

**POLSON RURAL FIRE BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES JUNE 10, 2009**

Board trustee members present: Alison Meslin, Paul Laisy, R. Jack Clapp, Jim Manley, Fred Nelson.

Board trustee member absent: None

Staff Present: Fire Chief John Fairchild.

Guests: Paul Iverson, Jim Summers, Roger Rogers, Paul Mauer, Rory Horning, Lester Johnson, Lake County Commissioner Bill Barron, Volunteer Fire personnel Chris McGuinness, Ron Friez, Jeff Meslin, Jane Clapp.

Meeting called to order at Polson City Commission Chambers by Chairperson Meslin at 7:00 p.m.

**Minutes May 13, 2009 Rural Fire Board Meeting; Motion Trustee Manley to approve minutes of May 13, 2009 as presented, seconded by Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Claims:** Chairperson Meslin noted an additional claim for NFPA membership in the amount of \$150.00 to reimburse Trustee Laisy. Review check #3941 payable to DXP Enterprises is for a fit mask test for SCBA's. The department signs a contract for use of the testing machine. Fire Chief John Fairchild performs the test at \$55 per test; the cost for the company to perform the test is \$110 per test. **Motion Trustee Nelson to approve claims, seconded Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Communications:** Fire Chief John Fairchild reported Engine 327 has a leak in the water tank.

**Treasury Report:**

Operating Fund Balance	\$ - 29,874.06
Capital Improvement Fund Balance	\$ 85,791.81
Voted Levy	\$ 1,590.14
Paid bills in the amount of	\$ 110,861.63

Check numbers 3934 – 3954, both inclusive.  
(paid June 10, 2009)

Report updated following meeting with revenue provided by Lake County Treasurer reflect the following fund balances.

Operating Fund Balance	\$ 10,379.74
Capital Improvement Fund Balance	\$ 85,914.97 *
Voted Levy	\$ 28,580.01

\*Board approved transfer of \$50,000 from Capital Improvement Fund to Operating Fund will be posted in June 2009 transactions.

Chairperson Meslin requested the board authorize a transfer of \$50,000 from the capital improvement fund to the operating fund to facilitate a portion of the payment for Phase I of the fire station building contract with general contractor Paul Iverson. The total payment for Phase I is \$60,000 which is comprised of \$50,000 from the capital reserve fund; and \$10,000 from the operating fund. The FY '09 operating fund budget provides an \$18,000 allocation for building costs. The initial payment will be provided by the district's funds to reduce loan interest. The loan will be negotiated for payment of the remaining construction. **Motion Trustee Manley to transfer \$50,000 from the capital reserve fund to the operating fund, seconded Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Staff Report:** Fire Chief John Fairchild reported 27 runs. VFIS conducted training with burn box trailer, and vehicle roll overs. June training will include pump operations and foam application. Two members relocated - Dennis McCrea moved to Finley Point and Nathan Boucher joined Missoula Rural Fire Department and plans to attend fire science classes in Missoula. Engine #326 has an electrical short. The department will be staffed July 3-5 with 24 hour coverage.

