

**POLSON RURAL FIRE BOARD MEETING
MINUTES DECEMBER 9, 2009**

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: Roger Rogers; Lee Manicke; Lester Johnson; Paul Mauer; John Jolliff; Dean Sams; Bill Barron Lake County Commissioner; Berl Tiskus Valley Journal Reporter; Jenna Cederberg Lake County Leader Reporter; City Manager Todd Crossett; Volunteer fire personnel Jeff Meslin, Craig Rubel, Drew Hoel, Ron Friez, Ronnie Swope, Chris McGuinness.

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

“STAKEHOLDERS” GROUP FORMATION – Chairperson Alison Meslin introduced Polson City Manager Todd Crossett. Mr. Crossett addressed the board regarding formation of a "stakeholders" group to improve trust and communication between the Polson Rural Fire Board, the Polson Volunteer Department and the city of Polson. He noted a number of complicated issues facing the department including training, policies, and working together for a common goal. Mr. Crossett suggested the group meet once a month at a round table discussion with a facilitator. Manage Montana provided a facilitators training seminar. The seminar was free, although participants are required to provide sixteen hours of public service to a community. A facilitator from outside the community or Mr. Crossett would be available. Trustee Nelson suggested a specific number of members. Trustee Laisy recommended expanding participation to Finley Point, Pablo, Rollins fire departments to provide diversification. Trustee Manley expressed the stakeholders group is the best idea heard in the time he has been a member of the board. Chairperson Meslin suggested a representative from each of the rural companies participate. Trustee Clapp indicated initially there are a number of issues to work through. Then perhaps develop an ad hoc group to address future goals. Chairperson Meslin expressed an interest to participate in the group. Volunteer Fireman Chris McGuinness suggested a member from the public, the largest stakeholder. Fire Chief Fairchild suggested firemen Martin Glasson, Pete Bishop, Chris McGuinness and Drew Hoel as members of the group. Trustee Manley noted Big Arm firemen are not mentioned. **Motion Trustee Manley to place a notice in the newspaper requesting interested parties to be a member of the stakeholders group, second Trustees Laisy. Trustees Meslin, Manley for motion; Trustee Nelson opposed; Trustee Laisy, Clapp abstained. Motion failed.** Trustee Laisy indicated initially to work out issues involving the three groups, the group should be more confined for the group to take action and get something done. His perception initially was a group in the fire service throughout the valley that has a potential to work together on incidents since all fire departments are dispatched by Lake County The group discussed is different. Mr. Crossett indicted the initial meeting will focus on agreements and goals for three or four months and then look at expanding to work out the internal issues. **Motion Trustee Nelson to max group at ten members consisting of two Rural Fire Board Members, two Polson City Commissioners, Lake County Commissioner Bill Barron, Fire Chief Fairchild, fire fighters, and a member of the public, second Trustee Clapp. Trustees Nelson, Clapp, Laisy for motion; Trustees Meslin, Manley opposed. Motion carried.**

Minutes November 12, 2009 Rural Fire Board Meeting: Trustee Clapp requested an addition to the minutes on page 5 regarding Lake County Commissioner Bill Barron’s comments. Commission Barron commented the Fire Chief needs to run the department and he answers to the board. Therefore a chain of command is established. **Motion Trustee Clapp to approve minutes of November 12, 2009 with the addition of Commissioner Barron's comments, second Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.**

Claims: Motion Trustee Clapp to approve claims, second Trustee Nelson. Motion carried unanimously.

Communications: Chairperson Meslin referred to two letters of appreciation. A letter to the Big Arm Firefighters for purchasing a piercing nozzle for the Big Arm Station and Polson Firefighters for contributing half of the cost toward an additional nozzle for rural engine #318. A letter was also sent to Lake County Commissioners for the gravel at the new fire station site on Regatta Road.

Treasury Report:

Fund #7243 Voted Levy/Operating Fund Balance	\$ 17,167.94
Fund #7245 Operating Fund Balance	\$ <u>41,390.34</u>
Total Operating Balance:	\$ 58,558.28
Fund #7244 Voted Levy {Fire Apparatus}	\$ 24,898.69
Fund #7246 Capital Improvement Fund Balance	\$ 48,577.02
Paid bills in the amount of	\$ 43,798.84*

Check numbers 4076 - 4086
(paid December 09, 2009)

The above fund balances include the November revenue collections by Lake County Treasurer.

*DEBT SERVICE payment \$41,798.63 to 1st Citizens Bank December 15, 2009. Loan balance following payment \$270,516.72. Final payment June 15, 2013.

Chairperson Meslin provided a current actual to budget expenditure report. Trustee Nelson questioned the certified mill reduction. Commissioner Barron replied the certified mill will decrease due to protested taxes and reductions by the Department of Revenue.

