

Sheridan Fire District  
Board Meeting  
August 9, 2022  
Sheridan Fire District Main Station

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call: Tammy Heidt, Ray Bottenberg, Harry Cooley

Absent: Carol Van Wert, and Pete Gutbrod

Others present: Chief Les Thomas,

Harry made the motion to approve the minutes on July 12, 2022. Ray seconded it. The motion carried.

Ray made the motion to approve the minutes from the Virtual, July 14 Emergency Meeting Minutes. Harry seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Old Business.**

1. Seismic Updates

- Chief was able to submit new signature cards.
- Chief found out that no quarterly report had been submitted since January. Sent them.
- Determine \$56,000 next payout – Schedule A -- reimbursable. Waiting for schedule B which is the 5 percent holdback. This will be the last payout. Hope to have this closed out by the end of the month. There will be a celebration when that is done. Holdback not paid out: light—missing parts--, doorway that has a scratch, and a couple of items that need to be patched up. Board advised Chief Thomas not to pay the last 5% until all of the issues are resolved.

2. Levy:

- Chief said the LB1 is the information we share with the county. LB50 as well. It was found that the paperwork submitted showed a tax rate of 1.18 per \$1,000 when our permanent rate is 1.1188 per \$1,000. Chief made the adjustment on the fly. The board agreed that had been an appropriate response.

3. Audit:

- The 2020-21 audit is finished. Chief has seen a preliminary. They were able to find the items Susan needed from June.
- The audit is \$2,100 off. Both Susan and Blake want that to be \$0 off – totally balanced. Chief wants it reconciled before handing it to the Board.
- Overall it is a pretty clean audit.

4. Volunteer and subcommittee minutes

- The District has three additional volunteers, Watson, Watkins and Anderson. Volunteers did their own interviews (The old way). They will only be brought onboard when they have passed background checks. Anderson is a paramedic and works full time at

Sheridan FCI. He will be EMS only. The other two have a history as volunteers and are firefighters but would like to attend EMR class. Interviews were held the night of the Volunteer Business meeting so there are no meeting minutes for the Board.

Financials:

EMS Billing (Blake):

- In the middle of onboarding. Need access to ESL
- Blake presented the Board with an Excel Spreadsheet.

We don't have access to LGIP statements. It has not been reconciled. Will get it done as soon as possible. The ending statement balance is \$1.1 million which is not an accurate financial statement. Needs to pull a statement on each of them. Statements dating back to May. US Bank reconciled. First Federal has not been. Need documentation of July 11. Blake has no access to PERS. Tax adjustment for payroll. "I'm not worried about that being a risk at all." Reconciled down to \$18. First Federal reconciled. He will get that done within the week. Will get an updated spreadsheet to board. There are approximately \$100,00 in invoices that need to be processed.

GMT pay for services for coordinated care for Medicaid. Looking at other 85% now. Administered by OHPA. Susan and the chief got everything in. Sheridan will start receiving revenues from that program. The increased revenue will be substantial. Easily \$100,00 maybe \$500,00. GMT cost reports to be submitted Nov. 30. Changing what we are doing for billing that will have a substantial affect. Will payout previous settlement in May or June. (Payout this year \$50,000+ -- half of previous settlements.)

Billing process for Sheridan. Discovery process for deductibles. Anything an EMS agency can do to bypass billing the patient and bill insurance directly will drive the revenue up 20 to 30 percent. That way Sheridan doesn't absorb the loss of revenue, the hospital does.

Payroll: The Board held an emergency meeting to address issues. First pay period, one new employee not excluded, includes all of the raises in the new contract. Some adjustments need to be made. Some step changes need to be included. Blake will send Chief a packet. It will have the last couple of supplemental checks. They will be sent by UPS and should be here by Thursday. The information was based on the formulas of the previous system. Now we are meeting what it should be. Everybody's anniversary date for the next five years. There is no guessing. New scheduling program, ESO, that will be able to dump in all the hours.

Previously some of the employees had been underpaid. The problem has been isolated. Where most of that stems from is that there are multiple ways (at least 15 that Blake knows of) for calculating wages. Blake is contacting his lawyer, Buckley Law of Lake Oswego to determine the best way of doing this. Major misconception comes when fire departments based their calculations on FLSA and Civil Service differs from others. Looking through the ORS and OARS, there is no one place to go that says this is the exact number. Blake accidentally shorted someone 1.5 hours of overtime. New rates FLSA calculations. Previously it was calculated as the base monthly rate X 6.86 percent. Which differed from the way the chief and the Union calculated it. (Base hourly rate divided by two and multiplying it by 156 FLSA annual hours. That amounts to 13 hours per month. (Even in Blakes office there have been separate ways of doing that. Even though the end result may have been only 2 cents, Blake wants it to be exact.) It is a work in progress but, according to Blake, the District has come miles in the last couple of weeks. Part of

the problem involved the 90-day out window to close the contract with GNSA, Chief thought they had met the criteria for closing the contract when in June, but that appears not to be the case. Chief has decided to go with GNSA until January when things slow down. Blake will process everything. Then the switch will be made to Quick Books only. No issue with direct deposit. (This month it will be through GNSA.)

