

FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, March 10, 2015, 5:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL:

Members Present:

Dan Foley, Chair, *BSB Commissioner #9*
Patrick Doherty, *BSB Fire Dept.*
Bud Eveland, *Rocker Volunteer Fire Dept.*
Chris Mjelde, *BSB Fire Dept.*
John P. Morgan, *BSB Commissioner #3*
John Sorich, *BSB Commissioner #4*
Guy Quam, *Boulevard Volunteer Fire Dept.*
Chad Silk, *BSB Fire Dept.*
George Stone, *Terra Verde Volunteer Fire Dept.*

Guests Present:

Jeff Miller, *BSB Fire Chief*
Ted Bury, *Big Butte VFD*
Ed Fisher, *BSB Fire Council*
Darren Herman, *Race Track VFD*
Dave Kneebone, *Little Basin Creek VFC*
Gary Mattern, *Race Track VFD*
Jim Ross, *Little Basin Creek VFC*

III. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 18, 2015, MEETING

The minutes were not approved at this meeting. Not everyone was able to review them.

V. UPDATES

A. Meeting Procedures & Public Comment

Chairman Foley brought a couple of things to everyone's attention. He would like to follow procedures such as getting the agendas posted and following the agenda; and, according to the Fire Advisory Committee Bylaws, the people on the committee are part of the discussion. There is and has been a certain procedure that needs to be followed. There is a section on the agenda for "Public comment on any item on the agenda," and another section at the end of the agenda for "Public comment on any Fire Advisory Committee matter not on the agenda." This is the standard procedure used for other committee meetings and used for this committee. It doesn't prevent anyone from requesting to put an item on the agenda; you just need to submit the request to Chairman Foley. Following this procedure will allow the committee to stay focused. If a subject is being discussed and a committee member believes somebody in the

audience has more knowledge of the subject, a committee member can call on that person.

B. Volunteer Department Update

Bud Eveland shared George Goody's report that there were over a 1,000 hours logged at the Fire Training Center since the beginning of 2015.

C. Career Department Update

Chris Mjelde reported that they have had a busy week of training – They had five (5) days in a row of outside training (fire ground operation and EMT training). George Stone added that it was a really good class over the weekend. The NFA out of Colorado put on and taught the class.

D. Ordinance Change Submitted to Council

Chairman Foley reported that one more reading before Council must be done before the requested changes regarding the "entire devotion of time" and the "age restriction for hiring" are passed. He stated that two commissioners had questions on it, but the last vote was unanimous to approve the changes. It should be final in a week or two. Commissioner Sorich suggested that any changes that need to be made to the ordinance should all be made at once. Chairman Foley shared the reasons why these two changes were made now.

E. Fire Apparatus Replacement Program

Chairman Foley began by stating that Chief Jeff Miller began reviewing this subject before it was discussed in Fire Advisory. As discussed at the last meeting, it was agreed that the Committee would ask (through Director Dave Schultz) Mike Lingenfelter at the BSB Shop to review all the apparatus. Chairman Foley passed out a preliminary review of the apparatus information received from Mike Lingenfelter and reviewed the report. Chairman Foley said that this gives us initial information.

The next question is where we take this from here. Chairman Foley would like everyone's input. One idea was to go to each station and look at each apparatus. Committee members would like to take some time to digest the information that Mike submitted. Additional information needed for further review was brought up. Chief Miller suggested that it would be worthwhile to go to every facility. It will be eye opening. Many departments take a lot of pride in their stations and equipment; other departments do not. Jeff agreed to set up the schedule to tour the stations. Chairman Foley offered to gather information from everyone, put it in a chart, and send it to everyone so they will have it available for each station review. Chairman Foley emphasized that having a replacement program, once we get the data, we can determine which apparatus have the greater needs. It will help to strategize to fund for that, and

update the information on a yearly basis. Commissioner Sorich summarized that we are building a data base. Discussion continued on how to rate the review of apparatuses.

Chairman Foley asked if the Committee would be agreeable to review the fire apparatus and the fire stations. George Stone made a motion to review the fire apparatus and the fire stations and Bud Eveland made a second to the motion. On the question, Commissioner Morgan suggested doing a baseline to compare all the apparatus and made some suggestions. Commissioner Foley shared the chart that was reviewed at the last meeting. Chris Mjelde suggested a numerical system be used to simplify the rating system. Details of a rating system and what should be included in the chart were discussed further. Commissioner Foley mentioned that with the budget process starting, we could get this done soon and make a recommendation to Chief Jeff Miller for his consideration as he develops next year's budget. All were in favor of the motion.

The committee discussed including Walkerville and Melrose as part of the station tour/apparatus review. The details of scheduling the visits and transportation to the sites were discussed. Chief Miller will develop the schedule and contact the chiefs of each department. Chairman Foley will bring copies of the chart to the station for everyone.