**Old Business:**

**FIRE RECOVERY USA BILLING SERVICES** - Trustee Clapp asked if the billing service has been implemented by the City Commission. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated the billing has not been implemented; although the city plans to go forward with the billing services. Trustee Manley noted Ronan fire department received complaints on vehicle accidents regarding claims being filed on their insurance and increased insurance premiums. Trustee Nelson talked with Ronan Fire Chief and a few complaints were expressed with claims and increased insurance premiums. Trustee Manley noted the billing service information relates to all incident calls including structure fires. The property owners are already paying for fire services through real estate property taxes. The number of vehicles that respond to an accident is a common criticism. Trustee Clapp replied adequate equipment is needed for the response. Perhaps a letter to articulate concerns regarding insurance coverage, and non insurance coverage should be developed. Trustee Laisy agreed adequate personnel and equipment available to deal with the incident, fires should not be billed, while out of the county or district vehicle accidents should be billed, and the services of a local company sought. Chairperson Meslin provided the following information. Frenchtown was billing non-resident motor accidents. Collection ceased last August when the secretary resigned. The new secretary indicated a Missoula billing service charges 8%. Currently Frenchtown is not overly keen to bill, although \$2,500 is in the budget for collection of fees. Bad Rock Fire Department has considered billing, but are concerned the billing will be double taxation. Columbia Falls City Manager indicated the council feels property taxes pay for services, it would be difficult to decide who should be billed for auto accidents; not considering billing. The Kalispell City Manager indicated the council has not considered billing and personally would not like to try the system. Currently Kalispell has \$100,000 of uncollected ambulance fees. St. Ignatius Fire Chief indicated the fee opens liability issues; and expressed the department will remain a volunteer fire company as long as he is fire chief. The state firemen's pension would be thrown out the window if charges for firemen's services were implemented. Ronan Chairman of the board indicated the charges were implemented to pay the salary of a part time fire chief. The Ronan Fire Chief noted only accidents were billed. The fire department is on an automatic call out requested by the ambulance service. The department never used to respond to every call. The chief sends the jaws-rescue vehicle and will only send other vehicles if it warrants. Method of getting information is the police officer on the scene informs who is at fault and the firefighter collects the insurance information. The information is submitted to the billing service on line with a fee of 25%. The bill is for traffic control cleanup or extrication. As of May \$4,000 was collected with some complaints from residents. Whitefish City Manager was not aware of previous discussion and recently increased the mill levy to pay for 15 paid firefighters. FEMA grant funds were also utilized to upgrade the department. No billing will be considered since the new mills should provide adequate revenue. Bigfork Chairman of the Fire Board indicated their insurance company, Western States had recommended billing. The topic was tabled to next month, although he believes the department can manage with the current revenue. He does not think the board would approve billing. **Motion Trustee Nelson to investigate the Missoula billing service and check out the system seconded Trustee Laisy.** Trustee Manley added the injured may have a great deal of medical expenses; then adding additional personal costs for non-insurance would increase the burden. Trustee Clapp suggested limiting recovery from collectible insurance companies. Resident Mr. Rogers noted an increased mill levy was implemented a few years ago to cover additional operating expenses. Lake County Commission Barron suggested the department do the

billing. Taxes generally provide for infrastructure, and while the billing would pay for additional services **Motion carried unanimously.**

**REVIEW FEMA GRANT** - Trustee Clapp reported the initial computer review will be completed in 60 days then to human review. The grant process is by rejection, therefore, with no correspondence the application is still processing. Chairperson Meslin suggested a committee formed to prioritize requests for the recruitment and retention program grant. The grant is a four year program for college tuition, insurance, reimbursement of travel, community days to list a few. **Motion Chairperson Meslin Trustees Manley and Laisy form a committee and invite others to participate to formulate ideas for a recruitment and retention grant, seconded Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.**

**ELECTION COSTS AND PROCEDURES** – Chairperson Meslin reported the board received a bill from the Lake County Elections Office in the amount of \$4,395.89 for election services May 5, 2009. Chairperson Meslin and Lake County Commissioner Barron contacted the elections office regarding clarification of the charges. The elections office indicated 60 days prior to the election a form is sent out requesting the board's choice of a method to hold the election. The board did not receive the communication. The elections office spoke with the Lake County Commissioners and the Commissioners very generously reduced the bill to \$2,000 which was the budget amount for FY '09. **Chairperson Meslin would like to make a motion to form a policy that every election the board decide the format of the election and notifies the elections office in writing 60 days prior to the election date. The election office should not proceed without hearing from the board, while it is the responsibility of the board to notify the election office.** Trustee Manley noted the increased cost of a mail ballot and suggested the board adopt a policy that the elections office is on notice the Polson Rural Fire District wishes to have live voting unless notified otherwise. Trustee Nelson suggested the school and fire district combined in a single mailing. Chairperson Meslin noted the school district is slightly different from the fire district. Trustee Laisy requested the percent of returns with the mail ballot. The cost for the school election live ballot was approximately \$2,500. Chairperson Meslin will obtain additional information from the elections office and complete review of the issue at the next meeting.

