

**Tangent Rural Fire District  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Minutes  
March 10, 2021**

**Board Members Present:** John Dunn, Paul Strombeck, Chris Meyer, Scott Richards, Bruce Riley  
**Staff Present:** Chief Wooldridge, AC Vonasek, BC Chapin, OA Duckworth,  
**Others Present:** Assn. President Walters (late)

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Chair Dunn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and added an item to the originally printed agenda (under New Business) as follows: Consideration of a resolution to accept and appropriate unexpected conflagration funds.

**I. APPROVAL OF:**

**Minutes – Regular Meeting, February 10, 2021**

**Action:** Meyer moved to approve the minutes of February 10 as presented. Strombeck seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (5-0).

**Financial Report – February 2021**

**Action:** Richards moved to approve the February financial report as submitted; Meyer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (5-0).

**II. STANDING REPORTS:**

**Volunteers Association** – Assn. President Walters was not present at this time to give his report.

**Fire Chief's Report** – (The following is the Chief's written report as well as additional comments made at the meeting.)

- **COVID-19:** Vaccinations are complete for those who wanted them (22 individuals). March brings new hope that things may return to a 'more normal' way again. We are returning to regular drills and having everyone here again. We will continue to wear masks and practice social distancing where we can. We have new masks with our logo on them and they are being handed out to everyone.
- **Budget 2021:** We have had some major projects and unforeseen expenses throughout this budget, but those have set the tone for our upcoming budget. Things look good and we are on track for budget presentation.

- **Weekend Duty Officer:** Staff is now scheduled for every Sunday as duty officer for planning purposes. We will obviously work with the volunteer officers who are able to pick up duty officer shifts.
- **Response Times:** We had our first officers' meeting March 3 and addressed the need to improve our response times. I hope to get momentum going with everyone and continue to improve our service delivery to our district patrons. When this becomes better, we can then look at an ISO review to improve our fire district ratings, which could be helpful in reducing property insurance rates for our patrons.
- **Van Buren Bridge Corvallis:** We are working with Corvallis Fire to assist with calls within their fire district on the Linn County side of the river. The bridge is being replaced and will have weight restrictions over the next 2 years, thus delaying fire response to Linn County. I am working to be as transparent as possible with Corvallis Fire in what Tangent Fire can offer that meets their expectations and service delivery requirements and, hopefully, put into place an auto aid agreement with them. This would probably have a small effect on our annual call volume.
- **Surplus Vehicles:** We will have Tender 72 put up on GovDeals this month and will set a minimum for what we will accept for the vehicle.
- **Medical Director:** I am working with our Doctor and will have a meeting with him this month (fingers crossed) and then set up a time for him to come to the fire station on a medical drill night to meet with all of our medical personnel.
- **Conflag Payment Received:** We just received payment for our participation in the September 2020 Slater conflagration. OSFM has informed us that payment for the CA conflag should also be forthcoming this month.
- **Upcoming Events:**
  - March 14 Daylight Savings
  - March 17 St. Patrick's Day
  - March 18 TFD Blood Drive

**Asst. Chief/Training Officer's Report** – (The following is the Asst. Chief's written report as well as additional comments made at the meeting.)

- **FIRE & EMS TRAINING** –
  - **In-House** – COVID restrictions have been reduced, and we are taking full advantage of the situation to bring volunteers back to full scheduled training. We have increased our groups to 24 persons, which includes the instructor(s).
    - Lebanon Fire invited us to participate in a "live-fire" training burn on Sandridge Rd. on March 6. Unfortunately, the property owner's documentation did not clearly state ownership of the structure, and therefore LFD had to back out last minute. LFD feels they will eventually get to burn the structure and will extend the invite again.
  - **Regional** – The Linn-Benton Fire Training Council is wrapping up training that has been on-again/off-again through winter. The L-BFTC will be addressing training needs for the upcoming months and hopefully, barring any COVID restrictions, will be able to fulfill training gaps that were left from this past year.