F. Turnout & SCBA Replacement Program

Chairman Foley shared an Excel spreadsheet that Shelly Jones provided him to capture data for each member's turnouts. Chairman Foley will send this to each volunteer fire department. Also, BSB forms were shared that are used record keeping for the SCBAs, PPE's, etc. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided to look at the turnouts and SCBAs when everyone visits each station to check out and rate all apparatus. Discussion followed regarding the replacement of SCBAs and turnouts. SCBAs are easier to know when they need to be replaced; they have a 15-year life span per NFPA regulations. George Goody stated that we are so much more in compliance than we were 20 years ago. The purpose of this review is to create a database so that the ultimate goal is to know what needs to be replaced as a priority.

VI. REVIEW/DISCUSSION

A. Amend By-laws to Allow a Substitute When a Member of Committee is Absent

Chairman Foley researched this question that came up at the last meeting. No other committees in Butte-Silver Bow do this. The people on the committee have made a commitment to be on the committee and have the knowledge to make the decisions that need to be made. Further comments were made on the reasons why a substitute should

not be allowed to vote on behalf of a committee member. It was decided that no changes would be made to the by-laws regarding this subject.

B. Tour of all Fire Department Stations and Examine Fire Engines as a Committee

This subject was discussed as noted above.

C. Continue to Review Current Fire Department Issues -Staffing/Career & Volunteer, Service Delivery & Response

At the last meeting, budget sources, fire funded mil levy, and grants were discussed. Chairman Foley emailed Chief Miller questions regarding the cost of VFDs, etc., and Chief Miller sent an email response, which Chairman Foley distributed to everyone for discussion purposes. One of the questions Chairman Foley asked pertained to the cost of volunteer fire departments. This came up about a year ago when Melrose requested additional funding. The email response is attached. A rough figure for the costs of a VFD is \$11,883.73. This figure was used from Home Atherton. Per Chief Miller, the information is out there, but it is cumbersome to get. Costs are not captured per department, it is all in one fund. Chief Miller averaged the cost based on size of building and number of apparatus. Chief Miller said that the VFDs do not break the budget, the budget is 88% personnel - the boots on the ground. Chief Miller asked: "Can we better utilize the funding?" Chief Miller stated the biggest issue, second to replacement of our apparatus and PPE that is currently being discussed, is that our facilities need a lot of work if they are going to continue to be in operation the next 15-20 years. All of the facilities need work.

Chairman Foley then handed out a document that Chief Miller provided - *2014 Fire Station Safety and Health Inspections Developed Priorities FY 2014-2015* (attached). The information included notable capital improvements that were completed. Additional information shared was a copy of the project summaries that Chief Miller submitted to the Chief Executive for the Capital Improvement Plan budget: fire apparatus replacement, photocopier replacement, an emergency generator for Station 2, apparatus bay ceiling enclosure for Station 2, portable radio replacement, self-contained breathing apparatus replacement, and fire/emergency services training facility. The highlighted items have been completed since the report was written. Chairman Foley asked everyone to review this information (including Jeff's response to the second question regarding staffing and overtime costs) and bring up any questions at the next meeting.

The next items for review were service delivery & response plans. Call volumes, notification systems, and response plans were the next topic and how it is addressed in the ordinance. Chairman Foley asked Chief Miller to walk the committee through how the process works for call notifications and call volumes and how they relate to FIREHOUSE. A discrepancy was noted that when a volunteer fire department responds as mutual aid in another district, that information is not captured in

FIREHOUSE. When a call is made, the specific district that the call was for is input in FIREHOUSE. Chief Miller said that he has been asking for access to Swift Justice that is used by Dispatch/Law Enforcement for quite some time. This would allow access to the dispatch blotter. In a week or two, Chief Miller hopes to have this software loaded on his system. Chief Miller stated that when this system is up and running, the volunteer departments can call Station 1 for their times. One issue is that dispatch uses different clocks for times and they need to come up with one clock to use one singular time. Using different clocks for the times have caused problems for the fire department.

The next item for discussion and review was Butte-Silver Bow County, MT Code of Ordinances Section 2.16.710 Dispatch procedures. Does this occur currently? According to George Stone, it is much more involved than as written. There is a rural response plan in place that has career and three volunteer departments responding for manpower and water. Chairman Foley would like to know what is working, what is not working, and what should we be doing. Guy Quam believes the urban and rural response plans need to be updated, and that the ordinance is not being followed. The paid department goes on every call. The volunteer fire departments are dispatched according to the rural response plan. Chairman Foley asked if this is an efficient process. These are the tough issues that we have to address when we talk about efficiency and when we have an ordinance and plans that are not being followed, according to Chairman Foley. We need to have a plan that we agree on that is the best for the people in this community. Chairman Foley asked the career members if going on every call is the best use of their time in their opinion. The answer is yes according because of the medical aspect, the technical rescue, and firefighting operations.

