

WILLIAMS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2020

Called to Order at 6:42pm

Roll Call:

Board Members Present

Position 1 – (Vacant)
Position 2 – Sue Nevotti
Position 3 – Todd Rumery
Position 4 – Bill Ertel
Position 5 – Wes Nevotti

Williams Staff Present

Administrative Assistant – Jennifer Vetter
Chief – Rick Vetter
Captain – Nicco Holt

Public Presence:

Jeri Alleman – Support Group Member – Resident
Wilma Hyde – Support Group Member – Resident
Claudia Pratt – Budget Committee Member – Resident
Marilane Jorgensen – Resident
Wendi Giordano – Resident
Bob Giordano – Resident

Agenda Review:

The agenda was reviewed and the following were added by Bill Ertel:

- Document Requests from the District and District policy regarding such
 - The adoption of policies
 - Board Vacancy
 - Repeat the review of District benefits and approval of the benefits
- A motion to approve the agenda with the additions was made by Todd Rumery and seconded by Sue Nevotti. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcements:

The Board discussed the tentative resignation of Dennis Crawford (Position 1) for personal reasons.

Public Input:

Claudia Pratt – When events take place at the station that the exits are kept unblocked by people gathering as it impedes those attempting to exit with appropriate space.

Approval to Accept Board Meeting Minutes:

The Regular Board Meeting minutes of August 24, 2020 were reviewed with discussions that included:

- Vice Chair Bill Ertel stating that Dennis Crawford may rescind his resignation if his vacant position does not fill.
 - Clarification that the station is still taking volunteers was asked by Vice Chair Bill Ertel to Captain Nicco Holt and it was clarified that the focus is currently on the ones that are currently onboarded or being onboarded.
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel also wanted to be reminded if the Deputy Clerk job description was stated as part-time on the job description. Jennifer Vetter brought up the description and it does not say either way. Per Vice Chair Bill Ertel, since it states neither part-time or full-time that perhaps that can be clarified.
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel asked to be reminded how the employee benefit package that had been discussed in the prior meetings reached approval. Board member Todd Rumery stated that a conversation was had and Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter brought up the previous minutes and verified that the discussion took place of the specific questions that were brought up by Bill Ertel and how Bill stated it was a good retention tool. Bill stated that he could not remember if the Board had taken a vote. Bill was reminded by Chair Wes Nevotti that the vote to approve the District Benefits was to take place during this meeting. Bill Ertel was under the impression that Operations didn't get prior approval. Todd Rumery stated that as Chair Wes Nevotti stated, this subject is supposed to be finalized by vote during this session. Todd Rumery suggested that we should make such motion during this meeting. Chief Vetter stated that he had a letter as requested by Bill during the last meeting for presentation during this meeting. Chair Wes Nevotti stated that the Board was supposed to vote during this meeting.
- A motion to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of August 24, 2020 was made by Sue Nevotti and seconded by Todd Rumery.
- 👍 Ayes – Todd Rumery, Sue Nevotti, Wes Nevotti
 - 👎 Nays – None
 - 👉 Abstain – Bill Ertel – reason stated as he felt the minutes had missing information

Fire Chief's Report:

- **Number of calls in August**
 - 17 calls total
 - 4 Medical calls requiring transport
 - 3 Motor Vehicle Accidents, non-injury
 - 5 Open burn/illegal material with assistance from ODF
 - 3 Smoke Investigations
 - 2 Deployments of RV3 Task Force to engage in wildland fires

