

**POLSON RURAL FIRE BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES JANUARY 13, 2010**

**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:** Craig Jeppson, MSU Fire Services Training School; Will Woodger, Elizabeth Hoel, Lee Manicke; Lester Johnson; Berl Tiskus Valley Journal Reporter; City Manager Todd Crossett; Volunteer fire personnel Chris McGuinness, Jeff Meslin, Ron Friez, Jane Clapp, Grant Clapp, Keith Paul, Devin Phillips, Kraig Rubel, Drew Hoel,

Meeting called to order at new fire station located at 25 Regatta Road by Chairperson Alison Meslin at 7:00 p.m..

**Minutes December 09, 2009 Rural Fire Board Meeting; Motion Trustee Laisy to approve minutes of December 09, 2009 second Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Claims:** The board questioned the following expenditures. Mission Valley Power bill in the amount of \$716.31 for one month's electric service at the new station on Regatta Road. The board requested the temperature setting reduced to 45 degrees in the bays and Fire Chief Fairchild will monitor the situation. Operating supplies for the new station should be recorded as an expenditure in fund #900 building and recruitment reserve. Zumar Industries \$85.39 for two fire station signs. L.N. Curtis \$543.00 for a nozzle on engine #319. G & M Auto Tech a portion of the invoice is for replacing air bags on Engine #314 that was not billed several months ago. Stine Electronics \$2,280.00 for two radios and three Minitor V pagers for the rural fire district. Mission Valley Security \$5,477.78 security system installation at new station regarding billing and prior contract bid quote. The contract quote indicated labor installation was at no charge, although additional labor was necessary due to the sheetrock installed prior to the security system installation. The additional labor cost was approximately \$1,000 including the telephone line installation. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated the telephone wiring labor provided by Mission Valley Security was less than the Century Link telephone company fee. Century Link \$69.95 telephone service at new station. Clerk Bonnie Manicke changed the service from a business unlimited calls service line \$69.95 to a one party business line \$45.67. A credit will appear on next month's bill. Fire Chief Fairchild added Bresnan telephone and cable is also available; the telephone charge is approximately \$23.00 per month. **Motion Trustee Manley to approve claims, second Trustee Nelson. Motion carried unanimously.** Chairperson Meslin advised the worker's compensation policy with Bishop Insurance should be considered for renewal or request bids. Trustee Clapp suggested the policy renewed with Bishop Insurance. If a significant increase is billed the board should review the policy at that time.

**Communications:** Chairperson Meslin replied to Salish and Kootenai Tribes request for verification of liability insurance regarding the tribal lease at the Big Arm Station. Trustee Laisy had a verbal communication regarding management of the fire danger signs. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated the fire department manages the signs.

**Treasury Report:**

Fund #7243 Voted Levy/Operating Fund Balance	\$ 17,167.94 + Dec. Rev \$16,179.08 =	<b>\$33,347.02</b>
Fund #7245 Operating Fund Balance	\$ <u>41,390.34</u> + Dec. Rev \$32,763.93 =	<b>\$74,154.27</b>
Total Operating Balance:	\$ 58,558.28	<b>= \$107,501.29</b>
Fund #7244 Voted Levy {Fire Apparatus)	\$ 24,898.69 + Dec. Rev \$21,447.97 =	<b>\$46,346.66</b>
Fund #7246 Capital Improvement Fund Balance	\$ 48,577.02 + Dec. Rev \$557.24 =	<b>\$49,134.26</b>
Paid bills in the amount of	\$ 16,649.13*	

\*Includes check #4087 \$788.76 issued December 15, 2009 to Valley Bank for interest payment on new station building loan.

Check numbers 4087 – 4146 (paid January 13, 2010)

The above fund balances include the December revenue collections provided by Lake County Treasurer following the meeting. Filed Polson Rural Fire District annual financial report with Montana Department of Administration prior to December 31, 2009. The revenue for fiscal year 2009 was less than \$500,000, therefore a filing fee was not required. The total cash revenue for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2009 was \$237,911.46. The board thanked Bonnie for completing the annual report and adjusting the telephone service line with Century Link.

