

# Evergreen Fire District Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Meeting Minutes  
Regular Board Meeting of February 6, 2017

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER:** Shawn Baker calls meeting to order at 4:06 pm.

Trustees in attendance; Shawn Baker, Dave Adams, Dave Edwards  
Absent; Jack Fallon, John Foust

**DISTRICT STAFF/EMPLOYEES:**

Craig Williams  
Ben Covington  
Jack Knuffke  
James Boyce

**RECOGNIZE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:**

*(none)*

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

*(none)*

*At this time, public may comment on any public matter that is not on the Agenda of the Meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the District.*

**FINANCIALS:**

- 1. Discuss and Approve November & December Financials**  
Shawn makes comment on monthly costs of billing service, accountant and audits in terms of the business end and not having anything to do with other costs like fuel, tires and etc.  
*Dave Adams moves to approve November and December financials as presented.  
Dave Edwards seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.*

**PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:**

- 1. Approve Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2016**  
Trustees did not review Meeting Minutes from December 5, 2016. Craig summarizes the minutes for them which included 831, Jack Fallon's attendance at a Trustees meeting, approval of Christmas expenditures. There was not a documented Board meeting in January as a quorum was not present.  
*Dave Adams moves to approve the Meeting Minutes for December 5, 2016. Dave*

*Edwards seconds the motion. Motion passes unanimously.*

**2. Apparatus Update**

General Fire and Rosenbauer initially gave EFD 5 options for 831 with one of the options being to rebuild or Glider kit; it would go back and then possibly EFD could sell to Brindlee Mountain or they could put it under contractual agreement and sell it. In return, they were going to offer up a used demo at the cost of \$370,000.00 with a \$120,000.00 spread remaining that we do not have in the budget. Craig researched financing and leasing options and states it is very difficult because the mill levy is due to sunset in 2.5 years. They are not willing to lend with the uncertainty of guaranteed revenue in 2.5 years. This takes our way EFD's option of what was initially planned and based on that, Craig states that we are basically going to have to stick with 831 for now. The offer from General Fire still stands in that they will send a driver here and take it back to Rosenbauer plant and will replace all electrical and circuitry for free. Craig suggests that we move forward with it because we are not losing anything and we don't want the offer to expire. Craig states that from the start there have been issues with the air brake and air can and recalls when 831 plowed through the bay door of the brand new fire station. Dave Adams explains that when the air pressure is low on 831 the parking brake can still be released, go into gear and still have no operating brakes with no way to stop the apparatus from moving. When Rosenbauer was contacted, EFD was told that it was made that way so that if 'you are in a dangerous situation you can still move the truck even if you are out of air' to which Dave Adams said 'would never pass a DOT driver inspection'. Craig stated that when he and Dave Adams talked with Mike Flint he did not deny it. Craig told him that when they take 831 back to the plant EFD does not want the apparatus back until the electrical issues and the air brake issues are gone. Trustee Shawn Baker asked Craig if this re instills confidence in the apparatus. Craig responded that personnel has learned to deal with and compensate for the weird anomalies on the apparatus and thinks that it will restore confidence. Craig states that he met with Kyle last week and Kyle is willing to give a presentation. Kyle is still of the opinion that if the electrical issues are corrected the other anomalies with also be corrected. Kyle is also of the opinion that the offer is a good deal and that EFD should take it. It will leave EFD with one engine (832) while 831 is in process of being repaired which has been said will take 3 to 4 months. However, 831 is currently in good working order. Dave Edwards asks about the timing of this with the mill levy which Craig addresses during the levy discussion. After levy discussion, Craig directs discussion back to 831 and reiterates that this really is the only option right now but he does want to put it as part of the levy and have some sort of guaranteed CIP that isn't going to sunset. He states that we have been able to put \$25,000.00 to \$30,000.00 a year into CIP and if we are able to continue to do so and even put an extra \$20,000.00 we would be able to purchase new turnouts. EFD tried to budget \$20,000.00 for new turnouts but it was cut down to \$10,000.00. Craig states that we can't keep cutting that budget because we will have firefighters without NFPA approved turnouts and this is unacceptable and that most of the SCBA's, turnouts and

equipment were purchased all at the same time back when the new hall was built which was good and bad because if it's all purchased at the same time it all goes bad or expires at the same time. Craig states that we have to continue to build on it but that it can't all happen at the same time; it needs to be staggered. His goal is to budget \$20,000.00 to maintain NFPA approved turnouts. Craig adds that he and Kyle discussed storage space on 831 and a solution to some of the problem is to retro fit the apparatus for an estimated cost between \$5,000.00 to \$8,000.00 from CIP. This would entail getting rid of all the halogen lights and replace with LED. Craig states that the generator on the back of 831 is monstrous and is used only to power the halogen flood lights. The compartments can then be tweaked. This will only band-aid the situation until the money is available in CIP to look at something newer.