**DISTRICT'S POLICIES AND PROCEDURES** – Currently the City is reviewing the policies and procedures presented by Fire Chief Fairchild. Chairperson Meslin suggested the board form a committee to begin reviewing the policies and procedures at the same time as the city to work together and facilitate agreement on specific sections. Trustees Clapp volunteered and Trustee Nelson would like Trustee Laisy to serve on the committee. The committee will be reviewing guidelines that will govern firefighters. **Motion Chairperson Meslin the committee is to review the policies and procedures and the Fire Chief will provide the information, seconded Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously.**

**BIG ARM VOLUNTEER FIRECOMPANY SIGN AND 30TH ANNIVERSARY** - Big Arm Fire Company President Ron Friez presented the board a rendering of the proposed sign for the Big Arm Fire Station building. A committee is comprised of a cross section of community members who have been instrumental in establishing the initial fire station 30 years ago. Retired fireman Ross Hoyt and a group of Big Arm residents became involved in renovating the station a few years ago additionally firemen who have been instrumental since the 2005 upgrade of the station and younger firemen who represent the family age group. The committee proposed a sign that will be visible and readable. The committee recommended the sign moved from its past location on the front of the building to the north side of the building adjacent to Highway 93. The proposed sign is white in color with raised letters with depth perception. The committee contacted profession sign companies in Ronan, Polson, and Kalispell and asked for their recommendation. The recommendation is to use vinyl or bolted plastic acrylic letters or

metal letters. The request is for the board to consider a range of cost \$750 to \$1,050 and allow time to look on the internet for cost savings. The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event Saturday, June 27 is a day of joint celebration with the Big Arm Association and the firefighters as a way to give a good time to the community and recognize the people who were instrumental volunteer firefighters. The event is also a fund raiser for saving the historic school house in Big Arm. The firemen will be serving hamburgers with all the trimmings and the community will be furnishing a variety of salads and desserts to round out the meal. Activities will include a magic show, water war and games for children. Tickets are available \$10 for adults and \$6.00 for children under 12. A resident referred the sign letters indicate Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company. Trustee Clapp suggested Polson Rural Fire District Station 2 should be added to the sign. Ron Friez indicated the firehouse has been called station 2 for the past few years; prior the firehouse was called Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company. The committee proposed Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company Polson Rural Fire District. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated an issue with the size of the sign. The district and board should be concerned with the size of the sign. The sign is approximately three times larger than the original sign. The committee analyzed the building eaves and the placement of the sign on the north side of the building for visibility. The arc letters, Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company, are 18-inches and the straight line letters, Polson Rural Fire District, under the arc are 6-inches. The committee is open to change the size of the letters. Trustee Manley expressed the committee did a good job. Research of highway signs and visibility by motorists indicate signs give a message seen quickly and easily. Trustee Laisy asked the board's opinion to add station 2; board members felt station 2 was not significant. Lake County Commissioner Barron suggested the committee contact local businesses to furnish the sign. Ron Friez indicated estimates were received from local businesses and the businesses were very willing to work with the committee, although no mention of a discount was offered. The purpose of the new sign is to replace the sign that was removed from the front of the building a few years ago which read Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company. The committee also wants a sign that is readable and visible and recommends moving the sign from the front of the building to the north side of the building. A resident expressed use of rural tax funds to replace the sign at the station. Resident Jeff Meslin noted thirty years ago the Big Arm residents paid for the station and built the station at no cost to the rural district. Then made the station available to the rural district to house trucks. Four or five years ago the building was renovated with community funds and labor efforts. The original sign was removed from the building and the community is asking for the district to replace the sign. The community is not asking for repayment of the building or the renovation. Trustee Manley indicated the sign needs to be replaced regardless of the letters, the community is enthusiastic and has some strong feelings regarding putting the historical sign up. The board should encourage the enthusiasm. Currently the sign on the front of the building reads Polson Rural Station #2. The board approved the new sign last month. **Motion Trustee Manley the board authorize \$750 to \$1,050 for a sign as presented by the committee, seconded Trustee Laisy.** Trustee Laisy added he was involved in a similar discussion in Missoula County with a fire station that was established for a long era. The station was originally the Anaconda Lumber Company affiliate Station called Hellgate Station. The community wanted the sign to indicate Hellgate Station with Missoula Rural Fire District below which remains today. The title is appropriate for a sign in the area when it is as much of a community center as a fire station. **Trustees Manley, Laisy, Meslin and Nelson in favor; Trustee Clapp opposed. Motion carried.** Trustee Clapp indicated clarity needs to be established for communication purposes. Chairperson Meslin suggested the board revisit the issue when a sign is designated for the fairgrounds station and establish some guidelines at that time.

