

BIG MOUNTAIN FIRE DISTRICT (BMFD) BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 27, 2022

CALL TO ORDER – 3:03PM

ROLL CALL – Board Trustees Sue Oemichen, Tony Patterson, Paul Silverman, Tom Sato, Steve Cosby (via Zoom); Chief Ben DeVall; Firefighters Robert Sharp, Ken Wensel, Colyn Bray.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES – Tom Sato made a motion to approve the Minutes, as amended, from the Board meeting of August 29, 2022. Tony Patterson seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT –

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has again begun to issue Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) awards. By October 17, 2022, FEMA had given 1,840 awards totaling \$324.8 million. BMFD is still waiting to hear on both the Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) application and on District and County-wide radios. Award announcements are supposed to start again within two weeks.
- The BMFD laptop broke and was sent back to Dell for repair. Shortly after it was returned, a hinge broke, but this time Dell sent a technician to fix it on-site.
- Firefighter Colin Christopoulos is working through the list of District residents and has been updating their information. A new feature has been identified for addition to the program, and the outside technical coordinator will be asked to implement it.
- Firefighter physicals and their billing have been problematic this year for some reason. Chief DeVall has again sent out information specific to what the physicals entail. He is also attempting to find a checklist the firefighters can take with them when seeing a doctor.
- The required paperwork was just completed so the District may receive reimbursement for Medicaid patient transport where the billed amount is not paid. The Intergovernmental Transfer (IGT) Program is an arrangement whereby an agency can recover additional dollars for transports of Medicaid patients. BMFD sees very few such patients, but it may be worth the effort, regardless.

- Chief has called or emailed 30 of 39 auditors listed for Montana. Many do not respond to phone calls. Five of the remaining number are out-of-state, and the others are more than eight hours from the District.
- Engine 2031 was again in the shop for repair work, but this time it was for maintenance of a loose steering linkage.
- The District received \$1,616.00 from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) grant this year. An outdoor bulletin board, hose, and nozzles were purchased.
- BMFD has received its health insurance renewal invoice. Chief contacted the District's agent and asked if there was anything comparable for less cost. There is not, but the agent suggested that since the crew is now made up of younger members, he would negotiate with Western Mutual Insurance (WMI) to see if there could be a reduced rate. The District was set to renew the current policy in October 2022 but will now renew in April 2023, after the carrier has had time to review the situation and determine a possible new rate. The current rate will remain the same until April.
- There is still no action from the group working on the Flathead County emergency notification system. The County's radio/tech specialists have been fixing multiple issues with communication sites around Flathead Valley.
- The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) prescribe-burned Section 3 of the Haskill Basin Drainage thinning project on October 20th. BMFD assisted with an engine stationed at the helicopter landing area. USFS officer Manny Mendoza advised Chief DeVall that the burn was not completed when last scheduled due to an evening wind event.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

TREASURER'S REPORT –

Financial Statement for August 2022:

Statement of Net Assets –

- Cash overall on August 31st after tax receipts is \$14,379.99 more than it was last year. Payroll account is \$35,589.37 less, but the general fund is \$39,760.85 more. Vacation/sick accrual is overfunded by \$7,536.26.

- Accounts Receivable: There is \$11,143.59 less in A/R than there was at this time last fiscal year.
- Tax Receivables are \$71.92 more than they were at this time last year. Tax collections during August were \$6,720.35.
- Fixed Assets Net of Depreciation: None

Statement of Activities –

- Overall revenue is \$24,308.92 less than it was at this time last year. This is less collected in Accounts Receivable and 11K for sale of the truck.
- Ambulance fees are down \$21,108.24 (66.2%), and insurance write-offs are at \$1,843.34 (\$3,781.86 less than last year).
- Overall expenses have decreased by \$4,458.76.
- Labor Detail Report: There was an overall decrease of \$14,387.64 in labor costs over last year. The difference is because in 2021 there were 3 pay periods in July. October will make up that extra pay period for 2022. Labor is down 15.7% over last year and are at 13.5% of budget for this year, where it should be at 17%.

