

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2020**

An Emergency Services Committee Meeting was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Committee Chair Bruce McGee at 6:00 p.m. on February 24, 2020.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bruce McGee, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Klose
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Irv Wilke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heidi Sparks
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Kimmet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taryn Massa
<input type="checkbox"/> Richard Dawes	

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brent Peters, Fire Chief
Levi Vandersloot, Ambulance Director
Stan Langve, Chief of Police

Public Input: None.

General Items:

1. Review and approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of January 27, 2020.

Motion by Council Member Wilke to Approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of January 27, 2020, seconded by Council Member Klose. A vote was taken on the motion, and all six committee members present voted aye. Motion carried 6-0.

2. Removal of Richard Dawes from the Emergency Services Committee:

Chairman McGee stated that Richard Dawes has not been to a meeting in a very long time, and the process to remove a member, per the City Attorney, was to have a motion by the Committee. Council Member Klose made a motion to remove Richard Dawes from the Emergency Services Committee, effective immediately. Taryn Massa seconded the motion to remove Richard Dawes from the Emergency Services Committee. The Chairmen stated that the appointment to fill the vacancy is the authority of the Mayor. He stated that he would inform the Mayor of the vacancy, so a new member could be appointed. The Committee asked if the vacancy would be advertised, and the Chair stated there is always something posted regarding vacancies. The Chair stated that anyone interested in serving on the Emergency Services Committee needs to formalize a letter to the Mayor. The Chair stated if anyone interested in serving on the Committee had any questions, he would be happy to answer them. All six Committee members present voted aye, motion carried 6-0.

3. Update from the Fire Chief, Brent Peters:

The Fire Chief stated that the report for January 2020, the Firefighters have responded to 42 calls totaling 495 hours. There were 2 hours of fire prevention, 203 hours of training, and 46 hours of maintenance for a grand total of 746 hours. The Chief stated that longtime retired Firefighter, Chuck Rogers passed away. He was a member of the Laurel Volunteer Fire Department for 27 years, and a Mayor of Laurel at one time. The Chief gave the details regarding Mr. Rogers funeral. The Chief wanted to follow-up on last month's conversation. The Chief had a correction that needed to be made in the minutes of the January 27, 2020 meeting. He had already told the Clerk/Treasurer, but

the number of gallons maintained is 3500. The Chief did some research regarding billing for services, and he has yet to find anything regarding billing in the State of Montana. The only items he has found to date are regarding negligent arson, or if someone does not live within the districts. He stated there are mixed reviews regarding Fire Department's billing for services. This is due to the fact that Cities receive tax money to fund these services. The Districts pay directly for the fire services so he is not sure if they can double bill for those services. He stated that in some states it is legal to bill for services and in some states it is not. The Chief is going to continue to research this question. The Chief stated if the City can bill for services, we need to be prepared for some angry citizens, because they are basically being double billed. The Chief compared it to the Safety Mill Levy because people are paying for services and then being asked to pay for it again. The Chief stated that the City Attorney may want to take a look at this. The Chair explained this discussion topic stemmed from him asking if the Fire Department was billing for services covered by insurances. The Chief stated again that he has not found the legal statutes that would allow for this billing. He has found blogs and forums talking about it but those can be filled with inaccurate information. The Chief stated that he could go talk to insurance agents regarding this and see what information they share with him. The Chief stated the Department can definitely bill if the individuals are not in the City or Fire Districts. The Chief stated that he is working with the Clerk/Treasurer and going forward any bills from the Fire Department will be generated by the Chief and sent to the Clerk/Treasurer. The Chair stated he agrees the City Attorney needs to weigh in on this, and he would like to take this to City Council and find out if they want to move forward with it or not. The Committee asked the Chief if this would be for people outside the City who do not pay taxes to the City, and the Chief confirmed this was correct. The Committee asked the Chief who would do the billing if the Fire Department and Ambulance Department worked on an accident involving out of state vehicles. The Chief stated he would bill them for the cost of the engine going to the scene. The Chief stated he read where one department out of North Carolina had billed out approximately \$78,000 and had received \$1,100 in payments. The Committee asked if the Fire Department would be billing the individual or the insurance company. The Chief explained he would bill the individual and they would take that bill to their insurance company. The Committee asked if this would require a resolution or ordinance passed by City Council. The Chief stated he already has the ability to bill for the Fire Department as it is in Laurel Municipal Code. The Committee asked if this was something the Ambulance billing company could do for the City. The Chief stated down the road this is something they could certainly do. In the past the Chief has not billed for these types of services, but if the City Council wants him to then the City Attorney would need to be involved, and possibly a collection agency. The Chief stated the City would need to look into tracking people down, possible liens on businesses, etc. if this is something, they want him to pursue. The Committee stated there are a lot of factors that must be looked at. The Chief stated when he responds to a call, billing someone is not on his mind, saving the individual is. The Clerk/Treasurer stated she will correct the minutes to reflect the correct number of gallons.