*A motion has not been made to send the Apparatus 831 to Rosenbauer but the minutes shall reflect that the Board members are unanimously in support of the 831 being sent back to Rosenbauer to have all electrical and circuitry replaced.*

### **NEW ITEMS/UPDATES:**

#### **1. Levy Discussion**

Craig states that we are recognizing that we will be setting ourselves up for “the perfect storm” if we don't run a levy even just to help with CIP. Craig tells the Board that he has included a spreadsheet in their packets to help the Board understand how out dated and aging EFD SCBA and other equipment really is. He states that, in a good year, \$25,000.00 (maybe \$30,000.00) can be put in CIP. That means that we have had a good wildfire season and etc. Guaranteed revenue into the CIP is a *must*. Craig tells the Board that he is currently trying to have a salary survey done or that we could start at a midway starting point in the valley as well as the state in comparable fire districts that have the same population and staffing. He is waiting for a couple of the Fire Chiefs to give him the information. He is looking at entry level wages for an EMT/Firefighter and EMT/Paramedic statewide; not looking at the top end but wanting to find the middle ground as we are currently at the bottom of the wage pool. Kalispell is currently paying the highest wages in the state for fire department and has done so for the past 12 years with Bozeman paying second highest wages. Whitefish is ranking on the upper third of the tier for the state. Craig acknowledges that this is Evergreen and it does not have the tax base that Whitefish has thus leading to the importance of knowing the customer base and income levels of Evergreen Fire District. Craig is hoping to have numbers by next month. Craig states that his plan is an increase and if done smartly; can avoid having the increase all at once. In the past, the Board has always went on the dollar amount; a fixed dollar amount. The last levy the Board went with a mill vs. fixed dollar amount instead which Craig states he supported. He suggests doing the same thing this time. Craig states that asking for a mill levy as opposed to a fixed amount will increase each year as property values go up but with the understanding that property values could dip which would be the risk. Craig states that when he was hired, EFD was on a fixed amount of \$110,000.00 and 10 years later; still getting \$110,000.00 when after 10 years it could have gone to \$124,000.00 if it had been on a mill levy. Craig wants

to increase staffing with the understanding that we may not need that *today* but recognizes that we don't want to be running another mill levy in 3 or 5 years and have to explain why to the public. Shawn adds that the economy was in a downturn 2.5 years ago and the thought was that in order to get one to pass responsibly was to ask for one that would sunset. Craig states that while he understood that at the time he also knew it would put EFD and the Board in the current situation of not having guaranteed revenue which affects CIP. Shawn states that he agrees with Craig's plan and they both agree that action on the plan should start immediately. Craig states he would like to try this Fall, if possible and if it fails, it still gives another Fall or following Spring to run it again. In closing levy discussion, Ben states to Shawn that although a very comprehensive newsletter had been put together the last time, he felt the Board's opinion was that enough had not been done. Ben clarifies to Shawn that that was not the opinion he got from Shawn, individually, but would like some guidance on what more could have been done or what the Board's collective expectations are. Dave Edwards suggests making sure that the residents of Evergreen Fire District are educated on what 'sunset' means and that we have been running on a \$110,000.00 budget for 10 years. Craig clarifies to Dave that that had been the previous situation. Dave states that his point is that residents have been experiencing increases in costs of daily living with no increase in their wages and will be wondering why \$110,000.00 is no longer covering the EFD. Craig responds by telling Dave that he understands his example of public thinking but EFD core *has* to be maintained and right now it is eroding. Craig and Dave agree on the direction to take in educating the residents of Evergreen Fire District on the fire department's loyalty, dependability and responsibility to this community as well as to the EFD personnel who serves not only this community but the entire Flathead Valley. Craig states he wants the numbers and the data to speak for itself. Craig states that we can show that we have a successful enterprise business; everybody's paid off; no tax dollars; all ambulance revenue and that we've shown due diligence. We can show that we've been very appreciative of the Hall they have provided us; it's a great place but we have to maintain our core group of people inside of this great place but we're not; we are losing them. Craig states that there are other competitive fire departments that are growing and getting things that are competitive with us and we are losing core people. Dave Edwards suggests that we get someone who knows how to present the information EFD wants the residents of Evergreen to understand. Craig states that there is just such a company who does demographics and surveys and whom Missoula Rural has used in the past (at the cost of \$20,000.00) after having been turned down twice by 2 consecutive mill levies and which resulted in a slam-dunk levy. The company had participated in town hall meetings; presented excellent graphs and other data they have readily available to them. Craig acknowledges the different dynamics of the residents of Evergreen and states he would have a different message for a single wage earner household vs. a retiree and that the data presented has to be sound. Craig states it would be ideal to receive an additional \$20,000.00 to \$30,000 and be able to put away \$60,000.00 every year without the worry of it sun-setting. Dave Edwards inquires what that would change from the

current tax burden. Ben uses Dave Adams' tax burden as an example and states that currently Dave's home is at \$131,000.00 and he pays \$70.00 per year on the 2 levies on the tax bill. The sun-setting levy is \$35.00 per year which would change it to \$42.00 (20%) per year. Shawn Baker states that the next step should be to bring back A – D Plan from last time. Shawn states that as a Board they would probably vote for Option B. Craig agrees with Shawn and adds that he plans on bringing back the core group of people representing the diverse demographics of Evergreen District but states that he lost them last time with all of the options and data. Dave Edwards states that, as a tax payer, he would be frustrated if “we came in like ‘we’re gonna do all of this stuff’ ...and would be like ‘just get it done first at a certain level...” Craig states that he thinks he understands Dave Edward's meaning and that the current struggle is ‘what do we need now vs. long term meaning in the next 5 to 8 years because we don't want to run another mill levy and it needs to be done right the first time.

