

spring, when the other half of taxes are received, and spring projects begin. Scot Stokes made a motion to approve the December 2019 Financial Statements. Richard Klose seconded the motion to approve the December 2019 Financial Statements, all in favor, motion passed.

- Review and recommend approval to Council Claims entered through 02/07/2020. Emelie Eaton reviewed the Claims Detail report and the Check Register for accuracy. There were no questions regarding the claims. Scot Stokes made a motion to recommend approval to Council the claims entered through 02/07/2020, Richard Klose seconded the motion, all in favor, motion passed.
- Review and approve Payroll Register for pay period ending 01/26/2020 totaling \$167,901.42. The two-page summary was reviewed, signed and dated. Scot Stokes made a motion to approve the payroll register for pay period ending 01/26/2020 totaling \$167,901.42. Richard Klose seconded the motion, all in favor, motion passed.

New Business - None

Old Business – Chief Peters handed out some information regarding the meal pay/drill pay, which are attached to these minutes. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that she had included an email from approximately a year ago, from the Fire Chief, in the packet. She stated that the email explained what the meal pay/drill pay was for, however as she stated at the last meeting the Fire Chief is going to be better able to answer any questions regarding this topic than her. The Fire Chief explained that the meal pay/drill pay has been in effect for over 40+ years. The meal pay is paid at \$5.00 per Firefighter and goes towards a monthly meal during their Wednesday trainings. The drill pay is paid at a rate of \$8.50 per Firefighter and is for the monthly maintenance the Firemen provide on the vehicles and equipment. This monthly maintenance saves the City of Laurel a lot of money. The Committee asked why the City pays the association and not the Firefighters through payroll. The Chief nor the Clerk/Treasurer had an answer to that question. The Clerk/Treasurer did state that the Auditors had mentioned this was not unheard of in the State of Montana and was a different form of a benefit to the Firefighters. They would like to see some form of accounting for the payment to the association, like an invoice. The Clerk/Treasurer and Chief agreed that putting this on the Firefighters payroll would cause them to incur taxes against it. The Chief stated that he can take the payroll option back to the Fire Association for discussion if that is what the Committee wants him to do. The Chief commented that there has been always been confusion regarding the department and the association. He stated, for instance the furniture in the area the association rents belong to the association, not the City. Since the association began the lease it purchased the items in the rooms. The chairs, tables, and appliances belong to the association, not the City. The Committee asked if there was still a lease with the association. Chief Peters stated that the last lease he has is dated 2003. The Fire Association has requested that a new lease be sent to Council, and that request has been sent to the Mayor. The Committee asked when the remodel was completed. Chief Peters stated that the remodel was completed in 2000 and the addition to the FAP building for the Ambulance Department was done in 2011.

Chief Peters then asked if money was taken out of the General Fund reserves to pay for EMT positions, why was the Fire Department budget cut by the Clerk/Treasurer. He stated that the budget was cut after his meeting with the Mayor, and then recently an additional \$174,000 had been removed from the Fire Department budget. The Clerk/Treasurer asked the Mayor if he wanted her to explain the cuts to the Chief, and the Mayor stated yes. The Clerk/Treasurer explained that the initial cuts were to provide funding for the hiring of a Fire Chief, and three full-time EMTs. During all the discussions regarding hiring EMTs and a Fire Chief it was mentioned several times that the wages for a Fire Chief should be used for hiring additional EMTs, and an Ambulance Director. When the decision was made to not hire a

full-time Fire Chief, those budgeted wages were then moved to the Ambulance Department budget to hire an Ambulance Director, since the Ambulance Director budget had been utilized to hire two additional EMTs. The Fire Chief stated that he understood that but why was his budget cut after his initial meeting in March with the Mayor. He stated vital line items were cut, such as radios, and he wants to know why the Clerk/Treasurer cut his budget without consulting him. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that while the Mayor and Chief Peters were in the same room, she wanted to make some clear. She is not the one responsible for the budget, the Mayor is. She doesn't make decisions to cut the budget, the Mayor does. She stated that she is tired of being blamed for decisions that are the Mayors. She does not have final say on the budget, the Mayor does, and then Council passes the budget. The Mayor asked the Clerk/Treasurer to get the total amount cut from the Fire Department's budget after Chief Peters met with the Mayor in March.

