Weigel, Alyssa McLean, Vickie Smith, Shirley Goudzwaard, Renee Cotton, Clara Kyrouac, Chief Cowan

-The pledge of allegiance was mistakenly left off of the Agenda, we stood for the pledge and it was led by Chief Blaine Cowan

-No approval of minutes at this meeting, as they will be approved at the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting

II. No public comment period

III. Policy

A. Discussion regarding the previously presented 4 policies presented to us by Chief Cowan

1. Regarding SOP “ADMIN 3” - this policy has to do with board meeting agenda items and should be considered into the by-laws for the board, it doesn’t belong in district SOP’s.
    a. Discussion ensued regarding public correspondence agenda items which the policy states we should have 15 day prior-to-meeting requirement for public correspondence. Vickie Smith suggested we change that to 10 to allow more leeway for public correspondence submission. This issue to be tabled and re-addressed when the board discusses it’s by-laws.
    b. Chief Cowan suggests that “Admin 3” should be taken out of district policies and can be discussed as board by-law at a later date.
    c. Vickie Smith motions to scrap “Admin 3” from district SOP’s. Shirley Goudzwaard seconded. All were in favor, motion passed.
2. Regarding SOP “ADMIN 8” - Corrective Action
    a. Mike Weigel recommends that terminations for cause should come to the board and/or a legal opinion.
    b. Discussion ensued regarding rewording the operational and personnel management powers of the Chief’s position, so that the

board can ensure a second opinion and/or legal opinion is sought before terminations for cause.

c. Discussion ensued regarding termination procedure, and edits were suggested so that the procedure remains consistent throughout the policy.
d. Discussion ensued regarding complaints that are against the Chief and how the public should go about doing that. Ideas regarding posting board email addresses, or even considering a defined grievance policy with a potential standing grievance committee on the board.
e. Vickie Motions to table editing ADMIN 8 Policy, Alyssa seconds the motion to table to a later date, after we do some research. All were in favor, motion passed.

3. Regarding SOP “ADMIN 23” - Paid call/On call
    a. This policy shows a breakdown of what is called PCOC pay. Chief Cowan shares his experience that he was getting paid PCOC on nearly every call he attended, with Alyssa McLean adding that she recalls historically we were not charging for calls that did not require transport, despite fuel and some medical equipment being used on those calls that did not end in a transport. Some practices that were being used weren’t written clearly in policy, so Chief Cowan has proposed some changes that more accurately reflect our practices, and allow for billing a base fee so we can recoup fuel or equipment money for our medical calls.
    b. Discussion ensued regarding better filing and numbering of our SOP’s.
    c. Discussion ensued regarding verbiage specifying medical calls, which should be changed to include fire calls as well.
    d. Discussion ensued regarding not charging for calls we respond to that do not require transport, but we are still paying PCOC on those calls and using medical supplies and using fuel.
    e. Discussion ensued regarding reporting for any pay over $600 requiring a 1099 form, and we are preparing for that.
    f. Alyssa Motioned to accept the proposed changes to the wording of the purpose of the policy to highlight the stipend for responders, removing verbiage restricting transport compensation to 3 volunteers per transport, and removing a statement regarding reasonable or excessive times on scene and run reports. Shirley Goudszwaard seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.
4. Regarding SOP “ADMIN 38” - Auxiliary Membership
    - Discussion ensued regarding eliminating the vehicle part of this policy. Vickie Smith motions to accept auxiliary policy with stated edits, Alyssa McLean seconds the motion. All were in favor, motion passed.
    - Discussion ensued regarding expanding the scope of the auxiliary membership description so that members can be more involved

with fundraising or organizing fundraising, under the purview of a Fundraising committee organized by the board.
- Discussion ensued regarding an auxiliary member handbook, background checks, and training on the position.
- Discussion ensued regarding a fundraising committee to be headed by Vickie Smith and Shirley Goudzwaard, the details to be defined at a future meeting.
- Vickie Smith made a motion to accept this policy with the discussed edits, Alyssa McLean Seconded. All were in favor, motion passed.

