

# Evergreen Fire District Board of Trustees

Minutes of Board Meeting  
February 1, 2016

**Board members present:** *Shawn Baker, Jack Fallon, Dave Edwards*

**Board members absent:** *John Foust, Kyle Nace*

**District Staff/Employees:** *Fire Chief Craig Williams, Fire Marshal Ben Covington,  
Administrative Assistant Laurie Pein*

**Public Attendance:** *Captain James Boyce, Lieutenant Josh Cox, Fawn Edwards*

## **MEETING OF FEBRUARY 1, 2016 CALLED TO ORDER AT 12:04 P.M.**

### **PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE RECOGNIZED:**

*Public in attendance had no wish to address the board.*

### **ADOPT THE AGENDA:**

*Jack moves to adopt the Agenda as presented, Dave seconds the motion, the Agenda is adopted unanimously.*

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

*None*

### **FINANCIALS:**

#### **1. December 2015**

*Neither Shawn nor Jack has any questions regarding the financials. Dave wonders how in depth his questions can or should be in regard to the financials. Shawn and Craig indicate that if he has general education-type questions about how the financials of the District operate he can get together and spend some time with Laurie or Craig. If he sees something on a particular financial report that appears to be an abnormality that can be brought up during the board meeting. Craig also indicates that the financials go out to the board in advance of the board meeting so that there is time for questions to be asked and answered prior to the meeting.*

*Jack moves to approve the financial statements as presented for December, 2015; seconded by Dave; motion passed unanimously.*

**PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:**

**1. Approve Meeting Minutes of January 4, 2016**

*Jack informs the board that at 11:30 today he emailed the final Bylaws to all board members. Laurie prints the Bylaws emailed to her by Jack for signature by the board members.*

*Jack moves to approve the minutes of January 4, 2016; seconded by Dave; approved unanimously.*

**2. Pager Pay**

*Shawn wants to know where Craig is with the pager pay proposal and Craig says that he is just waiting for approval of the \$29,030 to administer the program so he can get moving on it. Shawn says that either John or Kyle had proposed trying the program out on a month-to-month basis rather than approving the full amount for a whole year. Shawn also indicates that he feels it would be a good idea to approve pager pay on a provisional basis to try it and see what happens.*

*Craig says he would support either option: full approval or provisional. His main concern is that it needs to be done relatively quickly to allow for staffing and scheduling. There are a lot of personnel interested in the program. Dave questions where the money to pay for the program is coming from. Craig explains that the funds will come from the 9428 Ambulance account which is the account that pays all wages except those of the three in administration. This account is funded by ambulance revenue so it is an enterprise fund and renewable. Craig reiterates that inter facility calls are up 61% from this time last year and the pager pay program will provide payroll and allow him to staff these calls so we don't have to turn them down.*

*Dave questions whether these are Evergreen calls and Craig explains that they are not strictly Evergreen calls, but they are not 911 calls. The Department has contractual agreements to transport patients from one facility to another. The local transports pay less, the long distance transports pay considerably more, so one transport to Billings can net the department \$7,000 or more and if we don't have personnel available, or can't round up personnel quickly enough to take a transport like that we miss out on a lot of revenue. In addition, Craig explains that if too many of the inter-facility transports are turned down or missed due to the difficulty in getting personnel here quickly enough to take the transport, then we could be jeopardizing the contracts already in place.*

*Craig explains that the increase in inter facility calls has led more and more often to a situation where they have to split up the 911 crew that is here at the station. One of them will have to take a transport with Ben, while the other one stays at the station with Craig*

to cover the 911 calls, or Craig and Ben will take a transport together, which is certainly not an efficient use of their time or wages. Craig predicts that the inter facilities have increased to the point where the revenue derived from them will surpass the revenue from 911 calls for the first time in Department history and he believes it is vital to have a plan in place to deal with this increase. Pager pay will pay personnel \$3 per hour to carry a pager and be available to show up at the station within 30-45 minutes to go on a transport. Craig feels the only other choice would be to hire additional part-time employees who would be paid an hourly wages to remain here at the station to take inter facility calls but the Department can't afford to do that.

