

LEBANON FIRE DISTRICT  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
March 12, 2024

Robert Taylor, Board President  
 Dale White, Vice President  
 Wyatt King, Secretary/Treasurer  
 Allen Forster, Member  
 Tim Mueller, Member

Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief  
 John Tacy, DC of Operations  
 Ken Foster, Fire Marshal  
 Mark Fitzwater, DC of Training  
 Desiree Barker, Chief Administrative Officer  
 Michael Perkins, Recruitment Lt.

### CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order and the flag salute was led by Fire Chief Rodondi at 5:30pm at Station 33.

### MINUTES: APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 13, 2024 MINUTES

- Minutes were reviewed and approved with a clarifying statement regarding social media added to Agenda Item #4.
- **Member King made a motion to approve the minutes with modification. Member White 2<sup>ND</sup>, all in favor, motion approved.**

### CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

### AGENDA ITEM #1 – EMS BILLING SERVICES CONTRACT

Chief Rodondi reviewed the financial crisis of the last few years and its impact to the District's reserves. He stated that we cannot defer expenses much longer. After payroll and operational costs, there is little left for discretionary spending. Staff's focus has had to turn to the revenue streams to try to improve the District's financial position. Our ambulance billing returns a low percentage of what we bill due to Medicare programs, however it is our next large income source. Chief mentioned his attendance at ambulance billing conferences. Chief reviewed the processing capacity limitations we operate with having only 1 FTE. Tactical Business Group (TBG) handles our GEMT billing and also is an outsourcing ambulance biller. We've reviewed other vendors. TBG has demonstrated the trust of many agencies in our region. Transferring our ambulance billing to TBG increases our billing staff from 1 FTE to 5 FTE. Their services can generate 20% or more revenue annually. That translates to approximately \$500,000 in additional revenue. This is no reflection on our Administrative Assistant. This is economics to increase our revenue. Annually the contract will exceed \$100,000 per year and therefore requires Board approval. The transition to TBG will begin now, with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2024.

Chief Rodondi introduced Blake Jamison who attended over Zoom. Blake's Jamison provided a background summary of his experience and his staff's. Mr. Jamison was a wildland firefighter who transferred to billing and Medicaid CCO administration. Mr. Jamison has extensive experience with GEMT and helped OHA begin the GEMT program in Oregon. He then began TBG. Mr. Jamison hired an experienced staff that have over 25 years in billing. Mr. Jamison considers security a number one priority. TBG added Zoll, a top-notch cloud-based software. Zoll has a multifactor authentication. Additionally, Zoll is linked to most major credit bureaus, hospital networks, and networks that allow extensive research on patient information to assist in bill collecting.

TBG is also different in the method they use to collect. Daily phone calls produce a better result than the bills sent monthly through the mail. Mail can be sent to wrong address, and phone calls produce a better result overall. Patients may have more than one insurance coverage, and TBG bills all of them, not just the primary insurance company.

Deductible monitoring is another method TBG employs that has great success. Billing the patient after the deductible has been met is preferable as it forces the deductible to the medical facility, who then can attempt the deductible from patient. This method increases revenue because the insurance companies pay us consistently.

TBG has increased their client base from 4 to 16 in a few short years with great success in the revenues generated.

Member Mueller posed a question to Mr. Jamison about the Choice of Forum in the contract relating to court proceedings. Mr. Jamison explained that the lawyers retained by TBG prefer to practice in the counties listed. Chief Rodondi informed the Board that our lawyers reviewed and approved the language in the contract.

LFD staff recommends moving forward.

**Member King made a motion to move forward with Tactical Business Group. Member Mueller 2<sup>nd</sup>, all in favor, motion approved.**

## **AGENDA ITEM #2 – OSHA UPDATE**

Chief updated the board on the non-existent settlement offer from OSHA. OSHA believes they'd win in an official court movement and so offered us no reduction. Chief requested a more detailed response from Jeff Green, OSHA mediator, to support their decision. Chief spoke directly with Mr Green and followed up in writing at Mr. Green's request. Chief believes we've gained traction for positive change in the recommendations by the manufacturer, however there was no change to OSHA's decision. NFPA standards are a recommendation but not always obtainable. Without changing the potential OSHA changes, we'd likely have to hire a compliance officer at the cost of a firefighter. These changes will impact the fire service at the national level.

