

**Canyon Creek Rural Fire District
Board of Trustee's
Regular Board Meeting**

Monday – Feb 17, 2025



This meeting was conducted via hybrid/Zoom. The meeting, in its entirety, may be accessed via zoom link below:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84567890123>

Passcode: @CfUd^24

Attending:

Rick Grady, Chair (zoom)
Jim Thomas, Vice Chair
Ellen Eskildsen, Secretary (zoom)
Max Eskildsen, Trustee-at-Large (zoom)
Wendy Adamson, Treasurer

Firefighters:

John Keller
Kai Bauer

Community Members/Guest:

Gegi Guay (zoom)	E.J. Betka (zoom)	Robert Putsch (zoom)	Will Adamson
Judith Vincent (zoom)	Joane Bayer (zoom)	Charlie Spinning	Sonny Tapia (zoom)
Connie Horder	Dale Hudec	Kori Dee (zoom)	Jon Cunningham (zoom)

Meeting Commenced at 6:30pm

Chair Rick began the meeting by introducing himself and the board members did as well. He asked the meeting guest to introduce themselves, all present via zoom and in person introduced themselves. Chair Rick began by reading the criteria informing the members and guest that he received the mail ballot plan from the L&C County Elections office and the mail ballot plan was posted on the website for public information purposes.

Approval of Board Minutes:

Chair Rick asked for discussion amongst the board for the approval of the meeting minutes for Jan 27, 2025
No Board discussion; Open up for public comments.

No Public Comments.

Again asked for board input; Secretary Ellen made a motion to approve the meeting minutes dated Jan 27, 2025; Vice Chair Thomas seconded the motion; Vote: 4-1 in favor to approve; Treasurer Wendy Abstained. Chair Rick asked for discussion amongst the board for the approval of the meeting minutes for Feb 6, 2025; **Board discussion;** Treasurer Wendy asked for a copy of the meeting minutes to review prior to approving them; Secretary Ellen stated she thought she had sent them previously; they were posted on the CCRFD Website a week prior to the meeting, but said she would email them to her. Treasurer Wendy made a motion to table the approval of the Feb 6, 2025 meeting minutes; Vice Chair Thomas seconded the motion.

Public Comments:

No public comments.

Vote 4-1 to table the approval until next meeting. Chair Rick abstained.

Treasurer Reports for the months of November, December 2024, and January 2025



Trustee Eskildsen made a point of order; he stated that Treasurer Wendy just sent out the financial reports to the Secretary 1 hour prior to tonight's meeting, not allowing sufficient time to review the data for approval; Trustee Eskildsen made a motion to table the Nov, Dec 2024 and Jan 2025 Financial reports and Wex reports for Nov, Dec 2024 and Jan 2025 until the next meeting allowing for sufficient review by the board.

Board discussion:

Treasurer Wendy stated that it hasn't been a precedence for her to send out the information to the board in a certain time frame prior to the meetings and hasn't been a problem. Secretary Ellen stated that yes, the board members have asked the Treasurer to provide the information to them in a timely manner prior to the meetings. Secretary Ellen seconded the motion to table the reports until the next scheduled regular meeting.

Public Comments.

-Connie Horder stated that she feels the community needs to hear the status of the district funds and many times the Treasurer doesn't receive the information from the County in a timely manner to prepare her reports.

-John Keller agrees that Wendy should be able to proceed and the Trustee's can get the details worked out.

-Kori Dee stated that in the past the Treasurer always reported to the public and the board at the time of the meetings with no prior review of the data.

No other public comments.

Board discussion- Trustee Max restated his motion to table the Treasurer Reports for Nov, Dec 2024 and Jan 2025; Wex reports for Nov, Dec 2024 and Jan 2025 until the next meeting pending review by the board. He also stated that Treasurer Wendy had the data for these three months well in advance to send out to the board for review as it is now February 2025. Secretary Ellen restated that she seconded the motion.

Board discussion- Wendy stated that she feels the board is putting their needs ahead of the needs of the community; our needs to get reports is a matter to be resolved at a later date, not tonight. Chair Rick asked for a **Vote on the motion;** 3 yes; 2 nays motion passed.

