

# **WILLIAMS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

## **Regular Board Meeting Minutes**

### **November 14, 2023**

Call to Order: 10:00am

#### **Roll Call:**

##### **Board Members Present**

Position 1 – Heather Glass

Position 2 – Brian Barton

Position 3 – Claudia Pratt

Position 4 – Bill Ertel (Late Arrival)

Position 5 – David Applegate

##### **Williams Staff Present**

Fire Chief – Rick Vetter

Lieutenant – Oskar Sundell

Administrative Assistant – Jennifer Vetter

District Fire Marshal – Jon Scaroni

#### **Public Presence:**

Richard Brewster – CPA for Williams Rural Fire Protection District

Jaime Acosta with Zipler Fiber

#### **Williams Rural Fire Protection District Annual Audit Presentation**

Mr. Brewster presented his audit findings noting the Fire District's monthly and fiscal year ending funding needs and overview. He went over his recommendation letter, finding no material weaknesses and no concerns. Mr. Brewster expressed that as things change to make sure policies and procedures are updated to reflect those changes. Mr. Brewster asked for the District Financial Officer Jennifer Vetter's input and she explained that the audit went well and was shorter than expected in the requirement of more work to present. Board Member Claudia Pratt inquired about the receipts presented for audit and Jennifer Vetter stated that she produced the requested random receipts to prove payment and the controls in place.

Mr. Brewster continued with the presentation review of the audit findings going over the bound book for the Board to review with him. He reviewed the audit year versus the prior year numbers. Mr. Brewster's overview is that the Fire District is healthy and the books look good.

\*Board Member Bill Ertel arrives for the meeting.

Chief Vetter inquired about grant spending and allocation of funds. Mr. Brewster stated that in the review of grant requirements, grant request, and grant spending, he feels that those items were met according to the grant guidelines.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about the audit versus a review. Mr. Brewster explained that previous years financials were reviewed and this is a financial audit.

Chief Vetter inquired of Jennifer Vetter if this is a lot of work. Jennifer Vetter explained that she sets the books up to be ready for an audit at any given time. Yes, it is more work. Board Member Claudia Pratt inquired if the audit prep was more work than a review prep. Mr. Brewster explained his team has 50 hours more of prep work from his office into an audit and that there is more field work as well on both the sides of his office and the Fire District.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired if the audit included contact with or sampling of outside vendors. Mr. Brewster answered, “No”, and that the audit looks at disbursement and their appropriateness, the audit is looking for distortion and risks and if the books make sense; verifying accounting policies and if internal controls are working along with sustainability and governance of standards. Random samples of transactions are pulled and reviewed for compliance.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about the scope of Mr. Brewster’s audit. Mr. Brewster explained that the transactions are looked at for the appropriate approval process. Board Chair Heather Glass explained that there is no need for the accountant to feel the need to delve deeper if the board members with check signing ability are showing that they are appropriately reviewing the expenditures when issuing payment. Mr. Brewster stated that the Fire District is following the internal procedures with expenditures.

**Announcements:**

Board Member Claudia Pratt expressed that she does not have access to the Administrative Assistant. Board Secretary David Applegate states that this was not an announcement and considers the information presented by Board Member Claudia Pratt as personal in nature. Discussion ensued around Jennifer Vetter’s availability on particular days when her workload is heavier and how to make meeting with her on days that suit both parties.

**Approval of Prior Board Meeting Minutes:**

- October 10, 2023 Regular Board Meeting Minutes – Tabled
  - October 10, 2023 Workshop Meeting Minutes – Approved
  - October 24, 2023 Special Board Meeting Minutes – Approved
  - October 30, 2023 Special Board Meeting Minutes – Tabled
- A motion was made by Brian Barton to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2023 and it was seconded by David Applegate.

Discussion: Board Member Claudia Pratt gave a handout with changes she would like to see to the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2023 and the Special Board Meeting Minutes of October 30, 2023. Both meeting minutes were tabled so that the handout could be reviewed.

- A motion was made by Brian Barton to approve the October 10, 2023 Workshop Meeting Minutes and the October 24, 2023 Special Board Meeting Minutes

Discussion: None.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye

- The motion was unanimous to approve the Workshop Meeting Minutes of October 10, 2023 and the Special Board Meeting Minutes of October 24, 2023.

