

**HIGHLAND RESCUE TEAM AMBULANCE DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
Highland Station 317 S Lookout Mountain Rd
October 12, 2021, 3:30pm**

Chairman Robert Keating called the meeting to order at 3:34pm.

Other Directors present: John Zima, Terry McCarthy, Patty Hall

Others present: Chief Bob Fager, Captain Damon Brown, Christina Jantzef, Hanako Wyles, Carl Joyce

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

September meeting minutes were approved by the Board as written (1st Rob Keating, 2nd Terry McCarthy, unanimous approval).

FINANCIAL REPORT

October Financials - see financial packet by Christina Jantzef

We are three-fourths through the year.

Total Revenues are well above target at 83% due to tax revenue timing.

Operation Expenses are slightly above target mostly due to wildland team outsourcing.

Capital Expenditures and LOSAP Expenses are well below target due to timing.

Total Expenses are well below budget at 52%.

Net change in Fund Balance is \$342K.

Change in Net Assets or Net Income/(Loss) of \$358K.

Ending Cash Balance is at \$757K.

Rob Keating asked about the six-month gap in fuel bills from Jefferson County which put us well below target with our 2021 fuel budget at the last Board meeting. He asked if we were now caught up and in good standing with our Fuel account. He wanted accounting to clarify how the six-month's worth of fuel bills would be reconciled in our books. Christina explained that invoices are logged into the system by invoice date. So even if we pay an invoice in September, if the invoice is dated March, it will show up in our March books. If we were to run a current Disbursements Report for all the months in which fuel invoices were originally missing (since JeffCo did not invoice Highland), these fuel payments will show up in the appropriate month.

Rob Keating inquired about how Highland tracks overtime for paid staff. There are only two staff members who qualify for paid overtime. Hanako logs their overtime hours in a spreadsheet. In accounting, Christina has two ledger codes: 12-6160 for wages and 12-6162 for overtime. Having two separate ledger codes allows us to track cost for wages and cost for overtime.

Christina reported that she is still working on cleaning up the HSA account. With staffing changes (Barb's retirement), the monthly amount getting transferred into the account needs adjusting. Also, having the bank statements end on the last day of the month, instead of the 25th of every month, would make reconciling the HSA account straight forward, clean things up. Roxanne, as the authorized signer on the

account, should be able to request that change. Hanako can pull monthly reports to verify monthly transfers and balances of each staff member's HSA account from the HSA Gateway portal.

Billing - September Billing - see Billing Analysis by Hanako Wyles

September billing was the highest month this year at \$54,933. Cash receipts in September came in at \$18,154 and disallowed/ contractual allowances were \$28,842. \$9285 were sent to collections. All numbers look good and are right on track with YTD numbers of previous years.

Rob Keating inquired about the high balance on 90+ day outstanding patient accounts which is at about \$19.5K (91-120 days past due: \$18,886, 121+ days past due: \$5,513). He wanted to know if SDW is following Highland's updated policy of sending all unpaid invoices to collections after 90 days. Hanako will clarify with SDW if they are and try to get an answer as to why the 90+ day outstanding balance is hovering just below 20K.

CHIEF'S REPORT – See written report by Chief Fager

YTD calls are 556 with 200 transports. We had 70 calls in September and 36 transports.

Staffing- Currently we have 6 paid paramedics (3 FT, 1 PT, 2 PRN), 8 volunteer paramedics (2 newly certified), 1 volunteer EMT-I, 5 volunteer AEMTs (1 LOA, 1 Probationary), 29 volunteer EMTs (1 reserve, 1 LOA and 3 Probationary) and 3 EMRs.

New Ambulance – Progress is slower than expected because the manufacturer has lost design staff. They are down from 11 to only 5 design staff members. Accounting/budget issue may arise if delivery gets pushed out into the new year. The cost for the new ambulance is accounted for in our 2021 Budget, not in our 2022 Budget. As of now, vendor is still hopeful they can deliver in December.

HR Policies- Patty Hall, Roxanne Lenny and Chief Fager met in person and corresponded via email to finalize Highland's updated paid leave policy. Rob Keating wanted to have clarified why, under the new policy, staff will be given 6 months of their annual paid vacation time upfront with the remaining 6 months of vacation time on a monthly accrual basis starting July 2022. He feared staff could use their 6 months' worth of allotted paid vacation time in January and then quit. Chief Fager explained that since 2022 is the first year this new policy is being put in place, staff have no saved vacation time to use early in 2022. Giving staff 6 months of vacation time upfront is the only way staff can take time off in the first half of the year. Two staff members already have vacations planned in Q1 of 2022. This will not be an issue starting 2023 since staff can carry over unused vacation time from 2022 and have enough time off to be able to take a vacation in the first months of the year.

Rob Keating also wanted to know why vacation time is being calculated by month and not by the bi-weekly pay period. Chief Fager and Christina explained that having staff accumulate vacation time by month makes tracking the hours easier as well as tracking the cost (accounting) of paid time off over the year. Christina clarified, in accounting, unused vacation time that gets carried over to the new year or a pay out of unused vacation time is carried as a "liability" in books. Effective Jan 1, 2022, any unused vacation time must be allowed to be carried over into the next year. The cost will be expensed in the year it was accrued as "unpaid salary."