Craig addresses the staffing plan and states that the plan really doesn't change staffing. Some options are to minimize some shifts; operationally changing shifts to get more people on shift; and utilize current personnel in a different way that wouldn't cost anymore money with the understanding that we would have to add a couple of positions to do it. Craig states that we are losing core personnel because we do not offer benefits nor retirement and there is need of addressing the core group of people and figuring out valuation and cost associated with offering those things. Craig states that he has been working with Jack Fallon in researching benefit packages and if we get a mill levy; the possibility of getting County benefits. Craig states that he will most likely have to go before the Commissioners and present data and old meeting minutes that reflect that Evergreen was a county fire department before becoming Evergreen Fire Dept. GPIA, including James (Boyce), receives county benefits as an airport firefighter just because the airport used to be a county fire department so the same thing exists here. Shawn asks Craig is he would want the Board present while speaking with Commissioners and Craig states that it is a possibility. Craig also states that County benefits would be considerably less expensive than FERS PERS or EFD getting an IRA or something similar. Craig states to the Board that he recognizes that probably half of the residents of Evergreen do not have benefits and the struggle will be getting the residents to understand issues like: Do you want well trained people? Do you want quick response times? Are these things important to you when you call 911? Or would the residents want to go back to a volunteer situation with a 20 minute response time? Dave Edwards compares that scenario to the cuts being made at the dispatch center. Ben states that EFD runs on \$960,000.00 budget; combined levies total \$198,000.00 and if the one levy could be doubled it would take it to \$210,000.00 which could provide benefits for EFD personnel. Ben clarifies that the \$35.00 (every 6 months) \$15.00 is applied for the voted levy and \$20.00 for the permissive levy based on taxes for a home valued at \$131,000.00. Dave Adams states that the break-down of that large sum for the residents could greatly affect support of the levy; roughly only an additional \$1.25 per month. Craig reiterates the need for a workshop with data and numbers and being able to answer Board members questions and Shawn

agreed. Ben adds that he has created data using this year's valuations. Ben also informs Board members of upcoming training at the county that includes budgeting, mill levies and etc. on February 28<sup>th</sup> from 2 pm to 6 pm and is free of charge and only 2 Board members will be able to attend. Ben states that he will most likely be attending and Craig encourages at least one Board member attend as well. Shawn expresses some interest in attending. Dave Edwards mentions that the last couple of Board meetings seems to have gone much better and feels that the Board has been healthier. Shawn expresses appreciation of the emails he has received from Craig in between meetings. Craig states that he will try not to send them out more than a week prior to a meeting. A question is asked regarding 851 which is an ambulance that EFD picked up for free or "2 for 1" for \$10,000.00. 851 has been taken out of service completely and RES (Kyle) is interested in it as a service vehicle and is thinking of purchasing it outright or trade in lieu of labor since he is our main service tech on apparatus. Dave Edwards inquires about a \$3,500.00 check that was found during construction of an add-on to the office desk. Craig explains to Board members who had not known about the check that it had been found stuck under crown molding and dated 2010. It was from selling the building EFD had built to house the apparatus to Robinson's. They wrote a check to EFD and it was never cashed. Craig was able to track the guy down through Wayne Evert who told Craig that the check was supposed to have been torn up and EFD was supposed to have received another check from a different Robinson family member. The family member never made it in so it was never paid. Robinson is going to honor the check.

**RESOLUTIONS:**

(none)

**PROPOSALS:**

(none)

**CHIEF'S REPORT:**

**1. January Call Volume**

Shawn addresses a past concern that Evergreen tax payers are covering Whitefish's district. Shawn states that he can see by the data Craig has presented that that is not the case and that there is mutual aid and that there is a good balance and is no longer concerned.

**Adjourn.**

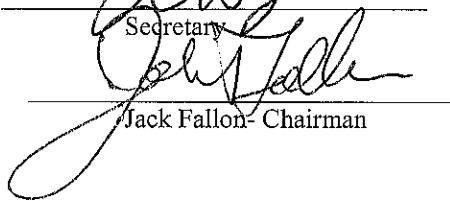
Meeting is adjourned at 4:59 pm.

*The President of the Board of Trustees, as presiding officer of any meeting of the Board of Trustees, may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy; and, then, if, and only if, the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains; and, in that event, the meeting must be open.*

Submitted by:

  
Secretary

Signed by:

  
Jack Fallon- Chairman