Staff Report: Fire Chief Fairchild reported 312 calls for the period ending November 30, 2009. The department responded to 26 runs in the rural during November 2009. The department is processing a volunteer membership application . Two piercing nozzles were ordered. Fire Chief Fairchild met with the Big Arm Company to set up driver sign off. A truck replacement scheduled was prepared and introduced with the estimated mill value at \$15,500 which includes a slight reduction from the original certified mill value \$17,363. The board should also consider additional stations in the Jette area, Turtle Lake, and Valley View. A building replacement schedule was not prepared at this time. The new station on Regatta Road will house all the wildland turnout gear and Engine numbers 327, 316, 314, and 315. Trustee Clapp requested a time line to move the equipment and questioned the fire service provided to the community. Fire Chief Fairchild replied the equipment will be moved as soon as possible and the response time will improve. Specifically structure responses will be from the current city station and wildland responses will be from the new rural station. Housing structure equipment and wildand equipment at both stations would create mixed responses. The wildland season is generally March to November. Chairperson Meslin noted the original plan to building a station north of the bridge was suggested by former Fire Chief Tom Maloney in 2000. In an event the bridge was impassible, a response team and adequate equipment would be available at all times. Trustee Clapp indicated housing both structural and wildland equipment at both stations will create a delay in response time since a limited response crew may be responding at both stations. Therefore a full crew will not be adequate to respond from either station. Trustee Laisy indicated the homeowner will see little change in response time. Currently the department does not have enough fire fighters to respond at both stations and complete a full crew for both structural and wildland fires; while recruitment efforts are progressing with approximately six potential applicants. Trustee Nelson suggested to try the plan and if it is not adequate changes can be discussed and implemented. Volunteer Chris McGuinnes supports the plan and volunteers will have a clear direction as to the proper response station. Trustee Clapp expressed the result is to provide fire service to the community as a whole. Chairperson Meslin indicated a wildland response south of the bridge creates additional response time. Additionally suggested an equal amount of services at both stations. Trustee Clapp Suggested the plan can be revisited when additional volunteers are recruited. Trustee Manley suggested revisiting the plan in six months. **Motion Trustee Clapp concur with contractor Paul Iverson that the station is ready to move equipment in and turn the station over to the fire chief to implement the plan that was discussed subject to review if the situation changes, second Trustee Nelson. Motion carried. Chairperson Meslin abstained.** Additional equipment requests are an equipment rack, mobile

base radio at an approximate cost of \$2,639, two signs at \$120 to alert the driving public trucks may be entering. Chairperson Meslin reported the tax revenue is questionable due to the protested real property taxes. The borrowing capacity on the loan with Valley Bank is \$200,000; while currently the amount of the loan necessary is \$175,000 with anticipated annual payments of \$16,000 which is within the budget. Trustee Nelson suggested contacting Office of Emergency Management for a base station radio to use in the interim.

Big Arm Company representative Ron Friez reported the district's new application form was adopted at the business meeting. Due to the length of the agenda, additional items for discussion can be postponed to the next meeting.

Old Business:

UPDATE ON FAIRGROUNDS FIRE STATION – Chairperson Meslin reported the board completed a final walk through December 8th, reviewed the construction change orders and the cost of the change orders with contractor Paul Iverson. Most of the changes are related to moving the building back from the original site, including the extra material and excavation, installing a 2-inch and 3/4-inch water line, lighting change and additional electrical outlets in the bay area, and upgrade of the five overhead doors. The total amount of the change orders is \$14,590. **Motion Trustee Manley to approve the change orders in the amount \$14,590, second Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.** Chairperson Meslin asked the board for approval to pay the total amount due the contractor. In some cases, it is standard procedure to withhold a portion of the final payment. Trustee Manley expressed Paul Iverson constructed an excellent facility. Additionally reported the Polson City Commission discussed the facility at the last meeting and was impressed the station was constructed economically, therefore tabled a decision for a sewer department facility to complete further review. **Motion Trustee Nelson to approve fourth payment \$43,920 and the change order payment \$14,590 to contractor Paul Iverson and release the performance security, second Trustee Manley. Motion carried unanimously.**

