

# **Fort Ellis Fire Service Area**

## **Public Meeting**

### **Fort Ellis Fire Service Area Board of Trustees**

Date: Monday, August 14, 2023

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Fort Ellis Fire Department

### **Officers Present:**

President Todd Kaiser, Vice President Norbert Hackl, Treasurer Gerald Groggel

### **Trustees Present**

Graham Goff, Dan LaFrance

### **Chief Present**

Chief Mike Cech, Assistant Chief Frank Boynton

### **Guests/Public**

Sean Farrell, MaryJo Penkal, Russell Penkal, Melody Kurk, Darrell Kurk, Randy Zuagerman, Joy Zuagerman, Rich Kelly, Shari Wood

Vanessa Skelton, Ben Kauffman (via Zoom) & Kate Dinwiddie

### **Public Comments 7:01 pm- 7:54 pm**

The Board took questions from the public on what the proposed fee increase is for and why.

The Board explained the current budget and the costs associated with the new building and shared concerns about the projected expenses going forward.

There was discussion on the need for a new fire engine.

There was discussion on the difference between a Fire District and a Fire Service area and how the fee increases differ between the two.

Discussion on the initial cost of building the new fire station.

Discussion on the grants secured in the last two years and the Capital Campaign.

Discussion on the funding for the FSA with equipment and what services we provide, 1/3 of our calls are from I-90.

Discussion on billing insurance companies for I-90 incidents.

Discussion on the I-90 calls and the residents who live in that area.

Discussion on the Fire Service Area boundaries.

Discussion on asking the State to lower the speed limit. We testified before the County and City Commission with no avail.

More discussion on safety concerns with speed on I-90.

Discussion on the Frontage Road, speed, safety and contacting your legislator.

Discussion on why we purchased the attenuator truck.

Discussion on the different departments and the section of I-90 they cover.

Discussion on equipment and safety and funds to set aside for PPE and aging vehicles.

Discussion on the operating budget, breathing apparatus, vehicles, and other PPE.

Discussion on the Engine timing out and the cost of replacement and the timeframe from deposit to order and delivery.

Discussion on the whole fleet of trucks and replacement dates coming due all within a few years.

Discussion on not having backup trucks if one of ours is out of service.

Discussion on using the Tender truck in place of the Engine and using brush trucks for house fires.

Discussion on the mutual aid agreement with other districts.

Discussion on our current engine in a reserve status for a backup and NFPA requirements.

Discussion on the new station and adding solar later.

Discussion if FEFSA ended up shutting down, homeowner's insurance costs would go up.

Discussion the department providing more than 5,500 hours of man work, free to this community.

Discussion on going to a paid department and the extra costs associated with that.

Discussion on not charging enough in the past and have only asked for money when we absolutely needed it.

Discussion on a mill leavy and the revenue.

Discussion on the process to becoming a District.

Discussion on the easement and the currently leased property and timeframe.

Discussion on the potential for building Phase 2 with living quarters.

Discussion on negotiations with the Academy.

Discussion on remaining in this area for response times and access.

Discussion on the sale of the old Brush Truck and the DNRC making the new truck functional for us.

Discussion on future services and possible fee increases.

Discussion on when the fire station was built.

Discussion on the old FSA and Subscriptions.

Discussion on the need to have the proper equipment and the station.

Discussion on charging the insurance companies and hiring someone to do the work.

Discussion on a percentage of our budget coming from the State due to I-90.

The community who attended expressed their appreciation to Fort Ellis and was glad to better understand what we do.

The Board welcomes the community to volunteer to help us in any way they can.

Discussion on contacting Jim Hamilton with legislative inquiries.

Discussion on the distance preferred for firefighters to live away for response times.

Discussion on recruitment and the current numbers. Recruitment will be in the fall for training and the training process.

The Board notified the members of the community that every meeting is open to the public and all minutes are published on the website and the board on the outside of the building. They can also follow our progress on Facebook and Instagram.

Training every Tuesday night from 7 pm-10 pm.

The types of training provided include Certified EMT classes, Driving school, EMS Extrication, and Wildland training. We train the same as the professional departments so we can respond with the same knowledge and equipment and interact together on scene.

Discussion on the Brick Campaign and other fundraising efforts.

Discussion on how the fees work per unit.

Discussion on going to the Commission on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and needing support from the public.

**The public discussion concluded at 7:54 pm.**

**Call to Order 7:58 p.m.**

## **Consent Agenda**

### ***Secretary Report***

The minutes from the July Board meeting were issued via email and each Board member acknowledged receipt. Norbert made a request to change the minutes from the August Special Board Meeting to reflect that the letters sent to the County Commission were from the Liebscher- Anderson Family and Henry Shovic and should be added to the minutes for public record. No public comment. Norbert made a motion to approve the suggested changes and last month's minutes. Gerry seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### ***Financial Report***

The July 2023 YTD financial report was issued via email and presented at the meeting. No public comment.

Discussion on the financial budget on the P&Ls. July should be for the fiscal year and the correct year.

There was discussion on the financial reports. Ben will review them with Lola and send out a revised copy.

The Board will table the approval of the financials until next month.

The Board has offered to help Ben as much as possible with this transition.

There was discussion on the reports, donations, and documentation. Need to prepare for an audit. Gerry may need a meeting with Ben.

Discussion on a preemptive audit at the end of this project to know where we're at.

