

## Special Meeting of the North Blaine County Fire District in the Council Chambers – 81 Elkhorn Road, Sun Valley, ID March 15, 2022, at 10:00 AM.

Chairman Gray – Present in person.

Commissioner Michael – Present in person.

Commissioner Engelmann – Remote - Present via phone.

### 1. Call to Order.

Chairman Gray called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

### 2. Public Comment.

None.

### 3. Approval of the March 2022 Claims\*.

Chairman Gray commented that there are some line items such as operating supplies, pump/hose testing, and travel/training of which we have used very little of the budget amount. Did we expect higher costs than we are having, or have we not reached the point in the year when we use those funds?

Chief Robrahn said that our pump and hose testing takes place once a year, usually in the spring, so we will be using that portion of the budget soon. We also have training and travel expenses coming up soon.

#### **MOTION:**

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the March 15, 2022, claims; seconded by Commissioner Engelman. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael, Commissioner Engelmann

NAYS: None

### 4. Approval of the January 12, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes\*.

Commissioner Michael would like the commissioners listed as who is present and who is remote, versus absent, on the minutes.

#### **MOTION**

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the January 12, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes; seconded by Commissioner Engelmann. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael, Commissioner Engelmann

NAYS: None

5. Approval of the February 15, 2022, Special Meeting Minutes\*.

**MOTION**

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the February 15, 2022, Special Meeting Minutes; seconded by Commissioner Engelmann. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael, Commissioner Engelmann

NAYS: None

6. Discussion: Greenhorn Housing Update and Blaine County ARPA Funding Request\*.

Chief Robrahn says we have been using an architect and Galena Engineering to help us prepare for next steps. We need a variance from South Central Health District to have a higher volume of units and septic system on the site, because we are doing a higher density project than what is typically approved. Galena Engineering dug a couple of test pits for putting in a septic system and had positive results. They are proceeding on the paperwork for the variance with SCHD, including a notice in the newspaper, and then approval from the county.

Chief Bauer and Robrahn are going to Idaho Falls tomorrow to meet with ZipKit, the company we are looking to use for the units. They have in progress units that are the same as the ones we want to order that we will be able to see. The units exceed our needs for how much snow they can safely handle. We will do another visit to ZipKit once these current units are more near completion.

An excavation company has been contacted to create an estimate for paving, grating, etc, to give us a general idea of what our infrastructure costs for the project will be. Commissioner Michael mentioned that the current site plans do not have landscaping. Chief Robrahn said that right now we are just planning the units, but landscaping is something we are planning on having, and will be planned according to county ordinances and giving residents additional privacy and sound buffers. Commissioner Michael mentions we may want to add some draft landscaping details to the plan earlier rather than later for fundraising purposes. Commissioner Gray mentioned that the county will require a landscape plan eventually. The architect is in communications with Nancy Cooley, Blaine County Zoning Specialist, and Alison Marks of the Blaine County Land Use Department, to complete plans and get them approved. Chief Bauer is frequently in communications with both Alison and Nancy as well and can be of great help in this part of the process.

Commissioner Michael, City Administrator Walt Femling, and Chief Robrahn attended the Blaine County Commissioners Meeting yesterday to review our request of ARPA funds, which we would like to use for infrastructure costs related to the Greenhorn Housing project. We have been told to revise and resubmit our proposal. There is still some overall confusion of specifically how funds can be used. What we do not want as a result of the ARPA funding is restrictions being placed on who can live in the units, based on such criteria as income levels. Administrator Femling said that our next step for revisions of the proposal is to get the estimate of infrastructure costs as soon as possible, to be able to submit our revisions as soon as possible, before all of the funds are distributed to other organizations. Chief Robrahn

agrees. If the infrastructure costs end up being less than we have asked for from ARPA funds, we need to know what the extra funds could be used for. The NBCFD and the City of Sun Valley are asking for this money together.

Commissioner Michael says the Executive Director of ARCH, Michelle Griffith, commented that because we are a public district we may have additional steps to go through. Mayor Hendricks spoke with the Michelle yesterday afternoon, and that was not one of the concerns that she brought up in their conversation. Mayor Hendricks hopes to get clarification in conversations with her in the next few days. Commissioner Michael said that ARCH paperwork is helpful in showing Blaine County that the infrastructure costs qualify as costs going towards the house building costs, which qualify for ARPA funds.