Treasurer Wendy stated that she was not in attendance at the Jan 27 board meeting where it was voted to add the Chair to the bank account. She then began to read a letter from the bank and Chair Rick stated she was off topic for the agenda order and she could read this later; she continued. Chair Rick continued to ask if she had any outstanding bills to report on. Treasurer Wendy stated that she feels she doesn't get an opportunity to put items on the agenda, so she was going to use her time with the Treasurer Report. Chair Rick asked her to wait until Non-agenda items to address her letter.

Old Business

Trustee Eskildsen reported on the findings he received from Chris Hindoien, Marketing Coordinator from VFIS-Rocky Mountain Insurance Services. Our choices for continued insurance for the management liability coverage for the board is to accept a 10k deductible or 25k deductible; insurance rates will have a minimal rise approx. \$549.00 in rates but that is mainly due to higher cost of repairs and claims. Trustee Eskildsen made a motion to accept the 10k deductible; Chair Rick seconded the motion.

Public comments.

-Joane Bayer stated she doesn't feel that the public should get stuck paying for the 10k deductible; its Rick's fault; taxpayers don't want to pay his legal bills.

-Gegi Guay- stated that its not Rick's fault; it was the fault of a lawsuit from 13 community members.

-Kai Bauer stated that the public doesn't want to pay extra money for something that is Rick's fault. Absurd.

-John Keller has four questions 1. How does this policy differ from the last policy; 2. What is the increase and where is that money coming from; 3. is the current litigation susceptible to the increase. 4. Should we get 3 other bids for our insurance needs.

-Connie Horder thinks this is a crazy discussion and there has never been a lawsuit before and if the board would have had training and didn't deny allegations this would not be an issue; it's a huge increase.

No other Public Comments

Board Discussion

Trustee Eskildsen informed the public that most of the increases to our policy is because of other liability factors not just the pending lawsuit against the board. He also stated that there are other fire departments facing increases in policies because of these factors. Treasurer Wendy stated future claims only for the 10k deductible; policy went down because we took on the 10k deductible where we had none before; the concern would be if there is another law suit the 10k would have to come out of the CIF funds. As far as getting three bids she believes our coverage is the best out there. The previous board members chose this policy. **Vote on the motion** to approve the 10k deductible; **4-1 motion passed.**

Discussion and decision on receiving copies of the actual monthly bank statements from US Bank;

Board Discussion

Treasurer Wendy stated that back in October it was asked by Trustee Eskildsen to receive financial reports from her minimum 48hrs prior to the board meeting. She went on to state that she is unable to get her reports completed when she gets reports from the County last minute. She stated that she has a full-time job and has other commitments. She stated that the board isn't working cohesively, and she could send out the reports but because of the lack of cohesiveness she chose not to. The County bank account is still the primary account. The bank statements from US Bank are a child account. The bank only gets enough money from the County to cover expenses; the account is always zeroed out. Process is the same. Secretary Ellen stated that she is aware that the board is dysfunctional but feels since the Treasurer has had the reports for four months there's no excuse to not get them out to the board in advance. Also stated the public asked to get a review period for the meeting minutes and financials prior to the meeting. The Treasurer and Secretary had discussion on when the reports should be put on website. **Trustee Eskildsen made a motion** that all trustees to receive the financial reports, monthly bank statement to include all deposits, withdrawals and checks written 48 hours prior to Regular Board meetings.

Public Comments

-John Keller- thinks that the 48 hours requirement is impossible and should be rewritten to exclude special meetings.

-Joane Bayer stated that the County doesn't always send out the financials in a timely manner but stated that she feels the Treasurer should send out the financials to the Trustees when she receives them from the County.

-Kai Bauer stated that in the past the meeting minutes have had the financials attached to the minutes; seems that the website is lacking in having minutes posted.

-Connie Horder finds it hard for Treasurer to comply with the Special meeting parameters; need a system that works for all board members.