Discussion on having an accounting review and audit.

Frank will link a CPA to Gerry.

Discussion on the cost of an audit. Kate said the accountant will need to be registered with The Department of Administration to do local auditing to satisfy the State.

The Board signed the new resolution to present it to the County Commission.

R&R check signed with no issues.

## **Regular Agenda**

### ***Review Annual Events Calendar***

The picnic is scheduled for September 28<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Discussion on the Gallatin County Commission Work Session.***

Kate discussed her thoughts from the meeting.

Discussion on the Commission wanting us to become a District even though it would be costly.

Kate discussed the County Attorney's opinion and her discussion with them.

Discussion on consolidation.

Discussion on how a denial keeps us from adding to our reserves.

The Board needs to decide tonight to keep the \$250 or decide to reduce it.

Discussion on asking every year for a 10% increase.

Discussion on more support to help get it passed.

Norbert discussed the Commission and the votes.

Discussion on the timeline and not enough money to replace the engine.

Discussion on going back next year for a fee increase.

Discussion on ways to get our story out.

Discussion on residents asking the county for relief or for people to apply for relief.

Discussion on fee increases every year for inflation and getting on the agenda sooner.

Discussion on asking for the full \$250.

Discussion on NFPA standards and reserve funds.

Discussion on our ISO rating being 6 and falling to 9 and the insurance increases that will follow.

Discussion where we would be at with and without an increase.

Discussion on equity and the tax increase.

Discussion on the percentage of low-income homes in the FSA.

Discussion on becoming a District and the costs and requirements.

Discussion on a restructuring of the rate schedule on square footage. Kate will check on this and other options.

Discussion on the County taking over the FSA.

Discussion on County funded grants.

The Board wants it on record that the County will be responsible if something happens to our firefighters due to lack of equipment.

Discussion on researching a more fair and equitable restructuring fee.

Discussion on what's best for the FSA.

Discussion on asking for \$125 and having an attorney assess new fee structures based on property values.

Norbert made a motion to pass a resolution to request a \$200 fee increase for next fiscal year with the addition that we will research alternate fee structures for the Fire Service Area. Gerry seconded the motion. Discussion on asking again in May, if needed, and the process. No public comment. The resolution was adopted by a 5-0 vote. Motion carried.

Discussion on the reserves and the budget with a \$68,450 short fall.

Discussion on where to make cuts in the budget.

Discussion on purchasing half of the new radios needed to work off two systems.

Discussion on what it would cost to become a district.

Gerry made a motion to adjust the budget to reflect the new \$200.00 fee increase proposal. Dan seconded. No public comment. Motion carried.

### **Chief's Report**

#### *Update on Capitol Campaign-*

Vanessa reported on the funds raised so far. She is looking at some potential donors.

Buy a Brick Campaign launched. Discussion on it not being added in the newsletter. Vanessa will follow up.

Vanessa has a sample brick to promote the campaign at the picnic.

Submitted to the Murdoch Charitable Trust LOI- will put together a proposal for an exhaust system.

Still prospecting for new grants opening.

Discussion on the donor recognition wall and quote for a digital sign. Can use a TV. Henneberry will investigate electricity to the wall for a TV.

Submitted almost a million in grants so far and will continue to look for new ones.

Did some outreach related to the County meeting with Eagle Rock for support.

Vanessa will have a list of grants and gifts raised ready for the Board.

Discussion on starting an AFG for an engine.

Vanessa asked about planning the picnic. Will ask Buck and see if the Outreach Committee is planning it.

The picnic is scheduled for September 28<sup>th</sup>.

Call Report for July 2023:

Nothing reported.

**Long Range Planning Committee:**

Norbert reported that most of the AV will be donated. We will need to purchase the computer to run the system.

Discussion on the first down payment on the office furniture and still needing blinds for the training room.

Lockers have been purchased under budget.

More discussion on the budget and savings made.

Discussion on money left from permitting.

Will run the campaign until the end of the calendar year with Bannack.

Money saved on PR and the Brick Campaign.

Discussion on the construction administration with Hennebery Eddy.

Discussion on the ventilation system cost of around. Hoping for a grant.

Graham discussed some potential change orders.

1-The floor in the mezzanine was discussed and the Board will paint the floor for now.

2-Light for the exterior sign. Graham will research the cost of the light.

Gerry made a motion to put in the ventilation system for \$86,000. Dan seconded. No public comment. Motion carried.

There was a discussion on the appliances needed. Washer, dryer, range, range hood and dishwasher. Will have a price in the next week or two.

**Training/Members Report:**

Nothing new.

**Subdivision Activity:**

Nothing to report.

**Public Service Outreach Activities:**

Nothing to report.

**Gallatin County Fire Council Activities:**

Nothing to report.

**Update on New Recruits:**

Nothing New.

**Outreach Update:**

Nothing new.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

*Review and approve the exterior sign design and cost.*

Discussion on the sign and a possible donation to help with some of the cost. The sign needs to be ordered and installed.

Gerry made a motion to approve the sign project for \$13,171.49. Graham seconded. No public comment. Motion carried.

***Meeting Adjourned at 10:05 pm***

Next board meeting Thursday, September 21, 2023 @ 7:00 pm at the station with the option to join via zoom. A Zoom link will be added to the website for Public Comments, and all are free to join in person as well.

Certified by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_