- Lietenant Oskar Sundell and Volunteer Firefighter Jennifer Vetter responded to the Almeda Fire
 - Volunteer Firefighter Jason Stevens was accompanied by and Engine Boss from Rogue River as response to the Slater Fire
- **Personnel/Recruitment**
 - 3 applications in process for new volunteers
 - Recruitment activities being held at local events (Farmer's Market)
 - Chief Vetter recommends the hiring of Jim Stearns to act as our information consultant for the Slater and Devils Fires
 - Received daily updates in place of Chief Vetter for 7 days
- **Training**
 - Trainings are held twice per week to ensure all members have an opportunity to attend
 - Moved inside due to smoke (for two weeks)
 - Supervision and Leadership Seminar
 - Chief Vetter and Captain Holt attended
 - EMT
 - Chief Vetter and Volunteer Firefighter Jennifer Vetter are in the EMT program which will take two terms to complete
 - Lieutenant Sundell and Volunteer Firefighters Heather Sundell and Amy Carlock are doing their prerequisites to enter the EMT course
 - Chief Vetter's attendance is paid for by the District
 - Volunteers that pass the course will have the EMT course reimbursed by the District
 - Mandatory Online Training
 - All staff and volunteers have been working on completing SafePersonnel Training
 - SafePersonnel Training is provided free by the Special Districts Association of Oregon
- **Safer Grant**
 - Reimbursing the costs associated with onboarding new volunteers
 - PPE, medical, new equipment, benefits
- **Meetings**
 - Rogue Valley Chiefs Association
 - Cancelled due to area wildland fires
 - Coffee with the Chief held on 9/16/20
 - Slater Fire representative Jess Webb
 - Candidate for County Commissioner Ron Smith
 - Sargent Rickter from Josephine County Sheriff's Department Present
 - Slater Fire
 - Morning briefings took place for one week
- **Old Station**

- Volunteers working on painting bay #1 east-side of the station to allow for a work-out facility for the firefighters
- Resident Wilma Hyde asked why the outside of the old station is not being painted
 - Chief Vetter stated that the Support Group is paying for the fixes to the old building and this can be taken up at the next Support Group meeting.
- **Property**
 - Station:
 - Looking into a Safety & Security Grant
 - Considering lighting & security cameras
 - If obtained it is a 50% match
 - Lieutenant Sundell is updating water supplies and capacity owned by the District as well as non-District owned water draft sites.
 - Maps, addresses, pools, ponds
 - Manufactured Home:
 - Final walk-through has been completed.
 - Final inspection completed July 17, 2020
 - Rich Cassidy (Contractor), Chair Wes Nevotti, and Chief Vetter attended the final inspection
- **Duty Officer Phone:**
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel questioned who answers the duty phone and Chief Vetter explained that Chief Vetter is best suited to answer dispatch calls and residential questions when the station is not staffed as he gets the best reception and is the closest to the situation. Other than Captain Holt who lives in Grants Pass who cannot easily assess the community from afar and Lieutenant Sundell who does not get reception at his home, the district does not have any qualified positions at this time to answer the duty officer phone.
- **Board Training**
 - SDAO Board Member Trainings are recommended by the Training Officer
 - Captain Holt was thanked by Bill Ertel for supplying training to the Chief
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel inquired if Captain Holt will be supervising the Chief as he takes the course and Captain Holt stated that Chief Vetter will be taking the course as it fits into his schedule without the need for Captain Holt's oversight.
- A motion to approve the Chief's Report was made by Todd and seconded by Sue Nevotti. The motion passed unanimously

Other Reports:

- Chair

- Nothing to report
- **Support Group**
 - Meeting was cancelled due to the wildland fires and poor air quality in our area.
 - Main agenda items are the Williams Fire District Christmas and Award Banquet
 - T-Shirts are selling regularly
- **Safety Committee**
 - Working on building safety and compliance issues and updating safety policies (noted only in the Chief's report).
 - Spending time working on loose hand rails, house cleaning items, removed stored chemicals, fixing electrical items.
 - Will reconvene in October

Unfinished Business:

- **Employee Benefits Package**
 - Chief Vetter read aloud the Letter of Explanation requested by Vice Chair Bill Ertel last meeting
 - Per District Policy, the District is not required to obtain benefits via competitive bidding
 - WFRPD sourced three vendors
 - Eligibility to receive benefits are to meet 17.5 hours of work per week to qualify
 - All employees qualify
 - Discrimination laws prohibit the exclusion of employees who meet the threshold
 - Payment and Reimbursement Outline:
 - Initial check is written for \$4,887.09
 - Paycheck withholdings and SAFER Grant reimbursements total \$1,448.84 monthly
 - Monthly Expense: \$3,438.25
 - Annual Expense: \$41,259.00
 - Approved Budget Expense: \$45,500.00
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel Questions:
 - How did Chief Vetter decide he has authority to enroll people into the program?
 - Answer by Chief Vetter: State statute does not allow singling out of employees; the budget was presented and approved.
 - Chief Vetter asked Vice Chair Bill Ertel if Bill is interested in running the Chief's position and operational decision-making as opposed to making policies? Chief Vetter accepts responsibility for his decision-making and had the help of former Interim Chief and employee of the SDAO, Jim Stearns to develop the budget.

