

**POLSON RURAL FIRE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES DECEMBER 08, 2010**

**Board trustee members present:** Fred Nelson, R. Jack Clapp, Beth Hoel, Steve Stanley, Dean Sams.

**Board trustee member absent:** None.

**Staff:** Fire Chief John Fairchild, Board Clerk Bonnie M. Manicke

**Guests:** John Ungaretti, SoleStone Reimbursement Services; Francis Davidson, John Powers, Tom Eddy, Leanna Fillman, Alan Fillman, Jerry Peterson, Lee Manicke, Volunteer Fire Personnel Will Woodger, Devin Phillips.

**Meeting called to order 7:00 p.m. Fairgrounds Fire Station by Chairman Nelson.**

**FEES FOR RESPONSE TO VEHICLE ACCIDENTS** - Chairman Nelson introduced John Ungaretti, general manager representing SoleStone Reimbursement Services, Missoula, Montana. Mr. Ungaretti provided a brief synopsis of SoleStone services. Established in 1998, SoleStone provides ambulance billing services in the northwest including Idaho, Washington, Montana, Wyoming; and extrication services for fire departments in Kalispell, Evergreen, Eureka, Clinton. He stated auto insurance companies has allowance for the incident fee. Chairman Nelson noted Fire Chief Fairchild communicated with Fire Recovery USA, a California Company for billing services. The company would only bill those who carry auto insurance and would not charge those without insurance coverage. The position of the board is to bill everyone. Fire Recovery USA fee is 20 percent of the amount billed; SoleStone fee is 8 percent. It is advantageous to contract with a local company. The contract for general services with SoleStone will reflect the following changes 1). contract is with Polson Rural Fire District; 2). contract signature by Polson Rural Fire District Chairman. Alan Fillman questioned the public information format and consideration for the residents in the community to inform the public of the proposed contract and fees. Trustee Hoel replied the board has been considering the different possibilities since September 2010. Fire Chief Fairchild indicated the proposal has been discussed for almost two years. Mr. Fillman commented with the additional revenue the real property taxes should decrease. Trustee Stanley commented the tax payers in the district are due a certain level of service and someone who lives in another state doesn't pay for fire department services. Therefore, the charge is to provide funds to maintain the response equipment. It is the position of the Lake County Office of Emergency Management to request Lake County residents reimburse for the supplies used and will not be billed for personnel or use of the van. The board needs the latitude to analyze residents of the community who pay real property taxes to the fire department to provide a level of service; while the cost of disposable supplies should be reimbursed. He suggested the revenue derived from the accident response should be deposited in the capital improvement fund to fund depreciation and replace parts of the jaws. The goal is for the city/rural to utilize the same company, therefore, the charges will be uniform. The city tabled the issue until the rural board makes a decision. Jerry Peterson has concern of the policy being open ended. Francis Davidson asked if the mitigation rates proposed by the California company will be considered for the contract with SoleStone. Chairman Nelson indicated the board will set the rates. Trustee Stanley commented hazmat response is not funded with tax dollars. Jerry Peterson requested public announcement of the proposed fee in the local newspapers. Trustee Stanley indicated the rural board needs to select a company to do the billing and then the city will be able to analyze the situation. The rates have not been established and that will be open for discussion. Fire Chief Fairchild advised several years ago the fire department utilized to collection company and it was very labor intensive for the volunteers to recoup \$200 per incident. Tom Eddy commented an operating budget was approved that should be sufficient for operations, therefore is the department engaged in activities not defined in the budget. The proposal will raise insurance rates by the insurance company accepting additional liability. Trustee Clapp indicated currently an

