

**POLSON RURAL FIRE BOARD MEETING
MINUTES DECEMBER 10, 2008**

Board trustee members present: Fred Nelson, Alison Meslin, Jim Manley, and Dave Ottun

Board trustee member absent: None {Note – Trustee/Chairman Ross Hoyt resigned}

Staff Present: Fire Chief John Fairchild

Guests: Etta Moore, recruit assistant for 2010 census for Lake and Sanders County, Tom & Lauren Lipko, Lester Johnson, Roger Rogers, Trish Friez, Volunteer Firemen Chris McGuinness, Terry Gembala, Jason Whealon.

Meeting called to order at Polson City Commission Chambers by Vice Chairman Nelson at 7:00 p.m.

2010 Lake and Sanders County Census – Etta Moore recruit assistant for the 2010 census requested use of the community room located in the fire station to test applicants to conduct the 2010 census. **Motion Trustee Manley, seconded Trustee Ottun to use Big Arm Fire Station for 2010 census recruitment. Motion carried unanimously.**

Minutes November 12, 2008 Rural Fire Board Meeting: **Motion Trustee Manley, seconded Trustee Meslin to approve minutes of November 12, 2008 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

Communications: Trustee Ross Hoyt sent a letter advising the Lake County Commissioners and Polson Rural Fire District Trustees of his resignation effective today, December 10, 2008. Ross stated: *After long and thoughtful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that after 30 years as a fireman and trustee of the fire district it is time to bring this part of my life to a close. So with that said, you are notified I will no longer serve as a board member effective today, December 10, 2008.* (Copy of letter attached to minutes).

Bills: Trustee Meslin requested information on repairs for engine #319. Fire Chief Fairchild noted the valves were leaking and required replacement; the connectors will allow hookup to equipment; the \$731.08 expenditure is for annual pump maintenance along with the valve replacement; the \$425.98 expenditure is for light fixture replacement – replace drivers side spotlight and electrical repair – wiring on rear clearance lights – troubleshoot problems on Engine #319. An expenditure report of actual to budget for FY '09 was also included. **Motion Trustee Manley, seconded Trustee Meslin to pay bills. Motion carried unanimously.**

Treasury Report:

Operating Fund Balance \$ 22,369.07

Capital Improvement Fund Balance \$ 87,230.69

Voted Levy \$ 29,699.35

Paid bills in the amount of \$ 2,384.48

Check numbers 3805 - 3816 , both inclusive
(Paid December 10, 2008)

Motion Trustee Ottun, seconded Trustee Meslin to approve treasury report. Motion carried unanimously.

Correspondence: None.

Staff Report: Fire Chief Fairchild indicated a problem with engine #326 charging.

Old Business:

CONSULTANT BIDS – Two bids were received from consulting firms to provide an analysis and report regarding the most desirable location for an additional rural fire station. Michael DeGrosky representing Guidance Group, Inc., 201 Baumgartner Place N, Eatonville Washington bid proposal \$9,340; and Lane Wintermute representing Emergency Services Consulting, 25200 SW Parkway Avenue Suite 3, Wilsonville, Oregon bid proposal \$9,000. Additionally the board received a letter from Bruce Suenram representing FireLogistics, Inc. 1 Jackson Creek Road, Montana City, Montana stating he is unable to meet the scheduled report deadline. Trustee Meslin sent letters to the consultants in appreciation of the informative proposal and advising the board of trustees decided not to hire a consultant.

ROBERT'S RULE OF ORDER - Trustee Meslin indicated the Board of Trustees has been working under relaxed rules of procedures but due to many recent emotionally charged meetings she is proposing the board adopt more formal procedures to enable the Trustees to conduct business in a more orderly and less disruptive manner. Trustee Ottun noted he was not present at the November 28, 2008 meeting in Big Arm. Also in view of the new vice chair moderating the meetings is the proposal applicable. Trustee Manley indicated Robert's Rule of Order apply to meetings of all public bodies. The board concluded Robert's Rule of Order is established under the meeting of a public body.

REVIEW BIG ARM FIRE COMPANY– Trustee Manley reported on the meeting held at the Big Arm Fire Station #2 November 28, 2008. Several members of the Big Arm Fire Company signed a letter and addition letters from members of the community were received critical of the board for not making a decision as to what members are in the Big Arm Fire Company. To prevent loss of firefighters in the area the issue needs to be resolved. Trustee Manley proposed the board should decide and make clear which firefighters are members of the Big Arm Fire Company. Trustee Meslin received a letter from the Public Employees Retirement Administration in response to two questions. 1). Should the company/station that the firefighter responds to for the majority of emergency calls be the company that firefighter is listed with on the annual certificate? *Yes, the firefighter should be listed on the annual certificate of the fire company that he is a member of and responds to most calls. When the fire chief certifies that list of all current members of a fire company/department with the county clerk by September 1 of each year then that firefighter should be on the Annual Certificate of that fire company/department.* 2). Can the Fire Chief list firefighters on another company for pension purposes only if they do not normally respond to that company for emergency calls? *This question is one that is hard to answer. A firefighter should be listed on the Annual Certificate of the fire company/department that he is a member of through the whole fiscal year. This is the company that he responds to emergency calls, is listed on their roster, and receives most of the training through. Remember a fire company/department is only allowed 28 members listed on their Annual Certificate for a fiscal year.* The Big Arm firefighters should be listed with Station #2 Big Arm Station and respond to the station most of the time. Then Irvine Flats firefighters should form their own company since they respond to their own station most of the time. **Motion Trustee Manley the six members who respond to the Big Arm Fire Station and live in the Big Arm community the board recognize the six members as members of the Big Arm Fire Company. Seconded Trustee Meslin.** The motion is for purposes of discussion. Trustee Manley noted an issue with the Irvine Flats firefighters. They could form their own company, become members of the Polson Fire Company or the Big Arm Fire Company. It is understood most of the Irvine Flats firefighters would like to be members of the Big Arm Fire Company. They can appear at the Big Arm Fire Company business meeting and become members or not in according to the by-laws the board discovered that exist. During the past year, the board discovered existing by-laws that provide for the Big Arm Fire Company to

