



Boardman Fire Rescue District Board of Directors
Special Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2024
Boardman Fire Station 81
911 SW Tatone Street – POB 2, Boardman, OR 97818

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL: 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Directors: President Lisa Pratt, Secretary/Treasurer David Boor, Director Ken Browne, Director Luis Medel Rodriguez. Via Zoom: Vice President Loren Dieter
Staff: Chief Mike Hughes, Executive Assistant Suzanne Gray, Lt. Ethan Salata, Levi Renfrew, Lt. Jeremy Gierke, Zulema Gaytan, Mark Sowa, Del Turner

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Raymond Akers, Boardman: Mr. Akers said he wanted Boardman Fire Rescue District (BFRD) to only provide fire services and Morrow County Health District (MCHD) to continue to provide ambulance services. “I want old reliable on both sides,” he stated.

Scott Ezell, Irrigon, MCHD Board member and Irrigon Rural Fire Protection District Board Member: Mr. Ezell talked about potential impacts, in his opinion, of approving the agreement for interim ambulance service with Morrow County. He concluded by saying, “Thanks for the hate and discontent and you haven’t done anything yet.”

Kelly Doherty, Boardman, Port of Morrow Commissioner: Ms. Doherty said it was concerning to her that BFRD would be signing a draft agreement (for interim services) even though the Ambulance Services Area Plan (ASA) hadn’t been approved. She also asked if a fiscal impact analysis on the fire district was performed; and where would personnel be housed throughout the county? Regarding the Litigation item on the agenda, Ms. Doherty said slander was hard to prove. “These are some things to think about before you make your decision tonight,” she said.

Paul Keefer, Mayor, City of Boardman, BFRD Volunteer Firefighter: Mr. Keefer said people have forgotten who pulled the trigger first. He said he believed it was MCHD and now people had to react. People were upset and wanted to make BFRD the entity at fault. If Boardman has its own fire department and ambulance service, it makes things better for Boardman, which he said he supported. The Morrow County Board of Commissioners (BOC) and the county have been trying to fix something, and MCHD has chosen not to provide ambulance services (after March 12, 2024). The only entity that can help is the institution that has ambulance service, or one that has the potential to do so. He said he didn’t want BFRD to do it but they didn’t have a choice. He said he believed the issue was with MCHD, who was making it everyone else’s fault. Mr. Keefer said the BOC should be fully supported as they’re directed by law to fix this (ASA Plan).

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS: None



ACTION ITEMS

1. Agreement for Service – Request approval to enter into interim agreement to provide ambulance services with Morrow County. This will ensure ambulance service continues countywide.

Chief Hughes explained the interim agreement specifies up to 90 days, with the possibility of extending an additional 90 days, if needed.

Director Browne clarified it was for countywide service and there would be two ambulances in Heppner. Chief Hughes agreed, saying the staffing model in the agreement mirrored the model currently being followed by MCHD: two ambulances in Heppner; two ambulances in Irrigon; two ambulances in Boardman. All three areas will be staffed full-time, with the ability to recall personnel, also the same as MCHD's current model.

Chief Hughes then discussed a meeting on February 20th that included the county administrator and fire chiefs. He said he went with the hope the other fire districts would help provide emergency medical service (EMS) to their communities but no other fire district in the county was interested in helping with EMS calls. This will cause BFRD to do some shuffling of resources but he said he believed BFRD could handle the day-to-day operations. The details for housing personnel and equipment were still being worked through, he said.

BFRD legal counsel, Jack Caynon, said this was a standard contract, fairly negotiated from both sides that will end after the new ASA Plan is in place with assigned providers.

Director Boor moved to enter this interim Morrow County Agreement with Boardman Fire Rescue District for Temporary Ambulance Services to provide ambulance services for 90 days until the ASA Plan providers have been selected and assume ambulance services. Director Browne seconded. Brief discussion held. Vote: Director Rodriguez: yes; Director Browne: yes; Director Boor: yes; President Pratt: yes; Vice President Dieter: yes. Motion carried 5-0.

Director Browne moved to allow Fire Chief Mike Hughes to sign the agreement with Morrow County to supply Temporary Ambulance Services to the county. Director Boor seconded. Vote: Director Rodriguez: yes; Director Browne: yes; Director Boor: yes; President Pratt: yes; Vice President Dieter: yes. Motion carried 5-0.



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ACTION ITEMS CONTINUED

2. Litigation – Request authorization via consensus to begin litigation against groups and individuals for slander, defamation and/or libel.

Chief Hughes said BFRD and its agents have sustained direct attacks that have been slanderous and defamatory. Therefore, he requested authorization to allow him to work with legal counsel to start reviewing the documentation.

Mr. Caynon said, at this point, he and Chief Hughes would look at the situation and determine: 1.) There's nothing there; 2.) Yes, there's something there; 3.) Yes, there's something there but it would be difficult to prosecute; or 4.) Yes, there's something there and it would be easy to prosecute. He added there would be a follow-up discussion with the Board about the financial costs. Additional discussion took place, including clarification from Mr. Caynon that this was not authorizing a lawsuit, but was only to “get the lay of the land for an informed choice.”

Director Browne moved to let Chief Hughes enter into an agreement with the lawyer on investigating if there's litigation for slander and defamation. Mr. Caynon said there would be a report back to the Board of their findings. Director Boor seconded. Brief discussion was held. Vote: Director Rodriguez: yes; Director Browne: yes; Director Boor: yes; President Pratt: yes; Vice President Dieter: no. Motion carried 4-1.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 4:54 p.m.