Sheridan Fire District

Board Meeting

4/11/2023

President Tammy Heidt called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Board members present: Tammy Heidt, Ray Bottenberg, Pete Gutbrod, Harry Cooley, Gary Giddings

Others Present: Fire Chief Les Thomas, Division Chief Phill Riggs, Administrative Assistant Marguerite Alexander, Dorie Vickery, Rob Foster, Nick Wooldridge, Michaela Woods, Logan Delano, Austin McDowell

**Gary moved, and Ray seconded the motion to approve the March 14, 2023, meeting minutes. Motion carried.**

Financials: Kathie has been thus far unable to replicate the financial document Tammy requested. (It comes down to the difference between QuickBooks Online and QuickBooks Desktop.) Tammy feels more comfortable moving forward now that Kathie has looked over the books.

**Harry made a motion to approve the financials for January, February, and March 2023. Gary seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

Audience Participation: None

The Board agreed to move the next Item moved up on the agenda to facilitate the guest speaker’s time.

Dorie Vickery, Superintendent of the Sheridan School District, came to talk about a Federal grant opportunity -- the RISE (Rural Innovation Stronger Economy). The school district is asking for $596,000 to build a 3-story training tower on the Barbara Roberts CTEC property. It will include the cement work to raise the building 3 ft. and out of the flood plain. “We really want this to be a regional training center,” Vickery told the Board. The Paint Building would become a smoke room. The grant itself would cover the construction costs and any work related to it. Vickery explained that the school board met tonight and approved the request to apply for the grant with a 20% matching grant that can be spread out over the four years of the grant. The application is due July 20. The district needs a letter from the fire district stating its intent to partner with the school. Later it will need an MOU. Sheridan Education Foundation Board is willing to work with the school and allow it to use its 501(c)3 status. Vickey presented a document outlining the plans. There would be a loading dock on the back and a storage mezzanine. There is a $100,000 planning grant. $1 million implementation (next year). The school district is requested $12 million in state lottery funds. Vickery wants Sheridan to be the model of rural career education centers. “We are in the middle of fundraising,” she said. They are talking about starting a class next fall (fire service) and are reaching out to other school districts to make it regional. They have reached out to the Oregon Community Foundation for funding. Right now, there is not a financial commitment.

Pete asked, “What does it mean for us to partner with the school? Anything financial? What about instructors?

Vickery responded that it would help if the fire district can look at any grants that would match the $149,000 required. Career tech is the most expensive as class size needs to be limited to 12-15 students. Looking down the road for 2-3 years, the school district would hire a part-time teacher. The state has changed its process for teacher licensure, and schools can have people with industry experience teach. Due to staff shortage, the school has five teachers working with emergency licenses this year, with the school district paying for classes for licensure. The contract would be between the school and the teacher. Eventually, the district would need 1 FTE to teach one lab in the morning and a second lab in the afternoon. (Different kids.) Five days a week.

Tammy said that wouldn’t work for our line staff time-wise, and our staff would need to get paid to get a provisional license.

Dorie said they would be reaching out to West Salem High School, which has a fire safety program.

The Chief said that the fire district would need to be guaranteed access to the property. Dorie said that would be as it is now, with access to the property as needed.

Chief Thomas: It has the potential to spark interest in volunteering. “We’ll work it out,” he said. It would start with an Intro to Fire class. There would be an entrance exam. It’s a long process. “We’ll help in any way we can,” he added.

Dorie said the benefit of career programs is that students graduate ready for careers.

Pete: Said he is very supportive. He wants to make sure the volunteers, union, and everyone is on board.

Dorie said the school district is going for $745,000.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Community Outreach: Written report (See attached)
2. Polk County ASA meeting yesterday regarding our corrections to the Polk ASA 3 report.

* It started off pretentious, Chief Thomas said.
* The report is based on 2021 numbers when we had a different administration and a different board. And we are no longer giving out calls, he said. “None of that information is shown in that study,” Chief added. Additionally, “The numbers are not correct,” he said. He is saddened by an incomplete, incorrect, and inconsistent report, adding, “Somebody needs to go back to grammar school.”
* The Chief received a call this morning stating that they would be happy to use 2021-2022 numbers. Yesterday they said they had been hired to get the 2021 data but said they would be willing to use the 2022 data if all the ASAs involved were willing to provide the same data. “We are going to work on this in the next few days. Hopefully, get it submitted this week,” Chief told the Board.
* Times were also a problem. No ambulance can reach Ballston – designated in the report as an urban pocket—in less than 8 minutes. The Chief said they understand we are not going to accept that.
* We can extend our response times by 2 minutes if we send a BLS responder and 5 minutes with an ALS responder.
* They were made aware that we are staffing M97.
* Commissioner Pope and Dean Bender were laughing and carrying on during the Chief’s presentation. Then they got up and walked out of the room. When in the meeting, they were on their phones.
* Chief told the board, “I have been nice. I have been polite. I have been respectful.” Now it is time to send our letter to the Polk County Commissioners. He felt we should wait to mail the letters to the voters in the district. Tammy agreed that we did not yet need to go to the public. Chief said the BOC needs to know how we feel about potential decisions impacting our citizens. He said, “It insults me and insults my people to see how we are presented this way in this report.” He is even thinking about contacting our lawyer to talk about defamation.