Board Discussion: **Trustee Eskildsen amended the Motion** to state receive actual bank statements and financial reports can we obtain them 48 hours prior to regular meetings; **Secretary Ellen seconded** the motion. Treasurer Wendy read about a motion we passed about in person and zoom meetings that passed a vote in November. Secretary Ellen talked about moving the Regular meeting to the last Monday of the month to assist the Treasurer to get her reports out in a timely manner. Vice Chair Thomas also agreed to possibly moving the meeting and it will be added to the next agenda. **Vote: 3-2 to approve the motion** (1 nay 1 abstained).

New Business

Accepting three bids for snow removal services. No board discussion.

Public Comments:

-John Keller wanted to thank volunteers for shoveling snow at the station as we didn't have a contract in place; snow plowing contract should be awarded in November; dragging our feet to get this done; a special meeting could've been called to get this done. Community is put at risk; shouldn't rely on volunteers to get snow removed. Provisions for emergency snow removal when we don't have a contract in place.

-Kai Bauer said he assumes the board has solicited for bids and wanted to know if the board has flyers out there asking for bids.

-Joane Bayer stated that if the board requires workman's comp that it's hard to find companies to do the work.

-Connie Horder publicly thank the people that plowed the lot

No other public comments

Board discussion Trustee Eskildsen stated that Christofferson Construction came out and plowed the lot for free; that company is filling out a bid for the contract as so is two other companies. Chair Rick stated that he will have three bids and they will have liability insurance. Chair Rick also came down with his backhoe to clear snow. Treasurer Wendy stated that Kai Bauer was soliciting for months to obtain the contract.

Secretary Ellen made a motion to accept the 2-3 bids competitive bids; Secretary Ellen amended her motion to accept 3 written competitive bids for snow removal contract; Trustee Eskildsen seconded the motion;

Vote all in favor motion carried.

Discussion on 8111; needs a pump and draft test prior to insurance paying for repairs to put back in service. Only certain vendors can perform these test and the weather has to be warm enough to do so. The Engine will remain at the vendor until the test is accomplished. Treasurer Wendy asked about ETA; Chair Rick stated end of March. Treasurer Wendy asked if the Chair made the decision to keep the engine out of service. Maybe the future agenda item should state if we want to get the engine back in service quicker.

Public Comments

-Kai Bauer asked if the board talked with John Keller about this vehicle; is the board communicating with him

Gegi Guay- asked if the insurance company requires this test

Connie Horder- why is this Engine out of service for several months and why don't we have anything to fight fires

-Will Adamson feels that the Chair is incompetent of doing his job; the engine would have been repaired and placed back in service if it wasn't for him; its disgusting. Putting people at risk; @#&%

No other comments

Board discussion- Treasurer Wendy wants to weigh the advantages of getting the test done versus just putting the engine back in service. Is it a matter of the insurance company reimbursing for the repair and testing. Grizzly Diesel has been paid for repairs. VFIS requires that the pump testing needs to be done to ensure the vehicle is road worthy. This is a requirement to ensure the pump is functional. Chair Rick stated that VFIS wants the test done; Treasurer Wendy stated that it seems its our decision to keep the engine out of service or not. Treasurer Wendy stated she would get clarification on this issue. Back and forth with Chair Rick and Treasurer Wendy.

Draft Addendum to Bylaw 177 "only active CCRFD fire and medical volunteers and trustees are allowed access into the Fire Station. They are the only ones allowed to know and have the access code. Anyone entering the building that is not authorized will be charged with trespassing.

Board Discussion Treasurer Wendy asked about the access of prior chief Gilliam having access; she also wanted to remind the board that we need to follow guidelines about public participation; affording the public ample opportunity to comment about items that are of significant importance. Vice Chair stated that Montana doesn't have a breaking and entering law.

Public Comment

-Joane Bayer curious of who is breaking and entering?

-Bob Putsch this proposal is inappropriate and feels the department functioned well before Rick and asked Rick to step down; spoke about past actions about records that were kept by Rick

-Jon Cunningham wanted to thank Bob for his comments

-John Keller this agenda item is DOA; cant be charged with breaking and entering; ask to table this agenda item Under the provisions of this amendment repair men would be charged; another mutual aid partner would be charged.

