

# HIGHLAND RESCUE TEAM AMBULANCE DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Highland Station

317 South Lookout Mountain Road

October 15, 2024

2:30 p.m.

President Terry McCarthy called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

**Directors present:** President Terry McCarthy, Treasurer Dan Kasinec, Director, Sharon Jones, and Director Chris Garlasco.

**Directors absent:** Secretary Kara Cooper.

**Others present:** Chief Bob Fager, Assistant Chief Steve Telgener, Deputy Chief of Operations Damon Brown, and Administrator Laura Cardon.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

## **PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

Director Kasinec moved to approve the previous month's minutes. Director Jones seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

*Admin Report (L. Cardon)*

Systems Designs West (SDW) billed \$41,206.40 for 27 transports in September.

100% of September payments are pending due to billing being completed later. Ms. Cardon had to reconcile tickets with SDW for accuracy. Bills were sent out October 7, 2024 as a result.

The ending balance for billing was lower than it has been for the last year, with \$127,612 outstanding at the end of September.

The payer share of insurance holders continued to move toward 2023 averages. Medicare represented the highest number of patients at 40%. The 2023 average was 45%.

BC Services is actively pursuing \$115,618 in collections.

Complete details can be found in the 2024-10 Admin Report - September 2024 pdf.

*Financial Report (C. Jantzef)*

Revenue for wildland fire operations has not been received yet, but revenue is still above target.

Director McCarthy inquired as to whether we will catch up to all expense items. Every expense was below the budgeted target.

Chief Fager responded that generally, the district always budgets conservatively. There are also several large expenses that haven't yet hit the budget. For safety and training, there is the state EMS conference at the beginning of November. Operations and admin never catches up to target until year-end bonuses are paid out to employees. For facilities, the district has had significant HVAC expenses that hasn't hit the budget yet. And finally, for the apparatus budget, multiple ambulances will have their tires replaced in October.

Director McCarthy asked whether this was a normal trajectory for this year or an especially well-budgeted year. Ms. Jantzef responded that it's an especially good year thanks to conservative budgeting, no large unexpected issues, and backfill property tax revenue.

Assistant Chief Telgener asked whether new property tax legislation would impact property tax revenue in 2025. Chief Fager responded that there has been a decent amount of growth in the district, and although we won't get backfill revenue in 2025, we will still have growth in the 2025 budget. There's a great deal of uncertainty how changing assessment rates will affect the 2026 budget.

Director Kasinec asked why there was a large increase on the income statement for bad debts and write-offs. Ms. Jantzef responded that the Medicaid supplemental payment went through and she will move it to a more accurate line item.

Director Garlasco questioned why salaries are split between operations and administrative expenses. Ms. Jantzef answered that the split mirrors how the state Medicaid supplemental payment program defines operations and administrative expenses for ease of reporting.

The board congratulated Ms. Jantzef on her recent marriage.

**CHIEF'S REPORT (B. FAGER)**

The district responded to fewer calls in September, which is a normal slow down from summer months.

The district has welcomed 9 new probationary members, including 2 paramedics. 1 member recently graduated from paramedic school. Normally, the district also has a bit of natural attrition and loses one member per month, but has not experienced that in the last several months.

#### *Facilities Updates (B. Fager)*

A topographic survey has been completed. Utilities are getting marked out in the next week and then the engineer will make more in-depth plans for septic and parking planning.

Deputy Chief Brown and Public Information Officer Jonathan Skavroneck were guest speakers at a community event for Mount Vernon Country Club. The community was very engaged; they either had previously volunteered with the district or wanted to learn how to get more involved.

The district replaced the air conditioner for the south end of the building. The compressor went out in September and the unit was over 20 years old, so the contractor recommended replacing the entire unit. The district got three quotes that ranged from \$13,000 to over \$20,000. The district went with the least expensive quote and had the highest quality unit. That company also offered a significant discount for replacing our furnace at the same time, which was also 20 years old.

Director Garlasco asked whether that unit would be able to be used for the expansion of the building. Deputy Chief Brown responded that the building is currently zoned, so an addition would use either the two newer existing units on the north end of the building or the district would add a fourth zone. Chief Fager added that septic and parking are the priorities for 2025 before more serious consideration of an expansion.

#### *2025 Draft Budget (B. Fager)*

Chief Fager noted the new ambulance was budgeted for 2024, but will actually arrive in May 2025. That capital expense is part of the 2025 budget. \$102,000 will be paid for by a state grant and the remaining other \$185,000 is budgeted out of cash reserves.

\$100,000 is budgeted for capital improvements to address septic and parking planning.

Chief Fager also budgeted for all personnel to get new helmets. Many have been in service for a long time and are due to be replaced. The new ones are also much lighter and rated for rescue and wildland fire, so one helmet will address all operational needs.

Replacement radios are another budget item of note. The district's current radios were released in 2003 and discontinued in 2014. New radios will be easier to repair as needed and will be dual-frequency, giving the district easy access to frequencies used by Evergreen and Indian Hills fire and rescue departments. This will significantly improve search and rescue operations with both departments.

Chief Fager proposed to the board that the district start offering health insurance benefits to employees again. Some employees who are buying health insurance on the exchange could be better supported, and offering health insurance benefits will help with recruitment and hiring.

Director Kasinec, who worked with Chief Fager on the initial proposal, added that the district would be part of a pool with a consortium of special districts. The pool covers about 37,000 people, making it a very high quality option for the district's small employee count. A conservative placeholder has been put in the 2025 budget.

The directors were unanimously in favor of offering health insurance benefits for employees. Chief Fager will bring a more detailed proposal to the board at the November meeting to consider how much of the premium the district can cover; whether dependents are covered; where there is a separation of full-time and part-time employee benefits; and whether volunteers could access coverage.

Director Kasinec expressed gratitude to Chief Fager for a thorough and well-researched budget.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

*Bank Account Consolidation (D. Kasinec, C. Jantzef)*

Ms. Jantzef shared that the HRA account has been consolidated into the main The Money Market account to be consolidated needs to be confirmed by Jefferson County. Ms Cardon will report back to Ms. Jantzef and Director Kasinec with the status of the district's request.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

*Human Resources Consulting Update (T. McCarthy)*

Director McCarthy shared that he reached out to CPS, an HR firm that provides the district with 10 free hours of consulting every year, for recommendations on how to best use that benefit. CPS recommended reviewing our handbook and policies or having human resources services on demand since the district does not have an official human resources representative. Directory McCarthy will send a proposal to the board regarding the chief's performance review by the end of October to discuss at the November meeting.

*Mill Levy Certification (L. Cardon)*

The district must certify its mill levy each year with the county and state. The board reviewed Resolution 2024-01 to certify the district's mill levy for 2025. The district had no changes to its 3.5000 mills levy.

President McCarthy moved to approve the resolution. Director Garlasco seconded. The resolution was unanimously approved. The full resolution can be viewed in the Resolution 2024-01 pdf.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURN**

Director Garlasco moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:52 p.m. Director Jones seconded. The board unanimously approved.