**Chief's Report:**

Chief Vetter's report was provided electronically before the meeting. Board members inquired about 911 medical calls and dispatches, had a discussion about ISO rating, and went over the upcoming annual Christmas dinner, and Santa's coming to the station on December 17, 2023.

Chief Vetter stated that Abate of Oregon will be donating again this year and would like to make sure the funds go towards the children.

**Operations Report – Lt. Sundell:**

Lt. Sundell's report was provided electronically before the meeting. Lt. Sundell answered inquiries regarding a car fire prop that was put together with a donated vehicle, a conex box that the Training Department is looking to acquire, the ALS jump bag created for advanced life support providers of the Fire District, and any needs to equip the pending arrival of the tender.

**Training Report – Captain Holt**

Captain Holt's report was provided electronically before the meeting. Lt. Sundell addressed that trainings happen every Wednesday.

### **Safety Committee:**

District Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni stated that a handrail is needed on the concrete ramp and that the stairs on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the old fire station building will need to be replaced. He went over some potential ideas and stated that there are no accidents to report.

8762 has the hitch installed and the newly purchased trailers are awaiting plates.

### **Chair's Report**

Board Chair Heather Glass stated that she had received a certificate from the SDAO to present to Chief Vetter for the Williams Rural Fire Protection District's Coffee with the Chief Program as a great way to connect with the community.

Discussion: Lt. Oskar Sundell announced that FF Devin Brennan and FF Jacob Bivins attended the Firefighter 2 class hosted by Chris Mills. FF Devin Brennan stated that in the class, Instructor Mills had stated during the education of extrication, he had witnessed and had pictures, sharing with the class, of an accident in Williams needing extrication and an after-picture of Lt. Sundell, Engineer Vetter, and the patient after extrication and some rehabilitation time giving praise to the department for their extrication techniques.

### **Unfinished Business:**

Internal Controls: Board Member Bill Ertel presented his document for review and approval. Several board members wanted to take the document for further review. This was tabled until next month's meeting.

Museum: Board Vice Chair Brian Barton stated that he turned the museum project over to Chief Vetter. The electrical is done, wall is fixed, and the stairs are done. Chief Vetter transitioned to take over the project. A bid was attained for \$6,000 and Chief Vetter will distribute the bid to the board members at a later time. Painting to be done in the Spring by Yin Yang Painting. Lt. Sundell ordered carpet for the weight room. Concentration will be to get the weight room done and paint will be done in the Spring.

Board Member Bill Ertel stated that the museum project is a good model of how the Board can work with the department staff.

By-Laws Discussion: Board Chair Heather Glass stated it to be beneficial to move forward with policy instead of attempting to locate the missing by-laws.

5-year Plan: Chief Vetter would like to put this on the schedule for after the holidays to have the subcommittee meet to build a plan. Board Secretary David Applegate, Board Member Bill Ertel, Lt. Oskar Sundell, Chief Rick Vetter, and Allison Cleveland are on the subcommittee.

Lexipol Policy & Procedure Adoption:

- Bill Ertel made a motion to adopt the Lexipol Policy and Procedures and the motion was seconded by David Applegate.

- 🗳 Heather Glass – Aye
- 🗳 Brian Barton – Aye
- 🗳 Claudia Pratt – Aye
- 🗳 Bill Ertel – Aye
- 🗳 David Applegate – Aye

Discussion: Board Member Bill Ertel stated the policy is a great tool and recommends its adoption and make modifications as needed.

- The motion passed unanimously.

**New Business:**

Mobile Home Update: Board Member Claudia Pratt spoke to the contractor. There are some siding issues and the contractor is keeping in contact to getting things ready for repair. Board Member Claudia Pratt provided a bid for faucets and outlets for board review for labor and materials.

White Paper #003 – Weekend Duty Officer Stipend:

- Claudia Pratt made a motion to fund the Weekend Duty Officer with increase to the pay from \$100 per day to \$150 per day to offset the loss of the SAFER Grant and provide a pay increase. The motion was seconded by David Applegate.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye

Discussion: A discussion ensued of resolution or no resolution. This was reviewed on a white paper and the white paper is numbered and filed providing the informational background on the motion.

- The motion passed unanimously.

