

LA PINE RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
Board of Directors Regular Meeting
51550 Huntington Road, La Pine, Oregon
Meeting Minutes May 14, 2020

Open Meeting Director Cox opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m. and led the flag salute.

Roll Call

Directors Present: Doug Cox, Jerry Hubbard, Larry South, and Joel Witmer.

Directors Absent: Jim Landles

Staff Present: Chief Mike Supkis, Assistant Chief Dan Daugherty, Office Manager Bonita Johnson and Administrative Assistant Joyce Engberg.

Public Forum

Charla DeHate, CEO of La Pine Community Health Center.

Dick Swails, Budget Committee Member

Approval of Minutes

Regular Board Meeting – April 9, 2020.

No Comments

Action: Director Witmer moved to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2020 board meeting minutes. Second by Director South; the motion passed by a 4-0 vote.

Financials

A. The Monthly Bills. Staff answered questions regarding expenditures and current revenue and expense statement.

- Director Hubbard inquired about:
 - Line 5101 – EMS fees. Inquired if budgeted amount will be reached? Bonita responded she does not think so, but the District did receive a \$18k CARE grant due to the COVID crisis. Joyce noted that transports were lower the first weeks after the COVID crisis began. Chief Supkis also noted a large part of the missing income is for unpaid bills the clinics have not yet paid for interfacility transports.
Line 5200 – FireMed Memberships. Noted the amount YTD was \$20k under budget. Bonita responded that the highest re-enrollment month is June so the end of year bottom line should look better in a month.
 - Line 6815 – Computer Service and Repairs. Inquired why only \$212 was spent of \$1,500 budgeted. Bonita responded some of those cost may have been dropped into the computer contract line so office staff will review.
 - Line 8115 – Routine Maintenance. Stated the District was way under budget. Chief Supkis responded that line item will be used up starting next week when Hughes does their annual on-site maintenance of nine major apparatus.

- Line 8130 – Tires. Inquired as to the increased expense. Chief Supkis responded that the District spent \$6k for seasonal changeovers and new tires. To date, note purchases are under in the Tires line, but over on the Breakdowns line. The goal is to have the District Vehicle Category balance.
- Line 8456 – RV PPEs. Inquired as to higher expenses. Chief Supkis responded that as he shared with the board several months ago, many items of uniforms and protective equipment were needed for the large variety of student sizes this year. There was a lack of winter coats and they are expensive. Going forward the District has applied for two PPE grants; Director Hubbard has also applied for one for 10 sets of structural pants and coats.
- Director South inquired about:
 - Line 6100 - Overtime. Offered kudos to Chief Supkis for the lower amount. Chief Supkis responded life circumstances help and so far this year has been favorable. Also, the District did not have an all-staff training in the spring due to the COVID crisis which is also a significant chunk of the OT budget. Eventually, each shift will train separately and the amounts will come out then.
 - Line 6650 – Phone. Inquired as to the higher expense. Joyce responded it was to fix fax problems at Station 102 and included the cost of a new switch.
 - Line 7300 – EMS Supplies. Inquired whether the recent spending was to catch up? Staff responded a great amount of COVID supplies and protections were needed. One of the bigger costs were industrial “welding” helmets (PP N100 masks) that can be reused and last a long time. Also purchased for each medic unit a type of folding “stair chair” to move and transport patients in challenging spaces. Chief Supkis is working on an emergency COVID grant for reimbursement of some expenses.
 - Line 8409 – Rescue Training. Chief Supkis noted this is the line item connected to the all-staff rescue training discussed earlier in the meeting. Those costs will show up when District can get the trainings in when COVID restrictions lift.
 - Total Expense line under 9851. Noted it showed the District was \$200k over budget. Bonita noted that line includes the Capital Budget and the reason it is there is for the Board to be able to see it along with the general fund. Chief Supkis also responded the 191 QRU unit that was ordered in 2018 just arrived this year and was paid for in this fiscal year – it will be a ledger audit adjustment.

