

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, JULY 29, 2019**

An Emergency Services Committee Meeting was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Committee Chair Bruce McGee at 6:03 p.m. on July 29, 2019.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mayor Nelson
Brent Peters, Fire Chief
Stan Langve, Police Chief

Public Input: None.

General Items:

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

Motion by Council Member Mountsier to Approve the minutes of the Emergency Services Committee meeting of April 29, 2019, seconded by Council Member Klose. A vote was taken on the motion, and all four committee members present voted aye. Motion carried 4-0.

The Chair explained that there was no quorum at the May 20, 2019 meeting so there were no minutes to approve.

New Business:

2. Recommendation to Council to Place the Ambulance Department Under the Direction of the Fire Department

The Chair explained that he wanted the Mayor to express his plans for the Ambulance and Fire Departments, to the Committee, before any other discussions took place. He stated that the role of the Committee would be to make a recommendation to Council or not make a recommendation to Council on this matter. The Mayor stated that he wasn't sure why this was on the Emergency Services Committee agenda. The Chair stated that it was on the agenda because it was briefly mentioned in a previous meeting and not discussed.

The Mayor thanked the Chair and stated that late last year or early this year he had a meeting with the CAO, Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief when the term Fire/EMS personnel was mentioned. He stated that he liked that idea and found it intriguing. The Mayor looked into it more and investigated it, not only in Montana but what other communities were doing period. The more he looked into it the more it made sense to have a combined Fire/EMS service. He then met for three hours with the City Manager, Fire Chief and the HR Director of Livingston about their combined Fire/EMS service and then he had a two-hour meeting with the Fire Chief of Columbus about their combined Fire/EMS service. The Fire Chief of Columbus stated the opportunity for the combined staff to field EMS calls due to the frequency of fire calls. As we move forward as a City into 2nd and

eventually 1st Class the Mayor feels it is prudent for the City to start working on this process now. It is going to take a long time until we have any type of full-time service, but we can start moving toward that and start supplementing our volunteers. Both Livingston and Columbus supplement their volunteers with full-time staff. In the meantime, the Mayor is looking into a short-term contract with AMR to get some staff now. For the past two years the City has been running as a combined department, but we still don't have the staff to answer calls. Hiring a full-time Ambulance Department, to try to answer all calls, is a lot of personnel and a lot of money. The thought was to look at hiring a full-time Fire/EMS Chief who can then start putting the combined Fire/EMS department together. The Committee asked the Mayor if the City had been operating illegally because the Fire and Ambulance Departments had been operating together under the memo released by the previous CAO, Heidi Jensen. The Mayor stated that the City has not been operating illegally but has been operating outside the scope of what is proper. He clarified that there was never a resolution, combining the departments, passed by Council. The memo gave notice they were going to be combined in the future and there was going to be follow-up in 30 days and then nothing else ever occurred. The Committee asked if they wanted to take no action at this time they could do so. The Mayor stated that they could and that he had been asked to not combine the departments at this time since they are not combined by resolution. The Mayor stated that at this time the Fire Chief is not overseeing the Ambulance Department. The Committee asked who was overseeing the Ambulance Department and the Mayor stated that Riley Hutchens was currently overseeing the Ambulance Department. The Mayor stated that there are going to be a lot of difficult changes the City will go through as it grows, and at points there will be painful decisions and changes made. The Mayor does feel that the decision and changes are for the benefit of the community. Right now, there are a large percentage of calls that are not responded to. The Committee commended the Mayor on his efforts.

After hearing the Mayor speak the Committee decided to take no action on this item, at this time.

The Committee asked if Riley Hutchens could begin attending the Emergency Services Committee meetings. The Chair will make sure that Riley receives the agenda going forward and the invite.