-Connie Horder- needs to be tabled and wasn't worded properly; what about auxiliary members?

-Kai Bauer this amendment is vague; trustees should reach out to firefighters about questions they may have.

No other comments

Board discussion- Trustee Eskildsen moved to table the motion until further research can be made on the amendment; Vice Chair Thomas seconded the motion; Vote 4-1 motion to table passed

Non-agenda items

Public Comments.

-Jon Cunningham mentioned Canyon Creek is in litigation and was afforded information from the lawsuit 2500 pages of data and said he saw many statements that are damaging and asked for Rick, Max and Ellen to resign now.

-Kai Bauer ask the board to reenter the Chiefs Report into the Regular Board meetings; John Keller has been nominated to provide the report as he is the senior Firefighter volunteer.

-Vice Chair Thomas read a statement from Sheri Petes from US Bank; bank account is owned by the County; account is used as a tool to assist with paying vendors; all questions can be referred to Sheri Petes and or Amy Reeves.

-John Keller said he is on the enemy list of Rick and Max. Wants to submit his resume for Fire Chief of Canyon Creek. Will forward my resume for fire chief of Canyon Creek to Ellen. Stated his qualifications. Don't deserve to be a target. Stated his expectations of the trustee's. Mistakes will be made and should be learned from.

-Joane Bayer looked through the litigation documents and are damming; emails from Eskildsen's think that Rick is incompetent

-Kai Bauer continues to ask for keys to file cabinets that they need access to the items in them; stated HIPPA act prohibits people from access to health records by those who don't have authorization; Chair Rick may be in violation don't know if you are or are not in violation of these regulations. All recordings in the building is illegal.

-Gegi Guay wanted to know who is passing around the discovery of the lawsuit is being passed around the community; asked for a copy.

-Connie Horder if you try to talk to the firefighters to get things done; seems like Rick wants to be a fire chief of the department. Quoted things from the lawsuit discovery information.

-Trustee Wendy Adamson spoke about an email received from Gegi Guay requesting financial information. Wendy used this forum to respond to Gegi's demands. Spoke about meetings missed. Recommended that anyone can request reports from the county at any time. Stated that she will provide her financial statements at meetings. Stated she was running for a three-year term for trustee.

-Gegi Guay stated that she has never seen such disrespectful people. Will Adamson kept interrupting her and yelling and wouldn't let her speak. Started to get out of hand so Vice Chair Thomas recommended adjournment.

No other comments.

Chair Grady adjourned the meeting at 8:39 pm.

Meeting Minutes approved by the Chairperson Richard E. Grady

Date Approved: Tuesday - March 25, 2025

Canyon Creek Rural Fire District (CCRFD)

Board of Trustees

Regular Board Meeting

Monday – February 17, 2025

6:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held via zoom only based on the continued inclement winter weather for the safety of the public and preventing any freezing of the district fire apparatus

There will be no agenda item or public comments regarding pending litigation on lawsuit in Lewis & Clark County District Court Case No. DV-25-2024-674, recall petition and redress petition before the Canyon Creek Rural Fire District, Board of Trustees – Richard E, Grady Chairperson

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Board of Trustee Principles of Civil Dialogue

1. We provide a safe environment where individual perspectives are respected, heard and acknowledged
2. We respect diverse opinions as a means to find solutions based on common ground
3. We encourage creative approaches to engage in public participation
4. We value informed decision-making and take personal responsibility to educate and be educated.
5. We believe that respectful public dialogue fosters healthy community relationships, understanding, and problem solving.
6. We acknowledge, consider and respect the natural tensions created by collaborations, change and transition
7. We follow the rules and guidelines established for each meeting

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Public Comments on the respective agenda items(s) falling within the purview of the Canyon Creek Rural Fire District Board of Trustees.

