



Hyalite Rural Fire District

Board Meeting Synopsis Approval Form

The written synopsis of the February 18, 2025 Hyalite Rural Fire District (HRFD) Board of Trustees Annual Board Meeting was approved by motion of the HRFD Board of Trustees on March 25, 2025.

Chair Signature

Justin Miller, Chairman

Printed Name

Secretary Signature

Ken Beideman, Secretary

Printed Name

**HYALITE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
SYNOPSIS**

DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2025

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Sourdough Fire Station, 4541 S. 3rd Rd., Bozeman, Montana

In compliance with [MCA 2017 2-3-212](#) and the Hyalite Rural Fire District Bylaws, the minutes of HRFD Board of Trustees open public meetings are comprised of an audio recording and a written synopsis. The audio recording is designated as the official record of a meeting. The written synopsis serves to assist the public in accessing portions of the audio recording and is a good faith attempt to provide the public with another method to be informed about the actions of the Board. The minutes are available to the public at www.hyalitefire.org/board-meeting-minutes/ or at the Hyalite Rural Fire District Administrative Offices, 4541 S. 3rd Rd., Bozeman, MT, during its standard business hours.

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Justin Miller
Jason Jarrett
Pete Geddes
Walt Zidack
Ken Beideman

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Brian Nickolay, Fire Chief
Chris Dahlhauser, Assistant Fire Chief
Sheryl Wyman, Administrative Assistant

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

Kade O'Brian-Volunteer Firefighter
Evan Jones-Volunteer Firefighter

0:00:01	CALL TO ORDER OF HYALITE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT Chairman Miller called the meeting to order and asked for any public comment on non-agenda items. None given. HYALITE CONSENT AGENDA Chairman Miller asks if there are any requests to pull anything from the Consent Agenda for review. None given. Motion: Trustee Geddes moves to approve consent agenda as presented Trustee Zidack seconded the motion. Vote: Jarrett-Yes; Beideman-Yes; Zidack-Yes; Miller-Yes; Geddes-Yes. Unanimous approval.
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	<i>[See January 21, 2025 Board Packet for Consent Agenda items Approved]</i>
	REGULAR AGENDA
0:00:36	<p>Agenda Item 1 – RFP for Website Design</p> <p>Chief Nickolay informs the board a committee consisting of the Chief and Captain Templeton reviewed the RFP responses. Some of the responses did not meet the criteria asked for in the RFP and those were discarded. The rest were narrowed down via cost to what was budgeted. The best option was a local company, Big Storm Interactive Marketing. They gave two options. One option is \$17,500 and the other option is \$23,000. We had budgeted \$20,000. Working with a local company would be easier for us than working remotely with a company in a different state or country. The Chief's recommendation is to go with Big Storm.</p> <p>The Chief brings up for discussion that since we have bought the engine our capital funds are lower and it might be beneficial to table this project. Discussion is held among the trustees. Trustee Geddes asks where the Chief feels this project is as a priority. He doesn't feel it is a high priority. As a recruiting tool it is not utilized as much as other tools.</p> <p>The Chief's recommendation is to hold off on this project and do another round of RFPs. Trustee</p> <p>Chair Miller asks for any other comment or public comment. Trustee Zidack suggests we table this project for further consideration in the future. We can revisit this in the Fall.</p>
0:10:22	<p>Agenda Item 2 – Creation of Division Chief of Training and Division Chief of Maintenance</p> <p>Chief Nickolay states he has created two position descriptions for the Division Chiefs. Creating the positions would be to move Colin and Mac into the Division Chief positions and make them exempt status employees. This turns them into supervisors. They would no longer receive overtime but can earn comp time. The benefits on the maintenance side would free Colin up to work on maintenance issues that comes up and not restricted by his hours worked in the week. On the training end of things, Mac is currently restricted on his hours to train. If he was an exempt employee, he would be freed up to do additional training if needed and not restricted by his hours worked.</p> <p>Both positions would also be given oversight duties to the employees and spread out the responsibility between everyone in exempt status.</p> <p>He suggests moving any decision to March when he can provide the documentation to the board. He is also recommending giving both those position an increase in salary to \$106,600/year. This salary would be between what the Captain and Assistant Fire Chief makes. There is money in the budget to cover overtime for</p>