3. Update from Chief Peters

Chief Peters handed out the June report to the Committee and apologized that the Fire and Ambulance reports were still combined at that time. He briefly went through the number of fire, motor vehicle accident, falls alarm, medical assists, other calls for the month. There were a total of 38 calls and 1,080 hours of volunteer time. He also stated that they had 22 fire driver calls for the month of June. He stated that the new extrication tools were due to arrive Wednesday. They are battery operated and he is hoping to set up a time to demonstrate those for the Council. He wants the Council to be able to see the difference between the hydraulic tools the department has used for so many years and the new battery-operated ones. Also, on Wednesday there will be a presentation by CHS for the money that went into the tools. The Clerk/Treasurer helped with Pat Kimmet getting a grant for \$50,000 for these tools. The grant is \$10,000 a year for the next 5 years. CHS wants to do a little presentation so the Chief is trying to get all his firemen that work at CHS together for the presentation of the money. The Chief stated that the department just purchased a 2004 F-250 in order to downsize what they currently use as a support vehicle. Currently they are using a 1976 beer truck. The support vehicle carries the cascade system that refills the SCBAS. They will be able to take all the equipment out of the old beer truck and put it into the new truck. They purchased the truck from Cornerstone so it is already equipped with the boxes and has plenty of storage. The Chief just received a call that the department will be participating again this year in the severity staffing with DNRC. This is for the wildland fire season. DNRC pays to have firefighters staffed at the station eight or twelve hours a day during wildland fire season. Last year Laurel staffed three

firefighters and this year they will staff five, if they are able. It is a great opportunity for the City, as the firefighters do a lot of work while they are staffed at the station waiting. Also, being a part of the taskforce allows the department to respond anywhere in Yellowstone County and part of Stillwater County. It also allows the taskforce to respond here if anything should happen near Laurel. They used to staff taskforces up at the Airport but now they staff firefighters throughout the County. This should start Friday. The Committee asked the Chief to clarify the difference between the new extrication equipment and the old equipment. The Chief explained that the old extrication tools run off of hydraulics. So, there are lines that run from the power plant to the extrication tools and firefighters can trip over them, and they can leak. If one of the tools fails, the crew is dead in the water and has no back-up. The new tools are all battery operated and they weigh about the same as the old ones. When the firefighters must do an extrication at a distance, they can just take the tools and go. They new tools are more powerful than the old ones. They run off a 110-volt battery. The batteries can be purchased anywhere because they are not special order. The system can run on AC or DC power as well. The Committee then asked the Chief if he has noticed an improvement in wildland fires using the taskforce. The Chief stated that this was the 3rd year Laurel has participated in the taskforce. He has seen the taskforce respond to fires near Laurel and a reduction in the damage wildfires have done. Before he would have to call the DES coordinator and then he would have to call DNRC. Now he can call DNRC directly and that cuts down the time. Laurel has responded as far as Custer to help fight wildland fires. The Committee thanked the Chief and his volunteers for their time and dedication.

3. Update from Chief Langve

Chief Langve stated that the department is over 5,000 calls for the year and over 600 incidents for the year. He stated that the felonies are increasing with the summer months. The transient activity is increasing as well. He stated that the 3rd and 4th of July went well. The reserves stepped in and did what they could to help out. He stated that the department is looking into recruiting more reserves and get some quality reserves into the department. Chief stated that he was happy to bring closure to the Miranda Fenner case last week. He stated it was a long hard week for everyone, but he hoped it could bring some closure to the family and the community. He stated that there is one more unsolved case in the City that is being worked on. He stated that the partnership with the other area law enforcement agencies is invaluable and he hopes to continue that relationship. The Committee stated that they hoped the solving of the Fenner case could bring some closure to the department. The Chief stated that it certainly would. He stated that when a case is unsolved the officers are always looking at cases and it is always in the back of your mind. He stated that he felt bad that Captain Mark Guy couldn't be present for the solving of that case. He stated he started working for the department shortly after the Fenner death and he saw all the time and effort Captain Guy put into that case. The Committee asked how the Chief was looking into getting more reserves. The Chief stated that he was working with the reserve coordinator to make the program better. The reserves don't get anything for their time and efforts so how do we make the program better? How do we keep them invested? He is exploring options. The Mayor asked if the departments had problems with their radios and the repeater. He had heard that both departments had dead spots with their transmissions. The Fire Chief stated that they had some issues in the Molt area. The Police Chief stated that he had talked with Industrial Communications about moving the repeater and increasing the wattage to try to solve the issues. Industrial Communications is going to do some repeater testing in the fall and give the City some options. The Police Chief stated that he is also looking at some digital options as an upgrade to the analog we currently have. The Police Chief stated that there are spots in town where the portable radios do not work as it is a dead spot.