**Staff Report:** Fire Chief Fairchild introduced Craig Jeppeson of the MSU Fire Services Training School. Mr. Jeppeson presented a 2009 informal Montana run survey of fire departments comparing Polson, Stevensville, Hamilton, Rae/Sourdough and Seeley Lake. The survey indicated Polson has 25 active firefighters with 40 on the roster; 300 training hours were provided with 261 average training hours attended; while the state requirement to qualify for a volunteer fire pension is 30 hours; retention at 95%; average time to route an engine is 6 minutes; average number of volunteers responding 40% and average number responding to confirmed emergencies 90%. (Copy of run survey attached to file minutes). The board thanked Mr. Jeppeson and acknowledges the volunteer personnel outstanding performance. Lieutenant Chris McGuinness of the Polson Volunteer Fire Department provided a comparison of utilization configuration for the new station. Chris stated the public pays for, expects, and deserves response. The public does not pay for the fire trucks, personnel, training, or stations. They pay for response. The quality of that response is the measure of the value provided to the taxpayers. Response is measured by its effectiveness at mitigating hazards to life and property. The main components to response are time, resources, personnel and expertise. Reducing complexity generally improves human driven systems, while increasing complexity generally degrades human driven systems. It is possible to treat the responders for both stations (Polson Station #1 and the new station) as a single pool due to the proximity of the stations to each other. The choices are (1) divide equipment and staff to make both stations all-hazards response sources. (2) Divide equipment to make both stations all-hazards response sources. (3) Divide the stations by type of response. The firefighters "initial response" is followed by formation of a crew based upon call requirements and crew member qualifications. Orphan firefighters are formed which represent insufficient numbers or qualifications to become a crew. They may become crews with arrival of additional firefighters and respond to the scene if necessary. A comparison for time, resources, personnel, and expertise indicate an average delay of one minute provided both stations were managed as all-hazard response sources and responders are split by geographic location (north and south of the bridge). Response should be the number one goal of the board and firefighters. Chairperson Meslin supports proper training for the new recruits and adequate equipment for both stations should be the ultimate goal and we should be working toward that aspect. Chris felt effort and cost would be duplicated. The interlocal agreement with the city provides for sharing equipment. Trustee Laisy expressed response is very important to firefighters. The current situation in Polson with the interlocal agreement and the working arrangement with the city is like a chapter in a book. The city regulations and laws are prescribed by the state with the city in control and the current relationship with the city could end abruptly. From the board's perspective we need to be prepared. The board thanked Chris for an informative report. (Copy of report attached to file minutes). Fire Chief Fairchild reported 17 calls in December bringing the total to 329 calls for the year which is a new record for the organization. In a ten year average 1999-2009, the lowest number of calls being 202 calls and the highest being 329 the increase in call volume is 61 percent which is significant. The value lost in the rural was \$449,000 and a property value of \$1,358,000 up from last year. During the last few weeks, the new station was prepared for service. The department is processing volunteer membership applications for Paul Iverson, Greg Perkins and Will Woodger. A letter describing construction deficiencies at the new station was presented by Fire Chief Fairchild. A number of the items listed have already been corrected. The letter is for permanent file records. (Copy attached to file minutes with original in station construction file). Piercing nozzles were placed on Engines #318 and #328. Thanks for the board and volunteers participation to purchase one for #318 and Big Arm volunteers purchased one for Engine #328. He commended the dedicated volunteer staff completing 261 training hours and 3091 hours for incident response during 2009.

