

1. Introductions made. Laurel VFD was the host.
2. Minutes from Jan.10, 2023 meeting approved.
3. Treasurer's Report: Have a total of \$6506.11 in our checking account. Of that, \$5285.69 is from calendar project donations and sales. And \$1220.42 belongs to the Fire Council as its own funds. (Since the meeting, additional calendar project money was received bringing the Total in our account to \$11,558.11.) Larry explained that he did not file for nonprofit status yet while waiting to see if the calendar project would be repeated for 2024. Once granted non profit status, we would be required to file every year with the IRS. If the calendar project was a one time event, then it did not seem sensible to jump through hoops required of being a non profit. Larry reported that 2 fire departments have still not paid their annual dues. A second notice has been sent to them. Larry met with Phil Ehlers and Travis Jones at Stockman Bank to add their names and remove Bill Rash and Lance Taylor from the checking account.
4. Fire Warden/DES Report: KC Williams talked about the new VFA (Volunteer Firefighters Assistance) grant (not affiliated with the old VFA/RFA grant). It is a 50/50 cost share grant whose qualifications are almost similar to the RFC (Rural Fire Capacity) grant. Confusing - yes! There is about \$12,000 available in grant money. KC Williams also mentioned that for next year he would like to see fire departments transition back to filing individually for the RFC grant program instead of doing a joint county application. (Back in the day when the RFC grant was known as the VFA/RFA grant, fire departments did apply individually, but then DNRC pushed for a single county wide application to simplify the review. It appears this directive is to be reversed.)

OLD BUSINESS:

5. Ambulance District: John Staley was not at the meeting, and it appears there was nothing new to report. Then the surprise! KC Williams got up to introduce John Briggs, and his new (private) ambulance service - America First Response. No one in the room even knew about this except for Billings Fire Dept. There was a lot of confusion, but it turns out that Derek Yeager was to have sent out an email prior to the our meeting to introduce the new ambulance service, and that did not happen. AFR will tentatively start service on 3-20-23 with one ambulance and offering only BLS. The owner said they are looking to hire a paramedic so they can offer ALS. They also eventually hope to add ambulances as the company grows. The business will operate from downtown Billings during the day and from Laurel at night. AMR quickly became concerned as to how calls will be delegated - is there a rotation or what? Karim Eshbaugh, representing Lockwood, had concerns too mostly because of the unknowns with the operation of this new service.
6. Calendar Project: Brent Peters and Reno Olvera both spoke about wrapping up this year's project and asked about continuing it for next year. Both felt it was a worthwhile project with monies eventually going for a good cause. Both acknowledged some mistakes, and both felt the overall quality of printing should be improved if we continue. Phil Ehlers asked for a vote, and the Council decided to sell calendars for 2024. Larry Carpenter will go ahead and apply for the non profit status with the IRS since we will continue to handle larger sums of money. Fire depts.

who have calendar sales money should send it to Larry to be deposited. Any left over calendars should be first handed out free to any firefighter family that wants them, and the remaining calendars should be returned to Laurel VFD.

7. Resource Book: Travis Jones is sending out the final call for updates to the book. He wants to have the updated information ready as soon as possible. Please check your information and contact Travis with changes.

NEW BUSINESS:

8. Motorcycle Festivities: The BASTARDS motorcycle group is hosting a 911 Memorial parade from Laurel to Billings (county courthouse) on Sept. 9. It is a charity fundraiser with past events bringing in \$120,000 total. They would like to see every fire dept. bring a fire truck to the parade.

9. Montana Firefighters' Memorial: There will be a series of fun runs on June 9 in Laurel at 6:00 pm to raise money for the Montana State Firefighter Memorial park. There needs to be more local support of the memorial, and it would be nice to see area firefighters participate.

10. Identification for Volunteer Firefighters: Phil Ehlers proposed copying what Musselshell County does to identify fire fighters responding to an emergency in their personal vehicles. They issue a sticker that goes on the driver's side lower windshield corner and has the fire dept name or logo. Along with that is a different color year sticker not unlike those used on vehicle license plates which helps identify a person as a current fire dept. member. Phil will bring a sample to the May meeting. There was brief talk about firefighters having ID cards for their wallets.

11. Liability: KC Williams reminded everyone who uses their vehicle to respond to emergencies that you are exposing yourself to a lot of liability especially with the large increase in lawsuits involving emergencies.

12. Agency Reports: Billings - They will make sure an email is sent out concerning the new ambulance service. They took delivery of their new 107' Pierce ladder truck. 10 new recruits will start work. Laurel - JW Hopper is the new interim fire chief. Brent may take the deputy chief position. They are getting a new Type 5 brush truck. Blue Creek - Things are quiet. Working on maintenance of their trucks. Have several members who will be attending the resurrected Cody Fire School. Fuego - Quiet. Broadview - Had the wild land fire refresher. Working on a Type 4 brush truck. Needing some new radios. Lockwood - Down 3 firefighters recently, but hiring 2 new. Training with the Billings Fire Dept. Call volume is currently stable. Karim Eshbaugh will be retiring. Haley Bench - Doing truck repairs. 5 members taking the ICS class. Shepherd - Did a mutual aid with Billings on a structure fire in Billings Heights. AMR - Nothing new. DNRC - Pleased at good turnout for trainings The EFF "packets" are out electronically and due April 15. Keep doing your grass fire reports for DNRC. They will be doing staffed station again this year. Sheriff's Office - Hired 2 new deputies but still down 4. Struggling with costs on everything going up so fast. FSTS - A funding bill for fire training was gutted. Work loads will be tripling. Burn trailer is currently here and will be back in the fall. Jerry has his own door prop. Custer County will be hosting the Montana State Volunteer Firefighters Association on June 24 in Miles City. There will be extrication demonstrations. Jerry talked about electric vehicle fires - how hard they are to extinguish. There is no tow operator currently certified to haul burned electric vehicles away and no place to dispose of them because of the hazardous materials.

County Fire Chief: John Ostlund has taken over as the chief. Thanked everyone for their good work. KC Williams reintroduced Annemarie Overcast as his assistant in the DES office. Sean McCleary has been diagnosed with a third tumor. He has also been given a new service dog with which he is training with. One of Sean's issues will be loss of eyesight, and this dog will help him navigate.

NEXT FIRE COUNCIL MEETING IS MAY 9 AT 7 PM AT THE BLUE CREEK FIRE STATION. IT WILL BE THE FIRE COUNCIL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

Larry Carpenter, Sec/Treas.
YCFC