

**Regular Meeting of the North Blaine County Fire District in the
Council Chambers – 81 Elkhorn Road, Sun Valley, ID
March 15th, 2023, at 10:00 AM.**

Chairman Gray - Present in Person
Commissioner Michael – Present in person
Commissioner Engelmann – Absent

1. Call to Order.

Commissioner Gray called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

2. Public Comment.

Chairman Gray stated that we have lost and will sorely miss two very important people to the Fire District. Dick Fosbury, Blaine County Commissioner, was very supportive of the District and a great help in securing funding for our Greenhorn Housing Project. Mary Austin Crofts, who was doing the marketing campaign for Greenhorn, has also passed. These people are both irreplaceable big losses for our community and the District.

3. Approval of the March 2023 Claims*.

MOTION:

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the March 2023, claims; seconded by Commissioner Gray. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Engelmann

4. Approval of the February 8, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes*.

MOTION:

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the February 08, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes; seconded by Chairman Gray. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Commissioner Engelmann

5. Report: Monthly Update – North Blaine County Fire District Chief, Rich Bauer.

We would like to adopt a new fee schedule for the Fire District for burn permits, inspections, etc. Wood River Fire and Rescue has sent us their fee latest schedule they plan to adopt, and we would like to keep our fees the same as theirs, which will mean some increases. We will present this new schedule at our next meeting.

As you know, we were awarded a grant a few years ago for a set of portable extrication equipment. We

have a set on Engine 2 at Griffin Butte and Engine 3 at Greenhorn. We would like to move the equipment that is currently on Engine 2 to Sun Valley Engine 60 at Elkhorn Station, because we know we will always have a response out of Elkhorn. A response is not guaranteed out of Griffin Butte, which only has 2 live-in firefighters. We could then equip the engine at Griffin Butte with our older equipment.

Chairman Gray likes the idea of the guaranteed response with the new equipment, and does not have a problem with this suggested change. Commissioner Michael asked if all departments in the Valley have extrication equipment on their first out vehicles. Chief Bauer answered that while their engines are equipped with extrication equipment, they will be more likely to respond to a motor vehicle accident in their ambulance, which would not have this equipment. The Commissioners approve of this change on a 6 month trial basis.

Theo and Amanda Rich moved out of Unit 100A at Greenhorn Station a couple of months ago. If possible, we would like each of the Commissioners to walk through the unit and discuss what kind of updates and repairs you would like to make to the unit. We have previously discussed updating the units to a duty quarters, and would like your input on it. Jocelin added that we would also like to create a standard of what we want to update in each unit as tenants move out.

We have been having ice dam problems with a couple of the live-in units. Griffin Butte Unit 2 is leaking again from the roof due to an ice dam, and we have a first reported leak at Greenhorn due to the same cause. If this gets worse, we would like to consider hiring somebody to shovel off the roofs, which Chief Bauer estimates could cost \$4-5K. Chairman Gray would like this to happen right now, as he would like us to be pro-active. Chief Robrahn suggests the idea of asking the residents to get on their own roofs and shovel, as we do already train them to do so safely. Either way, Chairman Gray would like us to move forward with getting this snow removed, and plan to get the roofs looked at this summer for damage that may need repairs.

[6. Report: Monthly Update – Sun Valley Fire Chief, Taan Robrahn.](#)

Chief Robrahn said that Chief Bauer has covered a lot that is going on in the District. With our extreme weather of late, we are very concerned with avalanche danger. We are concerned with warming/flooding events, and rain on snow events as we get into the spring. We encourage residents to have flood plans ready for if something happens. Chairman Gray asked about concerns there might be regarding flooding at Greenhorn Station. It's hard to say, but the Chiefs do not see that area as much of a concern; areas like Gimlet that historically flood are more concerning. We also work with LEPC to have plans in place. As we push further into spring, we will likely see rapid warming and/or spring rains on top of the snow.

[7. Update regarding Local Government Registry Compliance.](#)

Jocelin gave an update with the confusion of the entity registration. Each year all government entities in the state of Idaho need to register with the state's Local Government Registry in order to receive our quarterly sales tax revenues. We completed our registration before the deadline with the District's new name, and when they filed their report with the Tax Commission, the District was listed under our new name as compliant, and old name as non-compliant. Because of this error, our 1st quarter sales tax was withheld. Jocelin has spoken with Blaine County, the State Tax Commission, and the Local Government

registry, confirming that we were never not in compliance, and there was an error in reporting. We will receive the funds, approximately \$7,300, with next month's Blaine County Remittance.