B. Monthly Expenses by Vendor.

No comments.

C. Monthly Expense Report.

No comments.

Action: Director Witmer moved to approve monthly expenses presented from 4/10/2020 – 5/14/2020 in the amount of \$560,173.95. No further discussion or comments. Second, Director Hubbard; the motion passed by a 4-0 vote.

Management Report

A. Monthly Alarm Report.

- Director South noted call volume had not slowed down much. Chief Supkis responded that was true – total calls are about the same but transports were down due to St. Charles now wanting stable patients not transported the main hospital due to the COVID crises -which was not a bad thing. However, there has been a big jump in calls the last 10 days with many critical events. The District’s paramedics also helped in three births recently.

B. Multiple Alarm & Building Permit/Valuation Report.

- Valuation for building permits in April 2020: Commercial \$85,000 and Residential \$4,165,594.
- Director Cox noted the residential permits are maintaining pace.

C. Notable Incidents

- Director Hubbard inquired what is an IOB? Chief Supkis responded it is an illegal outdoor burn and usually represents neighbors calling in unattended campfires and/or out of season debris burns.
- Director Cox noted the District was back up to 8-10 calls in a 24-hour period. Chief Supkis responded there were 13 calls on Monday including 11 transports, there would have been one more if not for the helicopter transporting a patient originating from St. Charles. The District had indicated strongly to SCLP in the planning phase that they needed a heli-pad on their facility site. That was unfortunately not included, which delayed that critical patient’s transport.
- Director Hubbard inquired if the helicopter “Airlink” was employed by St. Charles? Chief Supkis responded no, but they are a separate private for-profit corporation based at the hospital location and are connected through a common communication system. Director Hubbard inquired why Airlink had to get their legal permission to staff our medic vehicle? Chief Supkis responded it was the first time this had been done and they had to make sure it was OK to crew it within their system. Our on-duty officer made it happen on our end as it was the right thing to do for the critical patient who stuck at St. Charles with no other options.

D. Equipment and facilities

- Director Hubbard joined the chiefs on the Spring inspection and it went well. All looked great except for several minor items. The RV’s did a great job at Station 103.
- Director Cox inquired who cleaned out the drain lines at 102? Staff responded the crew began mucking out the floor drains when the water wasn’t draining and Roto-Rooter then came out. More cleaning needs to be done at the oil water separator.
- Director Cox inquired if the District was upgrading the HVAC system? Chief Supkis responded basically part by part - the blower fans and controls have been replaced at all three stations over the last few years. However, the bay exhaust vent systems are having problems. They are 15 years old and when it’s time to replace, it will be a new style hopefully more durable.

E. Training

No Comments

F. Other

- Director Hubbard inquired how the student recruitment testing went? Chief Supkis responded it went well and the District offered scholarships to six individuals who have signed letters of commitment. Academy begins in August starting with hose testing. RV's numbers will be at 15 in the fall, 4 of those will be third year so most likely be down to 11 RV's by December as they find full time career positions.
- Director Cox inquired about COVID-19 planning. Chief Supkis responded it's ongoing and takes an amazing amount of effort to stay informed and filter through copious amounts of information and ensure staff has the latest best practices and PPE.
- Director Cox inquired about security cameras. Staff responded the equipment is being purchased by the vendor and will be installed in the next couple of months. There will be 4 cameras per station, as that was what the grant and budget will allow.