Other Items

- Review the Comp/Overtime Report for pay period ending 01/26/2020. The Committee reviewed the report and had no questions or comments.
- The Clerk/Treasurer stated that she had nothing to report at this time.
- The Mayor stated that the Rod and Gun Club had expressed being a champion for a building at Riverside Park. The Mayor expressed concern since there is an ordinance prohibiting discharging firearms within City limits. He is also concerned that Council will not be open to this after MMIA's concerns regarding shooting at the park. He is also concerned with shooting at the park and the new campground.

Announcements –

- The next Budget and Finance Meeting will be held on Tuesday January 25, 2020 at 5:30pm
- Richard Klose will be reviewing claims for the next meeting

Respectfully submitted,



Bethany Langve
Clerk/Treasurer

NOTE: This meeting is open to the public. This meeting is for information and discussion of the Council for the listed workshop agenda items.

From: Brent Peters
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 4:29 PM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Eaton <deaton4626@aol.com>
Subject: RE: Rejected Claim

Ok, I'm not sure what more I can clarify. There were discussions a few months back when we weren't receiving checks between April and August 2017.

Drill pay (line 190) is paid at a rate of \$8.50 per Firefighter per month. This is for the monthly maintenance program of all the equipment of the Fire Department. This includes apparatus and equipment inspection and minor repairs for the upkeep of equipment. This happens every second Wednesday of the month to keep our equipment in good operating condition and avoid break downs or having to replace broken equipment.

Meal pay (line 223) is paid at a rate of \$5.00 per Firefighter per month. This is paid monthly for the volunteer Firefighters training. Since they train every Wednesday this has always been paid and used towards a monthly meal.

Both these pays have been paid for many years, at least 20 + years. When Fire and Ambulance were combined the CAO refused to increase to reflect the 30 EMT's. This could be a reason that there is a reluctant attitude to conduct EMS maintenance and attend EMS training every month. I have always used these tools to influence Firefighters to conduct maintenance and to attend the countless trainings. I do not wish to see or the possibility of losing Firefighters dedication to performing maintenance or training because of a refusal to pay by the City. These are small amounts to pay have great rewards when it comes to equipment reliability, knowledge, safety and liability.

Let me know if there's any other questions.

Brent S. Peters
Fire Chief



LAUREL FIRE/EMS

215 WEST 1ST STREET • LAUREL, MT • 59044
OFFICE 406.628.4911 • FAX 406.628.2185

Re: Drill and Meal Pay

February 11, 2020

Drill Pay line item 190

Paid at a rate of \$8.50 (current callout pay amount) per Firefighter per month. This is an incentive for the monthly maintenance program of all the equipment of the Fire Department. The Firefighters take one night a month to inspect, operate and conduct minor repairs to keep all equipment and apparatus in good working condition and help identify any major repairs that may be needed. This helps reduce maintenance costs to the city, ensures equipment is ready to respond at a moment's notice and improves the longevity of equipment.

Meal Pay line item 223

Paid at a rate of \$5.00 per Firefighter per month. This is a monthly incentive for the volunteer Firefighters training. Since they train every Wednesday this has always been used towards a monthly meal on the third Wednesday of every month. Instead of having Firefighters who train for their required 30 hour per year the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department Firefighters spend upwards of 100- 200 hours per year training.

Both the Drill Pay and Meal Pay are paid to the Laurel Volunteer Fire Association per requested by the Firefighters. The Laurel Volunteer Fire Association is made up of only Firefighters from the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department.

These two programs have been in place for 40+ years.

Brent S. Peters
Fire Chief, Laurel Fire Department

Brent Peters

From: Bethany Langve
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 6:50 AM
To: Brent Peters
Cc: City Mayor; Eaton
Subject: Re: Rejected Claim

Brent

Thank you

Bethany Keeler
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Laurel, Montana

On Feb 12, 2018, at 9:42 PM, Brent Peters <bpeters@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

All the money goes to the Association and the membership decides what is spent. We pay the Association for their services and they manage it. Same is for the annual hose testing. We pay for a required service and the pay out the way they want.

Brent Peters
Fire Chief
Laurel Fire/ EMS

On Feb 12, 2018, at 6:21 PM, City Clerk <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

I sent out another email correcting my mistake. I shouldn't have used the word rejected.

Does the association pay our volunteers for maintaining the vehicles? I'm trying to make sure I have all the questions asked that may come up at the next Budget Finance meeting.

Bethany Keeler
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Laurel, Montana

On Feb 12, 2018, at 5:05 PM, Brent Peters <bpeters@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

I was just explaining as per the subject "Rejected Claim" as a precaution of not knowing if it was in discussion to reject the claim. I thought it was the City Clerk asking. I apologize.