4. Update from Police Chief, Stan Langve:

The Police Chief stated that the month of February has been a busy month. The total calls for Police, Fire, and Ambulance, for the month to date were 507. He expects another 200 before the month of February is over. He stated there were 57 traffic stops, and some of the bigger cases have been worked. He stated there is an increase in assault calls, and felony assault calls. He stated there was one unattended death on the 10th of February that took a lot of manpower, and resources. Just the scene security involved took two days' worth of manpower. Suspicious activity and thefts are increasing. He stated that more transients are moving through town. There were 22 warrants served, which is good for the City. He stated that the detective has had approximately one sex assault a week. He stated he had received a report on Officer Sedgwick, who is at the academy. He is doing very well and will graduate the first part of April. The Chief has started the hiring process to hire

two officers. The Department will be down an officer because one officer is moving to Helena, and another officer has already left the department. The Chief explained the next big project for the department is upgrading their radios. The repeater is also a high priority, and some site surveys need to be done so a better location for it can be found. He explained that the portable radios also need to be upgraded. Currently the department has hand-me-down radios that are 14-15 years old. He stated the current portable radios are no longer serviced, and this is another reason they need to be upgraded. The Committee asked what has caused the increase in warrants. The Chief explained that two of the big ones served were for the Taco Bell drive thru robbery. The Marshalls assisted with getting those two individuals served and through their attorneys they turned themselves in. The Chief explained that most of this is due to female's that have warrants. The jail has gotten the new female wing open so they will take the individual on the warrant. The Committee asked about the new jail being built in Carbon County. They wanted to know if this would be a location the City of Laurel would contact for taking individuals. The Chief stated that would be out of jurisdiction for the City of Laurel and if they did take anyone the City would have to pay for it. He stated this jail will open full because this jail is years behind being build. It was necessary years ago, but the levy did not pass for it. He does hope that when that jail opens it will allow for more room at the Yellowstone jail. The Chief stated the Yellowstone County jail is so full that inmates are being housed in Townsend. Officers must drive to Townsend to pick up inmates and then drive them back.

5. Update from the Ambulance Director, Levi Vandersloot:

The Ambulance Director stated the total number of patient contacts is 164, compared to last year was 118. The Department is a lot busier and is having a lot of overtime due to that. The Ambulance Director stated they need more people. He stated having a combined department would not sustain the call volume they currently have. He stated moving forward having full time employees on every day is the only solution. The transports are up, compared to last year. In January 2019, the department had 30 and this year they had 50. He stated this will help with revenue because now the department can respond to transports. He stated the department is still overwhelmed at this time. The Committee asked if the Director kept track of how many calls the department cannot make. The Director stated they do keep track of those calls. He stated in January 2020 the department missed 16 calls, however the Quick Response Unit or QRU went to 9 of those calls. The Committee asked how long the response is when the department misses a call. The Director stated sometimes it is quick, however sometimes it can take a long time. The Department missed a call at 4:00am this morning and there was no ambulance available until 8:00am. There was nobody available to respond to the call, and the full-time employees responded when they arrived. The Director stated this call was not life threatening and the individual was stable at a nursing home, however he has witnessed life threatening calls have to wait for long periods of time. The Committee asked how many full-time employees the department had now. The Director stated there were 5 full time employees and the Mayor has a job description for a director. The Committee asked how many of the volunteer became full time employees, and the Director state three of them did. The Committee asked if there was a plan in place to get more volunteers to replace those three. The Director stated the department is advertising for volunteers. He stated people do not want to volunteer for \$3.50 an hour. He stated the department is looking at adjusting the \$3.50 an hour.