IV. Budget

1. Vickie Smith presented a visual excel graph of the financials we were provided to us by the office administrators who worked for months in conjunction with Missoula county to come up with the figures, however it required many addendums from Missoula County.
2. Vickie Smith compiled this preliminary information, from June of 2024 to November of 2025, without the intention to address or focus on the past or on any individual, but instead to focus on the numbers themselves and the current reality of our district finances. The chart shows a sharp decline in this time span, reflecting that we were around $280,000 in black in June of 2024, and then by the end of November 2025 we were around $178,000 in the red, a potential swing of around $458,000. She added that this has not been independently verified, and it could be due to things like revenue, account balance factors, taxes that came in, and etc.
3. Vickie Smith offers her opinion that it is our duty as the board of trustees to understand this, and what it means for our future, so that we can work to correct the state of our district's finances. Discussion ensued about our responsibility as a board to analyze this and address potential district changes that need to happen to recover from this current financial reality.
4. Discussion ensued regarding potential frivolous spending, unexpected emergency spending on maintenance, or accounting/recording mistakes, as shown through research into past board minutes and the above mentioned compiled financial records.
5. Discussion ensued regarding looking into months with larger expenditures, to analyze what happened those months so we can better plan for emergencies and avoid spending money that isn't available to us.
6. Discussion ensued acknowledging that for a period of time there was no administrator in the office to reconcile our books with the county's records, which could account for some of the difficulty in reconciling our accounts.
7. Discussion ensued regarding keeping receipts for all credit card purchases, a practice which office administrator Renee had already started doing.
8. Discussion ensued regarding presenting this compiled information to the county attorney for some guidance and advice on moving forward and correcting our massive financial deficit. While a forensic audit would be helpful, it is a very expensive undertaking that the district cannot currently afford to pursue. It was discussed that it is our financial responsibility to make the county attorney fully aware of our findings, as the office administrators have worked with the Missoula

County finance division to determine that we were well in the black in 2024, but are now in the red.

9. Discussion regarding a resort tax and/or mill levy ensued, as it is apparent that we will not be able to recover financially with our current trimmed down budget. Chairman Miike Weigel researched the last time we had a mill levy increase, and it appears it was in 2010.
10. Discussion regarding expanding our district to cover Placid and Salmon Lakes, and potentially adding a south district station which we have a need for as our population continues to expand. It was discussed how to get this information to the public so they can be educated about our needs, and about what steps we have taken as a district to recover and survive.
11. Discussion ensued regarding educating the public about what grants we have out there, but those grants are granted for specific purposes and still would not help our account get out of the red. Similarly, donations go to a specific purpose like needed equipment or training, and while they have allowed us to improve the health and safety of our lockers and are helping to educate and certify our volunteers, donations still will not improve our current budget deficit.
12. Discussion regarding how many ALS (advanced life support) responders we currently have available to us, and that is not enough to offer 24/7 guaranteed ALS response.
    a. This is due to the fact that there are only 2 paid ALS responders, and only 4 ALS responders total, who are trying to cover 168 hours per week between them.
    b. The non-staff ALS volunteers have full time jobs and other committments especially during this severe wildfire season.
    c. The community desires 24/7 ALS response, but we cannot afford to do so and are already over-taxing our current staff and volunteers.
        i. Chief Cowan has covered 106 hours of on-call in a single week before.
    d. A continued increase in revenue for more staffing of ALS responders would be a solution to providing 24/7 ALS care. Chief Cowan offers his opinion that if we were to travel to another community of this size in Montana, there would likely not be 4 ALS responders in that district. Most communities of our size offer BLS (Basic Life Support) services.
13. Discussion ensued regarding annexing and doing everything we can to get financially healthy first before asking the community for more money (in the form of a levy increase).
14. Discussion was had regarding coordinating any donations through the Fire Foundation until we get our 501(c)3 status restored with the IRS.
15.

V. Agenda Preparation

1. Discussion regarding putting Board bylaws on the next agenda was had, and the continued development of a Board orientation binder for new members coming in.
    a. Discussion regarding addressing a Bylaw that restricts board members from also being an operational volunteer who receives PCOC, to be

discussed thoroughly at the next meeting due to the possibility of a conflict.

2. Discussion ensued regarding keeping the acquisition of the new lockers on the agenda, as they are not yet ordered. Donations are still arriving to fund that purchase.
3. Discussion ensued regarding Chief's presentation of the new scheduling and coverage strategy in updates/actions on the agenda

VI. Adjournment

Next Meeting Monday, July 20th, 2026 at 6pm