Informed the board additional supplies were purchased to make the building functional. The following Polson businesses contributed items at cost Ace Hardware, Lake View True Value, and Western Building Supply. Steve Stanley, Lake County Director of Emergency Services constructed the water manifold. Steve's donation of time and expertise expresses his commitment to the community and the fire service. Trustee Nelson acknowledged the commercial cost to purchase the manifold would be approximately \$2,000. Additionally Steve located a base radio in the Lake County inventory for the station. **Motion Trustee Nelson to send thank you letters to the Polson businesses and Steve Stanley Lake County Director of Emergency Services and an acknowledgment in the newspaper, second Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.** Trustee Clapp will prepare the letters. The Stakeholders group first meeting will be January 28th at 7:00 p.m. at City Commission Chambers. The members of group are City Manager Todd Crossett, City Attorney James Raymond, Fire Chief John Fairchild, Rural Fire Board Trustees Alison Meslin, Jack Clapp, Fred Nelson, City Commissioner Judy Preston, Lake County Commissioner Bill Barron, Volunteer Firefighters Pete Bishop, Martin Glasson, Chris McGuinness, Drew Hoel, pending citizens at large Dennis Duty, Paul Landon, Carlisa Landon. City Manager Todd Crossett will be the facilitator. Chairperson Meslin noted Big Arm firefighters are not represented. Fire Chief Fairchild requested the board consider approval to purchase lockers for the new station. Chairperson Meslin suggested the lockers put out to bid and perhaps a volunteer firefighter may be interested in constructing wood units. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated wood lockers do not circulate air flow on the wet turnouts. A drying unit could facilitate the use of wood lockers. He is willing to put the locker units out for bid, but would like a decision. The cost of the locker/rack is \$4,084. **Motion Trustee Nelson to purchase lockers and move funds from capital improvement fund if necessary, second Trustee Clapp. Motion carried. Trustee Meslin opposed.** Fire Chief Fairchild reported the base radio for the new station provided by Lake County Office of Emergency Services is currently on loan with St. Ignatius Fire Department. Trustee Manley suggested if the base radio is for safety purposes all three rural stations should be equipped with a base radio. Depending on the current budget Fire Chief Fairchild indicated base radios installed at Big Arm and Irvine Flats stations.

#### **Old Business:**

**UPDATE ON NEW FEMA GRANT APPLICATION FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION –** Trustees Manley, Laisy and Meslin are completing the grant which is due January 29, 2010. The grant application is for \$236,000 spread over four years. The grant award will be announced in a year. The grant request covers training, hiring a part time coordinator, recruiting, retention for fuel reimbursement with the board establishing a firefighter expense report, awards for firefighter with greatest improvement, response to 50 percent of the calls, and certified training in excess of standard training. Training, recruitment and retention are the three specific parts of the grant application. Trustee Meslin volunteered to submit a grant to Plum Creek. Plum Creek grants are awarded quarterly in the amount of \$10,000 per successful application. The grant request will be for turnout gear. **Motion Trustee Nelson to submit a grant application to Plum Creek for turnout gear, second Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **COMMITTEE UPDATE TO REVIEW RECRUITMENT AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS**

**FOR FAIRGROUNDS FIRE STATION –** The board reviewed the application of Paul Iverson and Greg Perkins. Applicant Will Woodger lives at Jette and completed an application for Polson City Volunteer Department. Trustee Manley requested in the future when a rural resident applies a rural application should be completed. Chairperson Meslin indicated different rules apply to the city and rural departments. Under the interlocal agreement all volunteers provide a team effort regardless of which department or company the volunteer is affiliated with. A background check needs to be completed on the applicants. A recommendation by a volunteer fire fighter suggested potential applicants participate and attend training meetings for 30 days prior to consideration of an application. The department found a much higher success rate for retention if potential applicants participate for 30 days seeking information and training. The guidelines should include the 30 day orientation period. Trustee Manley suggested the 30 day volunteer orientation period discussed at the February meeting and entered into the guidelines. **Motion Trustee Manley to approve applications contingent upon completion of background check and in the future authorize the fire chief to complete a background check on applicants, second Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.** Trustee Laisy recommended the fire chief review a volunteer and retention manual from state and federal governments in the United States. Volunteer fire department serving cities of

over 600,000 population and do an exceptional job. The book is easy to read and presents a whole different attitude in regard to recruiting and retaining firefighters. The book is an added tool to compliment the current team work of the volunteers. It is important to encourage potential volunteers to become part of the team. As an example a response sign-up sheet is provided, therefore all volunteers are not required to respond. The fire chief a willingness to explore new recruitment avenues. Trustees Meslin and Laisy drafted a letter for review to recruit volunteers. Trustee Clapp requested Polson Rural Fire Company recognized in the recruitment letter. Chairperson Meslin noted residents north of the bridge are concerned they will be without fire response if the bridge is impassable. Trustee Manley expressed Valley View area is very interested in a fire station. Additionally a station should be located in the south shore area.