accident on Highway 93 the response will be billed by another jurisdiction. The Polson Rural Board has not increased taxes for operations. The increase in 2006 facilitated the purchase new equipment. Currently the budget remains the same while the cost upon the department have increased significant. The proposal is to balance the budget to maintain a certain level of service. Lee Manicke commented the fire department has three major functions that overlap: 1). Structure fires require specific equipment, maintenance and housing of equipment supported by real property taxes; 2). Wildland fire protection requires a different apparatus, maintenance and housing of equipment supported by real property taxes; 3). Emergency services require different equipment, maintenance and housing of equipment supported by real property taxes. All the expenses are currently added to real property taxes. The fee for accident response will take some of the burden off the real property taxes and apply the cost to what is already being paid for by insurance policies. In the rural district, taxes are paid to the rural fire district and the DNRC which is obviously a double tax. Although that doesn't seem to be an issue. Currently there are four taxes on the real property. Mr. Manicke supports moving some of the burden of the emergency equipment response to insurance policies. The collection can be facilitated through a reimbursement agency, collection agency, or the court system for those who do not have insurance coverage. He agrees the fee collected should fund capital improvements or perhaps lower the real property tax mill. He fully supports the fee for accident response and urges the board to approve the fee. Trustee Stanley provided a history of the jaws equipment. The original green jeep jaws vehicle was donated; the red suburban was in memory of Jana Campbell and Anita Myers along with efforts of the volunteer membership with no tax dollars applied to the jaws equipment. The volunteers needed \$20,000 to purchase the red suburban and were blessed to raise \$40,000. The current rescue truck which houses the jaws is in memory of Jana Campbell, Anita Myers, Barney Townsend and Arthur Nelson and efforts of the volunteer membership. For a number of years the Polson Volunteers provided service to all of Lake County. Currently the surrounding communities have jaws available. The ability to recoup some funds from the crashes is appropriate. The current board did not raise the taxes for debt service requirement. The board is retiring the debt and maintaining an adequate level of services. Mr. Eddy commented for the past three years a surplus existed at the end of the budget year from the tax base and transferred to the capital reserve fund. The request for an additional source of revenue is not needed. Trustee Stanley commented the fee is for those who do not pay real property taxes to pay for the service. Additionally indicated the \$35,000 transfer to the capital reserve fund at year end indicates sound management. Mr. Ungaretti commented the volunteer crew in Polson is top notch when it comes to extrication. Leanna Fillman indicated there are several layers of fees and the fees should be written in the contract. The contract needs to be very firm when, where, why, and the fee. Trustee Stanley commented event data request for services is policy set by dispatch. An E911 service is being analyzed that will have more citizens and user input. **Motion Trustee Stanley to accept the contract with SoleStone with the following changes, the contract is with Polson Rural Fire Department and signed by Chairman of the Polson Rural Fire District, second Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously. Chairman Nelson requested a copy of the contract sent to the city for review.**

**Minutes November 10, 2010 Rural Fire Board Meeting; Motion Trustee Stanley to approve November 10, 2010 minutes, second Trustee Clapp. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Communications:** Fire Chief Fairchild sent a letter to Plum Creek Foundation to advise the grant funds were utilized for turnouts. Francis Davidson submitted a letter to the board describing the issues discussed regarding the fees for vehicle accidents.



F series w/ electric rewind, 150-feet of 1-inch hose reel \$810; roller \$225; hose \$959.40. Boxes: T.R. Marinar Company-Missoula – possibly 4-5 boxes weather guard boxes \$3,000. Foam mixing system: L & N Curtis & Sons-Utah – Task force tips eductor, eductor \$525; nozzle \$432; tube \$218. Lettering for the truck: Kara Bishop Signworks-Polson – Polson Rural Fire District Engine #333 \$300 over the phone. Total cost of this portion of the project \$17,479.40. Note: There will be more items needed to complete the truck. Items off Engine #323 will be utilized. (Engine #323 will be retired). Shipping was not included and will be added to the cost. (Copy of truck components list attached to file minutes). Fire Chief Fairchild clarified the components match those on the DNRC type 3 engine.. Trustee Stanley reported John Stevens provided an equipment quote to install the LED light bar, remote siren, siren speaker, and 4-amber lights \$1,635.93 plus shipping; and install the radio in the truck; installation estimate \$600-700. The maximum estimate for the equipment, shipping and installation \$2,500. Trustee Stanley noted the radio and equipment on the back table were provided by the Volunteer Firefighters Assistance Grant. Fire Chief Fairchild was the only on reservation VFA applicant for the grant. Grants were also awarded to Rollins and Ferndale as off reservation departments. John requested flappers, tools, shelters, two chain saws and a portable radio. The radios need to meet P25 standards which increases the cost. The county also submitted a grant for communications. Radios are available to fire departments in the process of building new apparatus the 110 watt P1500 will be installed in the new engine #333. The rural needs to provide paid receipts of \$500 to match 10% of the \$5,000 value. Trustee Stanley complimented John for a successful grant. **Motion Trustee Stanley to transfer \$20,000 from the capital reserve fund #7246 to the operating fund #7245 for the new type 3 engine components, second Trustee Sams. Motion carried unanimously.** Chairman Nelson appointed Trustee Sams to coordinate the components and completion of the new type 3 engine with John.

