

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

DATE: JANUARY 20, 2026

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
Walt Zidack
Jason Jarrett

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Brian Nickolay, Fire Chief
Chris Dahlhauser, Assistant Fire Chief
Sheryl Wyman, Administrative Assistant
Colin Prato, Division Chief of Maintenance
Reid Templeton, Recruiting and Retention Captain

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

Kade O'Brian-Treasurer, Volunteer Firefighter Association

0:00:01	<p>CALL TO ORDER OF HYALITE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT</p> <p>Chairman Miller called the meeting to order and asked for any public comment on non-agenda items. Assistant Chief Dahlhauser gives a report on an EMS call responded to by the Department. This turned into an ALS call and without the care immediately provided by Lieutenant Kuntz the patient may not have had the positive outcome that occurred.</p> <p>HYALITE CONSENT AGENDA</p> <p>Chairman Miller asks if there are any requests to pull anything from the Consent Agenda for review. None given.</p> <p>Motion: Trustee Zidack moves to approve consent agenda as presented</p> <p>Trustee Jarrett seconded the motion.</p>
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	<p>Vote: Jarrett-Yes; Zidack-Yes; Miller-Yes. Unanimous approval.</p> <p><i>[See December 16, 2025 Board Packet for Consent Agenda items Approved]</i></p>
	REGULAR AGENDA
0:02:36	<p>Agenda Item 1 – Promotion of Sophie Smith</p> <p>Moved to end of agenda</p>
0:04:14	<p>Agenda Item 2 – Hyalite Volunteer Firefighters Association Report</p> <p>Kade O’Brien, Treasurer of the Volunteer Firefighters Association gives a report of the association. Allie Kuntz, President of the volunteer association has recently been hired by the Hyalite Rural Fire District. They are also losing Reid Templeton who was the ex officio so those roles will need to be filled. A meeting was held on the 19th to go over 2025 and the goals and plans for 2026.</p>
0:04:57	<p>Agenda Item 3 – Discussion and Decision – Trustee Election Resolution</p> <p>There are two vacancies for Trustees which are expiring in May. Trustee Geddes has filed his Oath of Candidacy. Trustee Zidack informs the board he does not plan on renewing his position. If nobody runs for the trustee position the County will need to appoint a trustee. Chief Nickolay will reach out to potential candidates.</p> <p>Chair Miller states Trustee Zidack will be greatly missed.</p> <p>A resolution is presented calling for a trustees’ election.</p> <p>Motion: Trustee Jarrett moves to approve the resolution.</p> <p>Trustee Zidack seconded the motion.</p> <p>Vote: Jarrett-Yes; Zidack-Yes; Miller-Yes. Unanimous approval.</p> <p><i>[See Resolution-Attachment A]</i></p>
0:07:35	<p>Agenda Item 4 – Discussion and Decision – Hiring of 3rd Party for District Research</p> <p>Chief Nickolay provided a copy of the RFP in the boards’ packet laying which will go out for bids. The RFP will go out in the paper as well as the Fire School notices.</p> <p>Trustee Zidack makes comments.</p> <p><i>[See RFP for Strategic Planning Services- Attachment B]</i></p>

0:11:46	<p>Agenda Item 5- Discussion – Replacement of Rae Fire Station – <i>Standing Agenda Item</i></p> <p>Nothing to report at this time. This item will be tabled until after the 3rd party review has been completed.</p>
0:12:18	<p>Agenda Item 6 – Fire Chief's Report</p> <p>The Chief provides the yearly numbers for the board. The numbers decreased for 2025 from the last two years.</p> <p>He has been working with our employment attorney and will be utilizing the FLSA 7(k) exemption for emergency responders for our Captains schedule going forward. This will allow our Captains to work up to 212 hours in a 28-day work period without receiving overtime pay. This schedule would compare to working 160 hours in the same time period as a non-exempt employee. The overall effect will reduce the amount of overtime paid out.</p> <p>We are continuing to work on our overnight command coverage shortages. We currently we have only two of our needed seven volunteer captains. We are losing a number of Captains due to new jobs and leaving the department. The Chief is concerned about burnout with the paid staff having to cover shifts. He may have to come back to board for more positions.</p> <p>Our paid holiday staffing ran from December 15th - January 2nd. We employed six firefighter/EMTs and three lieutenants during this period to get us through the holidays when a majority of our volunteers leave the area.</p> <p>The Recruitment and Retention Captain position closed on January 16th. We will move right into interviewing candidates. We hope to onboard a new employee in February.</p> <p>The Chief has offered the Shift Captain position to Allie Kuntz. Allie has accepted the position and we are excited to have her come on as part of our paid staff. Allie is a current volunteer with our department. She will begin her paid status on February 1st.</p> <p>Engine 6-1 is currently out of service due to a turbo issue with the chassis motor.</p> <p>Command 6-3 is back in service</p> <p>Division Chief Prato is working on the build out process for Command 6-7. We expect the truck to be ready at the end of January.</p> <p><i>[See Fire Chief's Report-Attachment C]</i></p>

