**Jefferson County Fire and EMS**

**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

**Feb. 4th, 2025**

**Meeting called to Order:** 5:30 PM

**Pledge of Allegiance lead by:** Led by VP Galyen

**Roll Call:**

**Fire:** Board President Kim Stout, Vice President Rob Galyen, Secretary Dusty Miller,

Director Chris DuPont, Director Ryan Boyle

**Fire Members Absent:**

**Fire staff:** Fire Chief Blake, Deputy Chief Earnest, Billing Manager Danielle Peckham,

Admin Asst. LeeAnn Bowman, FF Paramedic Kayla Page, FF Paramedic Jeremy

Stinson, Captain Trevor Beebe, FF EMT Mark Cooley via Zoom,

, FF Paramedic Lauren Melka

**Zoom:** “Iphone # 6”, “Iphone”, FF Paramedic Chase

**Community Members:** Linda Larson

**Agenda approval/adjustment:** Secretary Miller made a motion to remove agenda

items #5 and #7. Director DuPont seconded the motion. The motion passed

unanimously.

**New Business**

**Financial Update:** Finance Manager Kristal H. provided an update on the department's financial status, noting that PERS payments have been systematically addressed, with the department paid up to June 2023. The last two quarters have been withheld due to a $250K discrepancy between actual and estimated PERS costs. This decision was made to maintain a positive cash flow.

The financial report through January 31, 2025, showed a remaining balance of $322K in bond proceeds. Kristal noted that PERS payments for this month are higher than expected ($50K, compared to the typical $30-40K) due to a significant amount of overtime. She also mentioned the department expects reimbursement for the fire response in California within the next few months.

Cash Flow and EMS Revenue:

Director DuPont inquired about the $322K remaining and whether it would be enough to get through the budget cycle. Kristal clarified that the total reserve amount is $661K, and EMS revenue of roughly $200K per month is being used to help cover costs. However, it’s unclear how much of the past billing would be recouped. The billing process is moving forward, with the next phase involving autopayments.

Chief Blake added that they had received partial payments from Pacific Source, but some claims need to be resubmitted for mileage adjustments. The department is working to ensure it receives all the funds it is entitled to. Kristal also discussed the variable time required for auditing claims, with some claims taking just 10 minutes while others might take up to half a day.

Chris asked about how the $661K reserve funds were allocated into the LGIP account. Blake explained that the decision was made to keep the reserve segregated in the account for clarity. Kristal clarified that the reserve amount was unrestricted, and it could be used if necessary.

Blake also discussed staffing levels, mentioning furloughs are going to be implemented. He pointed out that staffing across the state has become increasingly expensive. Blake also mentioned that insurance premiums are expected to increase by 6% next year, and workers' compensation costs will also rise.

Director DuPont raised concerns about sustaining a budget that could require $400K per month. Kristal responded that at the current rate of EMS revenue ($200K per month), the department would deplete its reserves in about four months, potentially running out of funds by April.

President Stout also pointed out that the department needs to balance both running out of funds and balancing the budget. Kristal agreed, stating that the organization must figure out how to generate more revenue. The department typically breaks even at the end of the year, but it is often short by $1 million until the next tax revenues come in.

Director Boyle suggested that the department should aim to spend closer to $350K per month to avoid the risk of running out of funds. He also asked if there were any grants or other revenue sources that could be explored. Chief Blake responded that most grants are focused on equipment rather than operating costs.

Director Boyle emphasized the need for a tax anticipation loan to make it through until November, as drastic cuts to services or staffing would not be feasible.

DC Earnest clarified that the department had already cut $250K from the Materials and Services line item, reducing it to bare essentials. Earnest estimated that the department would need about $2.4 million to make it to November, but if funds run out in April, that number would increase to $3.2 million. These estimates exclude the uncertain monthly EMS revenue of $200K.

**New Business**

**Staffing:** Director Miller emphasized the urgency for the board to have clear answers from the Chief about the department's financial plan. He pointed out that relying solely on the promise of insurance reimbursements is not sustainable and called for action. Miller suggested the following immediate steps:

* Reduction in overtime.
* A pay freeze.
* A hiring freeze.

Miller also requested that a clear, balanced budget plan be provided at the next meeting, with these measures going into effect immediately and not changing unless resolved by the board. He acknowledged that a tax anticipation loan is necessary but emphasized that the current financial path is unsustainable.

Chief Blake agreed that the situation is not sustainable and that they have reached the limit of what can be done with current resources.

Director Boyle agreed with Miller’s stance, stressing the need for immediate action.

Miller asked about the $225K owed to PERS whether this was the district’s or the employee's portion. Kristal H. confirmed that she had asked PERS for clarification but had not received answers.

Stout stressed the need for a clear plan to navigate through the financial situation, particularly exploring new revenue sources.

Chief Blake stated that the department must secure more operational revenue to grow and meet community needs, as the current $1.18 per $1,000 in tax revenue is not enough to sustain operations. He also noted the department has already planned for reductions.

DuPont asked if an operational levy had been explored. Blake confirmed that he is working with the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) on this matter and also exploring ways to increase EMS revenue.

Galyen asked whether other Ambulance Service Areas charge service fees. Blake confirmed that only one other ASA currently does. He noted that implementing a service fee could be dependent on county commissioners’ actions, and if they don't approve it, it could go to a public vote.

Blake pointed out that the department has the lowest assessed value compared to other departments of its size in the state, which is a significant barrier to raising revenue.

Stout asked if the Chief would be able to present a plan that the board could vote on by the next meeting. Blake confirmed that this is possible.

Galyen inquired about the hours for transfers and the potential additional revenue from new ventilators, both in terms of equipment and expanded transport hours. Blake responded that the county would need to request those numbers from the public health director.

Galyen requested that Chief Blake’s plan include both transfer operations and potential ventilator-related revenue. Blake explained that with lower staffing levels, the department may need to increase transfers, which would be a key part of the financial plan.

Blake also proposed a pilot program funded by a grant to address transfers. The program would include the use of a 12-hour car for transfers, which would reduce reliance on ambulances for these operations. However, Blake stressed that the department still needs two fully staffed ambulances, ideally three, and he is exploring all potential revenue streams.

**Adjourn Meeting:** 6:58 PM

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Board President Recording Sec.