**MAINTENANCE UPGRADES AT FAIRGROUNDS STATION** - Fire Chief Fairchild reported the window blinds were installed. The fans and lighting is complete. The electrical upgrade is on hold due to weather conditions. Trustee Stanley commented on the efficiency of the fans to maintain the temperature in the building at 65 to 68 degrees and lower the electric bill.

**INVENTORY REVIEW LIST** – Trustee Stanley will review the inventory list.

**PUBLIC NOTICE OF RURAL FIRE DISTRICT MEETING** - Trustee Hoel reported the permanent public notice of meeting date and time was posted on the doors at the Big Arm Station, Fairgrounds Station and Polson Station. The agenda is posted on Polson Fire Department website prior to the monthly meeting.

**New Business:**

**E911 REPORT BY LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONER BILL BARRON** – Tabled.

**ELECTION ALTERNATIVES** – Trustee Clapp requested the item tabled to the January 2011 meeting. He contracted the Lake County Elections for a cost estimate of a poll ballot and a mail ballot.

**BIG ARM STATION ELECTRICAL WIRING** – Trustee Stanley suggested Morelli Electric inspect the electrical wiring at the Big Arm Station for code compliance. He proposed installing motion sensor lighting in the bays and meeting room. **Motion Trustee Stanley to contact Morelli Electric to inspect the electrical wiring and install motion sensors in the bays and meeting room facility at the Big Arm Station, second Trustee Hoel. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Public Input on Non Agenda Items:** – Francis Davidson commented there was a lot of discussion involving transparency and informing the public. He suggested the board utilize the fire department

website and the newspaper to inform the public of the contract with SoleStone Reimbursement Services and the proposed fees for accident response. Trustee Stanley promotes open discussion with public concerns at any time. Trustee Sams clarified the purpose of the accident response fees. The district proposes to enhance revenues. Approximately eighty-five percent of the accident responses involve people residing outside the district. The purpose is to recover a portion of the expense for services rendered. The charge is not for residential structure fires. Fire Chief Fairchild reported the jaws responded to 30 rural crashes last year, therefore the proposed fee of \$400 would generate \$12,000. Expenses involve fuel, tools, man hours for training, etc.; while the district proposes to recoup a portion of the expense. Trustee Stanley indicated insurance policies also pay for structure fires, although he does not support a fee for structure fires since the resident pays real property taxes for fire services. Mr. Davidson suggested a reasonable fee for the area. Trustee Stanley proposes a fair cost for the accident response. Mr. Davidson commented the board needs to relieve the citizens of the perception of non-transparency. Trustee Hoel provides an agenda to the Lake County Leader and Valley Journal newspapers which generally appears in the community notes section. The agenda is also posted at the fire stations and in the front window of city hall.

**Motion Trustee Clapp to adjourn, second Trustee Hoel. Motion carried unanimously.  
Polson Rural Fire District meeting adjourned 8:20 p.m.**

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Fred J. Nelson, Chairman

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Beth Hoel, Secretary-Treasurer