There will be an opportunity prior to the final board decision on each of the respective agenda items for public comments. **Members of the public are welcome to submit written verbal public comments that will be entered into public record on each individual specific agenda item.**

1. Please state your name in an audible tone of voice for the record.
2. Verbal public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes and a clock will be used to monitor the time by the CCRFD Trustee at Large or trustee designee.
3. Be allowed to comment only one time on each individual agenda item.

Agenda

- Introductions

Public Announcement: Lewis & County Elections – Connor Fritzpatrick – Election Supervisor

Memo and updated mail ballot plan for the board to review for public information to be posted on the CCRFD webpage.

CCRFD Board of Trustee Minutes

Approval, amendments, table or denial of the **“DRAFT”** minutes of the Regular Board Meeting
Monday –January 27, 2025

Approval, amendments, table or denial of the **“DRAFT”** minutes of the Special Board meeting
Thursday – February 6, 2025

Treasurer Report

- Financial reports for the months of November and December 2024
- Financial reports for the month of January 2025
- Wex report on charges for the months of November and December 2024
- Wex report on charges for the month of January 2025
- Report on all pending bills that need to be reviewed, discussed and approval by the Board before payment by the treasurer.
- Discussion and review of the Capital Improvement Fund (CIF) reserve account balance and deposits made the past 6 months on donations, and selling of district apparatus in accordance to the Montana Procurement Act to be managed by the board with US Bank and the Lewis & County Treasurer Department.

Old Business

- Continued Discussion and decision on accepting the changes on the Management Liability provision being removed and the Umbrella limits that have changed under the **NOTICE OF POLICY CONDITIONAL RENEWAL** presented by Chris Hindoen, Marketing Coordinator - VFIS -Rocky Mountain Insurance Services, LLC **RENEWAL under the Canyon Creek Rural Fire District, Board of Trustees insurance policy.**
- Discussion and decision on receiving copies of the actual monthly bank statements from US bank(to include all deposits, withdrawals and checks written) to all trustees along with copy of the treasurers report 48 hours ahead of a regular or special scheduled board meeting

New Business:

- Discussion and decision of accepting a minimum of three separate written competitive bids to the Chairperson or his designee from local vendors to complete the snow plowing around the fire station facility by Friday - February 21, 2025 based on the provisions in the CCRFD Snow Removal Service Agreement and the calling of a special board meeting on Monday – February 24, 2025 to discuss, review and decided on the acceptance of local vendor to complete the snow plowing and the signing of the CCRFD Snow Removal Service Agreement.
- Discussion and follow up on the recent research being reviewed on the Canyon Creek Claim #MTTR25010652 if any compensation under the respective claim could go toward the repairs that were completed by Grizzly Diesel Services on 8111; a pump and draft test will be required and will be covered by VIFS insurance **before placing 8111** back into service.
- **Discussion and decision on the proposed draft Addendum to by law 117**
" Only active CCRFD fire and medical volunteers and trustees are allowed access into the Fire Station. They are the only ones allowed to know and have the access code. Exemptions of non-members of the CCRFD would be attendance to scheduled trustee meetings, fund raisers or other social events, however a trustee or active ccrfd firefighter must be present at all times. Anyone entering the building that is not authorized will be charged with breaking and entering"

Non-agenda items

The board can accept written or verbal comments on non-agenda items, but the board cannot respond at the respective meeting. **Members of the public are welcome to submit written or verbal public comments that will be entered into public record .**

- 1. Please state your name in an audible tone of voice for the record.**
- 2. Verbal public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes and a clock will be used to monitor the time by the CCRFD Trustee at Large or trustee designee.**
- 3. Be allowed to comment only one time regarding any non-agenda item**

Adjournment

Canyon Creek Rural Fire District is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Canyon Creek Rural Fire District's Regular Zoom Meeting

Time: Feb 17, 2025 06:30 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86003772101?pwd=3Z2ClDvd9Kwrkv7GebUFKiTdKW6z5l.1>

Meeting ID: 860 0377 2101

Passcode: 452769--

One tap mobile

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Meeting ID: 860 0377 2101

Passcode: 452769

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/k79Rn5xzl>