

MINUTES

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE BUHL CITY COUNCIL AND THE BUHL RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
JANUARY 16, 2023

PRESENT:

Pam McClain	Mayor	Neal Gier	Fire District Chairman
Michael Higbee	Council President	Glenn Van Patten	Fire District Commissioner
Kelly Peterson	Council Member	Bob Linderman	Fire District Commissioner
Amanda Hawkins	Council Member	Andrew Stevens	Fire Chief
Marla Sisson	Council Member	Brent Reinke	JMA Chairman
Karen Drown	Clerk	Concerned Citizens	
Autumn Jones	Treasurer		

The meeting was opened at 6:30 p.m. Karen Drown confirmed a quorum for the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Minutes of October 17, 2022:** Michael moved to approve the minutes from October 17, 2022. Neal seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Clerk Report:** Michael moved to approve the clerk report. Marla seconded the motion. There was no additional information to provide since the report was sent on Thursday. The motion passed.

**Treasurer Report:** Michael moved to approve the treasurer report. Glenn seconded the motion. There was no additional information to provide since the report was sent on Thursday. Neal questioned when the CD with ICCU was up for renewal. Autumn stated she didn't have that information with her but she could send an email with that information the following day. There was no further discussion and the motion passed.

**Fire Chief Report:** Andrew Stevens reported there had been a total of 1428 calls in 2022 with 1039 for EMS and 389 for Fire. He noted he has been working on crunching some numbers and would like Autumn to check his numbers. He added it is scary that everything is up in the air. His figures show both entities have spent about the same year to year, he added the explanation of the excess returns has come from volunteer payroll and grants. He reviewed the challenges with using an annexation type scenario. He also stated that all the things on the table have challenges but noted how it has been working is easier to plan. He stated he always budgets for the worst-case scenario and hopes for the best and he is grateful for the ability to be able to plan for the worst. Neal moved to approve the chiefs report. Glenn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

**Discussion of Contract Options between BRFPD and City of Buhl:** Andrew Stevens said he could get contact information for benefits to look at that piece if the district were to hold the contract. Michael stated concerns that no apparatus replacement and no building were included in the budget proposal provided by the district and those are major items. Michael added it doesn't include other funds and costs outside presented draft budget. Glenn noted it was a rough draft to open the discussion. Michael also discussed the URA and the city doesn't receive the incremental increases on taxes. Andrew stated the draft has additional revenue on the district side which has a full-time clerk but using the current O&M and current salaries. Glenn posed the question on what would the city like? Marla stated she is still feeling very new but she is hearing from citizens and would feel better to stick together. Mayor McClain stated options were annexation without true annexation and the City contract with BRFPD or BRFPD contract with the city. Michael stated he is way more inclined for contract of service one way or another but currently it is hard because the city is paying twice the mill rate. He added that if we could just sit down and look at quality of care and service for citizens. The City of Twin Falls and other cities don't understand the difficulties. We have been able to pool resources to benefit the citizens. But there are concerns, he worries to get minutes, and how much the fire department relies on other city staff. And for 10 year this group has been going in circles. Mayor McClain stated one year ago she stated we need to forget the past and have to think about 83316, the career firemen and the volunteer staff and this situation is not fair to the admin staff. Kelly commented on what everyone was talking about and doesn't want to see a split but areas of concern for him is the levy rate, still large animosity, and the city feels they are paying more than their share. He added a contract has too many moving parts with HR and who buys what, the existing equipment is there to transfer or lease to the other entity. Glenn stated he has been doing this longer than just his time on the board and seeing the boards wrestling over this situation. He would like the best scenario for the firemen. He noted the HR gals are worth their weight in gold. He would prefer the city contract with BRFPD. He also noted we could have to go back to the citizens for a possible bond. Bob stated they

need to move forward on a new building and he would like to hear the city's option. He stated the building was a part of discussion 13 years ago and it might be out of reach.

Brent questioned which options is going to be the best for 83316. Autumn suggested her putting together a contract budget. Michael noted the individual boards need to discuss separately. It was questioned what is the bench marks for a new station. He added we tried to go to a feasibility study to really know when and where but didn't get there. There was a discussion of going to a bond for both the district and city together with one election. Glenn noted it could be different levy rates because district has collected and saved previously for a building. Michael noted by bonding we don't take out of other departments. Karen stated she can research the bonding questions and suggested the district look at options for benefits for employees. A special working session was suggested for February 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30. Glenn questioned Andrew on what he hoped for. Andrew stated he would like reliable budgeting expectations. Michael moved to approve scheduling a special working session on Monday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 6:30 PM. Glenn seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

**Discussion of Collective Bargaining Agreement Representatives:** Mayor McClain announced the full-time career staff have voted to Unionize. Andrew noted as chief he can not vote or be a part of the union. It was questioned if employees are city employees and the district is contributing who collective bargains? Mayor McClain described the process of collective bargaining when she was on the school board and it was mostly about benefits and wages. It was questioned if this would take place in executive session. It was unclear on the details until Mayor McClain spoke with Ricky Walsh with International Association of Fire Fighters 7<sup>th</sup> District Vice President. Kelly questioned would pay, benefits and time off be different for other departments in the City and it was confirmed they could be.

**CITIZENS CONCERNS –** There was none.

#### **MEETING ADJOURNED**

Glenn moved to adjourn the meeting; Michael seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.