The District needs to get a handle on the invoices. Chief said the Board was not very well represented in this arena. It had been 30 days behind and is now 45 days behind in this. We're just going to have to catch up. Chief will roll out plan about trimming down some of these checks – going with direct pay. (Bank charges them for that. Some is 3 or 4 percent.) The Board will be able to review the invoices. Blake can pay it via Auto draft or credit card. Blake can send the district a receipt. Blake can send a copy of a batch of statement with checks to go with it. Sign as a Docu-sign or Adobe Sign. Tammy wants to look at what is fastest and most efficient. Chief would rather not be a signer. Blake recommends implementing a process to use until Sept. 1. Invoice check and use Adobe document Click and Sign.

A motion is needed to implement a new process that will go from now through the end of August. To get us caught up once or twice weekly emails to members of the Board as specified by the Board with list of invoices to be paid at the time, through Adobe Sign. Board can review, approve and sign it. Blake will issue the checks the next day. Any questions, contact Chief. Blake to put it in a Word document and send something out giving his assistant Brigette Sanford signer authority until Aug. 31. She can only do those under Blake. Chief asked if the bank would accept that. Blake – “Yes” and recommended testing it.

The Board needs to authorize Brigette Sanford to be a check signer on behalf of Sheridan Fire District from accounts payable from Aug. 9, 2022 through Aug. 31, 2022. Blake found Invoices from February to process. We are already starting July with reconciled bank statements.

A motion was made by Ray to authorize Brigette Sanford and Blake Jamison to be authorized to sign to pay bills for Sheridan Fire District through August 31, 2022. There was more discussion. The motion died due to the lack of a second.

Ray made a motion for Sheridan Fire District to authorize Blake Jamison and Brigette Sanford (Tactical Business Group), as check signers to process accounts payable payments for invoices preapproved for payment processing by two members of the board of directors. Authority is only granted for the dates of Aug. 9, 2022 through Aug. 31, 2022. The motion was seconded by Harry. The Motion carried.

Chief requested an explanation and clarification of the goal and process now for insurance checks. These checks need to be done manually at this time. They are either ambulance patients or payer and has been with Systems Design. (This is in reference to reimbursements or overpayment checks.) Moving forward, Sheridan Fire won't be processing this. On the monthly invoice there will be a flat billing on a per claim basis and a separate line item on the billing invoice showing any refunds or overpayments due. A reference claim number will be listed on it. Blake then goes to the bank and gets a cashier's check for each patient.) This process separates refunds out and keeps it out of our audit and avoids additional charges that Systems Design would be charging for it. This will consolidate the process and SFD would only pay a once-a-month billing check.

Chief: Sheridan Fire District has received a request from the residents at 5395 Violet Drive, Sheridan, Oregon, Larry and Leonna Brown to have their property annexed into the fire district. They have lived there since 2016. After moving in they found out that they are not part of the fire district although all other addresses on Violet Drive are in SFD. The residence is three miles from Hwy 22 off Gooseneck which and is a public-owned road. Most of the houses are off to the right. They are on the left. They have a short driveway the neighbor across the street is in Sheridan Fire District. Tammy became aware of the situation during the time of trying to pass the levy. Cody has done the driveway inspection. There are no issues getting into their property. Downside at all? No. Chief said it would clearly be in our district. They are not in anyone else's district. It is up to the board to offer services. They would need to fill out an application at the Polk County Tax Office. They are only covered by ODF and we would respond on mutual aid.

#### Request for Annexation

- A motion was made by Ray to annex the property of Larry and Leonna Brown at 5395 Violet Drive,

Sheridan, Oregon into Sheridan Fire District. The motion carried. Tammy will contact them to let them that they need to go to Polk County Tax Office to fill out the form and let them know they have been annexed in. (Call first). They will need a copy of the approved board meeting minutes.

