

Albany County Fire District #1 Board Meeting Minutes September 21, 2022

This meeting was held as a hybrid meeting with in-person attendance as well as through Zoom. (Formal action taken by the Board is indicated via italics.)

1. Call to Order: Meeting was held at Central North Volunteer Fire Department and called to order at 5:01 pm. Board members present were Luke Hawkins and Matt Burkhart (joined at 5:25 pm); Brett Wadsworth joined via Zoom.
2. Minutes of 8/17/2022 Board Meeting and 9/13/2022 Executive Session: Per Eric, the Expenditure Policy was not approved in the June minutes as stated in the August Draft Minutes Section B, so this is inaccurate and needs to be removed. Treasurer Wadsworth read the June Minutes and under Section 10 New Business, found where an updated Expenditure Policy was approved, is this the policy referred to? Yes, it is. *Treasurer Wadsworth moved to approve the minutes as presented. Motion was seconded by Chairman Hawkins and approved unanimously.*
3. Comments from the public: No comments from the public
4. Financial Report:
 - a. Bills to be paid: *Chairman Hawkins moved to approve the September Financial Report as presented. Motion was seconded by Treasurer Wadsworth and approved unanimously.*
5. Report – Outside Agencies/Guests:
 - a. LFD – Nothing to report, Chief Johnson will take any questions/comments.
 - b. EMA – Technical difficulties; They are still waiting on the SHSP grant for radios and will let departments know.
 - c. LARC – Nothing to report, open to questions/comments. Chief Sommerfeld - the dispatcher on the FS516 wildland fire was awesome. LARC is working with Secretary Burkhart on the parsing and they are close, it looks good.
 - d. County Fire Warden – No one present.
6. Board Topics:
 - a. Dispatch Active Alert – Trying to find an app that can be standardized across the District to allow for a digital integration with the CAD system through LARC. CrewForce fell through due to pricing. Demoing Active Alert from Active 911 which ties directly into the CAD system and the alerts are driven in an email, in a specific format, that comes from LARC, and then dispatches the appropriate departments/units. Working on fine tuning. Working well and they would like people (Chief's) to start demoing it to see how it works for your departments. You can get a phone call and voicemail, text message, email, app on phone, app on computer. You get the address, any notes from LARC, lat/long, it ties into navigation, has chat capability, ability to tell everyone you are responding, you can track yourself or apparatus to an incident, and any updates to the incident can be seen. You can also set your alerts. You can upload to the server any pre-plans, locations of hydrants/caches, etc. It's all automated, dispatch doesn't have to do any extra work. Whatever they are typing in goes in with their normal workflow and out through Active Alert. This is another tool in the toolbox, that is the intent. It doesn't create more work for dispatchers and the cost is \$13.50/device/year. Chief's you just need to fill out the mobile app confidentiality agreement to get started.

- b. Policy Reviews and Revisions – Had some success with policies going through, for example the Minimum Physical Standard. The Board had asked the Chief's group if they would be willing to get together on the policies and give the Board a consolidation. The Chief's group was unwilling to do that at that time, and stated it was the Board's responsibility to do that, and they would let the Board know what was ok and what wasn't. The Board moved forward and put out the first Draft policy and solicited comments, received sporadic feedback, and people were unhappy as there was not enough time to comment. The Board decided that policies would be sent out one week after the meeting with two weeks for comments. The Board would then have one week to review the comments before the next Board meeting. In the last round Chairman Hawkins asked to put out two policies – the New Firefighter Application and a Background Check, which were all consolidated into one document. However, that separation was unclear that after your acceptance (first part of application) you would then move onto the background check (second part of application) and that these are two separate processes. One is working through a background check process and how that policy is going to look; and then other is looking District wide, how/what do applications fall/work/look like. Chairman Hawkins looked at fire department applications across the region and that is how we got to the nine-page application. He put it out there and expected/wanted feedback. Chairman Hawkins wants to stress that this Board has not passed anything without the Chief's approval. This Board has asked for the Chief's input, they have requested the Chief's input, and even pushed items back so the Board could receive the Chief's input before anything was pushed through. Before the Board has voted on anything they asked and received input from the Chief's. Chairman Hawkins wants and expects that, he anticipates it. He doesn't know where the thought process came from that the Board is trying to push out firefighters or push through policies that would alienate firefighters, but that is not the case. Chairman Hawkins is grateful for the work the volunteers do, and proud of each of the fire departments. The reason we are trying to consolidate these applications (and policies in general – administrative policies, not operational policies) is so that we can reduce spending at the administrative level. When we have an issue in one department and then have to address that same issue in another department with different Bylaws it makes it very difficult, and its very time consuming. Chairman Hawkins was asking, across the board, what does that application/application process look like? He received no response, so he moved forward by obtaining applications himself, those were compiled and put out for review/feedback. He still wants feedback, and the information out there that the Board would be pushing this through at tonight's meeting is inaccurate. The Board wants the feedback of the Chiefs and the District firefighters. Chairman Hawkins is not trying to say that "all" firefighters have this or that certification, he knows we need to support each department at their level of expertise. He is trying to reduce District costs and get consensus and standardization across the District for administrative policies. Treasurer Wadsworth stated they are trying to build consensus and arrive at final products that work for all departments and the District as well. Chief Essley stated there may have been a misunderstanding with the initial request for the application/process. We have had applications that were denied in one