Budget vs. Actual –

- 2 months into the fiscal year, the District should be around 17% of budget. Income is at 5.4%. The number will be short until November, when property taxes are billed. Expenses are at 14.8% of budget.

A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was made by Paul Silverman and seconded by Tom Sato. The motion was passed unanimously.

TRUSTEE REPORT –

- The Firewise Board met earlier today, and most of the Action Plan items have been done. The emergency contact plan, homeowners packets, and lit central location have been deferred. The information sheet for renters is now in draft. Distribution is targeted for March 2023. Differing rules by subdivision on such matters as firepits is a complicating factor.
- Roger King has replaced Brian Carper as Whitefish Mountain Resort (WMR) Director of Lodging.
- When new Firewise Board members are appointed, Sue Oemichen will convert from a Trustee to a community member.

- Ali Ulwelling, DNRC Forestry Assistance and Fire Information Officer, will conduct a wildfire education session in June 2023.
- An email on fireworks restrictions will be disseminated to District property owners in June 2023. Violators may be charged for any fire suppression costs resulting from their negligent actions.
- The District's Firewise certification will be renewed on November 18th.
- Tom Sato suggests that fire safety rules such as cigarette butt disposal be communicated to contractors, in addition to trash removal procedures, and that accountability be emphasized.
- The next community picnic is being planned for July 2023.
- The next Annual Report to the Community is scheduled for October 2023.
- Regarding upcoming Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiations, Union Rep Ken Wensel advises that small uniform changes will be requested, as well as a modification of overtime policy to pay time-and-a-half for extra shifts. Tony Patterson will compose a final draft after receipt of suggested verbiage from Ken. Bookkeeper Tracy Armstrong will supply relevant dollar figures. All parties understand that the Board is committed to paying higher firefighter wages when funding becomes available. The total CBA package will be submitted to the Board for re-signing when completed.

OLD BUSINESS –

- The Board needs to see Big Mountain Firefighters Association (BMFA) IRS Form 990 Annual Report. BMFA's equipment and operations funding will be discussed at the Board's December meeting.
- Tom Sato advised that the BMFD website will be on-line within the next week. Firefighter bios will be submitted on a voluntary basis and will be changeable.

Calendars, agendas, etc. will also be published. Additionally, the site can be used as a fundraising tool.

- The Employee Health Insurance Review will be moved to the Board's February meeting agenda.
- BMFD's Annual Report to the Community will consist of two newsletters per year and may share BMFA's report mailing envelope. The "Big Mountain Fire District Firehouse News" will include firefighter activities, Board of Trustees meeting dates, weather information, wildfire danger education, potential resort tax considerations, etc.
- The BMFD Annual Training Report has been prepared by Firefighter/Training Officer Kevin Wise. The Board discussed several issues including the need for more diligent adherence to training requirements by some firefighters. A schedule of such mandatory training is contained in a binder for firefighters to reference in the firehouse. Chief DeVall will review Board concerns with Kevin. Steve Cosby queried whether a training facility might be established on-site.

NEW BUSINESS –

- Chief DeVall will confer with Tony Patterson on the Mutual Aid Agreement and will provide a status report at the December 2022 Board meeting.
- The subject of a potential second egress from the Mountain was discussed. Key stakeholders are WMR, Stoltze Land and Lumber, Whitefish Planning and Zoning, and the Flathead County Highway Department. BMFD plans to host an exploratory meeting among relevant parties, with a target date of January 2023. Invitees will be resolved at the December District Board meeting.

FIREFIGHTER COMMENT – None

NEXT MEETINGS – December 12, 2022; February 27, April 24, and June 26, 2023; all at 3pm.

ADJOURNMENT – A motion to adjourn was made by Tony Patterson and seconded by Paul Silverman. The motion was passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 5:01pm.