0:23:30	Agenda Item 1 – Promotion of Volunteer Firefighter Sophie Smith Volunteer Firefighter Smith is presented with her Captain’s badge. Comments made by the Chief. Congratulations and thanks offered by the board.
0:25:14	Trustees’ Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustee Jarrett participated and has a meeting to catch up with the County EMS program.
0:25:54	Announcements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Board Meeting – Tuesday, February 17, 2026
0:27:09	Adjournment

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-01

Hyalite Rural Fire District

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A TRUSTEES ELECTION

WHEREAS, Section 7-33-2106, MCA, requires that the trustees of the rural fire district are to be elected and can only be appointed by the county commissioners if no nominations are made for the trustee offices; and

WHEREAS, candidates for the office of trustee of the fire district to be filled by the election may file their Declaration of Candidacy form at least 90 days before the election day; and

WHEREAS, Montana election laws require the election to be held on school election day, which is May 5, 2026; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 13-1-504(5), MCA, the Board shall specify in the resolution calling for the election whether the Board is requesting the election be conducted by mail; and

WHEREAS, the trustees of the fire district have determined that 2 trustee position(s) will expire in May 2026; and

WHEREAS, the trustees find that it is necessary to elect 2 trustee(s) at the election in 2026.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. A trustee election for the above-named rural fire district to elect 2 trustee(s) shall be held on May 5, 2026, and shall be conducted by mail ballot.
2. A Declaration of Candidacy form for trustee may be filed with the Gallatin County Election Department no later than February 4, 2026. If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be elected, the county governing body shall declare elected by acclamation each candidate who filed a nominating petition for a position. If a nomination is not made for one or more trustee positions, the county governing body shall appoint one or more trustees as necessary to fill those positions.

Dated this _____ day of January, 2026.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

By: _____
Chairman

CALL FOR STATEMENT OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES

The Hyalite Rural Fire District (District) is soliciting proposals from qualified contractors (Contractor) to provide strategic planning services for the District. The District is interested in engaging with a qualified Contractor in planning for growth in both our fire district and our surrounding area.

The scope of work will include collaboration with the District in regards to:

- Identify the present and future administrative and business risks in the District. Identify and present solutions to how the District addresses those risks.
- Identify the present and future operational risks in the District. Including fire station location, staffing and equipment. Identify and present solutions to how the District addresses those risks.
- Identify the risks of annexation from other jurisdictions including the City of Bozeman. Identify how those risks affect our operations and areas of responsibility. Present solutions to how the District addresses those risks.
- Present solutions of best practices from other geographies/jurisdictions that can inform and ultimately enhance our service delivery model to operate to industry standards.
- Identify how we might engage productively with our neighboring jurisdictions to realize operational and administrative efficiency resulting in better customer service for all involved.

For questions, contact the following:

Brian Nickolay, Fire Chief
Hyalite Rural Fire District
4541 S. 3rd Rd.
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 586-3770
bnickolay@hyalitefire.org

Responses will be received by

Hyalite Rural Fire District, Attn: Strategic Planning Services Proposal
4541 S. 3rd Rd.
Bozeman, MT 59715

Responses will be received until 5:00pm on the 6th of February 2026 and then opened and read aloud at the scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7pm on the date of the 17th of February 2026. At the Hyalite Rural Fire District, Sourdough Fire Station. 4541 S. 3rd Rd. Bozeman, MT 59715

The Hyalite Rural Fire District and its agents reserve the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any formality and technicality.



Hyalite Rural Fire District

Fire Chief's Report

January 2026

Prepared by: Fire Chief, Brian Nickolay

1. The Hyalite Fire District responded to a total of 56 incidents in December 2025.
 - Total December 2024 - 73
 - Total December 2023 - 74
 - Total November 2022 - 74
 - Total November 2021 - 58
 - Total November 2020 - 52
2. In total the Hyalite Fire District responded to 684 calls for service in 2025.
 - Total Calls for service 2024 - 751
 - Total Calls for service 2023 - 747
 - Total Calls for service 2022 - 672
 - Total Calls for service 2021 - 630
 - Total Calls for service 2020 - 583
3. Our current roster is at 45 members (effective 1/1/2026).
 - 1 Career Fire Chief
 - 1 Career Assistant Fire Chief
 - 2 Division Chiefs
 - 2 Career Captains
 - 1 Volunteer Captains
 - 1 Volunteer Reserve Captains
 - 5 Volunteer Lieutenants
 - 14 Volunteer Firefighters
 - 7 Volunteers Apprentice Firefighters
 - 1 Volunteer Reserve Firefighters
 - 6 Volunteer Recruit Firefighters
 - 4 Volunteer EMTs
4. I have worked with our employment attorney over the last several months to move our department to utilizing the FLSA 7(k) exemption for emergency responders. This exemption will include any paid position that has response duties who are not already identified as exempt for supervisory reasons. The FLSA 7(k) exemption allows emergency service personnel to work up to 212 hours in a 28 day work period without receiving overtime pay. This would compare to working 160 hours in the same time

period as a non-exempt employee. Though our 7(k) employees will still be hourly, we should see a reduced amount of overtime paid out.