department and allowed into another. We could eliminate some of this by having the Chief's and the Board put together a base standard process. Chief Essley suggested having a list somewhere so Chiefs can check if someone wasn't accepted on another department or had been let go. Chairman Hawkins would like to hold further work sessions at different departments regarding this. He wants to hear "this is how the group does it", "this is what works well" and then move forward. Chief Isborn suggested a minimum standard for an application in the District that states these are the items, liability wise, the District needs to have, and move forward from there. Chief Sommerfeld is concerned about the pre-requisites and the mandatory red card, mandatory response, and mandatory volunteer outreach. It was stated again that this document is a Draft and continues to be a Draft, and the Board has asked for input and discussion. The District does not want to create any policy that alienates anyone inside the District. The Board will host another work session to continue to revise the Draft. Treasurer Wadsworth has requested that it be written down what the Chief's/Departments would affirmatively like to see in there. A second Draft was sent to the Chief's.

- c. Background Checks – We don't have a specific policy Draft written up yet. Chairman Hawkins has solicited different policies from other agencies. A general overview/consensus is that a crime of violence is a no, a predatory crime is a no, a theft crime in the last 7 or 10 years (whatever is decided on) is a no, and a DUI crime in that last 5 or 10 years (whatever is decided on) is a no – with discussion that they might be allowed to join, but not allowed to drive. This is not a policy; it is still in the works with nothing written down yet. We have secured the money to do the background checks to get the District up to par and are looking at a third party vendor that would provide the departments with a Yes/No or Pass/Fail based on the criteria we set up as a District. We need to be very clear about the criteria and let firefighters choose to fill out, or not fill out and leave in good standing. What about military discharge (these are not normal civil court issues)? There is no 100% catchall, there is due diligence and what is reasonable. To save the District money, current licensed EMT's could be excluded because they have already had the background checks. Concealed carry was also mentioned. When the Board has a Draft, they will send it out to the Chief's and solicit input.
- d. SLIB Grant Status – Teri Jo did not receive any SLIB grant requests, only an email from WYCO saying they need insulation. She needed to have the grant written by this meeting so the Board could approve the submission to the SLIB Board. Teri Jo will try to get a list of information that is needed from departments to put together for these grant submissions. The next one is in February 2023. Can we create a calendar/clearinghouse for what's due and when. We had that on the website at one time, but no one used it. Put this information on the website when things are due.
- e. EMS Grant Status – Still waiting for a response. In the EMS grant we requested funding to cover some standard PPE items to cover all firefighters and to help with sorting out what/how/who to offer EMS services, not necessarily the District, but we want to spearhead/lead this discussion and we asked for some funding to do community surveys which are required to start this process.

