

MINUTES

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE BUHL CITY COUNCIL AND THE BUHL RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
February 15, 2021

PRESENT:

Tom McCauley	Mayor	Karen Drown	Clerk
Michael Higbee	Council President	Neal Gier	Fire District Chairman
Pam McClain	Council Member	Glenn Van Patten	Fire District Commissioner
Sue Gabardi	Council Member	Andrew Stevens	Fire Chief
Kelly Peterson	Council Member	Concerned Citizens	

Because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic this meeting was made available telephonically.

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

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Minutes of July 20, 2020:** Pam moved to approve the minutes from July 20, 2020. Neal seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Update on new fire district building – Stage 1 with Morton Building:** Neal presented a summarized list of dates and topics that had been done to gather information regarding building a new station. That list is attached to these minutes. Pam questioned why there wasn't a meeting in October or January to discuss this with the two boards. Neal stated the district didn't have any fact to present at those meetings and Glenn added they were gathering information. There was a question from Michael concerning the whereabouts of the minutes and agendas for several of the meetings held that were detailed on the list and not included in the request Mayor McCauley had asked for from the district. There were concerns from Council members about the transparency from the district and it was noted the district minutes were vague compared to the information that Neal presented at this meeting. There also were concerns from Council about the two boards not being on the same page. Michael noted a study had been approved jointly in the current budget and the district was proceeding with that on their own. Michael also stated the constituents want and need to know what is being considered. Neal made a comment about when the truck was put up for bid, he didn't know until he read it in the paper. He added there are very few districts like Buhl left.

Mayor McCauley noted that when the JMA board approves the budget that gives him his marching orders for his employees. That includes the 10-year plan that is approved by the JMA board. He stated he is waiting for direction to give the fire chief and felt the district is moving in a different direction. Glenn noted plans may have come out premature to gathering facts but felt the district wasn't trying to go behind anyone's back and shove anything down anyone's throat. Mayor McCauley added the meeting on July 20, 2020 brought fears after getting presented with ideas after several years of working great together.

There was further discussion about concerns of the cost, amount of building and notification to citizens if a new station was being considered. Mayor McCauley questioned with the study the district was considering contracting for does that require them to go with Morton and it was confirmed it did not restrict them to that company. Michael asked if the study is equally examining the district and the city if only the district is paying for it and he added it doesn't work without the support of the city along with the district.

**Update for Alternate Plan to Replace Joint Management Agreement:** Mayor McCauley noted the Joint Management Agreement had been in place for more that 30 years. The current agreement was up in April of 2020 and with no change was automatically renewed for another 5 years.

**Clarification of City as Administrator of Personnel & Fire Services:** Mayor McCauley explained that through the Joint Management Agreement the District contracts with the city for administration services. That includes hiring/firing employees, human resources and jointly approve the appointment of the fire chief. The JMA approves the functions to the administrator and directions they see through the jointly approved budget. Mayor McCauley noted the previous chief didn't know who his boss was which caused confusion. Michael noted the Council and Commissioners are not allowed to administer; they are legislators for policy. Glenn stated he didn't feel out of line asking Andrew to look at new building, and is looking at this building for the whole area. Michael commented he couldn't fathom why the district turned down the study last year and now are paying and doing one on their own. Neal noted the proposal was poorly written. Michael

frustratedly stated this just keeps circling. Pam added that she could not tell what is happening with the district from their minutes. She also requested the JMA minutes be emailed out well in advance of the quarterly JMA meetings.

**Review of 2020-21 Budget:** There was discussion the \$40,000.00 was budgeted in the joint budget to pay for a study. Michael moved to have the district contact Morton building and include the city in the study. Pam seconded the motion. Glenn noted it is not a feasibility study, it is a design of a building not a study on where the best place to build a building. Andrew mentioned he had done the heat mapping of the call and felt the district property is a good location because of access to Melon Valley, Highway 30 both ways and the city. He added the property will provide area for training, a landing area and a station. Glenn noted the department has outgrown the current station; all the trucks owned will not fit in current building. Michael was asking to get the city back in the game. There was a vote on the motion. Kelly voted no, Glenn voted yes, Pam voted yes, Sue voted yes, Neal voted no and Michael voted yes. The motion failed. Pam requested the item on the agenda for April.

**Review of 2020-21 10 Year Plan:** Michael voted to take the building off the 10-year plan. Sue seconded the motion. Kelly voted no, Glenn voted no, Pam voted no, Sue voted no, Neal voted no, Michael voted no. The motion failed.

**Proposal of Pay Rate for Deployment to BLM Fires:** Andrew informed the group it has been confusing to firefighters in the past when they respond to a BLM fire they are not really paid differently and sometimes less for the 2 weeks they are gone. He noted he doesn't want to increase the BLM engagements they go on but would like to have a pay that gives some incentive for firemen to go. Andrew explained the charges cover an hourly rate for the apparatus, damage such as tires and fuel and even back fill pay at the station. Andrew would like to have a pay rate for employees if they sign up for BLM coverage. There was a discussion on where and how far the apparatus could go, it was noted they didn't want the truck to leave the state. Andrew stated that was part of his job to know the situation and what he had available to send and not put a risk to department. Michael moved to have the contract updated for wildland services. Neal seconded the motion. Andrew commented it only happens when he has resources available. He stated if an apparatus goes to the GACK it could go anywhere and he has control over that, so he will not send equipment to the GACK. Kelly voted yes, Glenn voted yes, Pam voted yes, Sue voted yes, Neal voted yes and Michael voted yes. The motion passed.

**CITIZENS CONCERNS –** There were none.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED**

Pam moved to adjourn the meeting; Kelly seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 PM.