Chairman Foley asked if this is considered the urban response plan, and where did it come about that the career firefighters respond to other districts. This is territorial stuff? Chief Miller stated that when consolidation occurred it was a real territorial issue the way it was designed at that time and they were very contentious times. The way it was designed, it was a one-for-one response. You had one paid pumper and one volunteer department paged to a district. That was when every volunteer department had a roster that was full and had a waiting list. If you had a need for a second alarm, a second paid pumper and the next closest volunteer fire department were dispatched. In 1976-77, that was the best plan that could be made to make things work with the politics involved. In the years since, it has come to the point that they go in to some districts where the volunteer department does not even answer the alarm. It is not about whose district we are in (mine or yours), it is about providing a life-saving service. The paid department sends much more equipment to a rural response than an urban response. The whole system needs some reform according to Chief Miller. We cannot compel any volunteer department to do what we think they should do coming from this group. Until we come to the table and agree this is really what we need to do to deliver this service and do it efficiently. Are we doing it the best, probably no. We are clearly not following the ordinance. As a taxpayer, paid firefighters should be used to fight a fire and not remain at the station. Chief Miller is against a mass dispatch to every fire

alarm. When you look at the stats and numbers for calls that actually turn out to be fires that require more than 10-15 gallons of water, his biggest fear in his position is that it is not about callouts or paid versus volunteers, it is about the more emergency vehicles and the more people you have responding to that singular point, we are going to have something bad happen. The chances are we are going to have a bad accident, and then we are going to be in for liability. Maybe it's time to develop a way on how we can do this more efficiently and properly so that things are staffed properly. It is difficult when some departments are not willing to come to the table. We need to develop a consensus. It isn't efficient, and it isn't being done as originally intended. The times have changed, the identity has changed, and the demographics have changed. He is sure there is a better way to do it.

George Stone shared what he learned at a class a couple of weekends ago and their process used for callouts for another alarm and their responsibilities. Chairman Foley reiterated that unless everyone is willing to commit to making some changes, is it worth our time to hash this through. Without the volunteer's ability or desire to consolidate, it is not going to happen. We have to come up with some solutions. Commissioner Sorich asked what the best cost versus benefit is. He stated that you want the very best level of service for the taxpayers. The best people responding at the best level of service at what cost. George Stone agreed that things have changed. He stated that back when these plans were written there was no such thing as an Incident Command (IC) system; and, now, we are working harder and harder to make sure that IC is in effect. He explained the IC process. That is why the ordinance is not being followed; we are trying to follow the incident command process. Chris Mjelde agreed that things are getting better. George suggested using IC procedures, and Guy Quam agreed.

Guy asked the question why more career firefighters aren't riding in one engine instead of taking two or more engines. Chief Miller responded that they have had this discussion many times within the career department and they continually evaluate it; but, they need the ability to answer another call that comes in.

Chairman Foley asked the three committee members that have been volunteer and career firefighters what we can do. Firefighter Mjelde echoed Firefighter Silk's comments that having been on both sides of it, he knows the volunteers train well and train a lot, but working 24 hours, twice a week as a career firefighter the technical side is so sharp. Do we need to go to every square inch of the county? Volunteers might not show up because the volunteers or the mutual aid may not show up either because they may be at work, they have other lives, kids, or sports. When Chris started on the career side after five years of being a volunteer, it was a huge learning curve on the technical side, a lot is expected of us. On the career side, they are all EMTs and learn and have the fire science knowledge, medical, rescue, and water rescue side. There is a lot more in the tool box per guy, and he believes they need to train more with the volunteers.

Firefighter Chad Silk agrees and said that when it is your primary career there is more of an urgency on how it needs to go. When it comes to incident command, he thinks it is a lot better than people make it out to be. He stated that there are four battalion chiefs down at the station on any given day that are amazing at what they do when they make their decisions on what trucks need to be where, when a second alarm needs to be done, etc. FF Silk believes they need to go on every call with the knowledge our officers have, there is a reason they have all that knowledge with all their experiences. Chairman Foley asked what role the volunteer's plays in this. FF Mjelde said we need the volunteers. The need their help, the water support, the volunteers tenders, and manpower (boots on the ground). George Stone said that at least 20+ people are needed on a working fire. Discussion continued on the process of who would maintain command of an incident. Volunteers stated that they have no problem turning a scene over to officers of the career department.

Chairman Foley appreciates all the comments. He wants to continue to hammer away at this. He appreciates what everyone does. When there is a fire or emergency, as a taxpayer and a citizen, he wants somebody there. You are appreciated and you are all good people. As Commissioners, they are responsible for looking at the financial end.

VII. ACTION/RECOMMENDATION

None.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Bud Eveland reminded everyone about the upcoming Flame-Sim software training at the new EOC. He enquired when a good time would be for everyone for scheduling. He thought it could be brought up at the Fire Council meeting tomorrow night. Bud will then email everyone.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ed Fisher had a question regarding the February minutes and asked for clarification regarding the TIFID money and grants. Chief Miller explained that the TIFID money is part of our overall budget. Those funds have to be included when you put in for a grant. Chief Miller said that he would verify the inclusion of this fund in the fire services budget with the county attorney. Ed Fisher also brought up that before changes are made to the ordinance that state law needs to be checked.

Gary Mattern thanked everyone for bringing up the customer service part of the deal, and as long as we all keep that in mind and set our pride aside, the fire department will make progress.

X. NEXT MEETING DATE - April 7, 2015 – 5:00 p.m.

XI. ADJOURNED - The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

cc: Chief Executive Matt Vincent
Dan Foley, Chairman, Fire Advisory
Chief Jeff Miller, Director Fire Services