The Association or other known as the Company is made up as the Firefighters and EMTs of the Fire Department. It buys a meal every month. The Firefighters shares that meal with the EMTs.

Brent Peters
Fire Chief

Laurel Fire/ EMS

On Feb 12, 2018, at 4:40 PM, City Clerk <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov> wrote:

Brent,

This payment is made to the association. Does the association then purchase meals for every Wednesday training? Does the association pay the volunteers for working on the equipment?

Also I want to make something very clear in this email. It is the job, if you will, of the Budget Finance Committee to ask these questions. This is not the first, nor will it be the last claim from all departments that they question. They are not stating they will not pay the claim. They are asking for clarification, nothing more and nothing less. Please do not take this as a refusal to pay anything because that is not the case.

Bethany Keeler

Bethany Keeler
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-7431 ext 2

From: Brent Peters
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 4:29 PM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: City Mayor <citymavor@laurel.mt.gov>; Eaton <deaton4626@aol.com>
Subject: RE: Rejected Claim

Ok, I'm not sure what more I can clarify. There were discussions a few months back when we weren't receiving checks between April and August 2017.

Drill pay (line 190) is paid at a rate of \$8.50 per Firefighter per month. This is for the monthly maintenance program of all the equipment of the Fire Department. This includes apparatus and equipment inspection and minor repairs for the upkeep of equipment. This happens every second Wednesday of the month to keep our equipment in good operating condition and avoid break downs or having to replace broken equipment.

Meal pay (line 223) is paid at a rate of \$5.00 per Firefighter per month. This is paid monthly for the volunteer Firefighters training. Since they train every

Wednesday this has always been paid and used towards a monthly meal.

Both these pays have been paid for many years, at least 20 + years. When Fire and Ambulance were combined the CAO refused to increase to reflect the 30 EMT's. This could be a reason that there is a reluctant attitude to conduct EMS maintenance and attend EMS training every month. I have always used these tools to influence Firefighters to conduct maintenance and to attend the countless trainings. I do not wish to see or the possibility of losing Firefighters dedication to performing maintenance or training because of a refusal to pay by the City. These are small amounts to pay have great rewards when it comes to equipment reliability, knowledge, safety and liability.

Let me know if there's any other questions.

Brent S. Peters
Fire Chief
Laurel Fire/ EMS

<image001.png>

The American flag does not fly because the wind moves past it.....

The American flag flies from the last breath of each military member who has died serving it.

From: City Clerk
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 1:10 PM
To: Brent Peters <bpeters@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: City Mayor <citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Eaton <deaton4626@aol.com>
Subject: RE: Rejected Claim

Chief Peters,

I need to clarify as I misspoke in my previous email. Your claim was not rejected. It was removed from the approval list in order to request additional information for clarification purposes. The claim will be placed on the next claims approval list.

Bethany Keeler
Bethany Keeler
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Laurel, Montana

(406) 628-7431 ext 2

From: City Clerk
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 11:58 AM
To: Brent Peters <bpeters@laurel.mt.gov>
Cc: City Mayor (citymayor@laurel.mt.gov)
<citymayor@laurel.mt.gov>; Eaton
<deaton4626@aol.com>
Subject: FW: Rejected Claim

Chief Peters,

Your meal pay/drill pay claim, in the amount of \$607.50, was rejected by the Budget Finance Committee. They requested additional information on the claim and I didn't not accurately recall what this payment was for. I recall you stating it was for the meals served during training and the servicing of the Fire Department vehicles. Can you please provide me with a more in-depth answer, as I cannot explain it?

Thank you,

Bethany Keeler
Bethany Keeler
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-7431 ext 2

From: City Mayor
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 11:26 AM
To: City Clerk <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov>
Subject: Re: Rejected Claim

Bethany,
Would you please have the Fire Chef provide to us a complete accounting detail of the costs for the drill and meal pay claim, please.

Thank you,

Tom Nelson
Laurel City Mayor
City Hall
PO Box 10
Laurel, MT. 59044-0010
406.633.3809
citymayor@laurel.mt.gov

From: City Clerk
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2018 9:48 AM
To: City Mayor; Eaton
Subject: Rejected Claim

Hello Mayor and Council Chair,

I am unsure of who is to notify Chief Peters that his drill pay/meal pay claim has been rejected. Any thoughts?

Bethany Keeler
Bethany Keeler
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Laurel, Montana
(406) 628-7431 ext 2