- Vice Chair Bill asked if we formally hired Jim Stearns to work of the budget
 - Jennifer Vetter answered that Chief Stearns was hired by the District to consult to put the budget together
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel has asked for a formal letter from former Interim Chief Jim Stearns
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel has asked if there was a work group assembled
- Chief Vetter stated that we cannot offer benefits to only one person
 - Captain Nicco Holt under the SAFER Grant, part of his costs are reimbursable by the SAFER Grant
 - Captain Nicco Holt recalled the Budget Committee meeting that the board had supported the expense of district benefits
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel questioned who was the driving force to the employees getting benefits
 - Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter answered: Interim Chief Stearns helped to develop and did a worksheet developing a budget that included district benefits
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel stated that his main concern is that because money is in the budget, does it give the Chief the option to spend the budgeted monies?
 - Chief Vetter answered that benefits are beneficial to the District
 - There was a discussion between Vice Chair Bill Ertel, Chief Vetter, and Captain Holt that since benefits have been implemented whether those benefits can be removed from the District once gained.
 - Chief Vetter stated that perhaps if benefits are cancelled, the district can pay wages that support personnel to be able to gain benefits without District support.
 - Board Member Todd Rumery stated that perhaps the appropriate checks and balances were missed. This is meant to be a discussion to fix a miscommunication/misunderstanding on how to obtain benefits. Todd Rumery stated we already discussed this last month and we are asking questions this month. In the future... let the Chief decide what to do and pass the decision on to the Board to approve.
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel states that he wants to have more information on the current benefits package.

- Vice Chair Bill Ertel would like to be clear on what 17.5 hours per week means. Who made up that number?
 - This number came directly from the insurer, Special Districts Insurance Services
- Who is eligible?
 - Anyone who works more than 17.5 hours per week
- What are the long term consequences?
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel asks: What makes an employee temporary?
- Resident Claudia Pratt stated that usually there is a contract on temporary employees and discussed what is usually included with employment
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel is curious what an enrollment form looks like
- Chief Vetter stated that a benefits package is an incentive to employees
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel asked how much the deductible is for the employees
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel is asking why the Chief is not a participant of the insurance package
 - Chief Vetter answered that although he is eligible, he is covered by the Veteran's Administration. He waived his right to participate in the program.
- Chief Vetter states that staffing is important and operating this district with only volunteers will greatly affect response. This is a good start to investing in the department.
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel is concerned that the purchase of benefits is self-serving
 - Nicco Holt stated that none of the staff had the intention of trying to 'slip' something past the Board
- Board Member Sue Nevotti does not agree that the Board should pick the package for the employees.
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel states that he wants to know what the employees had as package choices.
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel stated that he is open to moving money down the ladder to support personnel
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel expressed as an example how through past experience as Board Chair that because he didn't ask questions and vet situations appropriately that he has been burnt.

***** 5 MINUTE BREAK *****

- Vice Chair Bill Ertel asked if the benefits included dental insurance
 - Yes the package includes dental
 - Everyone has to go with the same choice of dental coverage
- Vice Chair Bill Ertel wants to compare the package to Rural Metro (a private fire company)
 - Captain Nicco Holt gave a comparison using Rogue River Fire District (his former employer) in which he received medical and dental from Rogue River Fire. Captain Holt stated that although the current plan through Williams Fire costs him personally more than what was offered from Rogue River, he is happy with just having benefits.
- Chief Vetter stated that he could have advised the Board better. Because he wanted hired personnel instead of receiving more pay as opposed to being the only paid operational person, he gave up offered wages and personal time to be able to give those wages to the District's ability to hire more paid staff to ensure response and the district to run effectively 24/7 year-round. Chief Vetter stated that benefits are important to all part-time personnel (including himself) since every person puts in more than 100% to the effectiveness of the district.

