

**Regular Meeting of the North Blaine County Fire District in the Council
Chambers – 81 Elkhorn Road, Sun Valley, ID
July 10th, 2024, at 10:00 AM.**

1. Call to Order.

Chairman Gray called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

2. Public Comment.

None.

3. Approval of the July 2024 Claims*.

Commissioner Michael comments that we purchased new wildland gear and had the Greenhorn 100 units painted. We accepted the lower bid for the painting, which was several thousand dollars less expensive than the other bid we received.

MOTION:

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the July 10th 2024 claims; seconded by Commissioner Engelmann. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael, Commissioner Engelmann

NAYS: None

4. Approval of the June 12th 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes*.

MOTION:

Commissioner Engelmann moved to approve the June 12th, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes; seconded by Commissioner Sarah Michael. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Engelmann, Commissioner Michael

NAYS: None

5. Report: Monthly Update – North Blaine County Fire District Chief, Rich Bauer.

The news of the season right now is that it is hot and we have started seeing the beginning of wildfire season in our area, and anticipate having a busy wildfire season overall. We have had recently had three small wildland fires locally and have assisted in putting out the Starbridge Fire on Broadford Rd. As you saw in the claims, we purchased new wildland turnouts for our new live-in at Greenhorn. The City's newest Engine, 64, is outfitted well to fight wildland fires.

Commissioner Michael says that she wrote to the Sawtooth National Recreation Area Ranger Kirk Flannigan, as she has not seen any campfire bans yet this season. Two years ago they posted a ban back in June, but so far there have not been any ban notifications. She says that she is concerned a campfire can get out of hand pretty quickly. Chief Bauer thanks Commissioner Michael for sending that letter. There are different fire restriction levels the Forest Service can implement depending on fire danger levels, but there have been no restrictions announced yet. Chief Robrahn says that

nationally we have been placed on a stage 4 of 5 preparedness levels. It is early in the season for this, and means that resources are hard to come by. The Commissioners discuss sending a letter from the Fire District to Ranger Flannigan. For now Chief Bauer will reach out to him, and see what the forest has as far as plans, and he will reach out to Chairman Gray with the response. Chief Bauer imagines that the forest is likely planning fire restrictions and bans in the near future. Chairman Gray comments that the Forest did a lot of work last fall to improve their campgrounds and put more established fire rings in place. They are trying to give people a safe place to burn. Chief Bauer says that we have banned open burning in the District.

We have a resident meeting with our live-ins next Wednesday. This will be our first meeting with all of our new Greenhorn residents, and we will review all of the requirements and expectations of them to live there. They are already doing a great job of responding to calls and backing up the Elkhorn crew when they get a call.

Chief Bauer says that he does not have any updates from the County on the consolidation study from ESCI. Commissioner Michael says that she spoke with one of the County Commissioners about that study and it is her understanding that data has not been forthcoming from all entities. Chief Bauer says that to have informative data, we really need several years of consistent data, which we do not always have with our current reporting system. Captain Ricky Williams is working on helping us get better with more consistent reporting, by starting all records on scene with our ipads. Chairman Gray comments that at the last meeting for elected officials that he attended, officials gave the consultants feedback that would probably change the direction of their report. We have not yet seen the result of this.

Chief Bauer says that we are still working on renovating the Greenhorn 100 units, as noted with our painting invoice in the claims. Jocelin is still working to get these updated, and we hope to have them ready in the next month or so. We do have some interest in those units already, so we could be at 100% occupancy overall in Greenhorn.

Plan reviews were slow for awhile, but now he estimates he has done 8 reviews in the past 10 days. There is still a lot of construction going on in the District, and he has been very busy with his Fire Marshall duties.

[6. Report: Monthly Update – Sun Valley Fire Chief, Taan Robrahn.](#)

Chief Robrahn says that we did feel a short slack season this spring that has now ended. The other day there were a couple of spot fires on the side of highway 75 across from Gimlet. These were put out quickly, and we think they may have been caused by vehicle chains. As he mentioned before, we are nationally at a fire readiness level 4 of 5, which means that fire suppression resources are hard to come by because many resources are already deployed. With Allen and Company this week, there is a local weather forecaster here. It is extremely hot and dry this week, and we are breaking 90 degrees several days in a row with minimal cooling at night. We are seeing heat related medical calls as well as a variety of others.

The Ambulance District will begin having budget meetings next week on July 18th regarding budget

requests from their partners, including the City of Sun Valley. Chief Robrahn will do a presentation of his request on behalf of the City, and by extension the Fire District. On the budget request are capital funds that we would want to use for a heart monitor and LUCAS (chest compression) device to go onto Engine 3 at Greenhorn Station. We have these devices on our first out engine at Elkhorn, and would be great to also have those on our first out engine at Greenhorn, enabling us to provide additional services to our mid-valley constituents. Commissioner Michael asked if this is a City proposal? If granted the funds for the equipment, would the District own that equipment? Chief Robrahn answers that this is a City of Sun Valley proposal, as the City is the one that currently has a contract with the Ambulance District. The proposal also requests funding for one additional full time duty staff member, including their benefits, and clarifies this would add no extra expenses to the Fire District. Chief Robrahn will send out the proposal to the District Commissioners. Commissioner Michael asks what Chief Robrahn thinks the likelihood is that this proposal will be accepted. Chief Robrahn is unsure, but he believes that we can continue to improve the way the Ambulance District functions and distributes its funding, and he is hopeful that the Commissioners see the value in his proposal. Chairman Gray says that he thinks that at least two Blaine County Commissioners are understanding of the current lack of EMS services in the mid-valley area, and we are starting to have some momentum to get support in expanding our EMS services.

