

**Regular Meeting of the North Blaine County Fire District in the Council
Chambers – 81 Elkhorn Road, Sun Valley, ID
May 2nd, 2024, at 10:00 AM.**

[1. Call to Order.](#)

Chairman Gray called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

[2. Public Comment.](#)

None.

[3. Approval of the May 2024 Claims*](#)

Commissioner Michael comments that we purchased flower seeds and paper towels from Amazon, and says that we have previously discussed purchasing these types of items locally when we can. Chairman Gray comments that it can be a question of being more frugal as an entity, or more attentive to our local economy, and Commission Michael says that it is a balance. Chief Bauer mentions that we often having limited staffing and time availability, and buying things online can be necessary out of convenience. We do strive to purchase everything we can locally, but we also work to balance purchases within our relatively small budget, and buying locally can be quite expensive. Commissioner Engelmann says that the convenience of Amazon is overwhelming, it's a hard balance. Chairman Gray ends the conversation asking Chief Bauer to do the best we can to shop locally, while also being efficient with our funds.

Commissioner Michael thanks Jocelin for having the District's bank statements printed, as well as a Greenhorn Housing Project sheet. She notes the sheet marks outgoing payments as being paid by the City, while much of the funds for the project came from the County and other sources. Jocelin explains that this page is set up to show all of the project related costs the City has paid in a given fiscal year to date. These payments are made from the LGIP account the City set up that has the pooled funds from the District, City, County, Spur Foundation, etc. This discussion is continued in the Old Business agenda item.

MOTION:

Commissioner Michael moved to approve the May 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 April 10th 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes*](#)

MOTION:

Commissioner Engelmann moved to approve the April 10th, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes; seconded by Chairman Gray. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Engelmann, Commissioner Michael

NAYS: None

[5. Discussion and possible approval to pay Cox bills in between May and June meetings*](#)

MOTION:

Commissioner Michael moved to pay the Cox bill between the District's May and June meetings; seconded by Commissioner Engelmann. A roll call vote was taken.

AYES: Chairman Gray, Commissioner Michael, Commissioner Engelmann

NAYS: None

[6. Report: Monthly Update – North Blaine County Fire District Chief, Rich Bauer.](#)

We have been busy gearing up for what has the potential to be a very busy wildland season. We have ordered gear, and staff are doing their pack tests, which are their physical tests that they take to be wildland firefighters. Chief Bauer says the wildfire risk is likely to be higher later in the season. We have our annual wildland refresher class next week hosted by Captain Reid Black. Commissioner Michael says she received an email from her home insurance company that because she is in a higher wildfire risk area. If there is a fire, they will deploy a team to protect her house? Chairman Gray says that he has received similar letters, and teams have responded to his house a couple of times when there have been fires in our area. Does this conflict with the main fire department or do they coordinate? Chief Bauer says that he has seen insurance companies send equipment to homes they insure, or put fire retardant on the homes. He is not sure how those crews coordinate with incident management teams. Chief Robrahn comments that these resources come in and prep homes as well as they can for fire protection. Typically they work well with the crews managing the overall incident, but they are not considered a resource on the overall incident, and will move out when the fire comes through, and move in for mop up after. He says they are good if managed correctly and allow the crews to focus on protecting other homes. Commissioner Michael says that it's interesting, because there are now a lot of people having difficulty getting home insurance due to natural disaster risk based on where people are, especially places like Florida or around the coasts. Chief Bauer says that he has been contacted by many homeowners here that are having difficulty getting insurance due to wildfire threats. He's seeing homeowners voluntarily putting sprinkler systems in their new homes to make sure they can get home insurance. He thinks this has the potential to become more common.

Chief Bauer would like to give a big thank you to Captains Ricky Williams and Hunter Storey for heading up orientation for our new firefighters at Greenhorn Station last weekend, as well as organizing a cleanup inside and outside the station on the same day.

We have begun preparations for our 5 year ISRB (Idaho Surveying and Rating Bureau) Public Protection Class Evaluation recertifications that will take place in 2025. The City of Sun Valley Fire Department and North Blaine County Fire District will both be going through this. It is how they ensure our insurance rating classifications. A big part of this is ensuring that our testing of the rural water supply is as good as it can be, which involves testing cisterns and hydrants. Line staff Sarah Driggs and Time Hanna are really tightening up that process. Ponds are not a qualifying water source anymore, as they are not accessible and reliable year round. Part of procedure of drafting from a dry hydrant during the winter means that if a water source is frozen, the firefighter needs to use a chainsaw to cut through the ice, which is not considered safe or effective. The rural fire district fire marshals and the county building inspector met a few years ago and decided that current ponds in the District are grandfathered in, but they no longer qualify as a water source for new construction. Chief Bauer is not sure that this will increase insurance rates, as homes will still have a cistern, pressurized hydrant, or fire sprinkler systems. We still know where the current ponds and dry hydrants are, but they will not count as w water source for new builds. Chief Robrahn adds that maintenance is usually not kept on the ponds, and silt is usually sucked up into engine pumps, which can easily damage our engines leading to expensive repairs.

