FIRE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
JULY 12, 2022

1. Meeting held at Blue Creek. Introductions made. Yellowstone County News in attendance.

2. May meeting minutes approved.

3. Treasurer’s Report: We have $7914.35 in our checking account. Had a recent donation of $5000 towards the calendar project by the county. A thank you note was sent to the commissioners.

4. DES/Fire Warden’s Report: We are in Stage 1 restrictions. Discussions held whether to rescind or not. Issac Wald (BLM) pointed out that we will be back in restrictions soon. Better to stay in Stage 1. All agreed. KC has applied for a $50,000 grant to pay for a new County Fire Plan. The last was written many years ago and is outdated. East repeater is up and running with a new tower. As for losing the Custer repeater, there is no solution in sight yet.

OLD BUSINESS:

5. County Ambulance Service: John Staley was recovering from surgery and unable to attend. The ambulance services will meet again to finalize several options for the county to choose from. AMR was present and had numbers ready for their proposal. Phil Ehlers asked them to hold off with their presentation until Staley can organize another meeting.

6. Calendar Project: The Fire Council is applying for a 501c3 status with the IRS because of the large amounts of money we may be handling. Presently Hillary Ramsey is looking at a 3 photo layout for each fire dept. (Photos and sponsorships with logos are due July 15.) It will cost about $7000 to print 5000 calendars. There is debate whether to ask businesses to buy calendars at a wholesale price from the Fire Council, and they sell at the retail price of $20 and pocket the difference; or whether businesses sell the calendars on our behalf at the retail price of $20 and get no cut. Brent also asked for some “tech type” person to help manage the Fire Council’s webpage.

7. County Emergency Service Voids: Phil apologized for not having the meeting. He will talk to Derek Yeager about exactly what next step needs to be taken to resolve this issue.
NEW BUSINESS:

8. Radios: This was an unlisted topic. There is concern about the pressure rural fire departments are feeling from the fact that the city of Billings and the Sheriff’s Office are connecting to the state radio trunking system with their 800 mHz radios. This might push the rural fire departments into joining in but with radio costs which they can not afford. A new hand held radio is about $7500! The only way we could afford to do this is to look for a huge grant to cover all the costs. We need to be planning for what some see as the inevitable future. KC is trying to procure at least one of these new radios (and maybe eventually two) for each rural fire dept. It was mentioned that maybe the Council should look to the legislature for financial help.

9. Bylaw Amendment: A reading of a new Article had passed which dictates that in the event of the dissolution of the Fire Council, all assets shall be evenly divided amongst all member fire departments in good standing at that time, was accepted by most of the fire chiefs who voted by email. A vote by email to accept this amendment will be held August 29. The reason for this amendment is that it is a requirement by the IRS for all those applying to be a 501c3 organization.

10. Agency Reports: Billings - Hiring 9 new firefighters. Construction has started on their new quint. Laurel - Only one fire call on the 4th despite many thousands of fireworks set off during their annual show. Fuego - Nothing. Broadview - Nothing. Blue Creek - Training new members for wild land firefighting. Haley Bench - Building a blocker truck to protect their fire fighters when working on the interstate highways. Shepherd - Hiring a second full time firefighter/EMT. Got a new type 5 wild land engine. Phil reminds everyone to use your resource book when looking for fire equipment needed on mutual aid calls. Worden - Still working on hiring a full time EMT. There is a Suicide Prevention walk on Sept. 18 in Billings at Will James School. DNRC - 95 Mike helicopter is in Billings and available. Be sure to send in grass fire reports using the new DNRC online system. BLM - Had a 5.7 acre fire north of Shepherd. All engines are back home in Billings. Hand crews got cancelled on a call out to Alaska. Available to help with any fire prevention activities you might have. AMR - Has a new medical director. Received thanks for helping out with counseling after a fatality accident in Shepherd. Sheriff - Sent a 4th detective to arson school. FSTS - Will have two door props to train on. The TIMS class has been very well received and 14 other states have asked to use Montana’s class on traffic management for their own. Looking for grants to build props. Columbus Fire is building their own training building (as has Red Lodge) and will be able to offer Firefighter 1 certification. Fire departments are getting sued. Jerry must testify in one lawsuit against a fire department that managed a traffic accident very badly. (And they did!) There is another lawsuit involving a volunteer fire fighter who had no training to drive a certain fire truck.

It was mentioned that Linda Oberg will be retiring in Sept.

NEXT FIRE COUNCIL MEETING IS AT THE FUEGO FIRE STATION ON SEPT. 13 AT 7:00 PM.

Larry Carpenter, Sec/Treas.
YCFC