Property Behind Fire Station: Board Member Claudia Pratt presented to the Board a conversation held between her and the property owner, Doug Walker, who is asking to sell the property to the Fire District. Last offer from the Fire District was \$300,000. Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that if the property foreclosed then perhaps the Fire District could entertain any interest in the property. Board Member Claudia Pratt will keep in contact with Doug Walker.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Clerk/Treasurer reports for October 2023 were reviewed by the board members. Jennifer Vetter answered any questions about revenue and expenses for the previous month's expenses previously distributed electronically. Items of review in the financial reports included spending on district credit cards, payroll, regular monthly bills, employee benefits package, station maintenance/repairs items, donations, grants, and reimbursements.

Each of the reports reviewed included:

- District credit cards
- The Umpqua Bank Account
- Profit and Loss Statements
- LGIP Account

Discussion: Board Member Claudia Pratt will get with Jennifer Vetter at a later date to ask her inquiries. Board Member Bill Ertel asked several questions about some of the small expenditures, the cost of the quarterly newsletter that went out between Applegate Fire and Williams Fire, and a discussion took place regarding volunteers that received nominal stipends.

Board Member Bill Ertel stated it was interesting that two volunteers got the bulk of the money pool that is supposed to be used for volunteers. Chief Vetter stated that they are indeed volunteers. Board Chair Heather Glass stated that two volunteers have fallen off the volunteer roster and are paid staff now so those two are not participating in the volunteer pool. Board Member Bill Ertel called this a “Canary in the Coal Mine” and it looks to him that volunteers only show if they are going to be paid. Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that during this reporting period there were less volunteers this time around. Board Chair Heather Glass stated that those volunteers that were on the Upstaffing Grant payroll are not participating in the volunteer pool. Jennifer Vetter replied to Board Member Bill Ertel, to put into perspective, that volunteers are tasked to show when employed members are on time off. Paid members have no obligations to return after fulfilling their employment hours/duty. Lt. Sundell stated that paid members that would volunteer what they get paid to do would violate BOLI employment laws. Chief Vetter stated that the employees do need days off and the Fire District cannot expect them to show when they are on their time off. Chief Vetter likes the system as it is another form of motivation amongst the volunteers. Jennifer Vetter stated that the amounts discussed can range from \$3-\$15 per call noting that arriving to a call that has a death, this is in no way near what a paid person receives for responding to the same call. Chief Vetter stated that volunteers are tasked with getting up in the middle of the night and regardless of the volunteers ability to show the Duty Officer is the one person that is obligated to show to the call.

Jennifer Vetter stated regarding the statement of the “Canary in the Coal Mine” that in public discussion the people that are intrinsically motivated to volunteer their time are listening. The Fire District is not a coal mine and the volunteers are more than canaries. Board Chair Heather Glass stated that it sounded like the statement was meant as if something is being hidden. Board Member Bill Ertel clarified that he felt that volunteers don’t show up unless they get paid. District Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni interjected stating the volunteers have jobs and their own lives and expecting them to show for calls can be challenging. Lt. Sundell stated that each quarter reflects volunteer participation levels differently. Board Member Bill Ertel stated that running this organization on the idea that volunteers are here to help out is not going to work. Board Chair Heather Glass suggested we talk about this another time with the accusation from Board Member Bill Ertel that it sounds like no one wants to face this. Chief Vetter stated that stipends have always been offered and the confusion may be that some of the active volunteers have recently been hired. The new recruit volunteers are not operational and not on the stipend list yet as well. Board Secretary David Applegate stated the system works.

Next regular board meeting is December 12<sup>th</sup> at 10am.

Public Input: Jaime Acosta is new with Ziply Fiber and left his name and number to express his interest in becoming a volunteer.

Oath of Office Swear Ins: Chief Vetter hired two new positions and a volunteer promoted to an Engineer.

- ❖ Jon Scaroni: Raised his right hand and repeated the oath of office to swear into his new position as the District Fire Marshal.
  - ❖ Devin Brennan: Raised his right hand and repeated the oath of office to swear into his new position as a career firefighter with the Fire District.
  - ❖ Jennifer Vetter: Raised her right hand and repeated the oath of office to swear into her new position promoting to Engineer with the Fire District. Chief Vetter and Board Secretary David Applegate pinned collar devices (Fire Scrambles) on Engineer Jennifer Vetter.
- Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Brian Barton and seconded by David Applegate. Unanimously approved.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:24pm

Respectfully,

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Heather Glass, Board Chairperson