[7. Updates, discussion, and possible action regarding Greenhorn Housing Project*](#)

Chairman Gray says that since they have started working on the berm, he thinks that he has probably had 20-25 people approach him to say how good the project looks, and congratulate the District and the City on the accomplishment.

Jim Keating, City of Sun Valley City Administrator, says that we are approximately 95% completed with this project. The rough grading of the berm is expected to be completed today or tomorrow by Jonathon Lunceford. Once that is complete Webb is ready to start putting in the irrigation and doing the planting there. Ashley Board is our landscape architect on the project and is coordinating the planting. They are going to wait to plant a little longer due to the heat. There have been a couple of change orders for the project. There was some incidental damage to the old irrigation system at Greenhorn, and so the project is covering the \$8-9K cost to repair the irrigation. They anticipate the landscaping to be completed by end of September. Vegetation and irrigation will be focused on the east side of the berm, with native grasses providing coverage on the west side. We will likely have a few invoices carry over into Fiscal Year 2025. Commissioner Michael asked what the total bid for the landscaping is, commenting that Jim previously asked the District to contribute another \$150K to the project. Jim answers that the bid for landscaping was \$50 short of \$200K. He expects that we will use the rest of the money the City and District have contributed to pay off the remainder of the project costs.

Commissioner Engelmann mentions that looking at existing Greenhorn vegetation, there a quite a few aspens that are looking a little unhealthy that we should probably address. Chief Bauer says that he has met with Rob Beck and marked some trees to be removed. We took out quite a few last year, and have taken a couple this year that were growing too close to the units.

Commissioner Michael comments that the LGIP account the City opened for this project was

opened in August 2022. In just two years, we have completed an amazing project in this valley, and she extends her thanks to everyone who has worked so hard on this, including the Chiefs and Jocelin. This also of course includes Walt Femling, and previous Commissioner Chris Stevens. We would not have been able to complete this project without either of them. Chief Bauer adds that this project is a great example of the amazing partnership that the City and the District have formed, and that Chief Robrahn has put an incredible amount of work in the project. Chairman Gray says that he has never seen a project go forward so smoothly in all aspects. Commissioner Gray also wants to make sure that we thank the County, for the ARPA Grants, the Wood River Women's Foundation, and the Spur Foundation for their support. Chairman Gray says the berm is really looking great, and Chief Robrahn says the berm has also had a great sound barrier impact there for the residents. Chairman Gray says congratulations to everyone that has been involved in the project. Commissioner Michael says this was successful in large part to political will.

[8. Discussion and possible action regarding Fiscal Year 2025 Budget.](#)

Chief Bauer says big thanks to Jocelin for all of her hard work on the budget, and Chairman Gray says his thanks as well for her overall service to the District.

For the budget, we have added \$6k in the line for merit increases for next year to reward great work and job performance. We have lowered our utilities budget for next year by \$2K and put it into the line for new Greenhorn Housing Maintenance. We put this here to mitigate the cost of the trash removal at the new units. Recycling is available at Greenhorn inside the station bays.

Jocelin explains that our predicted cash position for end of Fiscal Year 2025 is entered on our draft budget as approximately \$15K less than on last month's draft budget. This is for a couple of reasons. When putting together this newly formatted COA last month, Jocelin used quick data from excel sheets, and this month she has edited all annual revenues and expenditures to reflect our audited numbers. The other reason is the addition of the \$6,000 added to our merit increase line item.

Commissioner Michael mentions that she had not noticed that housing line item of \$23,700 previously, and asked about this line. Chief Bauer explains that all City of Sun Valley employees that qualify for Housing Assistance get a monthly stipend to offset the expensive cost of housing in the Valley. This line covers all three staff that the District provides funds for, as all three have been approved for the stipend. Those receiving the stipend must reapply and qualify each year. It is a really great benefit the City provides. We are trying to make our budget more transparent each year and that is part of why we have now added this as a separate line.

Commissioner Michael comments that we are continuing to draw down our District reserves. Our total expected expenditures for FY 2025 are \$841,881. In the following fiscal year, if we do not have capital funds for the new housing set aside, our deficit should go down by \$50K. We have been getting a lot of revenue these past couple of years just from bank interest, and we should expect to start seeing less revenue from that. We will pay off both of our leases within the next 10 years. We are in year four of seven on our Engine lease, and year two of ten in our appropriations lease. We can expect other revenue to increase with rent collection for the new housing units, and the 3% annual increase we can take from property taxes. Jocelin explains that we add approximately

\$3,000 on top of our 3% each year in our revenues from new construction rolls.

Commissioner Engelmann asks if we can expect revenues from responding to wildland fires? Chief Bauer answered that we do have agreements with the Idaho Department of Lands to go out on assignments, but we are limited in sending staff out, because they are required to be dedicated to the assignment for at least two weeks.

Before the Commissioners make any motions, Jocelin mentions that once we publicly post our draft budget that would be approved next month, the Commissioners will not be able to increase that total budget number in the budget hearing.

MOTION

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the tentative Fiscal Year 2025 Budget with an expenditure of \$841,881 as the proposed budget amount ; seconded by Commissioner Engelmann.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Engelmann, Commissioner Michael

NAYS: None.

9. Discussion: Old Business.

None.

10. Public Comment.

None.

11. Adjournment*.

MOTION

Commissioner Engelmann moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Michael.

A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Engelmann, Commissioner Michael

NAYS: None.

Chairman Gray declared the meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.


Jed Gray, Chairman


Earl Engelmann, Secretary