- f. Laramie Airport Large Scale Exercise – Would have liked more hands-on involvement, due to the scale of what they did. EMT's got some good hands-on experience and some taskbook items signed off on. Chief Essley was impressed with how well we did. The wildfire side didn't need that many apparatus, but in real life it would have been fine. Part of that was a contingency in LFD's plan in case the weather caused the live fire to spread. The airport maintained their commercial air service due to the successful handling of the exercise. One problem was coms; communications were on different channels and if you only had one radio you couldn't monitor both Fire 1 (fire) and Cat 1 (rest of incident) and you couldn't switch back and forth because one is analog and one is digital. Chief Stonum is happy to set up an AAR for the fire/EMT side if needed. Couple takeaways – make sure you are careful when entering the scene, and how do you account for an unknown number of people, at what point do you stop looking.
- g. Emergency Reporting Status – They have not responded to the last email from Secretary Burkhart regarding the mass import/export of files into their system. Maybe we should consider other options. State paid for the base account and we are paying for premium accounts. Or we could start from scratch and pay someone to manually enter all of the data that ER.com is saying can't be imported. ESO bought ER and possibly looking at migrating to new ESO platform.
- h. CAT Tender Updates – They have the RFQ and they are working on it to respond with a quote.
- i. HazMat Response and Billing – Received go ahead from legal to work with LFD, and potentially our own billing source, for non-personal at this point for Haz-Mat incidents that require materials and apparatus. Currently LFD is using FEMA numbers in terms of what is billed per hour on apparatus and materials generic. No specifics yet. Pertains to MVA Haz-Mat. Chairman Hawkins will be meeting with Chief Johnson October 7th. No man hours are allowed because of volunteer status immunities.
- j. After Incident Gear Decontamination – Along with the Strategic Plan and keeping the health and safety of our volunteers in mind, is making sure that the firefighters know where/how to clean equipment properly and having something that is readily available to them, making sure we have decon, showers, etc. so that folks upon returning from incident don't have to throw dirty PPE into vehicles or take home to their families. Secretary Burkhart knows there are some washers/extractors in the District but this information isn't readily available and he would like to make sure that all of the District firefighters know what resources are available for decon. We had applied for ARPA funds for these specific things inside each department – running water, shower, bathroom, extractor so they could decon. How do folks properly clean PPE? Spray off with hose off the truck. Where are the RFP processes at for bathrooms? Tied up in developing how the District does an RFP for this while abiding by all the things you have to do for public monies and being able to put it out with enough of the proper construction specs so you actually get what you want. Attorney Goetz sent a project proposal form a couple of months ago. We don't have the specs for the bathrooms, and they have to be ADA compliant. You can't just send out to bid, you have to have some plans that meet specs for public buildings. Is there funding to hire an architect to go out and look at each station and put something together. Chairman Hawkins could talk to

County Commissioners for ARPA funds to do that. Central had Rocky Mountain Contracting come out to draw up plans for second floor and the classroom. You could do a design build. Let's aggregate everyone's plans and then write an RFP from there with a design build. These bathrooms should be standardized by being ADA compliant and provide for decon. Get plans to Secretary Burkhart and he will work on compiling. LFD has extractor in new training facility, Chairman Hawkins can reach out to them. Or even opportunities to train on the one at Central and make it open access to all District firefighters. The problem with using Central's is access and finding time to allow other District firefighters to do it. Look into AFG grant for extractors times four.

- k. Firefighter Pay and Per Diem Reimbursements – Secretary Burkhart wants to discuss how we pay our firefighters after they have gone on a dispatch, whether incident or severity. The issue is we have firefighters that are going out, and this is possibly how they make money to live. The issue is the time period to get them fully paid and get them reimbursed for per diem and meals. Some people cannot accommodate doing that. If folks go out, they should get their per diem (meals) and hotel within two weeks of their return. The Board's goal is to have a big enough reserve to pay in full if paperwork is in alignment, at the next pay cycle. Everyone is on their own for the per diem (meals)/hotel, and this is captured on the travel voucher, which is paid 100% on their first payment. There are two ways to handle per diem (meals)/hotel. 1) The hotels can go on a department card and individual firefighters will pay per diem (meals) on their own. The travel vouchers go to the individuals, they cannot go to a department. When the hotel is charged to a department card, the hotels then must be paid back from the individual firefighters travel voucher to the department, so the department card can be paid. 2) The individual has to pay their own way (per diem (meals) and hotel) and then they get reimbursed from their travel voucher and they don't have to pay the department back. 3) Teri Jo mentioned another option – a travel card with department funds sitting on it that the individual would have to reload after they get their hotels and per diem (meals) paid from their travel voucher. We can also get a credit card that doesn't have a name on it, just associated with a department, and they could put all that on there, but this would still require that the individual firefighter to reimburse the department because they will have gotten paid for it on their individual travel voucher. The Board doesn't want to hinder anyone from going out. If the individual isn't paying for anything, what is the process when they get their travel voucher payment, does that get paid back to the department, or does that get paid back to the District. What does that process look like? Increase credit limits? Not everyone has cards. Is there a way to have a limit increased? Yes, they need to call Teri Jo, and make sure there is room on the card and then she can up their limit. The Board wants to know what works for the Chief's. If they are using District funds how does that work when the money comes back. The firefighter needs to reimburse the departments. How close are we being able to pay 100% on the first pay cycle. Treasurer Wadsworth stated we are a long way away from that, we are incrementally increasing by 5% every year. And we will never get to 100% immediately because sometimes changes are made at the State Forestry level where reductions are made, and we don't want to have to go back to people and ask for repayment of an overpayment. The most we have ever pay