Rob Keating questioned why Highland's new vacation time policy keeps vacation time and sick time separate and does not follow along with the trend of offering general "PTO" to include vacation and sick time as many companies are doing now. Chief Fager explained that keeping them separate comes at a cost saving to Highland since unused sick leave does not have to get paid out, only unused vacation time.

Budget – Chief Fager reported he met with John Zima and Terry McCarthy on Oct 11th and made significant progress on the 2022 Budget. He pointed out that income from Medicare/aid is down and that the initiatives up for vote on the November '21 election may affect Highland's budget negatively as well but the latter not until the 2023 Budget, if they pass. Highland's expenditures are going up due to rate increases for utilities (e.g. septic pumping), insurance coverage, software programs we rely on (our annual ESO subscription went up nearly 40%), etc. Still, we are fiscally healthy and will end the year slightly under budget by about 15K. Discussion over the last Mill levy increase raised the question if Highland should return some of the tax dollars collected to the community specifically run the budget on a 3.4 or 3.45 instead of the full 3.5 mill levy. This was presented as a selling point to the community when the Mill levy increase was initially put on the ballot (that we would cut the levy if funds were not needed). Further discussion and a closer look at our budget are needed before making that decision.

To lighten the load on the budget, John Zima mentioned to seek feedback from the Foundation to see if they are willing to supplement the training budget. Terry McCarthy said he will make sure financial support to the Highland Budget gets addressed in the next Foundation Board meeting (December 2021).

The budget for administration expenses was bumped up to accommodate a bi-weekly cleaning service for the station. 25K was added to the budget for next year's Board election which may or may not be needed depending on the number of candidates vs open spots on the Board. Also, budget for employee/payroll was increased from 198K to 216K to accommodate competitive wages. Currently, our part time paramedic is paid \$19/hr. A competitive salary would be \$33.30/hr. Our search for a PRN resulted in 1 applicant, a part time PRN brought us 0 applicants. This shows that we need to work towards offering our medics a more competitive salary. In response to the salary issue, Rob Keating asked Chief Fager what choice his would be: a new QRV (quick response vehicle/utility) or higher salaries for his staff. Chief Fager chose "buy a used QRV *and* offer higher salaries". He says having a QRV/utility vehicle is much needed. The current one is goes out nearly every day and is driven whenever an ambulance is not required e.g., to trainings, conferences, meetings, or as an additional vehicle to scene. It is cheaper to drive (fuel efficient, lower maintenance cost) than driving an ambulance. A suggestion was made to not call it a QRV since it is not truly a Quick Response Vehicle. Calling it a "utility" was brought up as an alternative. Damon Brown is looking at pick-up trucks with a topper as a replacement. He said we could buy used or apply for an EMTS grant that covers 50% of the cost of a new truck. In the end, buying used or paying 50% for a new truck would likely cost us the same given we get the grant. And a new truck would be preferable over a used truck.

A comment was made on the staffing issue especially with ALS coverage. Currently, we have consistent coverage M-F, but no set coverage Sat and Sun. Abbey Travers covers many of the open shifts at overtime. A meeting to produce a better plan for consistent ALS coverage is set for later in October. Hiring another part time PRN is an option as well but it will come at the cost of about \$24K/year (24hrs/week at \$20.90/hr). Considering we pay overtime to our two paid medics to cover open shifts, hiring another part time medic would not increase salary pay outs. Alternatively, having three full time paid medics would allow us to put them on a 48-96 schedule meaning they would be on 48 hours-off 96 hours closing any uncovered ALS shifts.

The deadline to file the 2022 Budget with the County is December 15. All efforts will be made to have a final budget in place by the November Board meeting. Otherwise, a special meeting must be called to vote and approve the budget.

Wildland Team – Currently, there are no further plans to deploy this year. In 2022, the Wildland team will primarily consist of Carl Joyce and Nicholas Becker. Liam Sharkey starts nursing school. Caela Bialek has voiced interest in joining the Wildland Team.

Corona virus- Still awaiting final word from the Federal government if we fall under the Federal vaccine mandate (as recipients of Medicare/aid payments). The Federal government expects to have details for all agencies affected by mid to late October. Chief Fager is keeping an eye on this and will comply with any Federal government mandates.

Septic issue- Addressing our septic issue remains a work in progress. Requests to allow us to encroach on Mt Vernon's easement have been made but dead ended. The new property owner, our neighbor just to the south of Highland Station, continues to be willing to accommodate a joint installation of a septic system to serve both properties. To date, no permits for a septic system have been pulled or applications with the County filed and no further details on design, engineering or construction have been made. Since we are the ones asking the property owner to allow us to use his land for our septic system we are holding back and waiting for him to decide when he is ready. Rob Keating asked for a hard number on cost. Both Captain Brown and Chief Fager emphasized a hard number cannot be given until construction begins since there is no way of telling up front what the ground will look like once digging begins. Solid rock would make blasting necessary which will drive cost up. Chief Fager researched installation cost of similar systems in the area, spoke with septic system installers and construction companies. They all said it could be 25K or it could be 40+K. Chief Fager added 40K to the 2022 Budget to accommodate the higher end. Rob Keating asked the cost of the new septic tank to be removed from the 2022 Budget and once a hard number is known to amend the 2022 Budget to reflect the accurate amount. John Zima agreed. Chief Fager said he will and that there is a good chance a new septic tank installation will not happen in 2022 anyway.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

See above

The Meeting was adjourned 5:24pm