

## MEETING MINUTES

MARCH 10, 2020 at Lockwood RFD

1. Phil Ehlers was at a mutual aid fire call in Worden, so the meeting was run by John Staley. Pledge of Allegiance was said. Introductions were given.

2. Minutes were approved.

3. Treasurer Report: We have \$1100.66 in our account. Larry thanked everyone for getting in their 2020 dues promptly.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

4. Ambulance District: Still being researched by Phil Ehlers. Not present to report.

5. Resource Book: Please turn in any final corrections to Travis Jones, Broadview VFD, so he can get an up to date list out to all before summer fire season. Please do this immediately.

6. Dry Hydrant Inspection: Trying to get a form created for inspections. A reminder that the county will help maintain dry hydrant access by spreading gravel, plowing snow, and helping with weed control. Contact Tim Miller with the county road department for help. Derek Yeager would like permission to exchange dry hydrant/rural fill locations with Stillwater, Carbon, and other counties in their mapping systems to allow for better mutual aid. Permission granted.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

7. Covid-19: KC Williams was not in attendance, so Denis Pitman gave a report from notes. Health people have been in numerous meetings planning for the virus to eventually hit locally. There is a lot of misinformation going around. Everyone is asked to look at the Riverstone Health website for truthful straight forward information. Over reacting will cause shortages and other problems. John Felton, head of Riverstone Health advises wash hands well, treat like flu, mask goes on to patient to retain what might be exhaled, wear proper PPE, and disinfect everything after encountering someone with the virus. If firefighters (and EMS) people are quarantined because of contamination, mutual aid from nearby agencies might be requested to help. We do need to know how fire departments and AMR can backfill when manpower shortages develop. Be sure to work with and help the Sheriff's Office and MHP when encountering possible virus infected people. Give them the gear to wear to protect them. PPE will be in short supply. AMR has solid contacts with suppliers and may be able to help area fire depts. with needs. The first Covid-19 test kit has arrived in Helena.

8. BUFSA: To help with shortfalls in the Billings Fire Department budget, the city council is looking at what the fees are for residents of BUFSA. There is some speculation that maybe fees might have to be doubled or tripled. (The County Commissioners act as the trustees for BUFSA.) The commissioners have been in talks with city government. BUFSA boundaries have not changed since it was formed in 1988. It is 45 sq. miles; down from 58 sq. miles in size. One worry the commissioners have is the possibility that as more of BUFSA is annexed into the city, there is a potential for fewer and fewer people being saddled with the higher costs. The fee BUFSA pays for city fire protection is thought to be based on what it takes to fund 10 firefighters as additional manpower to cover BUFSA. Talks are continuing between the city and commissioners over solutions.

9. County EMS: Discussion in 2 parts: First part is the concern over adequate EMS service in the county. And if we are to improve it, how will it be funded? Through levies? The second part was about the use of Helpflight for evacuating patients to hospitals. Everyone needs to be aware that Helpflight is always on "standby" 24 hours a day all year long. It is meaningless to ask to have the helicopter put on standby because it already is. What one can do is ask if Helpflight is "available." In other words, are they busy on another call or are they grounded because of weather etc.? There is some confusion as to who can order Helpflight. Ideally it should be a medically qualified person like a paramedic, but as Keith Edgell from MHP pointed out, medical help may be a long way out, and sometimes MHP officers have made the decision to have the helicopter launch. It was suggested that the IC of an incident should be the only one to order or cancel the helicopter because there have been incidents where more than one person has given conflicting orders concerning Helpflight. It was discussed that like mutual aid, if Helpflight is not needed they can easily be cancelled.

10. Document: KC Williams is interested in helping fire depts with grants, but in order to do so, we need to document our calls, our training, etc. There is more competition out there for money, and those who can document needs best will have a better chance of "winning." DNRC has also been pushing for better reporting of grass fires. Yellowstone County has done well, but other counties are waking up to the fact they need to also. There will be more competition for DNRC funds and equipment. Derek said reporting also can bring in needed resources during fire emergencies. "Numbers drive resources!" "And money!" Politicians don't understand firefighting, but they can understand documentation. Derek feels that within another year or two, those departments who don't report their wild land fires may have DNRC fire equipment pulled from them.

11. Agency Reports: DNRC - Get your applications in for staffed station positions soon! Training has been going really well with good attendance. Derek is hoping to finally get a permanent DNRC helicopter stationed in Billings by June 1. There will be support jobs that go along with it including the possibility of using volunteer firefighters to help with it under the staffed station program. The helicopter can be used for initial attack on fires or patrolling for possible reported "smokes." They hope to have training on "Crew Sense," a program to help manage the staffed station program. BLM - Seasonal hires will be on May 1. If anyone is doing a Wildfire Awareness Day in early May, BLM can help. There will be some controlled burns at Pompeys Pillar. There will be a Fire Origin class held in Lewistown April 27 for those interested. FSTS - Have been doing structure fire

training in Roundup. Jerry will have the SCBA trailer through April 27 for those who want to use it. There is a TMI (Traffic Incident Management) train the trainer course available. There is a FSTS position open in Great Falls. At this point we got sidetracked for a good idea from John Staley. He suggested that the head of the Fire Science courses at the College of Technology (City College) be invited to our fire council meetings and possibly invited to join. We could possibly use some of his students to supplement crews in the area volunteer fire depts. He could also help with training. John will invite him to our next meeting. There was also talk of having a one-week county "fire camp" with training for fire and EMS take place. Back to agency reports: AMR - Repeated their offer to help with PPE in dealing with Covid-19. Billings FD - Gearing up for Covid-19. Have 6 new recruits. Billings Airport Rescue Fire – Have an FAA drill on May 7. Will be doing live burns using hand lines. Airlines are postponing new flights because of the virus. They have 2 positions open. Fuego VFC - They have their new fire station up and running. Sharing access to bathrooms to law enforcement. Will be having a dedication/open house. Want to thank the county commissioners for their support with the Coal Board Grant and new FSA fees. Haley Bench VFD - Working on brush trucks. Lockwood RFD - Karim Eshbaugh is the new deputy chief. Did their own inhouse training for 3 new recruits. Worked well. Two are paramedics who did stints with AMR. They bought new defib/monitoring units by buying through AMR. Saved \$20,000! Have an opening for one more firefighter. Sheriff Office - Losing deputies. Have 9 openings and may have 2 additional openings. To control a virus outbreak at the jail, visitation is now restricted. Will get their command vehicle this summer. Will be housed at Lockwood. It is set up to be self-sufficient. MHP - They are down 7 patrolmen. Most on duty are young and inexperienced. To attract more recruits, they may now allow new hires to choose a station instead of being assigned. Matt Hoppel says that David Griffith has been re-booked for May 16 to come speak about mental health issues with firefighters. Cost is \$50 and said to be well worth attending.

NEXT FIRE COUNCIL MEETING IS AT THE BILLINGS AIRPORT OPERATIONS CENTER ON MAY 12 AT 7 PM.

Larry Carpenter, Sec/Treas.  
YCFC