	<p>command shifts by the captains so the increase in salary would still keep us in budget by not using the monies for overtime pay.</p> <p>Discussion is held between the trustees. Chief Nickolay's recommendation is to create the positions before the end of the fiscal year. Trustee Jarrett would like to see the difference between the onetime budget increase for overtime and holiday staffing and the increase in salaries for the division chiefs. Discussion is held regarding what entails an exempt employee and their responsibilities.</p> <p>Trustee Jarrett asks about the position descriptions for all of the career staff and the supervisory responsibility component of the volunteers. He would like to see an agenda item to discuss the strategic piece of supervision to be included for all career staff. He states the expectations may not have been captured for the positions.</p> <p>Discussion is held regarding the flexibility of the positions if exempt. Chief Nickolay states the employees look at being salary would be beneficial based on the flexibility.</p> <p>Trustee Jarrett suggests moving this topic to the next meeting for more conversation and full documentation to discuss further. He would like to see all career staff have written into their responsibilities, direct supervision. Chairman Miller states we will push this agenda item to next month's board meeting.</p>
0:29:49	<p>Agenda Item 3 – Possible Partnership with Fort Ellis Fire Service Area – Standing Agenda Item</p> <p>Dan LaFrance, a Trustee with the Fort Ellis fire department attended to present the introduction of creating a partnership down the road between Hyalite and Fort Ellis. They would be able to contribute \$250,000 - \$260,000 per year towards costs to provide the services Fort Ellis would be lacking. He discusses the current staffing situation for Fort Ellis. They are currently strong with ICs, First Responders and EMTs, but will be lacking in management and staff. The financial situation of Fort Ellis is discussed. The county is going to allow Fort Ellis to apply for and pursue an RID to handle the current debt on the new station. Reserves are in place for a new engine which should be ready in three years. The current fees are \$600/year. If Fort Ellis was to move from fees to mills the total mills would be 46 mills with 27 mills going to operations leaving 19 mills for the debt.</p> <p>He feels both departments would benefit from the arrangement. The \$250,000 they would be contributing would help cover any additional support staff needed to help Fort Ellis out. Fort Ellis would help Hyalite with the longevity of their staff. He feels without the assistance with management staff and training Fort Ellis would be struggling when their Chief steps down. He would like to see combined training as soon as possible. He would like to see consolidation occur next year.</p> <p>Discussion and questions are held between the trustees and Mr. LaFrance. Trustee Jarrett asks about not having a Fort Ellis Chief and what the statute requires. He feels comfortable with a contract for services. However, he doesn't feel comfortable</p>