Chief Robrahn stated that we are set up with the Spur Foundation to receive donations for the housing project through them, and we should begin speaking with private donors about funds. The more we can raise in donations, the lower we can keep rent payments for our first responders who will move into the units. Commissioner Gray commented that we need a specific cost listed for the project before we can raise funds from donors. Chief Robrahn said that because of the continuing changes of the project, and project costs, and adhering to government code, it is difficult to be very sure and specific about our costs. We do however have general estimates of our costs outlined in the ARPA funds request, which puts us at approximately \$2 million total for the project. The number includes foundations, landscaping, the actual units, and infrastructure costs. Commissioner Engelmann commented that it is better to over-budget, because it is difficult to go back to donors and ask for additional money. Walt has spoken with Zions Bank and they have a Community Reinvestment Act, which our first responder housing may qualify for some funds from. Walt is still waiting to hear back on details of if this is a loan or a grant/gift, or both. This could be a back-up plan or a co-contributor to our fundraising efforts. When collecting funds from the public we should make clear all of the partners that we are using.

Commissioner Michael has spoken with the Wood River Land Trust, who has land just to the north of our land, and they may be willing to grant us an easement for the septic system should we need additional space for it.

#### [7. Report: Monthly Update – North Blaine County Fire District Chief, Rich Bauer.](#)

Chief Bauer says that we are getting delayed in the delivery of our new pumper tender. The manufacturer made changes to the engine design without our approval, and we had to tell them that was not okay and the pumper needs to be completed as requested. Chief Bauer expects to go to Wisconsin in April to check the pumper tender before delivery.

Our new boiler has been installed at Greenhorn fire station by Thornton Heating, and this should help us lower our electricity costs back to normal.

We are having a meeting with the live-ins on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. We will have an agenda and have reached out to the live-ins for topics they might want included in the discussion. We plan to announce an increase in rent/utilities cost of \$100/month for all units to cover our utility and maintenance expenses. The rent increase will start May 1, so tenants have a full month's notice of the change. Also at the meeting we will be going over station clean-up and maintenance. We will likely have potential donors visiting

Greenhorn in the spring and summer, and we want them to see our stations and grounds being well taken care of.

Commissioner Michael previously requested that Jocelin research our utility expenses at the rental housing units. Jocelin completed this research in the past month, and explained that she put together a word document that contains charts as well as summary numbers regarding each housing unit. These documents are included in this month's Commissioners' binders. She explained how the different housing units get electricity and heating.

Right now tenants of each Greenhorn unit pay \$50 in utility fees per month. It is difficult to say what the residential use of power is at GH 100, but GH 200 and 300 each have a total monthly average utility cost of \$248.15 and \$254.56, breaking down to approximately \$125 per unit. The Griffin Butte residents pay their own utilities, but as their units are considerably nicer than Greenhorn, and the residents are currently paying the same as the 1-bedroom residents of Greenhorn, their rent is also being increased to keep up with our maintenance costs. Of the suggested \$100 increase per unit per month, the \$100 would be applied to utility costs in Greenhorn, and to the rent costs for Griffin Butte.

Chief Bauer mentions that inflation is affecting everything right now, including utilities. This is a reasonable amount to increase the rent. We will always have low rent at these units, but we need to be able to cover our costs.

Commissioner Gray asked how much we currently charge for the units. Jocelin answered that the 1- BR at Greenhorn are \$300 + \$50 in utilities, 2-BR are \$325 + \$50 utilities, and Griffin Butte units are \$300 + their own utilities. Commissioner Gray was surprised by how affordable this rent is. We should be sure to have increases over time to continue covering the costs. We are happy that in the past these low rents have enabled firefighters to save money to eventually buy a home.

Chief Robrahn commented that we need to make sure our housing costs are sustainable. Once we have the new units, we will likely be looking at some restructuring of our rental program. The new units are expected to have higher rent costs than the older units, and we may install some form of HOA dues, to cover costs of snow removal, landscaping, etc. Chief Bauer said that we might require tenants to work a certain number of on-call shifts in exchange for lower rent. When the Ketchum Fire Department managed these units they were only used for on-call staff, not duty staff. The housing is likely to become transitional housing for our new career firefighters, due to the overall lack of unaffordable housing in the valley. Commissioner Gray wants to make sure we keep the rent as affordable as possible, while making sure we keep up with our costs. Chief Bauer commented that it was not inexpensive to renovate unit 200B, and we have to consider the costs of continuing to renovate some of the outdated units.

Lastly, there was supposed to be a meeting of the Blaine County Ambulance District yesterday, but it was cancelled and has not yet been rescheduled.

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

We are seeing an increase in calls already in 2022, and are about a month ahead of schedule on the call numbers. We are focusing on preparing for what we anticipate will be a very busy summer, and are not expecting to see much of a slack season before the summer. Once 4th of July happens, we have Allen and Co., the writers conference, summer symphony, etc, and it is all coming back live and we expect

record numbers of attendance. We are also seeing record numbers of development and construction in the area. All of this means to expect higher call numbers. He can't thank our staff enough for all their hard work and preparation.

