

# Yellowstone County Fire Council

P.O. Box 53, Billings, Montana, 59103, 406-256-2775



## MINUTES OF MAY 14, 2024 MEETING AT THE LOCKWOOD FIRE STATION

1. Introductions were made around the room.
2. Minutes: Approved from the March 12, 2024 meeting.
3. Treasurer's Report: We have \$162.42 in our checking account. We received a thank you for our donation to the Montana Fire Fighter's Memorial in Laurel. Our post office box annual rental fee has increased to \$182 this year. Larry Carpenter suggested that we consider raising our membership dues from \$25 to \$30 per year to cover inflation costs. A motion was made and carried to raise our dues in 2025. There was discussion that we use the D.E.S. post office box for the Fire Council. If we did, we would have costs associated with new stationary, envelopes, etc. Larry suggested we re-visit this issue at the March 11, 2025 meeting. Our current PO Box renews every May.
4. DES/Fire Warden Report: The 23/24 VFC grant had only 3 eligible fire depts - Fuego, Haley Bench, and Shepherd. There were requests for \$29,435.31 worth of fire equipment, but only \$16,000 available. 100% of that grant was used. The 24/25 VFC grant has 4 eligible depts - Fuego, Haley Bench, Shepherd, and Worden. There was \$57,847.35 requested for fire equipment, but unknown how much will be available.

### OLD BUSINESS:

5. County Grass Fire Contracts: The county commissioners produced a proposed grass fire contract taking into account from the March meeting that the costs of fighting grass fires is substantially higher than what has been offered in the past. The contracts to each fire dept. include a base or "flat fee" which will go from \$7,649 to \$13,000 per year. Truck Maintenance will go from \$2,909 to \$6,000 per year. Fire Station Maintenance will go from \$2,586 to \$4,000 per year. Firefighter Maintenance (protective gear) will go from \$2,154 to \$3,000 per year. The acreage fee (based on total acreage protected) will go from \$0.071 to \$0.10 per acre. The commissioners asked that all fire depts. review the contracts and sign and return them as soon as possible. It was noted that some private lands within the Crow Reservation might end up receiving grass fire protection from the county Road and Bridge Dept. if no other fire dept. will take it on.

### NEW BUSINESS:

6. Molt VFD: Steve Vucurevich was introduced as the new fire chief of the Molt VFD. He takes over from Josh Walker. Steve is a retired fire officer from California.

(It should be noted that Lance Taylor is the new fire chief of the Worden VFD.)

7. AGENCY REPORTS: Billings - (Noted by Kent O'Donnell that Kevin Bentz is their new assistant chief.) Billings Airport - They have FAA mandated fire training coming up shortly. Laurel - Will be hosting the annual Fire Fighter Memorial Run on June 7. A name will be added to the Memorial wall. Ordering out a new engine. With the passage of their ambulance levy, they will have fully staffed ambulance crews to respond. Molt - Nearby property with a water

well was given so the fire crews will have a bathroom and water for their trucks. Replacing their tender. Fuego - Nothing new. Blue Creek - Hosting field training day. Lockwood - Changing their command structure to mirror Billings FD's by creating 3 battalion chiefs positions. They will be enacting a new auto-aid agreement whereby fire crews from both departments will be responding to many calls in each other's area. Switching their dispatching and radio traffic to what Billings FD (the Sheriff and Billings PD) use. The goal is to have seamless mutual aid with each other. Hosting a Safety Day on June 1. Getting a new ambulance this fall. Thanked DNRC for training. Haley Bench - Nothing. Shepherd - Jarid Clark is their new assistant fire chief. Custer - Nothing. AMR - Nothing. Sheriff's Office - Noted 3 structure fires involving kids. Have had 2 river rescues already. On the new state radio trunking system. One of their helicopters has been retrofitted to do long line hauling. The other helicopter is being outfitted for use. They have new helicopter pilots. Sam Bofto retired. Their office has 6 empty positions. DNRC - Carmen Borchelt is their new fire prevention and outreach officer. Training has gone well. Reminder to turn in EFF packets. Staffed station will occur again this summer. Need a roster of fire fighters from each dept for wildland firefighting. Be sure to have our fire warden respond to wildland fires for assistance. Be sure to be certain that task books are being done and signed off on. BLM - Their seasonal staff is on board: 2 engines and 1 hand crew. Currently many of their crews are out on fires elsewhere in the country. They have a new engine. Biggest news is that BLM will be changing their fire truck color from lime green to white with yellow striping. Tanker base will open June 15 with 2 SEATS by July 1. Notify BLM of fires on or threatening BLM lands. They have excess fire equipment available to be given away. A request form must be filled out. FSTS - Thanks to all who attended or helped with John Raisler's funeral. Trying for grants to purchase more fire props. County Fire Chief - Remind to review and sign grass fire contracts. Looking for a fire dept. to provide grass fire protection on private lands within a part of the Crow Reservation.

8. HelpFlight: Levi Hein, chief of Custer, talked about the use of HelpFlight, especially in remote areas. 1. We are allowed to request the helicopter if ground ambulance is too far away and/or medical issues are serious. 2. HelpFlight will need a good description of the emergency. 3. The pilot makes the final decision whether to fly or not. 4. Weather can be a huge issue as whether to launch. 5. Auxiliary lighting for a landing site is needed. 7. HelpFlight will stay on "standby" for 20 minutes at its base unless otherwise notified. 8. Shepherd VFD has smoke grenades for day time signaling for HelpFlight.

Larry Carpenter, Sec/Treas.

YCFC

NEXT FIRE COUNCIL MEETING IS AT BLUE CREEK ON JULY 9 AT 7:00 PM.