8. Report and discussion regarding potential Countywide Fire/EMS Consolidation.

Mayor Hendricks of Sun Valley, Chairman Gray, and Chiefs Robrahn and Bauer were all at the last meeting regarding Fire/EMS consolidation. Chairman Gray's biggest concern with the possible consolidation is inequities with how much funding and assets each department provides versus receives. Do we need to match up the tax rates of Wood River Fire and Rescue and North Blaine County? The NBCFD and SVFD have greater assets than some of the other departments. He is absolutely open to discussion and consideration of this topic, but he wants reports on how the checks and balances of combined finances would work, so that our taxpayers are not paying more than their share for these combined services. This is probably a long-term work in progress that will take at least 2-3 years. At this time, he believes the NBCFD and SVFD should plan to continue moving forward together as we are while having these larger conversations regarding consolidation. One thing we know that needs to happen is improvement of the quality of ambulance service countywide, as WRFR and Ketchum FD have the majority of the Ambulance District Contract.

Commissioner Michael asked about the contract that the County approved yesterday at their meeting. Chief Robrahn understands that the contract is to hire a facilitator from a company called Woolpert for conversations about consolidation. In doing research, Chief Robrahn found that Woolpert works on strategic planning for airports, not public safety planning. He is not sure of what their role will be.

City of Sun Valley Mayor Hendricks added some comments about this discussion. City leaders were charged with going back to their elected officials to talk to them about their desire to continue conversations regarding consolidations. The Mayor left the meeting that Chairman Gray referenced earlier not being clear on if the County is trying to consolidate Fire, EMS, or both. He spoke with the Sun Valley City Council and they agreed to continue having discussions. He tried to attend yesterday's meeting of the County virtually but was unable to get in. He also looked into the Woolpert company, and could not find information about Heidi Fletcher, the hired contractor. He also could not find evidence that the company has any experience with fire consolidation.

Chairman Gray is in favor of continuing conversations at this time. He walked away from the same meeting as Mayor Hendricks, also not knowing what was to be consolidated. Sun Valley and NBCFD made it clear they want better EMS services in their jurisdictions, but the conversation remained focused on consolidation. Troubling things he heard at that meeting are that the Ambulance District and WRFR appear to be running out of money in the next several years.

Mayor Hendricks says the timeframe of consolidation is puzzling; if this does take 2-3 years, two or more of the current fire chiefs will likely be retired by the end of the process. He suggests that the Ambulance District breaks away from the Blaine County Commissioners to have their own board. The County Commissioners have been the de facto board for over thirty years, and it is time to have a Board that can have their sole focus be EMS response in the Valley. He did bring this up at the meeting and will bring it up again.

Commissioner Michael asked what Idaho code allows for to create an independent Ambulance District. Walt Femling, previous City Administrator for Sun Valley, when the Blaine County Ambulance District was first formed, they had the option of creating an independent board or allowing the County Commissioners to be that Board. Commissioner Michael said that it could be interesting to look at what would be needed to change it to an independent board, as Idaho Statute dictates what we can do.

Adding to what Mayor Hendricks said, Walt said that back in July, Commissioner Fosbury asked Walt about what we can do to fix the AD. He reached out to Kootenai County and got their entire strategic plan and audit for their Ambulance District. The plan states that the Fire Districts and Departments, and each District and Department pays into it, and has an ambulance to respond with. He thinks we need to move forward to have an independent Board made up of the leaders of these departments. He explained a simple breakdown of costs, and believes something like this could be done by October. Since Walt is now retired, he asks for us, the City and the District, to push for this.

Commissioner Michael attended the last Ketchum City Council meeting, where they discussed and voted to move forward in support of discussions regarding consolidation. Chief McLaughlin stated that he was regularly meeting with Chief Bateman to discuss this, and Commissioner Michael asked why they have not been speaking with SVFD and the District, to which he implied that our chiefs have been told not to talk about consolidation, and that we will not speak with them.

