

# **FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, May 12, 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.*

### **Guests Present:**

Jeff Miller, *BSB Fire Chief*  
Ted Bury, *Big Butte VFD*  
Ed Fisher, *Boulevard VFD*  
Jerod Gonzalez, *BSB Career Fire Dept.*  
Darren Herman, *Race Track VFD*  
Marc Lee, *BSB Career Fire Dept.*  
Mike McGree, *A-1 Ambulance*  
Jim Ross, *Little Basin Creek VFC*  
Rick Ryan, *BSB Career Fire Dept.*  
Kurt Sheehan, *BSB Career Fire Dept.*

### **Members Excused:**

Chad Silk, *BSB Fire Dept.*  
George Stone, *Terra Verde Volunteer Fire Dept.*

## **III. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA**

None.

## **IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 7, 2015, MEETING**

Bud Eveland made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2015, meeting. John Sorich seconded the motion; the motion passed.

## **V. UPDATES**

### **A. Volunteer Department Update**

Bud Eveland gave a report on the Flame-Sim software evaluation and training, and then he read the comments of individuals who attended the training (Dave McPherson, Wade Hucky from Dillon VFD, Bob Huff, and Jim Ross). Everyone who made comments on the training reported that it was a very worthwhile training and would be a valuable tool for Butte-Silver Bow. There are two ways to purchase this software. You can purchase a license for \$1,800/per license or buy a pack

(laptop, controllers, hardware, and software) at a cost of \$22,000 for a complete set up. The training was free.

Bud also stated that Jim Ross reported that they had 180 hours of training, firefighting and other department duties for the month of April.

## **B. Career Department Update**

Chris Mjelde reported that they attended life flight training out at the airport this week. Over the last several weeks they have been focusing on R.I.T. & SCBA training.

Chief Miller reported that he, Sheriff Ed Lester, DES Manager Dan Dennehy, and 9-1-1 Supervisor Dave McPherson travelled to Helena on Thursday, May 7, 2015, to attend hearings for Homeland Security Grant awards. Dan Dennehy sent in a grant for a redundant back-up 9-1-1 center for the EOC. The request was for \$225,000 and Butte-Silver Bow was awarded the amount of \$185,000. If anything ever happens in Butte-Silver Bow, we will be able to use this as a backup 9-1-1 center.

## **C. Jeff Miller Update – 2015/2016 Budget**

Jeff handed out a spreadsheet that was prepared regarding the TIFID Fire & Equipment Training Fund Request orders. Everything has been ordered, most everything has been received with just a few items that have already been shipped.

The initial budgets have been submitted. Chief Miller met with Chief Executive Matt Vincent and Finance & Budget Director Danette Gleason briefly regarding the BSB Fire Department 2015/2016 Budget. Chief Miller made a request to resurrect the Intercap loan for fire apparatus purchases. They seemed open to the idea. He is hoping it will be included in the chief executive's budget.

Chief Miller brought to their attention the need for SCBAs; and, he brought them a copy of the Capital Improvement Budget Request that was submitted last year. They discussed potential sources of funding. Chief Miller stated that both of these requests were submitted in the preliminary budget. Commissioner John Sorich gave a brief update on the budget timeline. Chairman Foley said that it is really important to get the Intercap loan reinstated.

## **D. Turnout/SCBA Inventory**

Chairman Foley reported that he received about half (1/2) of the information requested for the turnout/SCBA Inventory request that he made. The spreadsheet shows the expiration dates of the SCBAs; and, currently it looks like Little Basin Creek has a couple of SCBAs that have expired. He still needs information from Big Butte, Centerville, Home Atherton and Terre Verde. As soon as the information is

received, we can develop a plan to order SCBAs through the TIFID funds over the next couple of years.

## **VI. REVIEW/DISCUSSION**

### **A. Fire Apparatus Replacement Program**

Chairman Foley referred to the color-coded spreadsheet that Chris Mjelde created and read a portion of the April minutes referencing a different approach to managing the fleet. With the purchase of the 3,000 gallon tender, Terre Verde hardly uses their engine that was bought by the county. Terre Verde thought about the idea of trading the engine, and that maybe Big Butte might be able to use it. Chairman Foley asked for everyone's thoughts.

Guy Quam asked for Big Butte's opinion. Ted Bury adamantly opposed the idea. He said they have been waiting for 5 to 6 years to get a new engine. They have been compromising since 1977. They are adamant that they would like a new apparatus. The question was asked whether or not if any other department would consider this idea.

Chris Mjelde expounded on the spreadsheet that he developed. Discussion continued regarding the results of this data. Lengthy discussion included how many engines should be requested and which engines should be replaced according to the chart. Whatever decision is made by the Committee, it will be sent to the Director of Fire Services for his consideration.

