**Jefferson County Fire & EMS**
**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**
**Date:** March 11th, 2025
**Time:** 5:30 PM
**Location:** Station 1701, 765 S. 5th St. Madras, OR 97741

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the Board President, **Kim Stout**, at 5:42 PM.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dusty Miller. 5:43 pm

**III. Roll Call**

**Board Members Present:** Board President Kim Stout, Vice President Rob Galyen, Secretary Dusty Miller, Director Ryan Boyle

Tim Gassner, Attorney

Krystal Hughes, Finance Manager

**Late Arrival:** Rob Galyen arrived at 5:52 PM

**Board Members Absent:** Chris DuPont

**Staff Members Present:** Chief Jeff Blake, Deputy Chief Kasey Skaar, Deputy Chief Jared Ernest, Michelle Spaulding, Jeff Codemo, Danielle Peckham, Jeremy Stinson, John Brown, Rick Allen, Dylan Lackey, Chase Duran, Jessica Haury, Trevor Beebe, Cody Martin, Josiah Bailey, Mark Cooley

**Community Members:** Linda Larsen, Gabby Beebe, Stacy Chiddix, Mr. Stinson

**Zoom Attendees:** James Hurley, Kayla Page, Lauren Melka, Chelsie Beaver, Andrew Flood, Debra Stinson

**IV. Agenda Approval/Adjustments**

The agenda was reviewed, and no additional items were proposed.
**Motion:** Ryan Boyle motioned to approve the agenda as presented.
**Seconded by:** Dusty Miller.
**Motion Passed Unanimously. 5:45 pm**

**V. Presentations**

There were no presentations at this meeting.

**VI. Citizen Input (Items on or off the Agenda)**

There were no public comments submitted during this portion of the meeting or citizen input.

**VII. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meetings were reviewed:

* **February 4th, 2025 Work Session:**
**Motion:** Dusty Miller motioned to approve the minutes of the February 4th, 2025 work session.
**Seconded by:** Ryan Boyle.
**Motion Passed Unanimously. 5:50 pm**
* **February 11th, 2025 Regular Meeting:**
**Motion:** Dusty Miller motioned to approve the minutes of the February 11th, 2025 regular meeting Minutes.
**Seconded by:** Ryan Boyle.
**Motion Passed Unanimously. 5:50 pm**
* **Executive Session (March 4, 2025 – Chief Blake Evaluation):** Minutes were provided via email from Dusty. No additional revisions were necessary.

**VIII. Old Business**

**Building Expansion – Timeline Update:**
Stacy Chiddix, acting as the Owner’s Representative for the expansion project, provided an update on the construction progress. He reminded all parties involved that before visiting the construction site, they must check in at the office. The owners' meeting occurred at 2:00 PM, and all submittals for the project have been completed except for a few, which are expected shortly. The design team has successfully completed the seismic plans, and work on the stem walls and backfilling has begun. Although the project is moving forward, there have been some delays, including issues with permits and miscommunication between the Deschutes Valley Water District (DVWD) and the excavation contractor. These delays have slightly pushed the project timeline back, but efforts are being made to catch up. A savings in costs has been achieved by switching to a new supplier, and the District is now working on submitting reimbursements for the project costs. It was noted that reimbursements are typically processed within a week after payment submission.

**IX. New Business**

**Appointment of 2025–2026 Budget Officer and Committee Members:**
The Board discussed the appointment of the Budget Officer for the upcoming fiscal years. Chief Blake was nominated for this role due to his knowledge of the budget process and his experience in fiscal management. Additionally, two openings were identified for the Budget Committee, and Trevor Beaver submitted a letter expressing interest in being appointed. The Board reviewed the submission and decided to move forward with his appointment. Sikkens also expressed interest but had not formally submitted a letter.

**Motion:** Dusty Miller motioned to approve Chief Blake as the 2025–2026 Budget Officer.
**Seconded by:** Ryan Boyle.
**Motion Passed Unanimously. 5:57 pm**

Further discussion led to the motion to appoint Trevor Beaver to the Budget Committee.
**Motion:** Rob Galyen motioned to approve Trevor Beaver as a member of the Budget Committee.
**Seconded by:** Dusty Miller.
**Motion Passed Unanimously. Time 5:58 pm**

**Finance Update:**
Krystal presented a detailed financial update to the Board. The total expenses paid for the month amounted to $1,545,199.40. This included General Fund expenses totaling $353,235.39, PERS past debt payments of $207,452.88, and Bond Project expenses totaling $984,511.13. Krystal clarified that PERS has agreed to reimburse the District for costs incurred and has committed to covering these expenses retroactively from July 1, 2025, saving the District an additional $100,000–$125,000. PERS will drop or remain at the 6-8%; notice will happen in April. Additionally, SAIF (State Accident Insurance Fund) premiums are set to increase by 12%, impacting all fire and EMS personnel. The Board was informed that there are changes in classification codes for structural and wildland firefighting positions, which may result in lower premiums for those specific roles. Insurance representative, Jen King, will be presenting additional information on this in future meetings.

Krystal further explained the three-page financial summary, highlighting revenue sources, such as property taxes, which were slightly higher than expected. The General Fund revenue stood at $3.9 million, or 67% of the total budget, with expenditures for non-bond items totaling $44,000. Krystal also discussed the bond-related revenue and expenditure timelines, noting that certain reimbursements and cash flow discrepancies would be reviewed and corrected in collaboration with Heather. Personnel costs have increased, particularly due to overtime (OT) expenses related to mutual aid deployments, including a significant call-out to California. Krystal answered questions from the Board regarding account numbers and discrepancies in the reconciliation process, with the conclusion that the timing of payments and check disbursements caused the reported discrepancies.

