

Mosier Fire District Board Meeting
Mosier Fire Hall on Washington St.

DATE: October 9, 2014
7:00 p.m.

BOARD: Darin Molesworth, Ken Hudson, Lee Roy Herman, Vic Hamilton, Glenn Bartholomew
STAFF: Fire Chief Jim Appleton, Recorder Tracie Hornung
Absent: Excused: Public: Steve Seymour, Emily Reed, MFD Volunteers Mark Cherniack and Charles Young

CALL TO ORDER – Meeting was called to order by Board President Darin Molesworth at 7:02 p.m.

ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS – Added to the Board packet was a list of bills paid.

BUSINESS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes – September 11, 2014
2. Review/Approve Bills

Board Member Hudson questioned bills from the Government Ethics Board, for Chief Appleton's recent uniform purchase and reimbursement for Volunteer Lisa White.

Board Member Bartholomew made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. There was no second. It was agreed the issue would be re-visited later in the meeting.

BUSINESS

1. Emily Reed, City of Mosier, regarding Mosier Centennial.

Reed thanked the Fire District for its support and participation in the recent Centennial celebration.

2. Capital Advisory Subcommittee Update, Pete Wright

Due to illness, Wright was not able to attend and asked Chief Appleton to relay his question to the Board. Wright wanted to know how the Board feels about the work the District Capital Advisory Committee has done in researching and making recommendations regarding the purchase of new apparatus and exploring plans to build a new fire station. Bartholomew said the committee's work had been "invaluable" and helped him have a greater understanding of the issues. Board Member Hamilton agreed but felt plans were moving ahead with the Dry Creek Rd. site, one of the sites proposed for the new station, which he did not support. Appleton explained that there were no plans to spend any more effort or money on the site. Hudson said that a preliminary station plan the Board had looked at previously had appeared to cost about \$1.5 million and he did not support spending that much. He would support \$400,000-\$500,000 but is opposed to spending \$1.5 million. A discussion followed on a possible bond issue. Hudson said he was "not interested in borrowing anywhere close to what our borrowing limit is." He said if a bond election failed "you've burnt that bridge." Appleton asked Hudson how he felt about a mini pumper for \$200,000. Hudson said that was probably OK. Appleton asked how he felt about the military surplus tender. Hudson said he wasn't sure yet. He was concerned that the proposed

\$50,000 or \$60,000 bill to retrofit the tender could turn out to be \$80,000 “and maybe we could find something that would be \$60,000 and know exactly what we’re getting.” A discussion followed on if Wright’s question had been answered. Hudson said he thought the Committee was valuable and had done research that the Board can use.

3. Bid process regarding tank size and pump capacity for military surplus tender

This agenda item, scheduled for later in the meeting, was moved forward. Appleton said of eight potential bids, some bidders did not submit and some submitted verbal bids. His comment to the Capital Advisory Subcommittee and the vendors is that because this is a tender that is going to be first-out for a fairly limited amount of time the District is contemplating replacing it with another tender probably sometime in the next 10 years, at which time this one would be put in reserve. “So we’re not looking for a Cadillac but the best we can afford.” He said the District is basically looking at two viable bids and he is about three-quarters of the way getting the information the Capital Advisory Subcommittee requested about them. He said he and Wright will be doing a field trip to look at a couple of vehicles.

4. Follow up on Sept. Board training

Appleton asked if there were any reactions to the training from the Board. Bartholomew and Molesworth said they thought it was worthwhile, and Molesworth thought it might be a good idea to offer it annually.

5. Reimbursing MFD volunteer for 2013 EMT class

A lengthy discussion followed on a \$510 reimbursement bill signed and paid to Volunteer Lisa White in September for EMT training last year, as well as a \$1,039 bill from her (also for 2013) presented at this meeting. Appleton said she is a good Volunteer and has been with the District more than a year. Appleton said he thought the original \$510 was the extent of her request for reimbursement but she explained and documented that there were more costs. Hudson asked if there were other Volunteers who might come forward and ask for reimbursement. Appleton said potentially yes but asked Hudson to keep in mind that \$7,000 budgeted last year for training did not get spent. A discussion followed on Board policy and if the wording was that Volunteers “may” or “shall” be reimbursed for their training after they have been with the District for at least one year. He said he thought reimbursing Volunteers after one year, and paying training costs up front for Volunteers who have been with the District a year or more was a good way to retain Volunteers. Appleton said he did not have the written policy available but would check it. Hudson mentioned a motion approved at the previous District meeting that allowed all training funds budgeted for this year plus \$2,000 from the contingency fund be used to pay for training for four other Volunteers this fall and asked where the funding was coming from to pay White. Appleton said “potentially” from the contingency fund. Hudson said he didn’t think it was good practice to use up all the training funds early in the fiscal year.

Hudson made a motion to approve the \$1,039 bill “but was not happy” that the previous \$510 bill had been signed and paid without approval from the whole Board. No immediate second to the motion.

Hudson added that he remembered that Appleton and the Board had agreed that any “controversial” costs would be brought to whole Board.

Bartholomew asked why the Board needs to come back and revisit this issue with each occurrence when a policy had already been made.

Hudson made a motion that the Board make a policy that any costs over \$250 that are “different” – not ordinary, not monthly -- from previous costs be brought before the whole Board for approval.