5. We are continuing to work on our overnight command coverage shortages.
 - We are at one (2) of our needed seven (7) volunteer captains.
 - i. Chris Leeper and Sophie Smith are our only current ranked volunteer captains.
 - We have two (2) of our new captains working on shadowing command shifts currently.
 - i. Alexi Ness and Nick Blommel are currently being shadowed for command.
 - We lost Ted Yewer to a paid fire position in Idaho in December.
 - We will lose Sophie Smith at the end of January due to her relocating outside of Montana.
 - We will lose Nick Blommel in February for an opportunity to travel for six months. Although Nick has indicated we will return to Bozeman.
 - We have offered our paid Shift Captain position to Allie Kuntz.
 - We also know Alexi Ness is going to do her required ride time as a paramedic student outside of Bozeman in the near future.
 - With the adoption of the FLSA 7 (k) exemption, I have reworked our Training Captain and Recruitment Captain positions to cover one night of command per week. This does affect the amount of time they are on duty during the day during the week. I have set the schedule so the recruit training academies are not affected. Along with the new Shift Captain position this will have four nights per week covered by paid personnel.
 - We still will be short on our needed amount of captains to cover our overnight command shifts. This will require Myself, Assistant Chief Dahlhauser, Division Chief Malone and Division Chief Prato to work extra to provide coverage at night where we lack availability.
 - Our hope is in the fall to begin new potential captains on our training program. As of right now we believe we will have 3 or 4 people ready to begin training.
6. Our paid holiday staffing ran from December 15th - January 2nd. We employed six firefighter/EMTs and three lieutenants during this period to get us through the holidays when a majority of our volunteers leave the area.
7. We currently have eight (8) resident firefighters living at the Sourdough Fire Station.
 - Current Sourdough Residents -
 - Nick Blommel, Kade O'Brian, Evan Jones, Ruby Weinburg, Zach Fredach, Paige Maunu, Zane Nordwick, and Garrett O'Tool.
 - Sourdough resident firefighters continue to fill weekend shifts Friday 7pm – Monday 7am.
8. We currently have three (3) resident firefighters living at the Cottonwood Fire Station.
 - Current Cottonwood Residents –

- Jack Vincent, Colton Rue-Zindell and Allie Kuntz
 - Cottonwood resident firefighters continue to fill weekday night shifts Monday – Thursday 7pm – 7am.
 - Allie Kuntz will be moving out of Cottonwood Station once paid status begins.
- 9. We currently have three (3) residents at the Rae house.
 - Current Rae Residents -
 - Kate Brownell, Tyler Palmer, and Sophie Smith.
- 10. Non-resident volunteer firefighters continue to cover six hour shifts at the Sourdough Fire Station on Monday - Friday 7am – 7pm. With our current level of staffing we are able to cover 7 of our 10 day shifts with at least 2 volunteers.
- 11. We continue our regular multi company fire and EMS training every Wednesday night and command training twice a month. As part of our holiday break we did not have regular training through the month of December. .
- 12. We had seven (7) members test with the FSTS on fire instructor 1 certification January 10th and 11th.
- 13. The Recruitment and Retention Captain position closes on January 16th. We will move right into interviewing candidates. We hope to onboard a new employee in February. Reid Templeton has informed us he will be leaving our department as our Recruitment and Retention Captain effective January 31st, 2026.
- 14. I have offered our Shift Captain position to Allie Kuntz. Allie has accepted the position and we are excited to have her come on as part of our paid staff. Allie is a current volunteer with our department. She will begin her paid status on February 1st.
- 15. We assisted the Fort Ellis Fire Service Area with several wildland fires on December 11th. We provided 1 brush truck, 1 structure fire engine and 2 command vehicles.
- 16. The fire district continues to be involved with the EMS Steering Group in Gallatin County. I am still one of the steering committee members.
- 17. I am still on the Board of Directors with Montana State Fire Chiefs Association as a combination section director.
- 18. I am still on the Montana State Fire Chiefs Wildland Fire Committee.
- 19. I am still on the operational committee for the Northern Rockies Coordination Group.
- 20. 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.
- 21. Assistant Chief Dahlhauser continues to chair the training and SOP committees with the Gallatin County Fire Council.
- 22. I am still a Gallatin County Deputy Fire Warden.

- 23. We had no firefighter injuries in the month of December.
- 24. Engine 6-1 is currently out of service due to a turbo issue with the chassis motor.
- 25. Command 6-3 is back in service
- 26. Division Chief Prato is working on the build out process for Command 6-7. We expect the truck to be ready at the end of January.