Danielle reviewed EMS billing practices and how the revenue flow is usually slow in the first quarter which is a normal practice as new deductibles are not met in the beginning of the year. Review of past EMS billing slow continues to trickle in as claims move through the appeal processes. Danielle continues to educate on EMS structure of billing as it not on a net 30 basis like typical accounts receivables/payables -insurances have a longer time frame to pay and many checks and balances through out the process. Danielle reviewed that our gross billed will vary because of federal adjustments that will take place and so what we bill is not the amount we will receive.

**Fire Operations – Deputy Chief Skaar:**
Deputy Chief Skaar shared the status of current fire operations. The department is actively pursuing new grant opportunities to support its operations, including the purchase of new apparatus- Hopper. A proposal for funding has been submitted, and costs for daily operations and training are being analyzed. The department is preparing for the upcoming wildfire season with search and rescue training scheduled for March 27–29. Skaar provided a report on incident data, highlighting 301 calls this year, which is 64 more than the same period last year. Some discrepancies were noted in the reporting, and Skaar committed to investigating the data further. Phone call from the homeowner out by Opal and gave a huge thank you to the crews that assisted in a brush fire.

**Fire Prevention – Deputy Chief Earnest:**
Deputy Chief Earnest provided a report on the department’s fire prevention efforts, including defensible space evaluations and inspections for new construction projects in industrial areas. Although inspections have generally gone well, due to a lack of staffing and the inability to conduct follow-up inspections in a timely manner all have ceased or will go to the Oregon State Fire Marshall’s office. As a result, Earnest has been preparing files for future follow-up and is preparing for staff reductions due to layoffs. Dusty inquired about the air curtain burner project, which remains delayed due to state funding issues related to Oregon’s sanctuary state designation.

**EMS Report – Deputy Chief Lepin (Report Submitted):**
Deputy Chief Lepin was absent but submitted a report detailing recent EMS activities. Notably, the department received grant funding for transport ventilators, which will be used in emergency medical services starting March 12, 2025. Training on their use will be completed by April 10, 2025, with LifeFlight offering assistance during the implementation phase. Lepin also discussed ongoing efforts to secure reimbursements and funding for EMS services through legislative action, with a focus on balance billing and securing additional revenue for the District. Scott Pollard gave testimony for the Oregon State Ambulance Association (OSAA) for house bill 3243. Hospital Transfers expectations were discussed with Labrie Thompson, St. Charles ER manager to help as we begin night transfers and transfer matrix.

Ryan Boyle asked about what we bill and possible revenue involving transfers. Kim Stout asked for transfer numbers with counts and prices for next board meeting. Chief blake agreed that information can be provided at the April 15th board meeting.

**Chief's Report – Chief Blake:**
Chief Blake reported on the status of operational strategies, particularly regarding the ongoing efforts to reduce costs and balance the department’s budget. Layoff notices will be distributed soon, and the department is exploring alternative solutions, such as a quick response vehicle pilot program, to maintain operations while minimizing expenses. The chief also discussed the potential impact of legislative action on EMS funding, including a proposed staffing grant for wildfire response. Blake is scheduled to attend the SDAO Legislative Reception to advocate for state-level EMS funding and other critical needs. Blake emphasized the importance of making difficult choices to stabilize the budget, including cutting operational expenses and seeking more sustainable sources of revenue. Blake has proposed a potential EMS fee to the county but since this is new idea; lots of information to obtain so that it is done properly. Employe meeting was also held today and one big concern was the distribution of workload on current crews since that will be increasing and staffing decreasing with no compensation. Looking at health counsel potential grant as an alternative revenue source. Blake to attend SDAO legislative meeting in Salem to pitch balance billing and possible to get funding from OD type of calls.

Chief Blake hopes annual report will be done by April 15th board meeting.

Dusty Miller expressed a concern of not having audit report back as it has been months of pushback and volunteered to pick up reports from Chris Mahr and Associates’ office in Bend if that is the cause of the delay.

**X. Citizen Input (Continued)**

* Linda Larson expressed concerns for layoffs and that she has given reports to a CPA to look over the Districts Finances. Blake did not disagree with Linda and understood the big swing of hiring personnel and unfortunately there was too much to do so soon. There was reiteration that study over study shows we need to raise our tax rate as it is far below what it should be. There was no easy way but to reduce costs and the only area to be cut was personnel. Questions arose about the Ambulance Service Agreement (ASA) and what would happen if the county took over the District Blake said that is further discussion to be had.
* A question was raised by a Zoom participant about the repayment of grants in the event of staff layoffs. The response clarified that grants do not need to be repaid but cannot be spent on anything other than the intended purpose.
* An email from Kate Zemke was read aloud, noting that no board members had expressed interest in the available positions, with a submission deadline of March 20.

**XI. Additional Comments/Announcements**

* Mark inquired about health insurance options for laid-off employees. Chief Blake responded that this issue is still under review, and more details will be provided once available.
* Danielle read comments from Zoom participants, but there were no further comments from the board or staff at this time.
* No additional comments from Board members or staff.

**XII. Adjournment**

**Motion:** Kim Stout motioned to adjourn the meeting.
**Seconded by:** N/A
**Motion Passed N/A.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM by Board President **Kim Stout**.

**Signatures:**

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**Board President, Kim Stout**       **Recording Secretary**

Board Minutes Accepted 04/16/2025