Chief Bauer says that we are quickly filling up the new Greenhorn units, and will be full soon. We are actually starting to have a waitlist now. Jocelin has been working to get bids for carpeting, painting, rodent mitigation, lighting, and appliances in the Greenhorn 100 units. They are both currently vacant, and are original units and have not been updated since original build. Chairman Gray asks about turning the units into Duty Quarters, if we ever want to fully staff the Greenhorn Station, and get an ambulance back there. He wants to be prepared to staff those units. Chief Bauer says that there is an immediate need to update these units, potentially using our contingency funds, and they have the potential to be used as living quarters or live-in units. We may end up having an ambulance at the station and not have to staff it 24/7, and recalls that when the ambulance was there in the past it was not a staffed station. It would be easy to turn the units into a duty quarters. Chairman Gray wants to be prepared to house duty staff to use the ambulance should it be placed back there, based upon all of work they've been doing with the consultants regarding the ambulance district. Chairman Gray understands the units need updating, he wants to keep in mind potentially using one of them as a duty quarters should we get an ambulance at the station. He does not believe that parking an ambulance at the station without staffing it 24/7 provides the community any more safety than if it were not there. Chief Bauer understands this concern, and looks to the Commissioners for direction on how to handle these units.

Commissioner Engelmann asks where the housing applicants are coming from? Chief Bauer answers that the two most recent applicants are already on-call firefighters with Sun Valley. We have some applicants from Ketchum and Wood River as well. Anyone that lives in the housing has gone through the City of Sun Valley hiring process and is now a Sun Valley/North Blaine County Fire District paid on call firefighter.

Chief Bauer says that Blaine County recently rolled out a new way to process plan reviews digitally. It should increase efficiencies, as project managers no longer need to drive from place to place in the valley dropping off their plans. Chief Bauer receives an email when there are plans for him to review. We are pretty excited about this. He does not believe the plan check fees will change.

Commissioner Michael asked if the Wood River Women's Foundation has toured the units yet? Chief Bauer answered that he has been in contact with them but they have not come for a tour yet. Commissioner Michael want to make sure they get to see a unit before they are all occupied, especially considering the grants they have awarded to us. She asks if the District has written thank you notes to donors who have donated through the Spur Foundation, or are they just getting letters from Spur? She would like us to consider sending letters from the District signed by Chairman Gray.

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

Chief Robrahn would like to recognize Sarah Driggs, who recently went to Boston for her two week intensive paramedic bootcamp. She's at about the halfway point in her program, and this is a big achievement.

Chief Robrahn recently went to Couer d'Alene for the annual Fire Chiefs Conference. It was really great to attend, with over 300 people in attendance from local agencies to Forest Service and EMS services. He was fortunate that during a Chief's round table, we were called out for our housing program, and he

was able to share details about the program, which garnered a lot of interest and excitement . He was very happy to represent our organizations.

Also discussed at the conference is action in the legislature regarding the fire service. It was an interesting year regarding getting fire agenda items through the legislature, and not much was able to get through. The Fire Chiefs Association does have a lobbyist that stays in the Boise area, and an associated committee in the legislature. Sometimes bills sneak up on us, such as House Bill #389 regarding consolidation of fire departments and special districts. The bill capped the amount that two entities can increase their budgets by if they merge entities (total budget increase during consolidation can only be 8% of one organizations regular budget), making consolidation practically unachievable. This was an unintended consequence of the bill that the legislature did not address this past session, and we are hopeful can be addressed next year. Chairman Gray asks if this bill does anything that specifically hinders the current partnership between the City of Sun Valley and the North Blaine County Fire District. Chief Robrahn answers no, not at this time. It is impacting areas in the state that are growing quickly by limiting the taxability of new construction. This hinders a department's ability to grow, even if their response area is growing rapidly.

Chairman Gray thanks both Chiefs for their reports.

[8. Additional updates, discussion, and possible action regarding Greenhorn Housing Project*](#)

Chief Robrahn says that they've starting pouring concrete curb and gutter, as well as the landings of the units. Landscaping bids are due this Friday, and will be reviewed at the next City Council meeting. We have a good problem right now, that we now have so many applicants for the housing. He is proud that we have accomplished this project and created a place people really want to move into. Chairman Gray asks if we will still have a unit open for an open house? Chief Robrahn answers that we are still coordinating that; we will make sure there is a unit to walk through. Chairman Gray and Commissioner Michael discuss creating a press release stating we have 90-100% occupancy when we do have an official grand opening.