Correspondence / News

- A. Thank you – Smith
- B. Thank you – McDonnel
- C. Thank you – Partemi
- D. Thank you – Heiney
- E. Thank you – Lamb
- F. Letters - West Deschutes River Road – Schock, Adcock, Schmidt
- G. Thank-you – Buono
- H. Thank you – Hensala
- I. Thank you – Sanders
- J. Thank you – Cook
- K. Thank you -Potter
- L. Thank you – Sanders
- M. Donation - Williams
- N. Letter- La Pine Community Health Center – Appeal of Invoice #53096
- O. Newberry Eagle – Outdoor Burning; FireFree Yard Disposal Program

- Director Hubbard noted the arrival of Baby Cole with help of the District's paramedics!
- Director Hubbard inquired what prompted the letter to the residents of West Deschutes Rd? Chief Supkis responded the area is just south of Haner Park area, which sits on the Deschutes River in the middle of forest service land. The West Deschutes Road homes are remote and outside of any fire district. However, the District recently was dispatched to an activated automatic alarm to one of the homes there. Staff notified the 911 emergency response system that those addresses are out of district and the District sent the owners a courtesy letter so they are forewarned and can be best self-prepared as needed.
- Director Hubbard inquired about the appeal from the La Pine Health Clinic. Chief Supkis shared the inter/intra facility transport billing and appeal process. There are two levels of appeals: The District sends out the bill and by Ordinance the facility has the right of appealing it to the Chief if they believe an error was made, and he in turn has to

respond within 10 business days. If the Chief's ruling was in error per the Ordinance and based on the facts of the situation, the facility then has the option to appeal to the Board within 20 days. The Board has no time limit on a decision and has discussion on going and tabled currently. The clinic has appealed every invoice sent this year per the Ordinance to the Chief. Four appeals then have been brought before the Board, one prior appeal was granted by the Chief due the District not responding in a timely manner (and one delivered today and will be presented at the next Board meeting materials). Charla DeHate is here to appeal those invoices.

Old Business

A. La Pine Community Clinic Transport Appeals

- Director Hubbard shared his opinion that the District's transport business model is failing and his assessment shows that each run between La Pine and St Charles Bend is being subsidized by taxpayers in the amount of \$1,625 per transport. That equals a \$2 million loss per year and in 2024 will grow to a \$3.9 million loss out of a total \$5.7 million District budget. He feels the District cannot keep doing transports at a loss or with no payment – the process was no longer working and needed to be fixed.
- Chief Supkis noted many years ago District voters decided the need for paramedic service and transport and would be fee based not tax supported. The District also has an EMS policy that focused its efforts on citizens and not perform non-emergency interfacility transports. Last year, the Board created a District Ordinance that the responsibility for the cost for interfacility transports is the medical facilities who make the decisions to use the District's emergency paramedic ALS resources to transport non emergent and/or non-ALS patients. The District does not argue the need for an interfacility transport nor question it in front of the patient and provides the transport as requested by the medical facility provider. The medical facilities by Ordinance are now responsible for the cost of that decision and they can bill the patient however they wish. The La Pine Health Center has been working on this issue and Chief Supkis gives them credit for less requests for interfacility transports so far this year. His concern is there will be no emergency fire/paramedics units available for citizens who have no other option in La Pine, and will be totally bankrupt in 3 to 5 years on the current path unless the District is fully compensated for all these transports. There is no higher law that prohibits the District from seeking reimbursement for services as it has. The Ordinance is law and cannot be struck down except by the Oregon Supreme Court if it violates state law.
- The collection agency has been consulted by the District and they see no reason why the debts cannot be collected. Physical advisors, OHA, and the County ASA has been contacted by others and they are remaining hands off as this is a political and business decision not an EMS care decision on the District part - patients are already in a medical care facility and should be in a higher level of care, and are also being transported.
- Director Hubbard suggested drafting a letter to Senators Merkley and Wyden regarding federal EMS transport reimbursements. Chief Supkis noted looking to the federal government to solve an immediate local problem most likely would not come in time, as

one would be looking at changing the whole federal system, besides, the trend has been for less federal support for rural medical services.

- Director Cox recognized Charla DeHate from La Pine Health Center who is appealing all invoice sent to clinic. He stated the Ordinance and the policy is a political one and asked the rhetorical question who pays for the interfacility transports?

Action: Director Hubbard moved to cancel the first three invoices to LPHC: #53035, 53074, and 53096 (Chief Supkis already waived invoice #53048 due to untimely response to initial appeal).

No further discussion or comments. Second, Director South; the motion passed by a 3-1 vote.

- Director Witmer addressed Ms. DeHate and shared his personal perspective that the LPHC has been doing a good job as far as helping to address the issue, but would like to know when a doctor requests a transport, is there any point in her mind where she is seeing that perhaps an emergency ALS transport is not appropriate? Ms. DeHate said no as it relates to the invoices in question. Director Witmer asked if there have been any calls where other means of transport might have been more appropriate, and Ms. DeHate responded not so far, this is why they review the calls to make sure. She also noted they had an active heart attack patient after the new policy regarding keeping one medic in district was issued by the Board in March. Since the District was not available to transport, LPHC sent the patient to St Charles Bend by POV, but the patient went home instead, and later needed to call 911 from their home. Ms. DeHate feels there needs to be dialogue with officials at the state and federal levels so life and death decisions do not have to be made due to lack of funding.
- Chief Supkis noted St. Charles has not been a partner in this and has ignored efforts to dialogue with the District and LPHC to find solutions, but there are other options on the table. Five years ago, the Board made an innovative and progressive decision to allow the paramedics to triage in the field and make the call whether the patient needed to go by emergency ALS, POV or an alternate like CMT. With the limited resources the District has, it has saved lives by doing that. What is not being discussed is Cascade Medical Transport and private sector transport. The District is not arguing the need to transport, but why isn't CMT used? Somebody has to pay for transport service, and when the District picks up someone in district from their home, they have paid taxes to the District. When the District picks up someone at a medical clinic - first they are already under medical care, then almost 25% are from out of district – they are not paying taxes to the La Pine Fire District. One potential solution is to let our paramedics have final say on the need for emergency ALS transport from the clinic and allow them to defer to CMT. Chief Supkis also noted that the patient has rights and should have a say in the transport.
- Director Cox noted if all the District's units are out on transports to Bend, there is no one to fight any fires that come up. Ms. DeHate stated she has been coming to the Board meetings for four months and does not need to continue to hear this. In 8 ½ years the discussion has been the same and nothing has changed and it's not going to

happen here. What it comes down to is money: It's not about the lives, it's about the money.

- Director South stated he disagreed with Ms. DeHate about her statement that the issue is about money and not lives. The District is here to save lives and it does. If the doctors at the clinics are going to make the call, where is the clinics and doctors' responsibility for the cost of the call on their end? The other clinic's refusal to come to the table does not short-circuit the LPHC's responsibility. A win-win situation needs to be found. What has the clinic been doing to proactively make the situation better? Ms. DeHate responded that each transport case is reviewed. Director South responded that doesn't change anything because the cost gets kicked back to us. Ms. DeHate responded that the District is already losing money and needs more funds infused in this community and that cannot be met locally through taxation. Who do we go to? Is it the county or is it the state? She is willing to help talk to county or state officials.
- Director Hubbard stated he would like to see St. Charles, LPHC and county commissioners involved.
- Chief Supkis stated that Ms. DeHate is claiming we need to put more "blood in the patient." He disagrees and suggests we first need to stop the bleeding. The LPHC wants to continue with the same processes, but he feels there has got to be another way to deal with the transport need. The District's purpose is for the citizens having life threatening fire or medical emergencies at home and if it goes bankrupt doing that, it is solely the District's issue. The District services were not designed for transporting from clinics, which are considered a higher level of care. To put an extra load on the District's back for someone who is already at a higher level of care and not allow the District to make a triage decision that it owns, is not workable. Bend is not required to transport from Bend facilities to Portland facilities; the La Pine District is not required to transport from La Pine facilities to Bend.
- Director South stated we are all in this boat together. The Chief has given us a solution the clinic should at least be willing to try to see if some of the issue can be solved with the triage solution. Can we at least give this a try and see if it works? We can't put any greater burden on the taxpayer - why can't we work together?
- Ms. DeHate responded that [in that scenario] the District would have paramedics that do not have the same education as a doctor tell the doctor that they are making the wrong call. The District used to question the providers in the past and it felt like a respected community member in a uniform was telling the patient they did not need to be transported. Chief Supkis and Board members objected and stated the District confers every day with patients on the most appropriate care and transport. However, it appears the doctors were hearing that the medics were challenging their judgement in front of patient, but medics were just saying the patient is stable enough to go by other resources in order to protect the community in the bigger picture. Director South stated If doctor disagrees, then the clinic should foot the bill. If the doctor/clinic doesn't want to own the decision, then give it back to the medics. Let the medics decide if the patient can wait for alternate transport. If you are lying bleeding in a car wreck, do you want a clinic doctor or an ALS paramedic to attend you? The District medics are more experienced at recognizing and saving lives that are in immediate danger. They see it and treat it every day.

- Ms. DeHate stated the District is not seeing the clinic's daily decisions in sending patients via alternate transport and not seeing the give from the clinic. She will bring the information to the next meeting. Director South responded that would be a good idea and part of the frustration is not seeing effort from the St Charles La Pine clinic. The Board is a little raw from this ongoing issue with little resolve and all parties involved need to work together. Director South asked Ms. DeHate to consider what the District is asking. Ms. DeHate stated she will contact the county commissioners and others.
- Chief Supkis stated to be fair to Ms. DeHate and the clinic, the LPHC has cut transports in half and that's a big reason why the Board decided to go ahead today and dismiss the three bills earlier in the meeting. Ms. DeHate responded they have more doctors now and that helps them to not need as many transports.
- Director Witmer asked how does having more doctors help? Ms. DeHate responded the doctors can oversee the mid-levels and help review and assist treatment. However, doctors cost the clinic double the cost of the mid-level practitioners.
- Director Cox noted the District added four paramedics in the last three years. That equals hundreds of thousands of dollars in cost to the District. He and Chief Supkis have dialogued for years about having a nurse practitioner do home visits with a paramedic. Then patients who needed it could be transported to the clinic. What if the District provides the ambulance and the driver and the nurse/doctor goes with patient? That model may work again. The question is who pays for it? He has lived in the area for over 30 years and has been with the Fire District since 1988, and the conversations are always the same.
- Chief Supkis asked can resources be shared? That happens in past systems where the health provider would retain patient care and assist with the transport.
- Director South asked if clinics and the District can work together and implement something? The situation needs creative thinking and the courage to try.
- Ms. DeHate wants Board to know they have been working with the District chiefs for eight years.
- Director Cox stated the current Board works well together and is a good board to have in place for these discussions.
- Director Witmer inquired if there are identifiable criteria for appropriate transport from home to clinic? Chief Supkis responded that is a great idea but cautioned that St. Charles does that in Prineville, because before they took it over it was an ER and that was part of the deal, but overtime it's not working well because SCP just calls Prineville emergency fire/paramedics back to transport to Bend because of lack of ability to provide care.
- Ms. DeHate asked wasn't this in discussion some years ago and prevented by legalities? Chief Supkis responded yes but with the new COVID protocols in place some doors may be now be open to allowing something like that to happen. It allows for transports to care facilities "other" than hospitals. Noting it would take 15 minutes to deliver patient to a local clinic instead of 2 hours round trip to ER, and it would also help support the clinic.
- Director Witmer stated the clinic would need a policy for what health issues it can treat. Neither clinic offers urgent care.