**UPDATE ON THE FAIRGROUNDS FIRE STATION BUILDING PROGRESS** - Chairperson Meslin provided an updated report on the progress. The Lake County Commissioners have decided to attach lean-to additions to the station at a future date; instead of completing a second floor that was discussed previously. The additions will be treated as a separate contract with a bidding process by Lake

County. The building committee Trustees Laisy and Meslin met on the site June 5<sup>th</sup> with Commissioner Barron, Fire Chief Fairchild, contractor Paul Iverson, and excavator David Graham. The location of the building was staked and parking areas designated. On June 9<sup>th</sup> the contractor signed a contract between the board and the contractor. A performance bond was deposited with Whitefish Credit Union, the initial payment of \$60,000 was paid and the steel building was ordered. The total cost of the building with some changes is \$213,920 which includes an addition of two man doors with windows and windows in the five overhead door, a metal liner on the bay walls, and inside bay faucets which is over and above the original agreement. The board should decide on the following items. David Graham was approved by the board to complete the DEQ requirements and is quoting approximately \$5,000 for services. The engineer will review the project for construction details. Cost breakdown estimates are engineering services \$1,000; \$250 in state fees; and the excavation \$3,000 - \$5,000. The building color is sandstone beige with copper trim. With the addition of lean-tos in the future, consideration should be given to stubbing in pipes for water, sewer and electric. Contractor Paul Iverson suggested stubbing water and sewer to facilitate the lean-tos; no cost estimate is available. The consensus is to add gutters to the building after the lean-to additions are added. The exhaust system was considered an option at a later date. Mr. Iverson will review the exhaust system and report back to the board. Fire Chief Fairchild requested an extended concrete apron at 66' X 50' to facilitate washing of trucks instead of the original 66' X 30'. The board should consider hiring a building inspector to inspect during construction or have the building inspected upon completion. The item was tabled to the next meeting. Trustee Clapp noted the station needs a compressor in the building. **Motion Trustee Manley color of building sandstone and copper trim; stub in pipes for water and sewer, review electrical; install gutters at a later date; get prices for exhaust system; expand the apron; review the building inspector at next month's meeting; analyze parking of trucks in the bays to utilize compressor, seconded Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously.** Chairperson Meslin requested Clerk Bonnie Manicke return the bid bond to contractor Paul Iverson. Mr. Iverson signed a receipt noting the bid bond was returned. The next issue on the building is the options for a water line: The original plan specified a 3/4-inch line, Fire Chief Fairchild requested a 4-inch line, but will accept a 2-inch line to fill fire trucks. The cost of impact fees for a 2-inch line would change from \$13,000 to \$23,000, however conflicting prices are quoted. The monthly service fee from a 2-inch line to a 3/4-inch line would increase from \$800 per year to over \$4,000 per year; additionally new rates are going into effect soon. Trustee Manley noted a waiver on the impact fees can not be requested until a building permit is issued. The permit will be issued when the engineered plans are received. When applying for a building permit, he suggested stating it is the board's intention and preference to install a 2-inch line. However the size of the line will depend on the City's decision to waive the impact fees. Since the service is also for city fire protection as well as the rural it is hopeful the City will work with the board. Chairperson Meslin indicate an option is to install a 3/4-inch line and use the hydrants to fill truck; another option is to install an overhead system with an automatic fill; place a submersible pump in the lake using the fairgrounds inland irrigation system and extend the line to the station putting the line below frost level. A tribal permit would be necessary. An additional option is to obtain a variance from the City to drill a well for irrigation and truck filling. Trustee Laisy indicated the line to the lake would be expensive. A well would be practical with the cost being one year's annual fee of approximately \$4,000. A resident commented professional buildings are required to have a certain amount of water per minute. Trustee Manley indicated the majority of the impact fee goes to the fire department for fire protection. Resident Rory Horning stated the city should acknowledge the increased fire protection. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated the water and sewer impact fees for a 4-inch line are approximately \$105,000. The impact fee for the 3/4-inch \$13,484 - \$774 for impact fire; \$622 for administration; with the remainder water and sewer. The electrical permit has been requested from Mission Valley Power and an electrical engineer will visit the site to move the two temporary poles and move one street pole which is in the middle of the fire station. The new address for the fire station is 25

Regatta Road. A temporary three wire fence will be installed prior to the June 26<sup>th</sup> rodeo at the fairgrounds. **Motion Trustee Nelson to install a temporary three wire fence, seconded Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