Further discussion included taking personalities out of the decision-making process and making the best decisions possible for the taxpayers; thinking outside the box; keeping an open mind; using the chart as it was intended; revisiting the chart on a regular basis and keep it updated; could the Terre Verde engine be placed somewhere else in the fleet; how to address this after the 7-year period (the length of the Intercap loan); there is only a certain amount of money; looking at some funding mechanism through the TIFID money; getting parts for the old firetrucks is a problem and it must be addressed; it was an eye-opening experience for a lot of the group to go and see the trucks; Big Butte's truck does need to be replaced; but certain situations are going to dictate changes; using/trading Terre Verde's engine would be worth evaluating; we need to keep safety in mind and provide good fire service; interest rates were discussed; what happens if a VFD's truck is out of commission; the possibility of selling old apparatus or auctioning it off and putting the money back in the fund; the underutilization of some apparatus in some of the VFDs; consolidation of some departments was brought up again that would solve and address some of the issues that exist; consolidating runs and manpower; we are a town of 33,000 people with limited tax funding; we've done the homework that will be presented to the Council with the new apparatus request; and we have to have a united front when it comes to

Chief Miller requesting new apparatus and getting approval from the Chief Executive and Council of Commissioners.

After lengthy discussion, a few motions and substitute motions were made and several votes were taken to make a recommendation to the Director of Fire Services. The final motion approved was to recommend that Chief Miller put in a request to purchase two apparatus in the 2015/2016 Budget using an Intercap or bank loan to secure funding for the two new engine purchases. The vote was 5 to 2 in favor of the motion. Chairman Foley said that he would draft a formal letter to Jeff.

## **B. Urban/Rural Response Plan**

A recommendation made by Guy Quam was to spend some time (months or a year) following the current ordinances in place as they are written to see if it will work. How do we know if they don't work? Commissioner Sorich posed the question whether the ranking volunteer chiefs are running the fires. He has concerns about that. What is the liability? Commissioner Morgan asked what the enforcement value of an ordinance is. What is the efficient way to do this? Discussion pursued.

Chairman Foley read the questions that were previously given to the committee for discussion purposes. Ordinances need to be followed legality-wise. We need ordinances that will work to protect the property owners. Chairman Foley asked the committee to submit questions ahead of time and to come to the next meeting with ideas. The question was asked: "If volunteer departments were to mutually respond, who would approve the mutual response?" Who enforces the ordinances? What are the liabilities?

## **C. Ed Fisher E-Mail – Fire Chief & Director of Fire Services Positions, Call Outs & EMS Calls**

The Committee discussed a letter and a copy of an email that were received at the last meeting. Chairman Foley asked Ed Fisher to share the intent of the letter that he wrote. Ed shared some historical organizational information with the committee. He believes the Fire Department needs a Director of Fire Services and a Fire Chief and a change in the way certain positions operate, and he shared his reasons why. He just sent it out as a suggestion. Ed then shared that the other letter referred to was an anonymous letter regarding medical calls. A copy of the letter was anonymously sent to Mike McGree of A-1 Ambulance. Mr. McGree believes that the system that they have now is working perfectly.

Other comments regarding these letters were to hire a unified director of training for the career and volunteers; a letter of recommendation which was supported by the Fire Advisory Committee was sent to Chief Miller a couple of years ago, and Jeff stated that it was requested in the budget then (it was not approved) and it has been requested in this year's budget. Ed Fisher suggested reading Polson's study.

Mr. McGree requested that if anyone had any questions regarding ambulance or medical service or his business to feel free to call him anytime. Mike also commented that he has worked through four (4) fire directors with the Butte-Silver Bow Fire Department and, from a medical and EMS standpoint, it has never been better than with the current fire chief. Jeff does an excellent job and keeps them informed and they have a great system.

Chief Miller shared his thoughts about everything that was discussed. He said the single, most difficult obstacle is that there are 9 autonomous departments/fire companies that by state law cannot be compelled to do anything that the membership feels are not in their best interest. It is hard to come to the table and do what's best for the community. We need to streamline the process, coordinate and consolidate some departments so that we can consolidate the training.

The battalion chiefs do a ton of work running their shifts and coordinating the training along with their ancillary duties. They are very knowledgeable about fire attack and running an incident. The Fire Marshal position is a really unique position that requires one person to do that by themselves. Within the career department they have developed a uniform training calendar that has been used for two years of which the battalion chiefs have been excellent about implementing, but it still lacks consistency. A training officer would help coordinate the training and the training officer would expand out to the volunteer departments. If the departments were scaled down, it would be easier to consolidate the training. We are trying to get company level training for cause and origin investigations. John Lasky has been extremely reliable. He believes the same obstacles would be here even with a fire coordinator.

## **VII. ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Fire Apparatus Recommendation for 2015/Budget**

**Chairman Foley will send a letter to Fire Chief Jeff Miller.**

## **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY FIRE ADVISORY MATTER NOT ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**X. NEXT MEETING DATE – June 9, 2015 – 5:00 p.m.**

**XI. ADJOURNED - The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.**

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