At the meeting that the Mayor attended, Chief Bateman reported results of a survey to our local firefighters about possible consolidation, and most firefighters responded support it. The problem is that it is not the decision of the firefighters, or even the fire chiefs. It is the decisions of the elected officials, and that is why they were elected. KFD has a \$2.6 mil/year budget currently, \$1.3 comes from AD. SVFD has \$1.8 mil/year budget, \$150K coming from AD.

Knowing this and that our Chiefs know this, Commissioner Michael would still encourage these conversations in between chiefs of different departments. Chairman Gray asked Chiefs Robrahn and Bauer how many meetings they have been invited to, and Chief Robrahn answered that communication has not been that clear about reaching out for conversations and meetings. There are many emails that go without reply. There is certainly some lack of communication between organizations, and before we can consolidate we need trust. There is now a meeting of the chiefs next week, between Bateman, McLaughlin, Bauer, and Robrahn.

Chairman Gray asked Commissioner Michael if she thinks these conversations should continue to move forward, and she answered of course.

Chairman Gray would prefer to discuss consolidating EMS services and Fire Response services separately, but also wishes for the conversations to continue.

[9. Update, discussion, and possible action regarding Greenhorn Housing Project*](#)

Chairman Gray loved the photographs of the units that Chief Robrahn sent to the commissioners after the visit to the prefabricated units earlier this month.

Commissioner Michael said that there will be a five minute presentation with the Wood River Women's

Foundation this afternoon for the grant she applied for. Chiefs Bauer and Robrahn will be doing the presentation and Commissioner Michael asked what the presentation will look like. Chief Robrahn said that this will be a zoom presentation without a PowerPoint, although the Foundation has been sent the pictures and plans for the project. They'll do an introduction about the District and SVFD working together, and why it is so important to have this housing, with messaging about the importance of creating affordable housing for the First Responders in our community. We want our First Responders to be a part of the community they work in, rather than continue to see them get pushed further away due to housing costs. Having firefighters closer to their stations will improve our response times and the safety of our community. There is great benefit in the location of Greenhorn, and every dollar raised for this project will help us to keep rents low and affordable. Commissioner Michael did a few practice questions with the Chiefs for the presentation.

Chairman Gray would like to thank Commissioner Michael for getting us this opportunity with the Women's Foundation.

Walt gave an update on how we are going to get this project done. Many contractors did not bid on the project because of the timeline we were looking at, trying to have foundations complete by early summer. These dates were set based on when the units are estimated to be done. Now we have less of a time limit because the housing manufacturer has agreed to hold onto the complete units until we are ready for them, and the new plan is to start in June/July, and place the homes by August. We now have a contract with Galena Engineering to manage the project, and they are going to reach out to individual contractors for the different parts of the project, and get new bids. When we made a request for bids there was only one bid received to cover the entire project, for \$1.7million, which was more than twice we were expecting. We talked with the contractors about when this happened and have addressed their concerns, mainly regarding our tight initial timeline. We are hoping to hear detailed plans from Galena at the April 7th City Council meeting.

The City has created a LGIP account with the Appropriation Lease money for the project, at about an 4% interest rate. Walt recommends that the District transfers our current funds with the Spur Foundation to the LGIP account, and decide how we want to continue working with Spur for fundraising. Can we work with them without paying \$3,600/month? We will be spending money as we get contractors going and make the next payments on the units, which will be ready in 4-6 weeks. We also want to be able to tell the manufacturer when to start the next set of units. Commissioner Michael asked where our \$350K of ARPA funds are that were promised from the County? Jim Keating, City Administrator, has called the County about how that process will work, and is waiting to hear back from them.

Commissioner Michael commented that the District needs to move our approved Greenhorn funds to the LGIP account the City created, and Commissioner Gray said that we should do it when the City moves their approved funds to the account. Jocelin added that the District has spent some of our funds for the project when continuing to pay the Spur foundation. Commissioner Gray plans to talk with the Spur Foundation about how to move the money we have raised so far and update the contract we have with them.

[10. Discussion: Old Business.](#)

None.

11. Public Comment.

None.

12. Adjournment*.

Our next scheduled meeting is April 12th.

MOTION

Commissioner Michael moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Chairman Gray.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: Commissioner Engelmann.

Chairman Gray declared the meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.



Jed Gray, Chairman



Sarah Michael, Treasurer