was 90% and we are working on getting there. Albany County, as a rural fire District, gets more money to their firefighters faster than any other County in the State, unless you work for a private contractor, which the District is not a private contractor. Why should firefighters continue to go out, when it benefits the District, and not get paid their full amount immediately. The answer is money and not having enough of it in a “pot” to pay the firefighters. Chief Essley brought up you could have \$400,000 in the “pot” to pay the firefighters from, but the year we had Mullen the total payout was \$800,000. When we have a large local fire that money is gone. What about the money for the District Coordinator position? Chairman Hawkins feels this position is important because it would benefit the District to have a training liaison to reduce liability, a liaison to LFD with new training center, but the biggest push is because of grants. We need someone to consolidate what we are doing because we don’t have the compiled data to receive grants; we don’t have anyone going out and getting grants for the District. So, we invest in ourselves by paying someone to be able to get those grants, reduce our liability, reduce our costs, improve our training, and that will pay back in dividends over time. The amount we set aside for the District Coordinator position is only half of what we are paying out in firefighter pay this month alone. A lot of departments, Laramie County for one, do not pay their firefighters anything until they receive all of the money from the federal government. The Board is all on the same page, they all want to be able to pay on the next pay cycle; however, this takes a large “pot” of revenue to pay out of, but it also takes accountability on the firefighter’s standpoint as well; they need to be getting their fire paperwork done on time, turned in on time and they need to be getting it done right and turned in correctly. We still struggle with this as a District. Also recall, at the beginning of the fire season the Board generally comes out with a statement of what the policy is that we are going to pay firefighters up to “x%” rate for as long as we can, but if our coffers start running dry, we might have to reduce that amount. It can run dry on a big local fire. The departments are contributing as well. Teri Jo asked if there are rules on public funds entities and getting lines of credit? Possibly pursue a line of credit, but you cannot bind the Board that follows. If you renew every year, you wouldn’t bind a future Board. The past couple of years, Chad has been paying us out of his pot of money before we get the federal money, like we are a contractor, so we are getting our firefighters 100% paid within 90 days of being home because he is paying us before we receive the federal money. If you used the line of credit strictly for fire pay, that is all reimbursed within a year, and then it zeros out, it could work and not bind a future Board.

7. Chiefs Report: No report.
8. Department Reports:
 - a. CVVFD – Several medical calls. Love their new truck, it’s a great investment. The well driller was there talking to another member trying to cut the General Contractor out of the deal, then they had an emergency, left, and are supposed to come back and drill the well.
 - b. BLVFD – Woods Landing RFP approved, contractor there and working on it. Still working on Wild Horse Ranch and planning to meet with new BLM Director. The HOA does have 40-acre plot by Lake Hattie, but not centrally located. WHR resident is installing a

10,000-gallon underground tank in heated garage they will have access to. Concerns about EMS and liability and being covered. Requesting some type of memorandum for the departments. We are ok to respond to assist for medical, LFD is primary responder, we are responding to assist, we are not the primary medical, LFD is, but the assist can show up first.

- c. WYCO – No one present.
 - d. TSVFD – One call in September. There was a delay because of the train for the call. VVFD should have also be included, depending on which side of the tracks the call falls on.
 - e. Central – No one present.
 - f. VVFD – Callouts at 63. Is land swap deal done? Treasurer Wadsworth recalls it is not complete yet. It is somewhere between the surveyor and the County. Chief Isborn reached out to the Chiefs, they have three females and need smaller bunker gear for safety reasons. CVVFD might have some.
9. PA Approvals: None to present
10. New Business:
- a. Woods Landing RFP awarded to TriHydro, contingent to Laramie Survey Company.
 - b. Kenny Langford is heading up Albany HOA. Rick Anderson sold his place, and they had a burn pile there on a State section. The Albany HOA is asking CVVFD to burn that pile this winter for the homeowners. He would like a letter stating that CVVFD will burn it during the winter as training and in compliance with EPA regulations. What is our liability? Usually, the homeowner lights it and we are there. Because it's State land with a grazing lease we have gone through legal and she requested Chief Davis present publicly for the board to agree/disagree. Does Anderson still hold the grazing lease? We don't know. As long as there is no liability to the District; just follow the rules, don't let it get outside, obviously it's a huge hazard, and make sure the HOA is on board with it and all private parties are aware.
 - c. Missing Receipt Form – Discussed last time. We are going to use what UW used with a few edits. Teri Jo will email out and get feedback on it.
11. Next Meeting: October 19, 2002, at Vedauwoo VFD Station
12. Adjourn: *Chairman Hawkins moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 pm. Motion was seconded by Treasurer Wadsworth and approved unanimously.*

Respectfully Submitted,
Michele Turner, ACFD#1 Administrative Assistant