

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY FIRE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES - NOV. 14, 2023

1. Meeting held at the Lockwood Fire Station. Introductions made.
2. Minutes of Sept. 12, 2023 meeting approved.
3. Treasurer's Report: The last bank statement shows \$2438.00 in our account, but that reflects the fact that some of the disbursed checks from calendar sales have not been cashed. In reality the Fire Council has only \$319.42 of its own funds to spend in the checking account. Larry will be sending out 2024 dues notices the last week of December. Annual dues remain at \$25.00 per year.
4. Fire Warden/DES Report: DES now has a portable StarLink set up in a backpack which will allow for cell service and WiFi in remote areas. This may be requested by any fire department for any kind of emergency call. It sets up quickly. Jeff Brown suggested the county add this to its DNRC agreement for reimbursement on wildland fires. KC Williams says county grass fire money has been sent out to all but 3 fire departments.

OLD BUSINESS:

5. County Grass Fire Contract Revisions: Phil Ehlers provided a breakdown of actual wildland fire fighting costs in 2022 from 4 of the 10 rural fire departments. He still needs the 2022 costs in the 5 categories from Worden, Molt, Laurel, Fuego, Custer, and Blue Creek. This is extremely important if the rural fire departments want to be fairly compensated by the county. Please contact Phil with any questions. In addition it was suggested that the fire departments start tracking total annual man-hours in all operations from training and responding to building maintenance and bookkeeping etc. etc. etc. The public needs to be educated about how many total hours it takes to operate a fire department.
6. Chiefs' Meeting: The meeting scheduled for this last Sept.-Oct. on dispatching and communicating issues was not held. The meeting is now rescheduled for either Dec. 6 or 13. Phil Ehlers will send out a notice as to which date, time, and location.

NEW BUSINESS:

7. Dispatch Protocols: Billings and the County are working on new protocols for dispatching in an attempt to reduce dispatcher stress and provide more appropriate responses to emergencies. For fire departments, this means getting paged out to a call as usual, but any mutual aid or unique responses will have to be preplanned and entered into the dispatch computer. Dispatchers will no longer be responsible for "calling around" or making other decisions on behalf of a fire department. American Medical Response is already working under the new protocols, and work is being done for the Billings Fire Dept, Billings Police Dept, and Sheriff's Office to bring them under the new protocols. The rural fire departments can expect changes that affect them to occur later in 2024.
8. 2024 Fire Council Hosts: Jan - Shepherd Fire, March - Billings Fire, May - Lockwood Fire, July - Blue Creek Fire, Sept - Yellowstone County DES, Nov - American Medical Response.
9. Calendar Events: Nov 18 - Hanser's Towing is hosting a Move Over law rally. Dec 10 - Laurel VFD is hosting a chili cook off in memory of Sean McCleary who passed away from cancer last year.

10. Agency Reports: Billings Fire - ordered a new pumper early because of long lead times. Will cost \$300,000 more than their last new pumper. Airport Fire - Paul Totton is retiring as chief. Fuego Fire - nothing new to report. Broadview Fire - selling 3 of their older fire vehicles. Blue Creek Fire - nothing new to report. Lockwood Fire - they have ordered a new ambulance. Hosting their Santa event on Dec 9. Chief Staley is retiring Dec 29. New fire chief will be Branden Stevens who is currently fire chief of Miles City. Haley Bench Fire - they wanted to thank the fire depts. who turned back their share of the calendar money to benefit the smaller rural fire depts. Shepherd Fire - hosting their Come See Santa on Dec 16. They have a new EMS director. Training with Lockwood. Worden Fire - nothing new. AMR - nothing new. DNRC - get training requests and offers to host into them. Virtual training may be available. Contact them for details. Keep the grass fire reports coming in - it helps get more funding into our county. Currently have about 10 DNRC fire people on out of state fire and training assignments. Sheriff's Office - been very busy. SWAT team called out 23 times so far this year.

NEXT FIRE COUNCIL MEETING IS AT A SHEPHERD FIRE STATION ON JAN. 9 AT 7:00 PM.

REMINDER: PHIL EHLERS NEEDS FINANCIAL FIGURES FROM 5 MORE RURAL FIRE DEPTS. TO HELP REVISE GRASS FIRE CONTRACTS TO MORE ACCURATELY REFLECT TRUE COSTS. PLEASE HELP HIM OUT.

Larry Carpenter, Sec/Treas.
YCFC