Dave expresses concern that if the program doesn't do what we hope it will, the only option would be to increase the amount of pager pay. Craig responds that he cannot guarantee that this program will work but really wants to try it as it's really the only option at this point. Shawn indicates that if it doesn't work we can just back out of it and Craig agrees but adds that if we can no longer do the inter facilities like we have been, the Department would only make it for about a month and a half before there would be layoffs. In essence, the ambulance program is subsidizing the fire district in that all personnel are paid from the ambulance account and if there were no income to the ambulance account, the department would be faced with going back to an all volunteer status and service to the residents of Evergreen would suffer dramatically.

Craig says that this increase in call volume is unprecedented so there's no way to predict with certainty whether it will continue but statistically, as the population continues to increase, so will the call volume. Craig doesn't want to lose the forward momentum and give away the revenue to other providers because we don't have a plan in place for staffing. Laurie points out that missing that one transport to Billings for \$7,000 would have paid for nearly three months worth of pager pay.

Craig indicates that if the board is not comfortable with approving the full \$29,000 for a year then maybe we could look at a plan "B" that is similar but has the same net result over a twelve month period. Shawn says he views this as seed money and proposes approving it on a provisional basis, either month-by-month or quarterly, and see what happens. He would like to see how much of the pager pay expenditure can be recouped in inter facility income. If the money is coming back in, or at least a fair portion of it, then he would consider the program a success and worth continuing. If not, we pull the plug on the program and say well, we tried, but it didn't work, and at least we're not risking the full \$29,000 to figure it out. Craig wants to make it very clear though that the money paying for the program is not money coming from the tax payers. It will be paid for with revenue generated by the inter facility transports themselves. The seed money will be coming from ambulance revenue.

Dave expresses concern about losing the revenue stream from the ambulances and how it would affect Evergreen residents. Craig says he doesn't think the community even realizes that while they are paying taxes on the fire side they are basically getting a 24-7 staffed ALS ambulance that they aren't paying a whole lot for. We either expend the

*funds to keep the revenue stream flowing or we have to go to the people and run a levy. Ben feels we either risk spending \$30,000 a year or risk losing \$300,000.*

*Dave is concerned about having to increase the pager pay in order to keep people interested in taking the pager shifts and then still having to go for a levy because it's become a runaway bus. Craig cannot promise that won't happen but says this is the best short-term plan he can come up with and that we need to be working on coming up with a long-term plan for long-term support. Shawn believes approving the full \$29,000 is a big risk if it doesn't work. He would like to approve it on a quarterly basis for the first year to ensure it will work. Craig reminds the board that the \$29,000 is the absolute maximum it could cost but predicts it will be only half that amount as the crews will "time-out" and go to the normal inter facility rate at the time they go enroute. Craig has concerns about approving pager pay on a month-to-month basis due to the lag time in receiving payment from billing, which can take two or three months, so it will take at least three months to be able to know if the financials are working out on the program.*

*Dave wonders if there are other departments doing something similar. Craig indicates there aren't very many fire departments that run a full enterprise fund and staff the majority of the personnel off of ambulance revenue. It's very rare. James says we have the call volume of a small city like Kalispell or Whitefish without any of the city luxuries. Craig doesn't know if the board realizes it, but Evergreen is not an incorporated municipality where by law we would be paid with pension and benefits based on our population. Instead we are within a planning donut of the City of Kalispell so the Department has always struggled with that. He points out that we have similar run data to Whitefish but because they are supported by tax dollars, they don't have to do inter facilities whereas we have to run all over the state and have all the contracts that allow our personnel to remain here and serve the community quickly and efficiently.*

*Shawn moves to approve the expenditure of \$3 per hour for pager pay for two employees, 10 hours per day each, seven days a week, on a quarterly basis, with the understanding that if at any point it doesn't pencil out, then the program will be discontinued.*

*Jack states that he can't support it because it doesn't address any of the questions he asked in his email to Craig and he feels it should be either all in or all out, no trial or anything.*

*Craig responds that he has presented many proposals to the board over the years that the board has either accepted or denied without requiring the level of detail and questions contained in Jack's email. Craig points out that there were actually 20+ questions contained in Jack's email and that he did answer the question that the \$29,000 included payroll taxes but does not see how knowing what the specific costs would be for FICA, FUTA, Social Security, etc., would be beneficial to the board in making a decision. Craig felt there was a certain amount of micro managing involved in the questions and that the questions asked by Jack delved into the operational aspects of the program that are his responsibility and not those of the board. Shawn indicates that he would like to see some detail in a quarterly report that would show what has been spent on the program and the*

revenue received. He realizes there will be some delay but would like to see the two tied together. Craig says that he will develop a report in conjunction with Pintler Billing.

