

Public Input on Non Agenda Items: –

Mr. Eddy also commented about recent newspaper opinion articles regarding the vehicle crash fees and questioned facts being presented.

Background: In a recent opinion article (Leader, June 2, 2011 p. A4, "Accident fee response"), the Polson Rural Fire District (PRFD) trustees stated that their crash fees are billed "specifically for COSTS incurred in providing the response".

Comment: The facts are that the PRFD apparatus fees (based on the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group costs) include the labor costs for crews of 1 to 4 members, depending on the apparatus. Further, the PRFD fees add \$17.85 per hour for "each additional crew member". These charges are NOT A COST to the PRFD because, as the trustees reminds us: "firefighters serve without compensation."

When I brought this to the attention of the board, my objection was dismissed. As a result, the current PRFD crash fees are in violation of Montana law which clearly requires "fees...must be reasonable and related to the COST of providing the service".

I would like to thank the trustees, for clarifying the "large amount of misinformation [that] has been disseminated".

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Background: In a recent opinion article (Leader, June 2, 2011 p. A4, "Accident fee response"), the Polson Rural Fire District (PRFD) trustees stated that "The majority of crash response is provided to persons who pay no taxes to this community."

Question: Can the board please provide me with the data that supports this statement?

Comment: I contend that the data to support the conclusion does not exist because without investigating tax records, there is no way to know whether a crash victim is a local taxpayer. (Furthermore, anyone who buys products or services in the fire district pays taxes indirectly.)

Additional information on this subject was obtained from a survey of approximately 10,000 crash victims who were asked the distance from their home to the accident scene. The results from this survey found that in a 2-car accident, there is a 90% probability that one of the participants was within 10-miles from their home. This suggests that a large majority of those charged for crash fees are locals.

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Comment: In fact, as the 2011-12 budget will show, the cost burden of the crash response services will be paid by the taxpayers of this district alone! Crash fees collected DO NOT help pay for the operational cost of providing this service. The crash fees will be deposited in a reserve account (sometime referred to as a "slush" fund) and may be used for anything – without requiring approval of the voters.

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Background: In a recent opinion article (Leader, June 2, 2011 p. A4, "Accident fee response"), the Polson Rural Fire District (PRFD) trustees stated "...the rescue truck was paid for by the firefighters, rather than the taxpayers..."

Comment: In fact the rescue truck was paid for by taxpayers and others, who contributed to the fire department! The fire department only has money paid by taxpayers or contributed by benefactors.

I would like to thank the trustees, for clarifying the "large amount of misinformation [that] has been disseminated".

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