**CONSIDER REPLACEMENT POLICY, FUNDING FOR UPDATING VEHICLES** – Fire Chief Fairchild presented a replacement schedule at the January meeting. Trustee Clapp suggested the board plan for replacement before it becomes a necessity. **Motion Trustee Clapp to table agenda item and revisit following an analysis of revenues, second Chairperson Meslin. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **DISCUSS PLANS FOR OPEN HOUSE AT NEW STATION**

**AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF APPRECIATION** - Trustee Laisy reported the February 20th date 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. conflicts with Ice Rescue training. However the committee suggested hot dogs, potato salad, chips, pop, and cookies served. A new date will be discussed at the January 26th meeting. Lake County agencies located at the site will participate in the open house. DES will provide fuel reduction information, Montana Highway Patrol will provide seat belt safety, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fire, and Polson Ambulance will also provide useful information. The committee also discussed holding Safety Day at the new station that is generally at Wal Mart.

**DISCUSS AND ADOPT GUIDELINES** – During the past several months, a workshop was held prior to the regular scheduled meeting to review the operating guideline consistent with the policies of the Polson Rural Fire Department. Board reviewed and adopted with changes operating guidelines 100.05, 100.07, 100.08, 100.09, 100.10, 100.11, 100.12, 100.13, 100.14. Operating guidelines not approved are 100.06, 100.15 and the apparatus operational guidelines 300's. Trustee Manley will revise the guidelines. The review was completed at the January session. **Motion Trustee Manley to revise the guidelines for adoption at the February 2010 meeting, second Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.**

**UPDATE ON RURAL FIRE COMPANIES** - Chairperson Meslin noted Irvine Flats Fire Company did not receive a \$150.00 PERS supplemental allocation in December 2009. Due to the time period in which Irvine Flats report was filed, the company was not eligible for the allocation. The payment will appear next year along with the Polson and Big Arm allocation. Jeff Meslin, President of Big Arm Fire Company provided a report regarding Big Arm Fire Company. The officers of Big Arm Fire Company are Jeff Meslin, President; Ron Friez, Vice President; and Martin Sago, Secretary-Treasurer. Jeff reported the by-laws were updated December 2009. The changes include Article II Membership Section 3 Active firefighter eligible to hold office, vote and perform all functions of actual firefighting. Supportive firefighter eligible to hold office, vote and perform limited duty as assigned by the captain or other senior firefighter present. Article V President Section 3 authorize checks signed by president or vice-president. Article VII Secretary-Treasurer Section 2 The office of Secretary-Treasurer can be divided into two persons, each holding either office. Article IX Meetings Section 1 Drill Night will be held on a scheduled Tuesday of each month at the Big Arm Fire Station, unless canceled by the Fire Captain or senior member. Article IX Meetings Section 2 An annual meeting for the election of officers shall be held at the Big Arm Fire Station at the regular business meeting in January of each year. Trustee Laisy questioned the check signature authorization with one signature. Perhaps checks should require two signatures for proper internal controls. It was pointed out some bank provide services for one signature accounts. **Motion Trustee Manley to approve amendments to the Big Arm Volunteer Fire Company By-laws, second Trustee Nelson. Motion carried unanimously.** Chairperson Meslin requested a copy of the Irvine Flats Fire Company officers and Big Arm Fire Company officers for the permanent file. The Polson Rural Fire Company has not been formed. The election forms are due Friday, January 15, 2010.

**New Business:**

None.

**PUBLIC INPUT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – None**

**Motion Trustee Manley to adjourn, second Trustee Nelson. Motion carried unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned 9:04 p.m.

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**Alison W. Meslin Chairperson**

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**Jack Clapp Secretary-Treasurer**