- **State** – DPSST announced Field Training representative Robert Farino’s resignation. Mr. Farino helped bring several state-level courses and training props to our station. DPSST plans on immediately beginning the process of searching for a replacement. With background checks and everything, the projected hire date could be around July.
  - The state has not announced opening up for training at the DPSST academy, but I expect we will hear something soon.
- **OR-EMS** – EMTs are progressing with their cont. ed. hours for their EMT recertifications in May.
- **National** – The National Fire Academy has been offering a limited schedule of classes so far. I hope to attend the academy again this year, and Brice Walters had to cancel last year. The next application period starts April 15, 2021, with courses starting October 2021.
- **HEALTH & SAFETY** –
  - **Safety Committee** – The Safety Committee was able to meet for the first time for the year last Tuesday. Discussions about moving forward as a committee and topics to focus on for 2021 were discussed.
  - **Policies** – OR-OSHA Temporary Rule on COVID-19 has been presented through Target Solutions among the volunteers and staff.
    - Policies related to COVID-19 and its training are available to members through Target Solutions. I have placed A COVID-19 Quick Guide online, and anyone who has a question about COVID-19 in the absence of staff now has a quick reference point to go check out.
  - **SCBA Research** - I have begun gathering information for purchasing SCBAs. Although this is a year or so out yet, I want to get the Assistance to Firefighters Grant submitted and then have another opportunity should we not be able to get it this time around. As it stands, we are in good shape as we meet several areas of criteria for the AFG; (two NFPA revisions and current SCBAs are over 10 years old). Current SCBAs are showing their age. Although they are still functional (our current vendor can repair them and some SCBA components are still under warranty), we do find that they are failing more often.
  - **SCBA Update** – The attempt for an AFG grant to purchase new SCBAs, unfortunately, slipped through my hands. This year the NFA announced the AFG grants enrollment earlier than they had in past years. By the time I learned of the grant, the time into which I could pull the information together was too short, and I was unable to meet the expiration date for submittal.
    - We do have another year-plus for our SCBAs before their component warranties expire; however, we still have to pay for labor.
    - LN Curtis & Sons. SCBA technician for the MSA breathing apparatus will be here this month to repair our current apparatus and flow test.
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH** –
  - **Tangent Fire District Website** – Our website continues to stay active with visitors.
  - **Tangent Community Blood Drive** – March 18 marks the 3rd consecutive “Full” Red Cross blood drive held at our station. On a side note, following this drive and the blood drive in June here at the station, I will earn my 20-gallon pin.

**Staff Battalion Chief’s Report** – (The following is the Staff Battalion Chief’s written report as well as additional comments made at the meeting.)

- **Fire Inspections-** No new inspections.
- **Pre-Plans-** No new pre-plans.
- **Fire Prevention-** Nothing new.
- **Vehicle Maintenance-** E-72 got 6 new tires. T-73 was checked out for a shimmy issue; everything turned out good. Sheet Metal Solutions came in and drilled two holes in the tender's battery boxes so we were able to install battery tenders on them. E-71 MDT is losing service and we may have to think about upgrading from wireless to a cradle. Forklift had a PM service done this month.
- **Building Maintenance-**
  - **Station Generator** – Axis electric came out to look at the transfer switch on the generator to see if something could be done to provide power to the main station whenever we have a power outage. They determined that, currently, the only parts of the station that are provided power by the generator are the bays, the radio room, and Chapin's office. This is not acceptable as our classroom serves as an area Emergency Operations Center, and the upstairs is a permanent home for our student residents; these areas must have power during an emergency. Of course, it is understood that a generator is not expected to fully power the entire station; we must choose carefully which areas are priorities. Axis is working on a quote for a new, larger generator and installation/wiring to power all the required areas during an outage.

There was some discussion at the meeting as to why we need a larger generator now when we were told a few years ago that a new transition switch would fix the problem. The Chief responded that we are finding out that the size of our current generator, which is 30 years old, is not large enough to power several station configuration changes (new classroom and additional resident rooms) over the past several years nor would the original wiring of the building as it sits now accommodate additional hookups to the generator. Much rewiring is needed as is an upgrade to our breaker panel. This is a huge project and will be addressed in our budgets over the next couple of years. For 2021-22, we would probably purchase the larger generator and address some of the wiring issues with the remainder of the wiring issues budgeted during the following fiscal year. It also needs to be decided whether the new generator would be natural gas or propane.