Tammy: I don’t believe the county commissioners will have any stomach for any backlash.

Gary Giddings commented, “This smells crooked from the beginning.”

The Chief told the Board that he has documentation that this was discussed by SW Polk and ESCI while the report was in progress.

Pete: You can’t make this kind of a life-altering change based on faulty information. It has to be updated.

Chief said that ESCI told him that If the majority of districts want new information, they will use the 2022 information. He added that 6% is a snapshot. Not 100%.

Tammy asked again for the Chief to hold off on the community letter. The Chief would like to show staff what we will be sending out. Would like to involve our people at every level., adding, “They know we are doing well. Our status quo is not our status quo. We are going to get better.”

1. Civil Service meeting yesterday
2. We are back in a 90-day rotation.
3. Employee positions and salaries were presented and approved by the Civil Service Commission.
4. We have 21 people. Some work part-time. A few of the part-time employees have been moved to FT temporary. (Class; staffing at St. 97, one paramedic going on leave.)
5. We will be losing a Civil Service board member is July as he is running unopposed for the fire board.
6. Financial Engagement Letter Merina+ CO
7. Eileen went over it.
8. The focus will be budget reconciliation and sustainability.
9. First meeting tomorrow
10. Initial cost: $8 - $10K.
11. They are very well-versed in what they are doing.
12. We can make it provisional based on the first report (4-6 weeks)

**Ray made a motion to provisionally approve the engagement letter with Merina & Co. subject to the results next month. Pete seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

The Chief will have a detailed report when available.

New Business:

1. COVID money. We received a letter stating when we received payment. We became non-compliant as of Sept. 30, 2021. The Chief responded with a letter noting the change of administration on 10/01/21. Letter attached. He sent a copy of the letter, our board meeting minutes, and a letter from Ilene letting them know that we are compliant now and will be with everything going forward. If they don’t accept our response, we must pay $10,323.04. Chief told them we would do whatever we needed to make it compliant.
2. FEMA AFG grant Audit. We applied for but failed to get fire apparatus through a FEMA AFG grant. Chief Thomas asked to see the grading sheet as he wants to improve for the next application. The next morning he received an audit request for the $35,000 grant we received for wildland up staffing. He had to break down the hourly and overtime rates and clarify them. He would like a meeting at OFCA for a discussion.
3. Two more audits. Today we were audited by the government for the radio and PPE grants. We are missing one out of 20+ invoices – the document showing the bids for the radio grant. The Chief asked for two weeks extension. We’ve followed the form to the T. He saw the form completed by Larry Wooldridge

In spite of the additional obstacles, Chief Thomas told the Board, “I will not quit. I will not fail. I will do everything in my power to get what is ours.” Then he added. “We are going to get through this.”

Chief Thomas was planning to talk to the other fire chief tomorrow.

1. Staffing at Station 97: Chief Thomas told the Board we have people out there. We have cameras out there. Our captains are doing a good job. There is no way we are going to capture every call. And there are no sleeping quarters. Bottom line: “I am not going to allow someone to take our calls.” Our people will go. If we get there first, we are transporting. We are ALS. We are going to protect our community as well as we can.”
2. Students in class. We still have five people in school, two paramedics and three intermediates. Chief told the Board, “We are way ahead of anyone else in the two counties – not overstaffed – qualified.”
3. Volunteer meeting notes: in the packet. Next month they are to send a rep to the board meeting.

Good of the Order:

1. FCI Community Meeting. While the Chief was on vacation, Tammy attended the FCI Community Meeting. The message for the crews: “Everyone loves everyone down here,” she said. FCI officials wanted to thank the crews. There is an activity coming up at the end of May, and Tammy will let the crews know.
2. Pete passed along a thank you for the work at Buell. Quick turnaround. He appreciates their work.
3. Tammy would like to see us host an open house at Station 97.

Harry moved to adjourn. Ray seconded. The Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Marguerite Alexander

Administrative Assistant