

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2019**

An Emergency Services Committee Meeting was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Committee Chair Bruce McGee at 6:04 p.m. on September 23, 2019.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

☒ Bruce McGee, Chair	☒ Richard Klose
☒ Irv Wilke	☐ Bill Mountsier
☒ Pat Kimmet	☒ Taryn Massa
☐ Richard Dawes	

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brent Peters, Fire Chief
Stan Langve, Police Chief
Bethany Langve, Clerk/Treasurer

Public Input: None.

General Items:

1. Review and approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of July 29, 2019.

Motion by Council Member Klose to Approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of July 29, 2019, seconded by Council Member Wilke. A vote was taken on the motion, and all four committee members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

2. Review and approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of August 26, 2019.

Motion by Committee Member Massa to Approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of August 26, 2019, seconded by Council Member Wilke. A vote was taken on the motion, and all four committee members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

New Business: None.

Old Business:

3. Update from the Fire Chief:

It was a busy month for the department. The severity staffing, which is paid for by the State of Montana continued. The department put in 1,300 hours of severity staffing for the month. The department responded to seven mutual aid calls, including the Mountain View fire that was North of town. The Laurel Fire Department initially took command of the Mountain View fire and then turned command back over to Molt as it is their area. The department had 187 hours of wildland fires within the LVFD district, 168 hours of motor vehicle accidents, 12 hours of other rescues, 73 hours of alarms, 89 hours of medical assists, 464 hours of mutual aid requests, and 70 hours of other calls. The department had a total of 2,554 hours of service for the month. The severity staffing was extended until midnight at times due to thunderstorms coming in late in the evenings. The Mountain View fire had a lot of challenges. The Chief has an after actions review with the County Fire Chiefs in Lockwood tomorrow night. This helps all the Fire Chiefs learn what went well and where things

could be improved on incidents. Severity staffing is over for the year unless there is a freak temperature swing. Fire Prevention Week is October 6th through the 12th. The department does theirs the 7th through the 11th so they can go around to the schools and talk to the kids and interact with them. On Wednesday October 9th from 6-9pm is the LVFD open house. The Chief would like everyone to come down and see all the equipment and the firefighters. There will be demonstrations with the new extrication tools. The Chief wanted to make the Committee aware the Yellowstone County is going out for another safety mill levy for EMS. They are still in the early stages of bringing it together but maybe for the next Emergency Services Committee meeting KC Williams or Commissioner Ostlund can come in and talk about it. The Committee commended the department for the amount of hours put in. The Committee asked the Chief what his opinion of the fire season was. The Chief commented that he felt we were lucky this fire season in the fact that we had relatively small fires. Most of the fires were man made and were caused by people burning. The County didn't even have to go into any restrictions this year. There were certain days of no open burning because of the red flag conditions. The Shepard area, however, got hit really hard. The LVFD responded to that area three times. The Molt area got hit really hard, and the LVFD responded out there three times battling large fires. The County got hit pretty hard but the LVFD was pretty fortunate this fire season. Carbon County got rain storms every night. He believes that Carbon County didn't get a fire until about a week and a half ago because of all the rain. You never know though as next year could be different. With the weather patterns changing and the summers starting later and earlier falls, things are really weird.

4. Update from the Police Chief:

The Fire, Ambulance & Police had 778 calls for service since the last meeting. Just over 700 of those calls were for the Police Department. Currently there are a lot of thefts going on. Detective Sauter has been very busy working on the criminal mischief from earlier in the summer but there are still a lot of thefts going on. The Detective is working on the armed robbery from the other day. Officer Booth is off to the academy and Dispatcher Sell is improving daily. The Chief is hoping to start the new dispatcher two weeks from today, on the 7th. The manpower is finally falling into place. There were 115 traffic stops since the last meeting. The SROs are back in the schools so there are two less men during the day, but they are still out patrolling. On October 11th contractors will be in for the NextGen 911 communication to begin putting hardware in. Two weeks after that they will begin getting things switched over. This is a very positive thing. The only issues they are running into is having to upgrade the electrical and conduit. Some of the key components in the server room are 20+ years old and must be upgraded. The Chief stated that all his men and women have been very busy, and he is very proud of their work. Football season is going on at the stadium. He has noticed that the parking issues have improved around the stadium. The education process regarding the parking at the stadium is continuing. The Committee commented that there was an announcement during the football game regarding the parking and some people did come move their cars after the announcement. The Committee asked if there was an adult involved in the vandalism that occurred earlier in the summer. The Chief stated that all parties were from the Laurel area and one was over the age of 18.