DC Fitzwater shared the high cost of the new radios and the operational issues. OSHA standards are so high that small districts cannot afford them. Older radios are no longer supported by the manufacturer even though they are operational. The new radio's manual is a 40 to 50-page document. Additionally, the new radios require a sequence protocol that is too lengthy and distracting when at a fire. We are joining with our partners in the State to provide a response.

The professionalism of the OSHA inspector is creating and adversarial relationship with the regional OSHA office. That is in opposition to what it should be.

**AGENDA ITEM #3 – LEVY UPDATE**

The levy is 22-202 on the May 21<sup>st</sup> ballot. We have a busy presentation month for outreach. Chief encouraged the Board to reach out to the community. Our social media is focusing on the facts in our response times, the simultaneous calls, and the increased calls and our ability to respond. We have released three 1-minute videos that share factual information.

**AGENDA ITEM #4 – FINANCIAL REPORT**

Chief Administrative Officer Barker updated the Board and responded to Member King's questions on the debt service fund amount that is for less than \$1. This is a small charge \$.05 per month bank fee. Member King's inquiry on Federal grants was also addressed. We have and are applying for Federal grants, but we do not have any at this time.

Member King asked for information on the increase to the prevention income. Fire Marshal Foster attributes that to the new homes and City construction. He also mentioned the alignment of processes with the other agencies, by creating a document all can follow.

CAO Barker reviewed the current budget status. She noted it is in line with the timing of the year. We have made small adjustments within funds and in compliance with ORS, for things like additional spending needs in uniforms.

Fees charged by the prevention office was covered to explain the increase in income. It is attributed to additional homes and City construction. We've aligned with the County and that has improved services with all the county entities. Over the last 8 months, we've created a document for all to follow.

Chief Rodondi added the LFD is a regional leader that encourages everyone to have better systems.

**AGENDA ITEM #5 – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE(S)**

Chief Rodondi summarized the legislative updates. A positive change is the national recognition of special districts. It is improving. Chief recommends sending a letter to our Representative. It is a great time to be heard. Additionally, he recommended talking to County Commissioners, local Legislators and anyone that could have a conversation to influence Congress. Chief reminded us that Special Districts received no money during COVID, though other agencies did to assist with hazard pay or additional expenses. The increase in medication need had a big impact on our reserves.

**AGENDA ITEM #6 – NON-REPRESENTED STAFF ADDRESS THE BOARD**

There were no non-represented staff present to address the Board.

**AGENDA ITEM #7 – UNION ADDRESS THE BOARD**

There were no union members present to address the Board.

**AGENDA ITEM #8 – VOLUNTEERS ADDRESS THE BOARD**

DC Fitzwater noted that the April academy will have 5 new attendees. We hope they become paramedics in the future. Two more staff members have almost completed their Paramedic certificates, and more are expected in the near future.

**AGENDA ITEM #9 – FIRE CHIEF REPORT**

Chief Rodondi updated the Board on the progress of moving into Station 31. Our firefighters have moved the modified response team into the station. Unpacking has commenced and Phase 2 is beginning. Disassembling the shop begins tomorrow. The Station construction should wrap up in April or early May. The flag raising and open house will start our 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary kick-off. Dedicating the new station for that event is exciting.

The newly designed badges with a more traditional look are now available for staff to purchase.

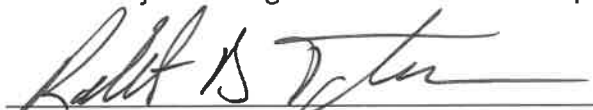
The website will be upgraded to the top tier. Staff discovered the cheapest tier was very limiting and would create future issues. This adds 4-5 months to the website build. Chief will send the example website for the board to review to see the differences. It will be more mainstream and user-friendly. Our social media and marketing is going well and receiving positive feedback.

**OTHER AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no other agenda items.

**ADJOURN REGULAR SESSION**

- Adjourn Regular Session at 6:38 pm.

  
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Robert Taylor, Board President

  
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Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief