

**** Page 1 ** A SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE JOINT THREE FORKS RURAL FIRE DISTRICT BOARD AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF THREE FORKS, MONTANA, JANUARY 9, 2024**

JANUARY 9TH, 2024. The Three Forks City Council met with the Three Forks Rural Fire District Board of Trustees at the City Hall (Council Chambers), 206 Main Street and via Zoom. (Zoom is a virtual meeting tool which the City began using due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines and continues to use to encourage participation from the safety of one's home.) The meeting was presided over by Mayor Randy Johnston. Mayor Johnston called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL: City Council members George Chancellor, Gene Townsend, Roxi McDermott, (Warren) Garret Buchanan and Ed Tharp and Brooke McLees were present. Brooke McLees resigned her Council seat on Monday, 1/8/2024. City Treasurer Kelly Smith, City Clerk Crystal Turner, Fire Chief Keith Aune, Captain Charles Eastty were present at City Hall. Three Forks Rural Fire District Trustee Chairman Roger Nerlin and Hannah Roadarmel were present in City Hall. (Gene Townsend is also the secretary for the Rural District.)

The record reflects a quorum of both the City Council were present and only two members of the Three Forks Rural Fire District present, and a meeting will be held.

The **Pledge of Allegiance** to the American Flag was led by Mayor Johnston.

Mayor Johnston reminded the audience this meeting was recorded and streamed via Zoom.

GUESTS: Broadwater County Commissioners Darrel Folkvord and Debi Randolph attended via Zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS (For items not on the agenda)

There were no public comments for items not on the agenda.

JOINT CITY COUNCIL / THREE FORKS RURAL FIRE DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

A. Discussion and Update on the Following Items within the Interlocal Agreement:

a. Officers & Firefighter

Fire Chief Aune reported there are currently thirteen (13) of a total of twenty-eight (28) possible volunteers, and one may be leaving since they have only shown up for two calls and one training. "We are actively recruiting via our sign on the Fire Hall, can we put something on the water bills too?" Chief Aune asked. Crystal Turner said yes, the City can include something at the next bill cycle. Chief Aune continued that all functions they are able to attend they usually bring some sort of recruitment flyers. Garret Buchanan asked why 28 is the magic number. Keith explained that is the max per state law of a volunteer fire department of this size. Gene Townsend added as explanation to Garret that there are both a Rural and City department. "The fire department belongs to the City, and we [meaning the Rural District] use them for our volunteers too so we don't have to duplicate recruitment efforts. We probably could both have something like 57 volunteers total if we merged (twice the max per MCA)," Gene explained.

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Garret asked what would be a good number of volunteers to shoot for? Charles Easty thought 20, "Because many work outside of town and are at jobs during any calls. Have 20 total would most likely have a few (3-5) who remained in district boundary during the work day."

b. Outside Agreements

There are no other agreements. Mutual Aid was discussed – Willow Creek and Three Forks get paged out at the same time. "That helps us get enough attendance at a call, either for us or for them by helping each other," Keith explained.

c. Services Provided

Gene said they purchased several medical supplies this fiscal year already. The majority of calls are for accidents on the Interstate, but the entities share that cost. Charles said all firefighters are basic First Aid and CPR certified. "This year we purchased a few more First Aid kits to put in the trucks because when Three Forks Area Ambulance (TFAA) did not respond, we are typically on scene for a while before they arrived anyway. It could be 20-25 minutes for American Medical Response (AMR) to show up if TFAA does not arrive on scene. Keith said Chase Moore is now a certified EMT so if he arrives on a call he is required to attend to the level of his abilities and some supplies were needed for that as well. Keith said overall, last year the Department responded to 159 calls – down from the previous year. "Unfortunately, this year three of our calls already have been for two fatalities," he said.

d. Emergency Medical Response

Charles covered this a bit earlier. He continued with, "We have one EMT now but we are working on training in hopes of having more certified EMTs." George Chancellor asked if they communicate with the Ambulance? Charles yes, "Yes, we are looking at sending some of our folks to their class in February." Keith added that part of the problem is the emergency medical response EMR [training] is 20 hours on top of 30 hours you have to have [for a firefighter annually]. EMT training is 90 more hours on top of that even, "It's a big commitment and most can't commit to that."

B. Update and Report Addressing Issues in Broadwater County

[Broadwater County Commissioner] Darrel Folkvord asked how often does AMR have to respond because TFAA does not? Keith replied that it is not many. "TFAA is responding well now and I think they've hit all their calls in the last two months. It was a big issue last year when they lost a lot of volunteers." Mayor Johnston asked when Broadwater County is starting its building? Commissioner Folkvord said they just finished the preliminary architectural report (PAR) and next step is to present that report to the public and get their input. "I'm guessing that building would be 1-2 years away still. I was optimistic it would be sooner, but things take a while. From here out it will take a lot of citizen response and interaction to move this forward," Commissioner Folkvord stated.