5. Ambulance Safety Mill Levy:

The Chair stated that he doesn't have all the information he's requested yet. He is still waiting to receive some research items. He did provide to the Committee an article (attached to these minutes) that Mayor Nelson provided to him. The article includes a timeline for Yellowstone County and School District #2. The Committee is still lacking organization in order to form the steering committee and a timeline for this levy. The Chair stated, to Chief Peters, that he did see the email regarding the County wide safety mill levy, and that may change the dynamics of this a little bit. Chairman McGee is going to have a conversation with the Mayor regarding how a County wide

safety mill levy would affect the City's mill levy tomorrow night. Regardless the City still must do something to get it to 100% of ambulance calls answered. The Chair is concerned that the Committee is losing valuable time to promote the levy. He understands that you don't want to promote it too early because then it will not be on the voters' minds when it is time to vote for it. He wants to make sure that the Committee is on the right pace and not behind. He also wants to be sure that everyone on the Committee understands their limitations per MCA. He doesn't want this levy to not pass because someone did something against MCA. He asked for any input on the subject. The Committee asked if putting together a steering committee was appropriate at this point. Clete Knaub, who used to be on the Emergency Services Committee expressed his desire to help put this levy together. The Committee would like to see the steering committee put together and asked if it was done by appointment of the Mayor. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that all committees are by appointment of the Mayor, however, the Mayor would be looking to the Emergency Services Committee for their recommendation on who to put on the committee. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that she spoke with Bret Rutherford at the Yellowstone County Election Office and the City can hold a special ballot election at any time. The Mayor was correct that a special ballot election may be held at any time and not just on November 5th. The Committee stated that was very helpful because they could then set their own date and work backwards from there. The Committee talked about possibly doing this in the spring of 2020 to get it away from the November 2020 election. The Committee stated that a critical piece they needed to get done is what are they going to ask for and how much is it. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that for the needs analysis Riley is going to be an essential component. Riley knows the needs of the department better than anyone, and he is going to be essential in getting that on paper. The Clerk/Treasurer spoke to him earlier in the day and asked him if he was going to put together the needs analysis for the levy, and he stated he would have something available for the Committee by the next meeting. Putting together the needs analysis is going to take some time because going from a volunteer only to a partial employed + volunteer staffed department changes the usage on equipment. The equipment is going to be used more often so your wear and tear goes up and the needs change. The Committee asked if Riley had access to the last mill levy the City had put together. The Chair stated the information was outdated and convoluted and he was afraid it would not be of good use to Riley. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that she has reached out to Lisa Lowy, the HR Director of Livingston, and asked for their last ambulance mill levy documents. Lisa is going to email those to the Clerk/Treasurer, and she will share those with Riley. The Clerk/Treasurer is hoping these documents will be a good starting point for Riley, so he doesn't have to recreate the wheel. The City of Laurel's needs will not be the same as Livingston's but at least it will be a place to start for Riley. The Clerk/Treasurer is also going to contact Columbus and see if she can get their levy documents for reference also. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that Lisa Lowy's advice was to start with the ambulance department's needs, put a cost to those needs and prioritize those needs. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that Riley was going to be working on this. The Committee asked how long Riley had been on the ambulance department. Chief Peters stated he thought Riley started in 2013. The Clerk/Treasurer handed around an informational calendar that Livingston had put together for one of their levy's. She wanted the Committee to see it as an example of what Livingston did to get facts to the public. The Committee asked if the City paid for that and the Clerk/Treasurer stated yes, the City could pay for that because it was presenting facts and it was not promotional. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that she did email the City Attorney regarding the MCA that dictates what City Council and City Staff can and cannot do for this mill levy. The Clerk/Treasurer did state that the two individuals on the Committee that are not City Council or City Staff can do anything they want but they cannot promote the levy as a member of the Emergency Services Committee. The Committee asked if the City could pay for the cost of the mail in ballot. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that the City could pay for the cost of the election and the cost of educational/informational materials. The City could not pay for any promotional materials whatsoever. The steering committee can do fundraising and

promotional events. City Staff and Council can be on hand to answer factual questions at these events but cannot promote the levy. Private funds can be used for the promotion of the levy, not City or taxpayer funds. Department Heads of the City can be present at events to answer questions regarding what the money would be used for, but they could not tell anyone what they should do with their vote. They could only answer factual questions. Taryn the taxpayer could be at an event cheering and yelling “vote for this mill levy” because she is not on the City Council or City Staff. The Committee would like to see this levy promoted strongly, legally and passed by the citizens. It was clarified that this levy is just focused on the ambulance department, and the answer was yes. The Committee stated that reading through the document handed out by the Chair it states that Yellowstone County does not have any levies on the horizon, however Chief Peters said they are going to have a sit down and put one together. Has something changed since the 5th of August? Chief Peters stated that it was on the agenda at the last County Fire Council meeting. They have been talking that they want to go back towards this. Chief Peters spoke with Commissioner Ostlund during the 9/11 Ceremony and he confirmed that the County is looking at going to an ambulance service. The Committee was curious about the contradiction within a month timeline. The Committee asked if anyone was trying to tie things together with the County and find out what they were trying to do. The Chair stated that just having learned about this, nobody has but they will look into it now. Chief Peters stated to keep in mind when talking about a safety mill levy, and one of the things they faced last time, was a clear understanding of who pays for what. When this goes for a vote the City of Laurel votes, not anyone outside the City. None of the surrounding service areas vote, just the City. There was a misunderstanding last time that the City of Laurel would pay for everything and everyone outside the City limits wouldn’t have to pay for anything related to EMS, and that wasn’t true. Everyone will still receive their bill and those outside the City limits get billed more because of the mileage. The Chief stated that is something else the Committee needs to determine. Is this ambulance service only going to be for the City of Laurel or will they go outside the City limits. The Chief stated that if the County is going to go out for a County wide EMS service then maybe that should be tied into the levy. The City is funding just the calls in the City of Laurel and the County is funding the rest of it. The Fire Chief stated that if this is the case then the response numbers will be considerably less than they are now because the majority of the ambulance calls are outside the City limits. The Committee stated that they were not sure if the numbers were broken down that far and stated that Riley would need to address that. The Committee asked if something like that would be even possible. The Fire Chief stated that if the County passed that they would have to figure that out. He stated it would be like Shepard. Shepard doesn’t have an ambulance service, so AMR is automatically dispatched. The Fire Chief stated that there may be a mutual aid agreement or a district contract, just like for fire protection. Fire Chief stated that currently the EMS map is slightly larger than the fire district map. The Committee thanked Chief Peters for bringing this to their attention. The Committee expressed frustration having this thrown in the mix of things but agreed they needed to continue to work on the City mill levy. The concern of the Committee is how long it takes to get these things moving, and then have obstacles thrown in the way. Chief Peters stated that if the decision is to keep it only City wide it will affect Chief Langve and his dispatcher because the 911 funds will go down and the call volume. The Committee will decide on a path forward for the citizens of Laurel and adjust accordingly as things come forward. The Committee would like to have KC Williams and/or Commissioner Ostlund present at the next meeting to address the County wide safety mill levy. The Committee asked for clarification on the fact that only the City of Laurel residents will be voting on the mill levy. Chief Peters stated that only the City of Laurel residents will be voting on the levy regardless of who the ambulance services. He stated that voters will be asking why they are paying for the levy, but everyone gets a bill. Chief Peters stated they faced something similar when the Fire Department had a new fire hall on the ballot at the same time as the stadium. All voters voted on the fire hall but only people in the school district voted on the stadium and it passed. The Committee asked if only the voters of Laurel