**New Business:**

**DISCUSS A REVIEW OF RURAL FIRE CHIEF'S JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERFORMANCE -**

Trustee Clapp suggested a starting point would be find some other fire departments that are similar to Polson with a full time fire chief. The purpose is to provide job description and an annual performance review. Chairperson Meslin added a job description should be written as many times during the last couple of years there has been a lack of understanding from both sides. Trustees Laisy and Nelson volunteered to serve on a committee to write a job description as it relates to the rural fire district and recommend an annual evaluation review. **Motion Trustee Clapp appoint Trustees Laisy and Nelson to a committee to write a job description as it relates to the rural fire district and recommend an annual evaluation review, seconded Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

**BOARD POLICY ON FIRE DEPARTMENT'S & COMPANY'S**

**REPRESENTATION AT BOARD MEETINGS -**

Trustee Laisy indicated the permanent records files regarding policies implemented by the board should be numbered and dated with reference to the minutes. The documents should be kept in a binder for quick reference. A policy should be adopted stating the fire chief or a designee as the spokesperson for the fire district at the board meetings and public events. Each station should elect a station officer or chairman who represents their station and firefighters. The person need not be a fire grounds officer. The officers should have a direct communication line to the fire chief. The communication provides the fire chief with information critical to protect the stations, volunteers and needs. Additionally the station officer would select a spokesperson to represent the firefighters at board meetings. The firefighters are considered residents and taxpayers of the district, therefore, the procedure does not eliminate the right of any firefighter to speak to the board. Trustee Clapp added the board should be the core of last resort; issues should process through the various chain of command, then to the chief or assistant chief. Chairperson Meslin noted in some past instances the chain of command was not viable, since the chain of command has been the problem. Issues have changed with the formation of the Big Arm Fire Company and appointed officers that report to the chief. She does not want to loose sight of the fact that the individuals are volunteers helping neighbors and not a military organization. If firefighters are not comfortable with the chain of command, board members should be available for grievances. Changes have been made in the right direction and Big Arm has a president and captain to follow the chain of command. Trustee Manley indicated it is a great idea and volunteered to draft a policy. **Motion Trustee Manley to draft a policy for the board to review at the next meeting, seconded Trustee Nelson.** Commissioner Barron indicated the only strength in an organization is the chain of command. **Motion carried unanimously.**

**1995 CHEVROLET BLAZER DISPOSAL -** Fire Chief Fairchild reported the vehicle has 170,000 miles. He suggested donating the vehicle to Finley Point Fire since the department does not have an administrative vehicle. Chairperson Meslin noted the rural district owns part of the vehicle. The loose items light bar, etc have been removed. She questioned if the vehicle could be used by the volunteers for errands, or incentive for fire fighters who travel a distance. Fire Chief Fairchild is concerned the vehicle is a liability, the light bar wiring caused a couple of fires; while Finley Point Fire Chief is aware of the condition of the vehicle. **Motion Trustee Clapp to donate the 1995 Chevrolet Blazer to Finley Point Fire, seconded Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

**ADOPTION/IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW FIRE CODES** – Fire Chief Fairchild reported the board should adopt the new fire codes which will enable the fire chief to enforce regulations in the district. Trustee Laisy reported a fire line safety code adopted by the state has been adopted by many of the fire districts. The fire line safety code may be the practical code to adopt. The code applies to public and commercial buildings in the district. Since there is no one in the district to enforce building codes, it would not be practical to adopt a building code. In a current situation, Fire Chief Fairchild requested installation of fire extinguishers in a public building. The owner refused and he has no adopted code in the district to enforce the issue. Trustee Manley would like to review the code. More importantly it places responsibility on the fire chief and the board to perform regular competent inspections

**FAIRGROUNDS FIRE STATION ADDITIONAL ITEMS NEEDED FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE** - Tabled due time required for additional agenda items. Will be added to July agenda.

**BUDGET FY '09-'10** – Fire Chief Fairchild indicated a slight increase in budget lines for training , conferences, travel, clothing allowance; while the other line items will be the same as last year. The board reviewed the preliminary budget. **Motion Trustee Clapp to further review the budget at the July meeting, seconded Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

**PUBLIC INPUT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS** - As an observer and taxpayer Ron Friez applauds the board for use of committees to bring facts forward in a commendable, consistent way to do business. Trustee Manley replied the board appreciates the enthusiasm of the Big Arm community. Chris McGuinness inquired if the board intends to make the finding of the private investigator public. The board will discuss the issue in executive session.

Meeting adjourned 9:35 p.m.

The board recessed to executive session.

---

**Alison W. Meslin Chairperson**

---

**Jack Clapp Secretary-Treasurer**