Ben feels that this is another example of inconsistencies with the board in what they require for approval of a request. Ben feels that there are no policies or procedures in place so Craig and Ben never know what kind of information needs to be included in a proposal. Sometimes the board requires virtually nothing, other times there seems to be a ridiculous number of questions. James says he feels like it's been a struggle because the money is needed and he understands the board needs their questions answered to a certain extent but feels they put as much on the table as they could, at least for a trial run, until more information comes in once the program begins. He indicates he is concerned about continuing to put the decision off because the Department is coming into its busy season and he doesn't know how they're going to handle it all without having a couple of people on pager pay that they can count on.

Jack says that he's come up with even more questions during the current discussion. He says no one has said whether pager pay would make people available for long distance transports and feels it is more related to local transports and also wonders how that fixes the problem of transports in the 50-100 mile range. James attempts to explain that personnel cannot just turn down a long distance transport if they're signed up for pager pay but is interrupted by Jack who says that he hasn't heard anyone say that they can't refuse a transport. Ben says he feels that what Jack is asking for is operational guidelines based on what's going to happen with the program. James indicates that the answers won't change the dollar amount whatsoever and Craig agrees. Jack interrupts again and says that it may because it may cause us to come up with a whole new plan. Craig feels that all of this is operational in nature and that it is up to him as Chief to administer the plan. Jack says that's not true when it's something new. Jack says that if it is something ongoing Craig is correct, but not with something new.

Craig again explains that personnel will time out and go to the normal inter facility rate at the time they take the transport. Jack says that Craig has said that before but that he hasn't put it into any kind of plan that the board can be familiar with. Jack says that yes, it is an operational aspect but feels that because it is a new thing the Chief cannot just administer the operational aspects.

Craig indicates that he has presented many new proposals to the board that were operational in nature and would cost the Department money, with no written plan whatsoever and would also make money and didn't have to jump through all these hoops, explanations, reasons for payroll, how much will it make, etc., and there was none of this discussion. Craig feels this goes back to what Ben has said in that there is no consistency. Jack says that is the discretionary authority of a board of trustees. Shawn indicates that he feels the board does need to be more consistent but doesn't need to get this far into the weeds with this proposal. Craig wants to know if some policy and direction can be put in writing for the proposal process saying here is the bare minimum that the board needs so that the same basic questions can always be asked and answered and we won't experience the issues we're experiencing now. Craig again states that he feels these

*things are operational in nature and points out that no one else on the board chimed in on the email and said they support the many questions as a majority and in fact no one else on the board responded to the email at all. The only response to Jack's email was Craig responding that he respectfully disagreed that all of Jack's questions should be answered, that they are operational in nature, and pointing out that he has brought numerous proposals to the board previously that did not require nearly this level of explanation. Dave is uncertain how a policy could be worded that would cover all the kinds of proposals that could be brought to the board. He agrees that most of this is operational and he's trying not to get into that, he is in favor of the proposal and would like to move on with it. Shawn feels that at times in the past, the board probably should have asked for more detail, but that there are too many details being asked for in this proposal with some very exact questions being asked with a very inexact idea of the answers. He doesn't think it makes sense to be so black and white on what the costs will be when the income questions cannot be answered unless we try it.*

*Shawn feels it is up to Craig to make sure that personnel toe the line and wants to try it on a trial basis and if it's not successful then the board may have to pull the plug on the program. That is also why he feels Craig will need at least three months, as opposed to a month, to see what kinds of transports come in and allow time for payment to come in to see how it pencils out. Dave agrees that the plan will keep the inter facilities going and will be good for the department and good for the ambulance. Dave asks Jack if he would be willing to give it three months. Jack replies that he still votes no.*

*Shawn points out that the Bylaws state that in the event of a minimum quorum, matters of decision shall have to be a majority of those present for a decision.*

SHAWN: All in favor?

DAVE: Aye.

SHAWN: Aye. Opposed?

JACK: Aye.

SHAWN: Motion to approve pager pay on a quarterly trial basis is approved, Two favor, one against; the motion passes by a majority.