4. Safety Mill Levy Discussion

Chairperson McGee stated that this has come up before, but it is essential now to pass a safety mill levy. The Chair asked the Mayor if he would like to speak about the mill levy. The Mayor stated that he has talked with other Cities and towns in Montana that have had success in passing emergency services mill levies. It seems to him that if they the mill levy is targeted more on one area of emergency services; they seem to be more successful. When the City went out three years ago some of the citizens had questions regarding paying taxes for services and then having the ambulance out in the County responding. The Mayor wants to meet with DES and the County Commissioner to discuss this issue in more detail. Everyone that the Mayor has talked to, regarding drafting an emergency mill levy, has advised to start early and get community members to be active in supporting the levy. The Council and City Staff cannot encourage voters to vote for or against the levy. They can only educate the public on the mill levy. The Mayor feels that it would be good to try for an ambulance only mill levy. The previous mill levy was for all three emergency services departments. The Committee is very excited about this mill levy if it solves the problem of calls going unanswered. The Mayor stated that it will, or the City will not go out for the levy. The Mayor stated that he is in the process of having a plan put together to show how the money would be used and what it would go towards. The Committee stated that at some point the question needs to be answered if the solution will be to hire an outside company like AMR or if it is to hire our own staff. The Committee stated that the citizens need to understand and know what they are voting for. If this levy will accomplish calls being answered, then the Committee feels that this levy has a great chance of passing. One member of Council wants this levy to pass so badly that he would resign his seat on Council if it meant this levy would pass. The Clerk/Treasurer stated that her understanding was that until the levy gets passed by Council via resolution the Council and City Staff could do and say what they want. Once the resolution is passed the Council and City Staff can not influence voters in any way. The Mayor stated he would check with the City Attorney on that to be sure so that nobody gets in trouble. The Committee is excited to work on this and they will work with the Mayor to start putting together a cost analysis. The Mayor stated that a citizen sub-committee would be helpful to promote the mill levy. The sub-committee would have to take care of all money related to the promotion of the mill levy. The City could pay for a factual sheet or document but nothing that would promote the levy. The Clerk/Treasurer will get a timeline from Bret Rutherford because he needs it so that his legal team must review it. The Mayor would like the levy to be on its own ballot. The Mayor stated that the City could have a special mail in election ballot whenever they wanted. The Clerk/Treasurer would check with the Yellowstone County Election Office to make sure.

Other Items

5. Discussion regarding Park Board's changing park hours in the parks.

The Park Board will be bringing forward, to Council, changing the park hours. The Committee isn't sure if this will have any affect on the Emergency Services Committee, but they are aware this issue is going to be discussed at a future Council meeting.

6. Removing a member from the Committee.

The question was asked by the Committee on how a member could be removed for not attending. One member has not attended for over a year, doesn't live in town any longer, and cannot be reached. The Committee would like to replace him and wants to know how. The Mayor stated that the Committee could reduce its size by changing the Ordinance. To remove a member the Committee would need to make a recommendation to Council.

Announcements

7. Next Emergency Services meeting will be held on August 26, 2019, at 6:00pm

Motion by Council Member Mountsier to adjourn, seconded by Committee Member Massa. A vote was taken on the motion. All five committee members present voted aye. Motion carried 4-0.

The Emergency Services Committee adjourned at 6:56 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.