Commissioner Gray asked if we have enough personnel. Do we feel that this new affordable housing at Greenhorn will help us attract new full time Fire Fighters and Paramedics? Chief Robrahn responded that we have a great group of paid on-call staff, but it is difficult for these volunteers to have the time to train and respond to calls, leaving their regular jobs to do so. We are working to grow as an organization, increase our level of service to our community, and increase our number of trained paramedics as well. Chief Robrahn is very thankful to have Chief Bauer as a mentor to work through these challenges, on top of all of his Fire Marshall duties related to the building of many new very large homes. Cost of living is so high in the valley that the only way we can bring in new staff from out of town is to provide the affordable housing. Commissioner Gray asked if we think the new housing will be used for full time staff in addition to on-call staff. Chief Robrahn responded that it will likely have some full time, staff that can add an additional level of leadership on calls and on site. Having an additional paramedic living there would also help increase our capacity for the types of calls that can be responded to from there. Chief Bauer added we used to have enough local medics and a large pool of people with those skills. This pool is getting smaller and it may be that we need to bring people in that are already trained in fire and medical, drawing them in with the affordable housing.

Commissioner Gray wants to know if we offer fair enough salaries to allow our staff to live a full life in the valley, in addition to paying rent. Our food, gas, and recreational activities are also all expensive here. Chief Robrahn answered we have a great city council that wants to keep up with wage growth in the budget each year. If our wages were to start to lag behind, we will lose staff members.

Commissioner Michael commented that the City of Ketchum has a Fire Department staffed mostly with older individuals that may be getting closer to retirement. They may try and take staff from other city and district departments as their staff retire, and we need to be competitive with their wages so as to not lose people. Walt Femling said that our wages are competitive with those offered by Ketchum.

Chief Robrahn responded that we continue to look at programs, in addition to this housing project, as to how to retain our staff. We know the challenges of living here continue to be compounded, and both Chiefs are having frequent conversations with Walt about this. Commissioner Michael thanked the Chiefs as well as Walt for always looking ahead for the future of our District.

Commissioner Gray commented that transitioning the District from being partnered with the City of Ketchum to the City of Sun Valley has been very beneficial to the District. We now have support from the City as well as a forward thinking mentality. Sun Valley is a great partner to have with NBCFD, and we are very thankful for that.

As we wrap up the conversation, Commissioner Engelmann commented that wages have their limits in retaining workers, and our offering of housing is critical. Commissioner Gray agrees, saying that housing is the most critical limited resource we have to deal with in the valley right now.

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

Commissioner Gray wants to know how our relationship is with the City of Ketchum. Chief Bauer answered that we are working well with Ketchum on calls and have automatic aid agreements that we work with them on. We have been working well with them on EMS calls in the City of Sun Valley. We unfortunately had another tragedy in the valley last Thursday. There was an all call response on Dollar Mountain, a ski patroller with cardiac arrest. He did not end up making it. Ketchum staff had high praise on how well our staff responded, and especially Ricky Williams and his calm demeanor. All of the rank and file staff are all getting along well. NBCFD and SV Chiefs are not in much communication with the Ketchum Chiefs. Commissioner Gray commented that he is happy to hear there is mutual respect between the staff of the different departments.

Commissioner Michael asked who the patroller was with cardiac arrest. At the time of this meeting it is already public information, so Chief Bauer felt comfortable saying that his name was Josh Ward. He was a ski patroller on Dollar for many years and really loved the job.

Commissioner Michael asked if we are issuing open burn fire permits, and when are they allowed until? Chief Bauer answered that they are being issued and will be until they get restricted once it gets too dangerous for them.

10. Public Comment.

None.

11. Adjournment\*.

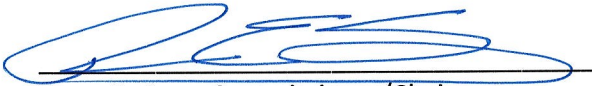
**MOTION**

Commissioner Michael moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Engelmann.  
A roll call vote was taken.

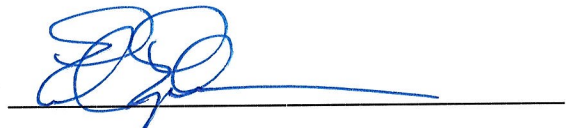
AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael, Commissioner Engelmann

NAYS: None.

Chairman Gray declared the meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.



James E. Gray, Commissioner/Chairman



Earl Engelmann, Commissioner/Secretary