### **3. Glacier Bank/WFCU Accounts**

*Jack moves to remove Julie Reid, Kathy Denise Cofer and Charles Warren from the Whitefish Credit Union district account and to add Jonathan Foust, David Edwards and Kyle Nace to the account, and also to identify Shawn Baker as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and John Fallon as the Secretary of the Board of Trustees; seconded by Dave; motion passed unanimously.*

**NEW ITEMS/UPDATES:**

**1. Pintler Billing Services Contract Increase**

*Craig informs the board that we have been with Pintler Billing for a year now and they are requesting a slight increase, applicable only to the 911 and MVA portion of the billing, from the current 7% to 7.75%. Inter facilities are currently billed at 5% which will remain unchanged. The industry average is 8% and we were paying Sole Stone 8.25% before we changed to Pintler. The increase will be effective as of January 1, 2016. The percentage is charged on what is actually collected and Pintler has increased our collection rate quite a bit. Shawn asks if this increase could be used as a rationale for increasing our contract rates for inter facilities but Craig indicates that would not work as Pintler is not increasing our rates for inter facilities.*

*In 2015, we paid Pintler approximately \$25,400 for 911 and MVA billing, which means Pintler brought in approximately \$340,000 in revenue for the department. Craig and James indicate that she has even been very helpful in identifying key words that can be used on the reports to help increase collection. One single word can change an account from being collectible to a write off.*

*Dave moves to approve the contract increase for Pintler Billing Services; seconded by Jack; motion approved unanimously.*

**RESOLUTIONS:**

*None*

**PROPOSALS:**

*None*

**CHIEF'S REPORT:**

**1. January Call Volume**

*There were 152 calls for January so we're up slightly on the 911 portion. There were 73 inter facilities, 48 incidents in the Evergreen District, 12 times into the City. We are still doing well with our times of on-scene arrival.*

**2. Ambulance Status**


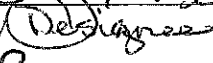
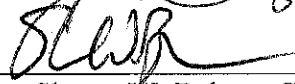
*Craig reports that Apgar ambulance was awarded the bid for the new ambulance. We will be getting a 2016 Ford F-350. The bid came in lower than expected and even with all the options it should still come in within our initial budget. The District will need to provide a 10% match which should end up right around \$20,000 with a number of*

options we didn't think we'd be able to get. We should be able to get some good trade in value for the 2 or 3 ambulances we will be declaring as surplus once we receive the new one due to our good working relationship with Apgar. One ambulance has already been declared surplus as it's not operable. We will also retire 821 which is the Department's very first ambulance and is two wheel drive so doesn't get used as much as the others anyway, particularly in the winter months. The new ambulance is four wheel drive and will be very well equipped. Craig will try to develop a power point presentation on the new ambulance as soon as possible. Craig hopes to have the new ambulance in service around the first part of May.

Craig is also thinking about declaring 851 as surplus and selling it as it was purchased solely as a rescue vehicle for swift water response which we no longer get calls for. Therefore we will still have four good ambulances with the added bonus of a little more room in the bays. The radio, cot and cot mounts will come out of the old ambulance and go into the new one. Craig indicates that next year he will be applying for a grant for a power cot, which runs around \$25,000 but is much safer for personnel and less likely to incur a work comp claim for back injury than lifting the cots manually.

As a last order of business, Craig read the following statement: "This letter serves as notification of my intent to file a grievance to Evergreen Fire District Board of Trustees regarding Trustee Jack Fallon. Additionally, I have received notice from the Fire Marshal, Ben Covington, and Administrative Assistant, Laurie Pein regarding their intent to file separate grievances regarding Trustee Fallon and the Evergreen Fire District Trustees in General". Craig wanted to submit this into the minutes of the meeting as an intent. There is no policy in regard to grievances at this level so Craig feels it will be up to the board to determine how this should be handled. Craig explains that the two employee grievances are to be submitted to Craig for him to determine if they have merit and should be heard by the board. If Craig determines they have merit they will then be presented to the board. Craig's grievance will be submitted directly to the board. It will then be up to the Chairman to determine how to move forward in the absence of any policy. Shawn asks if the grievances are written up. Craig says they are not yet and all three will require at least a week to complete the written grievances. Shawn would like at least a week from the time the grievances are received in which to review them. Craig agrees that is reasonable.

Meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Submitted by:   
Secretary   
Signed by:   
Shawn W. Baker - Chairman