Commissioner Michael asked if the residents' parking areas will be paved, and Chief Robrahn said yes, each unit will have paved parking for two cars next to each unit.

Commissioner Engelmann would like to thank everybody for their work on this project. It's great that Chief Robrahn could talk about it at the Chief's Conference.

There was a brief recess from 10:47 to 10:50 am.

[9. Discussion regarding FY 2025 Budget.](#)

Chief Bauer mentions that at this time the budget is not slated to go up considerably from FY 2024 to FY 2025. For wages, we are estimating that there will be a 4% increase, based on current direction from the City. We are waiting to speak with City Finance Manager Kelly Rockwood for numbers on fringe benefits.

We've increased a number of operations line items; the ones that are marked with justifications are ones that have been increased. These include Pump and Hose Testing, Telephone and Cable, Rental Equipment, PPE, Snow Removal, Maintenance of Fire Bays and Housing, Grounds Maintenance, Equipment Maintenance, Automotive Maintenance, and Dispatch Service. Most of these increases reflect keeping up with general inflation. Our telephone and cable was increased more significantly because we started up internet at Greenhorn Station again. The PPE line has been increased to \$10,000

so we can begin replacing 3 sets of turnouts per year, since we will have so many residents at Greenhorn.

We have increased snow removal to \$12,000 because we will have so much more plowable space. There was a brief conversation regarding managing snow removal for the upcoming year. Each station has a snow blower residents can use to clean up their areas.

We have created a new line for maintenance of the new housing, to be able to track those maintenance costs separately. Commissioner Engelmann asks what the warranty on the units is, and Chief Robrahn answers it is a 1 year warranty, and thus far they have been good about fixing things that tenants are noticing as they move in. During construction of the new housing units, our current irrigation system was damaged, as well as our alarm monitoring sprinkler system in the existing units and bays. We will need to have these repaired.

Our Automotive Maintenance line has been increased to ensure we purchase new tires for our Wildland Engine 10 next year. Our Dispatch fee we pay to the County is being increased, as they have been in a budget shortfall for a couple of years, and they are trying to rectify that. Our increase is going up proportionately with other agencies.

Commissioner Michael asks how long the term is on our appropriations lease is, and what year we are on. Jocelin answered that it is a 10 year lease. We pay it twice a year and have just made our third overall payment and are in our second year. Our total annual payment we make each year is \$67,899.30.

Commissioner Michael comments that we increased Salaries and Wages by \$14,000 from FY 22 to FY23, \$7,000 from FY 23 to FY24, and \$65,000 from FY 24 to FY 25. Chief Bauer explains that Jocelin's position has had its own line as Administration the past several years, and this year she is being added into the general Salaries and Wages line. Merit Increases and Adjustments were also moved into this line. These changes and the 4% raises explains the large increase in this line this year.

Chairman Gray comments that he thinks that the operational suggestions all make sense to him at this time.

Chief Bauer continues to go over the draft budget. In Capital expenses, we have \$20,000 set aside to buy radios and PPE for the new firefighters at Greenhorn, separately from the ones we will buy annually to replace old turnouts. We have set aside \$50,000 as previously discussed for the Greenhorn Housing landscaping. The City asked us to contribute \$150,000 for this, and we paid \$100,000 from our Capital line this year. This should be the last large contribution we make to the project. We have not gotten our ICRMP estimate for next year yet. Our contract we recently signed with the City splitting ownership of the housing 50/50 between the District and the City dictates that we pay half the ICRMP costs for the new housing, and we still need to get that number as well.

Chief Bauer says to keep in mind that this is just a first presentation of the budget.

Commissioner Michael asked if we can have revenues presented with next month's numbers, and Jocelin and Chief Bauer said yes. We have started looking at those numbers and will share them with the Commissioners at our next meeting. Plan reviews have slowed down some, but we do think there will be new taxable properties coming online for next year.

[10. Discussion: Old Business.](#)

Commissioner Michael asked about showing the income from the District in relation to the project. Jocelin has been tracking the project expenses monthly. She will get those receivables numbers together for the next meeting.

Commissioner Michael will draft a thank you note for the District to send to donors once we get donor names from the Spur Foundation.

Chief Bauer has not yet had time to look at the grant opportunities from Senator Simpson.

11. Public Comment.

None.

12. 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 11:12 a.m.



Jed Gray, Chairman



Earl Engelmann, Secretary