pay for the levy and the answer is yes. The question was asked by the Committee if there was any way to include the surrounding areas. There was talk of an ambulance district to include the surrounding areas. Chief Peters stated that there are things in legislature that affect this. There was a house bill that passed allowing a Class 2 City to contract with a district. He is unsure if it is EMS or Fire only. There was a discussion on how the best method of getting the correct information out to the voters. The Committee stated that 100% of calls answered 100% of the time is the goal of this levy. Chief Peters stated that you must show the need. The only ones who truly know are those that have called for an ambulance and haven't been able to get one. He stated that we may have to present hard facts, and nobody wants to look bad, but we must put those numbers out there. The Committee stated that an all-volunteer service cannot take care of a community the size of Laurel any longer. The possibility is that if you call for an ambulance one may not be able to come to you. Chief Peters cautioned the Committee against stating 100% of calls answered 100% of the time because there are always going to be times when the ambulances are all out. The Committee stated that is where the mutual aids come in. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that the Committee might want to invite the Mayor to the next meeting as he has been in communication with the County Commissioners as well. The Committee asked if the levy would include all individuals who lived inside the zip code 59044 and the answer is no. Not all the 59044 zip code is inside the City limits. Chief Peters stated that the attorney who created the districts for Columbus and Red Lodge is out of Bozeman. He may be a good resource for some of these questions. The Committee is waiting for answers to questions so it can move forward. The Committee talked about meetings being cancelled in November and December. The Chair stated that those meetings may have to be put back on in order to get this levy moved forward. The Chair stated that you first have to know when this election is going to take place and how much is it going to cost so he is waiting for answers to his questions so the Committee can move forward. The Committee asked if the decision to separate the ambulance from the fire department was final. Chief Peters stated that right now the two departments are separate. Chief Peters thinks the Mayor's wishes is to combine the two. He is unsure as he has tried to get ahold of the Mayor by sending emails to try to get clarification. Chief Peters has heard of a full-time Fire Chief and a full-time ambulance director, and full-time firefighter/EMTs. He is going to save that fight for when he gets down the road because he has a lot of concerns over that plan. Chief Peters feels that the City needs to hire a full-time EMS Director and EMTs, and that will fix the problem. Why fix something that isn't broken? If we go to a Class 2 City, we already meet the needs according to all the research the Fire Chief has done over the past nine years. The Fire Chief feels we need to fix the problem at hand and that is we don't have EMS staff. There is no problem on the fire side with response so why incur those costs of hiring a full-time Fire Chief. Lets just fix the problem and look at the future needs of the City as we go. The Committee stated that if the Mayor is not thinking like that the Committee needs to know. Chief Peters stated that the Mayor isn't, and the Chief will have packets for the Committee next meeting. The Chair stated that it is a challenge and he want to see this fixed. The Committee asked if the Council and Mayor want the same thing. The Chair stated that he felt the Council and Mayor strongly want to fix this issue. The Committee needs to form a plan and move forward with it. Chief Peters reminded the Committee that as they move forward with this levy to not forget that they have two other departments that have needs also. The Committee stated that they will promote for the other two departments needs as well. Chief Langve stated that his sole goal as the Chief of Laurel is to get his department ready for the future. The Community is growing, and we need to get it ready. The future is here, and we must promote it. What is your crime rate like, what is your fire rate, what is your EMS like?

Other Items:

Council Member Klose thanked both Chiefs for being a part of the 9/11 Ceremony.

Announcements

6. Next Emergency Services meeting will be held on October 28, 2019, at 6:00pm

Motion by Council Member Wilke to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Klose. A vote was taken on the motion. All five committee members present voted aye. Motion carried 5-0.

The Emergency Services Committee adjourned at 7:15 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.