UPDATE ON NEW FEMA GRANT APPLICATION FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION – Trustees Laisy and Meslin met with Fire Chief Fairchild to discuss the grant criteria. The NFPA specifies in rural areas less than 500 residents in 2 square miles response should be 6 firefighters within 14 minutes for 80% of the calls. A potential card system through dispatch was discussed but currently not possible. The grant application will describe the system in use and how the recruitment and training for the new firefighters will improve fire protection. Additionally create substations in Valley View and Turtle Lake in the near future. The grant allows for award, reimbursement, etc., advocates hiring a marketing assist, allows firefighters to be reimbursed for fuel expenses based on mileage from home to the active station, training cost, reimbursement for loss of wages during training. Funds to hire a Montana fire school instructor to bring fire fighters to a fire fighter one level. The grant also provides four sets of turnout gear for training. Montana has very strict pension rules and firefighters cannot be rewarded in any monetary fashion. Implementing a retirement plan through individual companies then making the funds available to the company will provide an incentive. Trustee Laisy suggested the fire company could then offer a 457K retirement plan vested at five years. Trustee Manley indicated if the companies form an association the grant funds will allow the fire district to contribute to the associations and the associations are able to provide incentives indirectly. Trustee Clapp introduced John Jolliff a retired firefighter to assist with training. **Motion Trustee Nelson, second Trustee Clapp to submit grant application. Motion carried unanimously.**

REVIEW RURAL FIRE CHIEF'S JOB DESCRIPTION AND REVIEW PROCEEDURE - Tabled.

COMMITTEE UPDATE TO REVIEW RECRUITMENT AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS

FOR FAIRGROUNDS FIRE STATION – Chairperson Meslin reported Fire Chief Fairchild indicated compressor installation and electrical wiring was approved by city building inspector Ron Melvin. The cement floors in the bay area were seal coated. Trustee Laisy obtained quotes for appliances for review. The security system is being installed. The telephone line will be installed to service the fire station along with the Lake County offices. Western States Insurance requested an occupancy date for

building insurance and noted the fire district or Lake County requests insurance coverage. Lake County Commissioner Bill Barron will check into the insurance coverage on the building indicating the insurance premium through the county will be less costly. The equipment in the station will require an additional policy.

**CONSIDER RELATIONSHIP WITH POLSON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
REGARDING RECENT RESOLUTIONS –**

Trustee Clapp informed the board of a 1960 agreement between the Polson Volunteer Fire Department, the Polson Rural Fire District and the City of Polson. In 1960 a relationship existed with the Polson Volunteer Fire Department and no termination could be found. Trustee Manley indicated the 1960 agreement is a contract. The agreement states the Rural District will purchase one truck, the Polson Volunteer Fire Department will maintain the truck in the city and rural. The board recognizes the Polson Volunteer Fire Department as a separate entity and has dealt with them in the past. The Polson Volunteer Fire Department is not part of the rural structure. The organizational chart for the City consists of the city commission, the city manager and fire chief; the city by ordinance has transferred all their authority for firefighting to either the Polson City Fire Department or the Polson Volunteer Fire Department; not clear which because they are used interchangeably. The organizational chart for the Rural with all the resolutions passed over the past few years is organized as a rural board, fire chief and three rural companies specifically companies and no rural fire department. Perhaps Trustee Clapp can find an ordinance similar to the Polson ordinance transferring the rural board's authority to the Polson Volunteer Fire Department. Trustee Manley will stand corrected. Trustee Clapp indicated the Polson Fire Department is an organization that provides fire service, we utilize their services and we need to recognize as such to operate within the authority and guidelines set by the board. **Motion Trustee Clapp to recognize Polson Volunteer Fire Department as a fire department that provides services to the rural under the rural board's guidelines. Motion died for lack of a second.**

RURAL COMPANIES FORMATION/OPERATIONS ISSUES – Trustee Manley presented an election form for Polson Rural Volunteer Firefighters to designate membership in a fire company. The form will also provide information for mileage reimbursement. **Motion Trustee Manley to circulate the form, second Chairperson Meslin. Trustees Meslin, Manley, Laisy for motion. Trustee Clapp opposed. Trustee Nelson abstained. Motion carried.**

BY-LAWS FOR FIRE COMPANIES - Trustee Manley presented generic company by-laws for review. Trustee Clapp suggested consistency for all companies. **Motion Trustee Manley to adopt by-laws, second Trustee Laisy. Motion carried unanimously.**

New Business:

SCHEDULE OPEN HOUSE FOR NEW STATION - Chairperson Meslin suggested two representatives from each fire company serve on a committee. Trustee Nelson suggested waiting for completion of the county additions and pool the open house with the county.

NAME AND SIGN FOR NEW STATION - Suggestions for a station name are Fairgrounds Station or Regatta Station. Volunteer firemen suggested the visitors at the open house place a vote for the station name. New 18" sign letters, Polson Rural Fire District, are available.

PUBLIC INPUT ON NON AGENDA ITEMS - None

Meeting adjourned 9:24 p.m.

Alison W. Meslin Chairperson

Jack Clapp Secretary-Treasurer