- Chief Supkis shared how another clinic had recently called for 911 emergency transport for a young man's broken arm, who had been brought in by a parent from school, calling it "critical life or limb". They did not have an x-ray technician on duty and insisted the District emergency fire/paramedics transport the boy even though the medics determined the need to non-life threatening and stable. In contrast, also recently a district staff member's daughter broke the same bone last week and they went to the LPHC, where an x-ray was taken, a splint provided, pain management discussed, and patient sent home with an appointment with an orthopedic doctor the next day. Both the patient and community were better served.
- Director Hubbard asked Chief Supkis to research the rules for transporting to local clinic. Chief Supkis responded he would with Chief Daugherty's help and the idea could be at least a partial solution to the bigger resource problem. Director Witmer responded that even if it was a short-term solution, it might eventually become a bigger political action in these changing times to meet increasing needs for many districts.
- Director Hubbard asked Ms. DeHate if the LPHC would want to become an urgent care clinic? Ms. DeHate responded they cannot due to their purview. Director South asked why? Ms. DeHate responded 20% of the clinic income is federal dollars and they have to stay in the box. She will ask their federal manager what it would take but knows it would need to include having MRI and CAT imaging equipment in addition to other things.
- Director South said he was encouraged by dialogue happening today.

B. Fire Station Shower Remodels – Architect's Estimate Report

- Chief Supkis shared the latest architect's information and drawings for review to improve and add showers at Stations 101 and 102. The estimate is just for actual construction, does not include cost of architect and engineering etc.
- Director Hubbard inquired if AC Daugherty can ask the architect for a quote on taking it to the next phase and put together a budget that includes the architect and contractor? Also make sure to get a written contract for the contractor.

New Business

A. Surplus Property – Wildland Engine, Fire Slide-in Unit.

- Chief Supkis shared the district memo on surplus equipment - a 1994 wildland Engine and 2000 wildland slide in unit. Estimated value of the engine is \$15k-\$20k and the slide-in unit is worth \$2k-\$4k, and he is asking the Board if the District should keep, sell or donate it to another public agency? Staff recommends donating it to help a local fire district.
- Director Witmer asked if the District could do a middle ground approach such as sell cheaply but still get some funds to help our budget? Chief Supkis responded that when the District donates equipment, such as to Walker Range, it sees that equipment back in the District in via mutual response calls still serving our citizens and taxpayers. He stated he didn't believe right now Walker Range would have the funds due to the recent

budget crises as they get their funds from the state. Last, as history has shown Karma seems to bless this District every time it paid a little forward.

Action: Director Hubbard moved to donate the surplus wildland engine and slide in unit to Walker Range Forest Fire Patrol. Second by Director South; the motion passed by a 4-0 vote.

Special Meeting and Workshops

None

Good of the Order

A. COVID - 19

- Chief Supkis shared that Deschutes County Commissioners plan has been approved by state to enter Phase 1, which will be implemented on May 15th. 1000 homemade masks have been donated to the District and staff is wearing them. The District purchased and received a UVC light sterilizer to kill the COVID virus on surfaces.

B. Grants -SDAO, AFG, SAFER, CARES stimulus, and AFG stimulus

- Chief Supkis shared that the District has received a \$3k summer internship grant from SDAO.
- Submitted an AFG for needed PPE
- Submitted an SAFEER – A new FF/paramedic hire for 4 years
- Submitted an AFG Stimulus for needed COVID PPE
- CARES – the District received a Coved-related Medicare grant for \$18k.

C. Spring Facilities, Apparatus & Equipment Inspection Report

- As stated earlier, the inspection went well. AC Daugherty will be removing a section of the chain link fence that is bent by snow at Station 103.

Next Meeting

Regular Board Meeting and Fiscal Year 20/21 Budget Public Hearing scheduled at Station 101 – Thursday, June 11, at 9 a.m., pending the current COVID protocols at the time or Zoom may be used again.

Adjourn Regular Board Meeting

Director Cox adjourned the board meeting at 11:06 a.m.

Respectfully Scribed and Submitted
La Pine Rural Fire Protection District
Administrative Staff

Date Presented to Board and Approval

Board Secretary

Board President