#### Staffing

- Office Assistant: Chief had identified this as a critical need—get someone in to answer phones on regular basis. The fire district brought someone in on a part-time basis (\$15) until Chief and Blake get a handle on the finances. Before they even put it out, someone from the community came in. She was interviewed and a background check was completed. Answering phone and doing some filing and getting to know how to do things. She is working 30 hour/week, 9 to 2 or 9 to 3. Doing very well. Figured out phone system. This takes the load off of other staff. Crews have been running and outside training. We are doing crossover training with the Tribe and McMinnville. Crews do answer phone. We don't know what we are doing after the first of the year. We are looking at taxes and revenue.
- Battalion Chief: Chief spoke to the Board about FF/paramedic Phil Riggs. He has a long history as Battalion Chief with McMinnville. He took a break from the fire service. Then he heard that Sheridan was hiring FF/Paramedics. He has a wealth of experience. In the absence of deputy chief, which there are no plans to replace, Riggs' offer of "Where can I help?" was accepted. Chief is cautious. He doesn't want to overextend the offer. (He was overworked by McMinnville.) He has been given an interim position as battalion chief and is being moved to days. He is limited to 45 hours/week and is paid \$79,500/ yearly. He may become a division chief in four to six months, but not deputy chief. Riggs has good at leadership skills and is very personal. He is well respected throughout the county. He fills a hole in the system. He is taking on some the radio stuff that hadn't been finished and is working on SOGs.
- Upcoming need for new hires: With Phil going to days and Donna taking on EMS Coordinator stuff – after taking a well-deserved vacation -- the district will need to hire. Four new people and one of our part-time employees will be interviewed. These candidates are very well

recommended with clean backgrounds. Pretty impressive. Salem is hiring at \$91,000. But with the raises approved by the Board, people are happy to be here. Our goal is to get this list of potential new hires now. Four interviews are scheduled for Thursday 8/11. Then to Civil Service Board will review the list.

- The Board packet has the latest draft of the CDA. A lot of work was put into this. The union conceded on a lot of items on the list. It is the bare minimum. This is a pretty solid CDA. We have 100 percent support of union. This has gone through their lawyer. Pete has gone through it and agrees.

#### Chief's Evaluation

- Chief has been an employee of SFD three years. (Hired on 7/1/19) (Has been Chief since Aug. 22). Would like a comprehensive but not so difficult evaluation.
- Ray has one for superintendent of schools. Will send Chief what he's got. Tammy said the last evaluation for Fred was very good least convoluted. Harry said he would get another. Ray said that a big part of job is for the board to evaluate the fire chief. Chief: everyone has been brutally honest with him throughout the last 10 months. Chief to get something out to the board yet this month.
- Time to review his contract. Not up for renewal as it is a 2-year contract. Happy with things now that our people are being taken care of. Up to the board regarding a raise and COLA.

#### Notes regarding the public

- Stacy has been after Chief about writing things for The Bulletin Board. The second one is to come out in August. Chief put some research into it regarding fire hazards in rural, dry areas. A sky lantern was found in the outlying areas. It could have been a disaster.
- Compliments and donation: The fire district has been receiving compliments from local citizens and a \$450 donation from someone we helped. Crews did a very good job. Everyone is working very hard.

#### Unexpected expenses

- Note the Invoices for fixing things that were not in the seismic upgrade. You can't fix one wall and not the other. Although some things are not operational, it is important to make the station livable.

#### Next board meeting.

- The Board agreed to delay the next board meeting until the third Tuesday in September as the Chief will be taking part in the executive fire program at the National Fire Academy the week of the regularly scheduled board meeting.
- The next board meeting will held on the third Tuesday, Sept. 20, regular time.

#### Grand reopening/Hot cake breakfast

- On Sunday, Sept. 25 we will hold a Grand Reopening Ceremony to let the community know that we are back. It will include flag raising, bagpipes and drums and a hose company.
- It will be followed by the annual Hot Cake Breakfast.
- A subcommittee with volunteers, career and Chief will be working on it.

#### Station safety

- Chief submitted a grant proposal for a safety/security grant to SDO for cameras, push-bar system (ADA) and signs in stairway – “Authorized personnel only.”
- Staff is doing a pre-OSHA audit. “We’re going to do things right.”

#### For the Good of the Order

- Apparatus has been moved around. Chief is determined that staff will learn to drive a stick and park every apparatus in there.
- Chief will leave for a convention on August 22. He will meet with ESO and will be taking two classes.
- Tammy to be gone the rest of the week.

#### Update on Southwest Polk

- Harry asked where things are in the request for payment that was invoiced to Southwest Polk Fire months ago. The invoice has not been paid. There is a potential for a lawsuit. Chief said our lawyer said we need to think long and hard about our next move. Tammy is willing to be passive for the time being and let it sit. Although an agreement has been signed, Southwest Polk wants more documentation to prove they owe SFD money.
- ASAs. There is a concern that the ASA boundaries between Sheridan and SW Polk could change dramatically in favor of Southwest Polk. Dallas offered SW Polk the area between Salt Creek and Rickreall and the offer was declined. Chief has documentation (30-pages from each county) from both Polk and Yamhill County. The Chief foresees the need will be a 12-hour medic in Buell, and a 12-hour medic in Ballston to keep our ASA intact. We need to start having some conversations. Chief would like everyone to do their own research. Wants information to be known.
- Right now Tammy said she wants to see SFD focus on its own things.

#### Third-out ambulance

- Chief is looking at having a third-out ambulance which would increase the possibility of taking transfers.

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.