➤ A proposal was made by Bill Ertel to table this discussion for another month so that a possible new board member can take part in this decision. A motion to table this discussion was made by Board Member Sue Nevotti and seconded by Board Member Todd Rumery. Vice Chair Bill Ertel stated that he and Chair Wes Nevotti would continue to sign the monthly benefits checks. Todd Rumery stated that he felt hesitant to table this but would like to see if there are any more questions that come up.

- **Deputy Clerk Job Description Updated**

- This description was updated with the recommended addition by Vice Chair Bill Ertel
 - Quarterly Nominal Administration of Volunteers
 - Necessary experience in QuickBooks and Website Building
 - Grant Writing Experience Preferred
- Full Time or Part Time?
 - This position was newly created (2019) when the Assistant Chief resigned.
 - Resident Claudia Pratt asked how many hours is this position assumed to be if someone were to fill this position if the current Deputy Clerk were to leave?
 - Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter answered that this job could be comfortably done in 30 hours per week

- This position works for the Board
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel stated that from his perspective he feels that the Board would like this position should be a 20 hour per week position.
 - **Ratification of Chief's Salary Agreement**
 - Not addressed:
 - Chief Vetter is appreciative of the position and the work he does for the Board and is fine with the current agreement.
 - Six-Month Review:
 - Board will schedule an evaluation next month
 - **Rich Cassidy – Mobile Home Project**
 - Reviewed paperwork and permits that Vice Chair Bill Ertel produced to show proof of approval by Josephine County
 - Contractor Payment
 - Payment still pending Vice Chair Bill Ertel's signature
- A motion to pay Rich Cassidy his final payment of \$17,828.80 was made by Bill Ertel and seconded by Sue Nevotti. Todd Rumery abstained from the vote. The motion passed with all other ayes.

New Business (and other additions to agenda):

- **Board Vacancy**
 - Each board member was given a copy of the two applications that were submitted for the vacancy and there are possible other applications coming in.
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel recommended to pick a date to interview applicants
 - Pick a person before the October board meeting according to the policy and procedures
 - Resident Claudia Pratt asked:
 - When does this term for this vacancy expire?
 - June of 2023; then the position comes up for election
- **Document Requests**
 - A community member is requesting copies of the board minutes for the last 3 months
 - Discussion of the cost to print, administrative cost to print, policy for printing
 - Vice Chair Bill Ertel to give Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter the information to get the printed copies to the appropriate person.

Clerk/Treasurer Report:

Clerk/Treasurer reports for September 28, 2020 were reviewed by the board members. Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter answered questions about revenue and expenses for the previous month's expenses. Each line item was reviewed in each financial report. Discussions included

spending on district credit cards, payroll, regular monthly bills, employee benefits package, station maintenance/repairs items, donations, and the interest in supporting local businesses.

Each of the reports reviewed included:

- The Board Chair's credit card
- The Chief's credit card
- The Admin's credit card
- The Umpqua Bank Account
- Profit and Loss Statements
- LGIP Account

Questions:

Resident Claudia Pratt asked about the financial parameters when deployments happen.

Deputy Clerk Jennifer Vetter answered: The volunteers and paid personnel will be reimbursed by the state and/or FEMA for the conflagration and the rigs that are used for deployment will also receive payment for their use on designated fires.

- A motion to accept the Clerk/Treasurer's report was made by Bill Ertel and seconded by Todd Rumery. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcement of Next Regular Board Meeting:

Monday, October 26, 2020 at 6:30pm

Motion to Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Bill Ertel and seconded by Sue Nevotti at 9:30pm.

Attachments: Board Meeting Agenda with additional agenda points, the Chief's and Clerk/Treasurer's reports for September 28, 2020, and Minutes of the previous Board Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted:

Wes Nevotti, Chairman