Discussion: Appleton said Hudson was describing a “recipe for gridlock and trying to remove any discretion” from Appleton and is “something that will not be healthy for this organization.”

Board Member Herman seconded the motion.

In favor: Hudson and Herman. Opposed: Molesworth and Bartholomew. Abstained: Hamilton. Motion did not pass.

Regarding the previous motion made by Hudson to approve the \$1,039 reimbursement, Bartholomew seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Appleton said the issues of his discretion as chief and District policy was “fruitful ground” for further discussion with George Dunkel of Special Districts Association of Oregon. Bartholomew said he would contact him.

6. Discussion regarding possible official commemoration of Ellen Dittebrandt
Some ideas were discussed but nothing was decided yet.

7. Station development update

Appleton said he had met with Wasco County again and that the county administrator had brought up the idea of the station housing both the Mosier Fire District and county personnel who work at the county yard site. Board discussion followed. Appleton said he thought the county yard site was still the best option available to the District.

8. Chief’s Monthly Summary

The Board reviewed the handout of the Chief’s Summary, which includes the actions of the volunteers and duties of the Fire Chief for the month of September.

9. Added Agenda Item

Hudson made a motion to “change the fire chief position to a half-time position and this would be a new position and I move we open the position up for applications.” Lee Roy Herman seconded.

Molesworth said the issue “comes out of left field for everybody.”

Discussion:

Bartholomew said, “That’s not a good idea. The amount of progress we have made toward reaching an improved level of fire service which is what the voters said they wanted and now we’re going to not just take a step back, we’re going to jump back.”

Hudson said, “In that case, I would guess that any folks that vote for it will be out come the next election.” Mark Cherniack said, “If not before.” Hudson agreed. Bartholomew said he had hoped

“we were all working together in the best interest of the voters.”

Hudson asked Appleton if he wanted the discussion to take place in executive session; Appleton said no.

Referring to a previous discussion with Appleton, Hudson said he “didn’t appreciate being lied to” about being called out for mutual aid by Mid Columbia Fire District on a recent fire. Appleton explained the situation in detail. Hudson said, “We used to have a good relationship with The Dalles and Hood River and now we don’t and it’s going to come back to bite us someday. . . I talked to Chief Palmer and he said we did not get paged.” Appleton said, “Whoever did (call), we ultimately did get paged.”

Appleton said when no one else knew how to get to Ortley he offered to direct the firefighting crew there. “I did what I thought needed to be done for Mosier.” He said previous computer modeling had shown that such a fire as existed that night could easily jump into the Mosier Fire District. “I think I did what needed to be done. I’m not going to wait for somebody else to call us to take proactive action to know where the fire is and what the likelihood is that it will be headed our way. That’s close enough to our district and potentially big enough that night that I was convinced and still am convinced that I did the right thing.”

Herman asked Appleton how he knew how to get to Ortley, if he had been there before and how he got there. He added, “A paid chief of the Mosier district has to take care of a house and five acres of land with each house. What would you be doing up at Ortley?” Appleton said he was interested in learning the lay of the land and what the access was, and that he had gone on foot on his day off and not wearing his uniform or using Mosier Fire District resources. Herman told him he had been trespassing.

Following discussion, the vote was as follows: Hudson, Herman and Hamilton in favor, Molesworth and Bartholomew opposed. Motion carried.

Following the vote, when Bartholomew asked Hudson, “How could you do it?” Hudson said he didn’t think things were working. Bartholomew said Hudson had just insured they wouldn’t. Hudson said, “So be it.”

Bartholomew said, “‘So be it?’ How can you look at the people who put us in this office and say ‘You know what I just did? I just got rid of the chief, all the progress we’ve made over the last three or four years and I have no infrastructure to move into the future with.’”

Hudson said, “We can find a better chief.”

Herman brought up the issue of Appleton spending money on a uniform for the memorial service for Volunteer Ellen Dittebrandt. He said, “I want to get a chief who asks the Board about spending any money over a certain amount.” He said Appleton ordered a suit “for \$700 and he’s not even a Firefighter One – you’ve got to be a Firefighter One to have any kind of position like you’ve got. How many years have you been in the fire department? And you’re still not a Firefighter One. And maybe you can get it in five minutes but you haven’t got it yet. And maybe

I'm wrong for saying that but I don't think so. This isn't an EMT organization; it's a volunteer fire department and you're the only paid fireman we've got."

"I just feel whenever I ask you something about the Board saying this or saying that you said, 'I make the decisions, I am in charge.' You're not! But you say you are. The Board is supposed to be in charge. What we decide, the decisions we make, that's the way it's supposed to be. The guy who was here the other night [George Dunkel of Special Districts] explained that to us; the Board is in charge. What the Board says -- that's what you go by. You go to any other fire stations and they go by what the Board says, not what the chief says."

Bartholomew said, "The Board sets the policy."

Molesworth directed the discussion back to the consent agenda.

Molesworth seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda (made by Bartholomew, as noted above).

Discussion: Hudson questioned whether the figure for paying for Volunteer training out of the contingency fund was correct. After discussion, Hudson agreed to let it stand.

The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2014

Attest:

Board President Darin Molesworth

Tracie Hornung, Recorder