- **Well Filters** - Aqua Pro came out and did a check of our well filters. They ended up servicing both wells for the main building and Warren building, which hadn't been done for three years. We will now have an annual service maintenance agreement with them.
- **Upstairs' Dishwasher** – This was replaced this month.
- **Warren Building** - Angelo and I have been working in the Warren building, going through everything, and trying to get rid of stuff no longer needed.
- **Hazmat Grant** – BC Chapin has applied for a Hazmat Grant to upgrade our monitors.
- **Tangent Inn** – The City asked TRFPD to look into what appears to be overcrowding and excessive parking at the Tangent Inn given COVID restrictions. Chapin stated that our Fire District can only deal with the occupancy rate for the building—we have no jurisdiction over parking or any COVID regulations/restrictions.
- **Volunteers-** I did drive time and cone course with a few of the volunteers. Brice invited volunteers down one evening to have cookies with him.
  - Out-of-district volunteer hours are on the next page.

- **Resident Students Volunteers-** The RVs completed training in fire attack, search and rescue, maydays, cone course for the brush rig and drive times. Knightin has finished his task book for NFPA Driver. I helped all three of the RVs choose their next term classes.
- **Wildland season** is around the corner, and I have been working on inventorying what PPE gear and equipment we have. I have been working with Chief and Karen on the budget of what we can purchase this year as a one-time cost. We have scheduled a few wildland classes to get people up-to-par with wildland training.
- **SDAO Conference** - I attended the two-day conference.

**Activity Report** – 46 calls through February 2021, 5 more than last year at this time.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

**Employee Vacation Accrual** – During budget prep for the new fiscal year, staff always does comparative research with surrounding fire districts regarding salary and benefits to make sure Tangent Fire is staying competitive. Recently, we learned that our vacation schedule should probably be amended for the first five years of employment. All the districts surveyed offered at least 12 days of vacation per year from date of hire or, at the longest, after two years of employment. Currently we offer 10 days for the first five years. The remainder of the vacation accrual schedule is in line with other districts. To keep us competitive, staff suggested that the District offer 10 days' vacation from the date of hire through the second year on the job, with vacation days increasing to 12 days per year from the third year through the fifth year.

**Action:** Riley moved to adjust the vacation accrual section of the Employee Benefits Policy so that employees earn 10 days' vacation per year for 0-2 years of service and 12 days' vacation from 2-5 years of service with the remainder of the accrual schedule to remain as currently shown in the policy. Strombeck seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (5-0).

While discussing vacation hours, Chair Dunn asked how Chapin, Vonasek, and Wooldridge were compensated for the extra weekend duty-officer shifts they have recently assumed or any other extra weekend work such as conducting trainings. As all three are salaried employees, they understand that their jobs are not just exact 40-hour work weeks, but there are many times when an extra full day or full weekend is worked in addition to the regular work week. The Chief shared that while there is no formal system in place for extra work hours, he works with Chapin and Vonasek to see that they take time off during the week, if possible, in exchange for weekend hours worked; past Tangent Chiefs also used this informal system for compensating extra hours. It is on the honor system, but he stated that the two of them never take off as much time as they have earned.

As the Chief is not his own supervisor, it would really be up to the Board to decide if there is a way to compensate him for his extra hours.

**Action:** No formal action. It was suggested that maybe a couple of Board members visit with the Chief to get his input on issue.

**Professional Education Reimbursement Policy** – This would be a new personnel policy. The Chief explained that the purpose of the policy is to encourage employees to obtain education and training provided at a college or university and have an opportunity to be reimbursed for such training. Only courses that fall within a specific degree program related to the employee’s position would be considered for reimbursement. Riley commented that Tangent Fire can’t always offer the same benefit programs as larger departments. He would be in favor of reimbursing for books or possibly tuition reimbursement in lieu of salary increases. He would not be in favor of increasing the overall district budget for this; however, maybe staff could look at reducing the budgeted monies for conferences and classes and using those savings to create a professional education line item.

**Action:** No formal action, but the Board asked staff to draw up a Professional Education Reimbursement Policy taking into consideration some of the above comments and bring it before the Board on the April agenda.

**Salary Adjustment** – The Board makes the decision each year as to whether or not staff will be given a cost-of-living adjustment and the size of that adjustment. Staff presented a written report outlining total budget costs for three potential percentage salary increases and total costs of each employee’s wage/benefit packages for the Board to study. In addition, the Board also considered that the CPI Western Region COLA for Jan. 20 – Jan. 21 was 1.5% and that is what most districts align their salary adjustments to.