vote the Irvine Flats firefighters into the Big Arm Fire Company. While the best alternative is for the six Irvine Flats Firefighters to form their own company since they respond to the Irvine Flats location. The creation of the Irvine Flats Company may facilitate some important community identity similar to the Big Arm Fire Station #2. Trustee Meslin noted advantages to Irvine Flats establishing their own company with the ability to apply for grants and reduced residential insurance rates. The interlocal agreement provides for all companies to work together. The companies need to be set up properly for pension purposes. Trustee Manley noted some of the Polson and Irvine Flats membership was listed with the Big Arm membership which caused a voting unbalance for the Big Arm Fire Company. Vice Chairman Nelson opened the discussion to the floor. Terry Gembala representing the Irvine Flats firefighters would like to table the decision to a later date. Big Arm resident Roger Rogers questioned if the Big Arm Company will remain part of the Polson Fire District. Vice Chairman Nelson noted Big Arm will remain with the district while Big Arm will have their own slate of officers for business meetings and response will remain the same. The board questioned the deposit of donations by the fire department. The checks are deposited with the City. Terry Gembala indicated a new refrigerator and mirrors for a truck for the Big Arm Station #2 were purchased with monies derived from volunteer fund raising. Trustee Ottun was not present at the November 28th meeting would like to table the decision. Currently Irvine Flats is not a designated or recognized fire station, therefore the board should deal with recognizing the Big Arm membership and creating the Big Arm Fire Company. **Motion carried unanimously.** Vice Chairman Nelson requested Fire Chief Fairchild work with the Irvine Flats volunteers to form a company. Fire Chief Fairchild advised the 1979 agreement with Big Arm states all volunteers will train at the Polson station and is not considered a stand alone station.

CONSTRUCT FIRE STATION AT LAKE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS – Trustee Meslin indicated the board needs to decide to proceed with actual bid quotes and analyze financing. Tentative price quotes with a preliminary floor plan were presented at the November 12, 2008 meeting. Vice Chairman Nelson suggested a committee of six members including Trustees Meslin and Ottun, Fire Chief Fairchild, volunteer fire representatives, and the general public. The board does not plan to request additional mills to finance the construction. Tom & Lauren Lipko voiced concern of constructing a new station with the state of the economy. They also appreciate the board's long range planning.

New Business:

BEST USE OF DISTRICT RESOURCES – Trustee Meslin reviewed Montana Code Annotated Duties of Chief of Fire Department for the city. MCA 7-33-4104 provides the chief has sole command and control over all persons connected with the fire department and has full power and authority over its organization, government, and discipline which is subject to the approval of the city council. However MCA 7-33-2001 changes the provision for the rural fire chief. In summary the rural fire chief is considered the highest ranking officer and is responsible for the operation of the agency, including but not limited to development and implementation of agency programs and procedures, and performance of agency personnel. In development of agency regulations, programs, and procedures, the fire chief is subject to applicable laws and ordinances. During the past several months there has been much discussion over policy and policy changes, where vehicles are being housed, increased demand for fire fighters training, increased demand in response to runs, vehicles responding to accidents, vehicles responding to minor calls. The district has some great resources with new vehicles, continue to replace old vehicles, and plans to building a new station. Most important resources are the volunteer men and women and those who step forward to become firefighters. The board needs to make sure undue demands are not made on their skills and time and retain them as volunteers. A good means to obtain some valuable information is for the board to send a questionnaire to the Polson Rural District Firefighters whose responses would be confidential. The questions should relate to the above issues and any issues

the board members would like to include. The information would be the best guide for future policy, creation, and will be a review of the existing policy that affect rural personnel, use of equipment, and service to the rural residents. Trustee Meslin suggested Trustee Manley would be an ideal candidate to phrase the questions and insure confidentiality. Trustee Meslin volunteered to summarize the data which would be presented to the board for review. The questionnaire will provide some feed back on what is being done right and not being done right and how things could be changed in the best interest of keeping the firefighters. **Motion Trustee Meslin to send a questionnaire to all rural volunteer firefighters to review the district's regulations, programs and procedures. Seconded Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

Comments from public: Volunteer fireman Chris McGuinness sent an email to board members with analysis on the location of the new rural station. 1) Understanding the response time in the district; 2) Analysis on ISO insurance rating noting new stations generally change protection services and response time. The board replied one can assume it will help with the ISO rating; a study has not been completed. 3) A typical question does the board plan to continue to pay the interlocal agreement annual amount of \$15,000. The board acknowledges the amount is for administration and the fire chief will be retained. 4) Expected life span of station. Trustee Meslin replied the lease is for 20 years and the building will surely be maintained for the 20 year time period.

Trish Friez commented it was a nice meeting with a home atmosphere.

Motion Trustee Meslin, seconded Trustee Ottun to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 8:23 p.m.

Fred J. Nelson, Vice Chairman

Alison W. Meslin Secretary-Treasurer