New Business: None

Old Business:

6. Safety Mill Levy Discussion:

The Chair stated that the Ambulance Director had provided him with DA Davidson's contact information. They assist with bond levy projects. The Chair contacted DA Davidson and spoke with Bridgette Extrum. The Chair and her had a great conversation. Bridgette provided the Chair with some ideas regarding the levy. She stated Dorsey and Whitney may be a good source for help with the Safety Mill Levy. She also recommended contacting Montana League of Cities and Towns. The Clerk/Treasurer previously provided the number of days required to get a Safety Mill Levy on a ballot. It requires 85 days, after the order of resolution, to be placed on a ballot. The soonest this could be placed on a ballot is possibly June 2nd. Bridgette stated if the mill levy was in the amount of 20 mills, it would raise approximately \$160,000 a year for the Ambulance Department. This would increase the taxes on a \$100,000 home by \$4 a year. It would increase the taxes on a \$200,000 home by \$8 a year. These are loose figures, so the Committee needs to know how much money the Ambulance Department needs annually, and what those funds will be used for. The Committee also needs to know the length of time the levy is going to be for. If the levy is given a sunset date, it can be brought forward again to the voters prior to that sunset date to extend it. The Ambulance Director stated that five more employees would be needed for the department and this would cost approximately \$241,000. The Director stated there is an ambulance available for sale in Whitehall and it is \$120,000. He would like to try to purchase this ambulance for the department this fiscal year. He agrees this levy would need a sunset date, for review, and increase or decrease. The Ambulance Director has called County Commissioner Pitman regarding an Ambulance district. The County will need to assist with this funding. The Committee wants to make sure they have accurate and detailed information to provide to the public. The Ambulance Director is working hard to talk with the County regarding ambulance service. The Committee talked about the timing of the mill levy. The Committee wants to make sure the levy is given enough time to be prepared properly and thoroughly. The Committee does not understand why the information gathering process is taking as long as it is. The Committee agreed that the June 2nd date was going to be cutting it too close. The Ambulance Director stated this levy needs to move forward because his department is not getting by with the staff they have. The Committee agreed that the November election is not a good time for this levy. The Ambulance Director stated in case this levy fails the first time, the City should not give up. Shepard did not pass their levy the first time, and they went back and tweaked the levy for a second time. The Committee requested to know what the future needs are of the Police and Fire Departments. The Committee wants to know this so when the Ambulance Department doing good financially, the focus can switch to the other two departments. The Committee requested a list of levies with sunset dates. They feel this information would be vital to provide to the community. The community may be more agreeable to pass this levy if other levies are sunsetting. One of the Committee members requested the levy be put on the June 2nd ballot for approval. The Chair stated he would request this be put on the March 3rd meeting agenda and see what the response is. The Committee will continue to discuss balancing the timeline versus giving the levy appropriate attention. The Chair stated the City could possibly pick a separate ballot date however the cost of ballots, etc. would have to be paid for the City. Putting this levy on with an already scheduled election cuts those costs. The Committee requested to know what the cost of a mail-in ballot would be, or special election. Chief Peters stated he agreed that the other two departments needed to be looked at for their needs. The Chief has a questionnaire that he would like to get out to the Council and the Community. It is a questionnaire asking what individuals want. He stated this questionnaire will help him and the department budget for future needs of the City.

Other Items: None

Announcements

Next Emergency Services meeting will be held on March , 2020, at 6:00pm

Motion by Committee Member Kimmet to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Klose. A vote was taken on the motion. All six Committee Members present voted aye. Motion carried 6-0.

The Emergency Services Committee adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

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.

DRAFT

Brittnev Moorman



Bret Rutherford <brutherford@co.yellowstone.mt.gov>
Wednesday, March 4, 2020 7:42 AM
Bethany Langve
RE: Special Election Costs

Without any knowing any details, roughly \$3,800 for mail ballot and \$5,700 for poll election.

From: Bethany Langve <cityclerk@laurel.mt.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 8:38 PM
To: Bret Rutherford <brutherford@co.yellowstone.mt.gov>
Subject: Special Election Costs

Hello Bret,

How much would a special election cost approximately for the City of Laurel?

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