**Action:** Meyer moved to increase staff base salaries by 1.5% for the FY 2021-22 budget. Riley seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (5-0).

**Employee Health Insurance** – First, the good news—there will be no increase in premium rates for FY 2021-22! This is due to a reduction in really large claims for our region and a reduction in overall claims for the year (insurance company thinks this is due to individuals postponing non-emergency medical treatments because of COVID).

Second, the District could potentially save even more money by offering employees a less expensive insurance option (with higher deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses for the employees), but then setting up a supplemental health insurance benefit (either a HRA VEBA--a health reimbursement arrangement or a MERP--medical expense reimbursement plan) for the employees to cover medical expenses not covered by the less expensive plan. Any money contributed to individual VEBA accounts immediately belongs to the employee. However, any money budgeted, and not tapped for medical expenses by employees, for a MERP belongs to the district. (See the full March 10, 2021, Agenda packet for a complete, multi-page explanation of both plans.) The District only budgets the dollar amount in savings between the more expensive and less expensive plan for the MERP. This is also the same amount that all employees collectively could be personally accountable for in extra deductibles and OOP with the less expensive plan. Thus, the employer’s budgeted amount for health insurance remains the same (offering the more expensive plan or offering the less expensive plan plus a MERP), and the employees aren’t out any more money with the less expensive plan because the difference in deductibles and OOP is covered by the MERP account. If there is money left in the MERP account at the end of the fiscal year, that money still belongs to the District and rolls over to the next fiscal year, saving the District more money than with the more expensive plan. The

Board could then decide how to use the saved money—use the entire amount as rollover for the District or split the savings with employees to start VEBA accounts for them.

In discussion, the Board shared that if the District changed health insurance options and started a MERP plan, that would be most beneficial to the District without compromising benefits to the employees. They then asked all employees if they supported such a change, and all answered in the affirmative.

**Action:** Riley then moved the following:

1. The District offer Option 5 of the OFCA SDIS health insurance plan to District employees for FY 2021-22; and
2. The District budget the savings difference from Option 1 to Option 5 as a MERP line item for FY 2021-22 and set up a MERP account with WHA who will serve as the third-party agent for the plan; and
3. The District split (50/50) with employees any monies remaining in the MERP line item at the end of FY 2021-22, the District rolling over its share to the FY 2022-23 budget with the employees' share being used to start individual VEBA accounts for each employee.

The motion was seconded by Richards and passed unanimously (5-0).

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Consideration of Resolution No. 2021-03 (Accepting and Appropriating Unexpected Revenue)** – The Chief shared that a couple of days ago, the District received funds in the amount of \$20,966.63 from our participation in the Slater Fire (September 2020). The Board needs to recognize the receipt of these funds and appropriate accordingly.

**Action:** Riley moved to approve Resolution No. 2021-03 recognizing receipt of unanticipated revenue from our participation in the Slater Fire and appropriating those funds as follows:

<b><u>Fund</u></b>	<b><u>Revenue Account</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
General Fund	1012 State Conflag Income	\$20,966.63

<b><u>Fund</u></b>	<b><u>Appropriations</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>
General Fund	2040a PERS Payroll	\$ 7,981.00
General Fund	2041 Social Security	\$ 2,459.00
General Fund	2050 State Conflag Wages	\$10,526.63

The motion was seconded by Meyer and it passed unanimously (5-0).

**Volunteers Association Report** – Assn. President Walters arrived late to the meeting and reported that because of the great response from the community to assist the Assn. with funds because they couldn't sponsor the pancake breakfast this last year due to COVID, the Assn. will spend some of those funds to assist

the District with purchase of equipment and gear. He also shared that while the Assn. has not finalized their decision about a pancake breakfast for 2021, most likely they will sponsor one if large gatherings are permitted by that time.

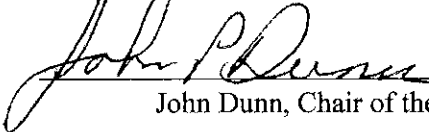
**GOOD OF THE ORDER:** None.

Chair Dunn adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Karen Duckworth  
Office Administrator

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APPROVED BY:

  
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John Dunn, Chair of the Board

4-14-2021  
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Date