<p>0:47:02</p>	<p>having Chief Nickolay responsible as the Chief for Fort Ellis. Questions are asked about the needed staffing for both stations. Chief Nickolay gives his thoughts regarding training, maintenance, and recruitment with combined departments.</p> <p>Trustee Zidack questions what an interlocal agreement would look like for both entities. Chris Gray has been asked to be Fort Ellis’ representative in creating a contract. Each department will have its own representation. Discussion is held regarding starting with a contract for services then possibly moving onto an interlocal agreement before a full consolidation.</p> <p>Trustee Geddes asks about the logistics of responding to calls.</p> <p>January 1st would be the first time frame Fort Ellis would be able to pay into the agreement. The County will be initiating the RID.</p> <p>Board discussion is held regarding timelines. Chief Nickolay would like to poll staff for both departments. He would like to sit down with the current Chief at Fort Ellis and look at current operations. His recommendation will be to add another FTE for purposes of recruiting and training.</p> <p>Trustee Miller asks how many calls Fort Ellis currently run a year. Approximately 240.</p> <p>The board suggests writing up a contract for services for review. Trustee Zidack wants to make sure operating expenditures don’t increase mils to the Hyalite district residents. The difference in levels of service is also a concern.</p> <p>Discussion is held regarding the Rae-Sourdough interlocal agreement.</p> <p>Trustees give Chief Nickolay direction on the next steps. Once a contract is prepared, Trustee Zidack proposes a joint board meeting with trustees from both departments.</p>
<p>1:16:34</p>	<p>Agenda Item 4 – Replacement of Rae Fire Station – <i>Standing Agenda Item</i></p> <p>There is no real update. ThinkOne is working on more detail with floor plan and elevation drawings.</p>
<p>1:17:02</p>	<p>Agenda Item 5 – Volunteer Firefighters Association Report – <i>Standing Agenda Item</i></p> <p>Volunteer Firefighter Kade O’Brian gave a presentation to the Board of Trustees. The association had their first meeting of the year the night before. They are fully incorporated with the State. They discussed their plans for the year. The first is apparel and working with a graphic designer working on logo and pricing options.</p> <p>Discussion was held regarding forming committees. Three have been formed: peer support team; a fundraising committee; and a community and personnel outreach committee.</p>

1:19:18	<p>Agenda Item 6 – Fire Chief’s Report</p> <p>Chief Nickolay goes over his Fire Chief’s Report. We had 57 calls in January. He discusses the command coverage situation. We are losing firefighters due to employment opportunities.</p> <p>Resident program is looking good. We are down one resident at Rae and Cottonwood. Starting in the summer we will be down to 10 of 16 residents in the program.</p> <p>Spring Academy will be starting in March.</p> <p>EMS meetings are ongoing. They are looking at a valley only EMS program. An EMS specific levy will be asked for down the road. If the levy were to pass the county would collect and distribute to the participating EMS providers.</p> <p>We have one truck out of service. Colin is working on the rebuild but it will be out of service for a bit. We are looking at a price around \$15,000 to be able to put the truck back in service. E-6-2 was out of service but has been repaired enough to be in service waiting on a motherboard.</p> <p>The new engines should be ready for pickup in late March. The used engine recently purchased should be ready for delivery soon.</p> <p>Questions are asked about the residency program.</p> <p><i>[See Attachment A – Fire Chief’s Report]</i></p>
1:36:21	<p>Trustees’ Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustee Jarrett would like to work on the department’s strategic objectives and mission. A working committee will be formed to work on this project.
1:39:57	<p>Announcements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Board Meeting – Tuesday, March 25, 2025
1:45:23	<p>Adjournment</p>



Hyalite Rural Fire District

Fire Chief's Report

February 2025

Prepared by: Fire Chief, Brian Nickolay

1. The Hyalite Fire District responded to a total of 57 incidents in January 2025. Our year total for incidents to date is 57.

- Total January 2024 - 67
- Total January 2023 - 59
- Total January 2022 - 60
- Total January 2021 - 58
- Total January 2020 - 37

2. Our current roster is at 40 members (effective 2/12/2025).

- 1 Career Fire Chief
- 1 Career Assistant Fire Chief
- 3 Career Captains
- 3 Volunteer Captains
- 1 Volunteer Reserve Captains
- 7 Volunteer Lieutenants
- 7 Volunteer Firefighters
- 13 Volunteers Apprentice Firefighters
- 2 Volunteer Driver/Operators
- 2 Volunteer Reserve Firefighters

3. We are continuing to work on our overnight command coverage shortages. We are at 3 of our needed 7 volunteer captains. We have 4 of our new captains working on shadowing command shifts currently. We do know we will be losing 1 of current captains in April and 1 of our shadowing captains in April as well. We continue to implement overtime shifts for our 3 non exempt paid captains when needed. Myself and Assistant Chief Dahlhauser are continuing to work extra to provide coverage at night where we lack availability. Overtime pay has been kept within what we budgeted for the fiscal year.