C. Finance & Budget

a. FY2022/2023 Issues (if any)

This agenda item was skipped.

b. Budget for FY2023/2024 (anticipated purchases split cost)

This agenda item was skipped.

D. Property and Inventory

Keith said they are working on conducting inventory. The SCBA equipment has a life of 15 years. "We still have life in some of the bottles but we need to get on a schedule to replacing on a regular basis," the Chief said speaking of creating a replacement schedule.

Commissioner Folkvord asked if there were other Broadwater County issues he and Commissioner Randolph would stay on Zoom for? Crystal Turner said no, that the Broadwater

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County agenda item was leftover from last year. She added, "I sent the agenda to all involved asking for discussion items, agenda corrections, and no one responded so it was scheduled the same. I apologize for that." Garret asked for clarification, "So your goal is not to replace all 24 SCBAs all at the same time?" Keith agreed, adding that replacement will be sooner for some of the equipment so they do not have all the cost at year 15. Gene said to keep things in perspective, the City would purchase 12 and the Three Forks Rural would buy 12. Keith explained to Garret all the gear they wear – the cost is split 50/50. He added that mask fit tests will be done in FY24-25. "This is supposed to be done annually, however faces do not change that much so we tend to perform this test every 2-3 years. The cost is between \$60-80/person," Keith said.

Chief Aune also reported the need to hire a hose testing company to test the fire hoses. This is a \$2,200/year cost. Keith found a company via Manhattan Fire Department, "That will occur in FY24-25." Roger Nerlin asked if Manhattan has as much hose as we do? Keith said maybe a little more. Charles added that at the last ISO rating these were our deficiencies: hose testing and pre-planning. "This could up our ISO rating (which means lower the ISO rating number to increase the discount offered to residents of the District). To get Three Forks below a rating of 5 would be very impressive given the size of our department," Charles said. Hannah Roadarmel asked about pre-planning. Charles explained they have been working with businesses on their floor plans, how to get into the building, if they have a lock we can access, etc. "We sent out an inventory sheet to all businesses in town asking for their response and got quite a bit of response from them. Then we take that data and learn from it and keep it accessible in the trucks for when/if we have to attend an emergency at that location," he explained. Keith gave a lot of kudos to Charles for taking this on and doing the leg work to with the businesses and then populate their data in a spreadsheet for the Department's use. Regarding the remaining inventory, PPE in the equipment, what else is in the fire hall he said, "We usually give it to Crystal for MMIA but I lost it when we performed it last year so we will get it all done again." Mayor Johnston asked if we would ever get any kind of a drone system for viewing above wildland fires when you cannot get close enough? Keith said he did not think so, but if we were Clarkston Fire Department or something we would try to order one in the budget because of wildland fires. Gene commented that accurate inventory is for insurance purposes. Again explaining to Garret mostly, but also to Roxi he said, "A couple years ago we [Three Forks Rural] lost a truck completely. To get it replaced you have to inform the insurance company what was all on the truck. Accurate inventory is important and all tools on a truck, and everything in the fire hall is expensive." Mayor Johnston thanked the volunteers for what they are doing.

a. Joint Existing Property & Future Joint Purchases

b. Station Maintenance

Crystal Turner asked if painting parking permitter stripes again will need to occur this year again? Keith said yes. (Crystal will inform the Public Works department so when others are done they can do the Fire Hall as well.) We have an electrician on the Fire Department to help us make some minor improvements. Kelly Smith informed the Fire Department that the City has a grant for \$172,000 for repair and maintenance of city infrastructure. "We are going to put in our project list to do your second bathroom and add a shower, and will send it to the state," she said. Keith explained the reasons they would like a shower at the Fire Hall: cancer is a big thing now with the smoke on their uniforms/PPE. "We put those in a big garbage sack and put them in a fancy washing machine to wash, and that way we do

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not have people take that home any carcinogens on their uniforms to their families washing machines. We'd like to have them take a shower at the hall too before going home to their families."

E. Liability

Crystal Turner reminded about liability, most often school children for sporting events, rides on the fire trucks. Trick-or-Treat on Main Street need to think about the liability of people sitting unbuckled, legs dangling over the edge, often throwing candy which can cause them to lose balance. Rides like this should be kept to a minimum or a sign in sheet accepting a waiver of liability will need to start happening. There are inherent dangers. Many of these riders are minors and would need parental consent. Need to think about the Rural's liability too when riding their trucks too.

Commissioner Folkvord excused himself to attend another meeting. He thanked the Council for the opportunity to participate in this meeting, and thanked the City Council for writing a letter of support for Broadwater County's emergency facilities building.

There was a discussion regarding moving the old fire siren to the top of the building, which turned into who used to also have fire phone lines ring directly into their homes before pagers.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Townsend made a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman McDermott seconded the motion. **Motion Passed Unanimously** and the meeting was adjourned at 5:47PM.

Randy Johnston, Mayor

Attest: Crystal Turner, City Clerk

Roger Nerlin, Chair TF Rural Fire District

Attest: Eugene Townsend, District Secretary