4. We currently have 8 resident firefighters living at the Sourdough Fire Station.

- Current Sourdough Residents -
 - Allie Kuntz, Sophie Smith, Nick Blommel, Kade O'Brian, Jack Vincent, Evan Jones, Ruby Weinburg, and Zach Fredach.
 - Sourdough resident firefighters continue to fill weekend shifts Friday 7pm –

Monday 7am.

5. We currently have 3 resident firefighters living at the Cottonwood Fire Station.

- Current Cottonwood Residents –
 - Brennan Lyle, Zakkar Tusken, and Sam Chiu
- Cottonwood resident firefighters continue to fill weekday night shifts Monday – Thursday 7pm – 7am.

6. We currently have 3 residents at the Rae house.

- Current Rae Residents -
 - John Pemberton, Kate Brownell, and Tyler Palmer.

7. We do know by the beginning of the summer we will be down to 10 of our 16 resident positions filled. Our spring recruitment for our academy will focus heavily on recruiting resident positions.

8. Non-resident volunteer firefighters continue to cover 6 hour shifts at the Sourdough Fire Station on Monday - Friday 7am – 7pm. With our current level of staffing we are able to cover 6 of our 10 day shifts with at least 2 volunteers.

9. We continue our regular multi company fire and EMS training every Wednesday night and command training twice a month. Our regular training through the month of January focused on live fire evolution of exterior and interior fire attack.

10. We hosted a fire leadership 1 class at the Sourdough Fire Station in January. 9 of our members took part in the 4 day class. The class was instructed by the Montana Fire Services Training School.

11. Captain Templeton is actively recruiting for our spring firefighter academy. The spring academy will start in mid March.

12. On January 6th we assisted the Central Valley Fire District with a commercial structure fire.

13. On January 25th we assisted the Gallatin Gateway Fire District with a residential structure fire.

14. The fire district is continuing to be involved with an EMS discussion going on in Gallatin County. Current discussions are focusing on the possibility of several fire agencies including the Hyalite Fire District, the City of Bozeman Fire Department, the Central Valley Fire District, and the Three Forks Area Ambulance taking on the ambulance transport duties for the Gallatin Valley. The Big Sky Fire District and the Hebgen Basin Fire District would continue to provide ambulance transport services to the areas of West Yellowstone and Big Sky. There are several factors to consider with this plan. The possibility of an EMS levy is being discussed to support

the funding of ambulance services. A steering committee is in continued discussions on these topics. I am one of the committee members.

15. I am still on the Board of Directors with Montana State Fire Chiefs Association as a combination section director.

16. I am still on the Montana State Fire Chiefs Wildland Fire Committee.

17. I continue to sit on the board of the Gallatin County Fire Council as Vice President. I also continue to chair the Gallatin County Fire Council communications committee.

18. Assistant Chief Dahlhauser continues to chair the training committee with the Gallatin County Fire Council.

19. I am still a Gallatin County Deputy Fire Warden.

20. Our ambulance transport plan is complete and we are actively transporting patients to the hospital. Income continues to come in from Pintler Billing for our transports

21. We had no firefighter injuries in the month of January.

22. Currently Water Tender 6 is out of service. On Feb 5th at a regular training night WT-6 experienced a fire water pump failure as a result of a pump operator error. Captain Prato is working on a plan for the fire water pump rebuild. We will need to bring in an outside repair agency to assist in the repair. The design and layout of the pump compartment on WT-6 doesn't allow Captain Prato to safely remove the pump on his own.

23. Engine 6-2 was out of service from January 11th - January 29th with a front bumper turret issue. We are still awaiting a new motherboard for the turret but the engine is back in service.

24. Our two new Pierce engines are now in production. We expect the two engines to be ready for final inspection and pickup in March 2025.

25. Our used 2014 Pierce engine on order from Brindlee Mountain Fire Apparatus is being worked on per our request shop items. We expect the engine to be ready for final inspection and delivery in March 2025.