



**CENTRAL VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

215 Wings Way
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MEETING PLACE: Central Valley Fire District, Station 1
215 Wings Way, Belgrade, MT

DATE: September 9, 2025

TIME: 5:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE:		<u>(Present)</u>	<u>(Absent)</u>
<i>Trustees:</i>	Darren Wilkins, Chairman	X	
	Ron Murray, Vice Chairman	X	
	Mark MacLeod, Sec/Treas.	X	
	Rob Holt	X	
	Ramie Blakeman	X	
<i>Fire Chief:</i>	Jay Wittwer	X	
<i>Operations Chief:</i>	Jeff Hurley		X
<i>Fire Marshal:</i>	Jake Zlomie	X	
<i>Acting Clerk:</i>	Debbie Bloem	X	
<i>City Representative:</i>	Neil Cardwell	X	

NOTICE: ALL MEETINGS OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT BOARD
OF TRUSTEES ARE RECORDED

GUESTS/VISITORS: Brent Poppe (Stockman Bank), Brinn Fiorentino, Stephen McAdams, Nick Stinson, Joe Doidge, Samantha Honatke, Dustin Pitman

Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Chairman Wilkins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA: As presented.

OFFICER RECOGNITION Chief Wittwer recognized **Fire Marshal Zlomie** who has completed the accreditation process through the Center for Public Safety Excellence and has received their Fire Marshal credential. He is one of only three in the State of Montana with that credential. Fire Marshal Zlomie was applauded for his accomplishment.

MINUTES: Trustee Murray moved to approve the **August 12, 2025 minutes** as submitted. Trustee Holt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL REPORTS: Trustee Murray moved to approve **the financial reports**. Trustee MacLeod seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMUNICATIONS: The District received a thank you note for their wonderful care in response to an **EMS emergency**.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT: As submitted. **Chief Wittwer** provided hiring and staffing updates. The District will have staff in Billings to support the Montana Firefighter Testing Consortium CPAT testing in December along with a CVFD informational booth. Various CPR and First Aid trainings are ongoing and soon Far Out and Waiting sessions will be held at the Reese Creek Community Center.

The Fleet Program is doing better than projected with consistent service requests from neighboring departments. Appropriate grants continue to be identified and pursued.

OPERATIONS REPORT:

As submitted.

Chief Wittwer reviewed the submitted report citing how beneficial the wildland deployments have been and thanking Finance Manager Honatke for her extraordinary efforts in submitting those reimbursements. An additional Brush Truck has been purchased for use on the wildland deployments. Chief Wittwer also noted the progress of the EMS Reserve Program.

FIRE PREVENTION REPORT: As submitted.

Fire Marshal Zlomie reported that thanks to the work of Deputy Fire Marshal Brandon Yung, C Shift and volunteers, the public outreach at Digger Days was a great success. A number of events are planned for "Charge into Fire Safety!" Fire Prevention week, October 5th through the 11th.

LOCAL 4939 REPORT:

Union President Nick Stinson reported on the wildland deployments and the vital experiences that these teams bring back to the department. The Union would also like to express support for the EMS Division Program. They are enthusiastic about the Heavy Rescue Team, as well, and the opportunities that this program provides to train other departments in the skills that the team is mastering. Two members, Firefighter Coulthard and Firefighter Samlowski, have completed their paramedic training and certification. Carol Burroughs has reached out to CVFD commending the peer support response to the incident with Firefighter Anderson.

TRUSTEE REPORT:

Trustee Rob Holt reported that he experienced a notification on a rental car of "emergency vehicle entering roadway" and asked if that is available for the department. Fire Marshal Zlomie said that it may be good to try the program on one of the department's busier vehicles and it will provide data on how many notifications are sent out. There is no recent update on progress on a traffic control light in front of Station 1 for exiting emergency vehicles.

This project is in the financing/cost research stage. Chief Wittwer said that a ceremony will be held at 7:45 am on the morning of September 11th at the flagpole at Station 1. Trustee Holt asked about call volume being posted on social media to keep the public informed. Chief Wittwer responded that a community outreach committee is being formed to facilitate better messaging to the public.

Trustee Ramie Blakeman called attention to September as Suicide Prevention Month. She is cited concerning statistics for wildland firefighters and has concern for CVFD's firefighters, with everything that is asked of them. Trustee Blakeman noted the need to ensure that members on deployment are adequately supported.

CITY LIAISON REPORT:

City Manager Neil Cardwell reported that the City Manager is replacing Council Member Jim Simon as a representative to the Board as a good resource for the operational stances of the City of Belgrade. A number of streets in Belgrade are being resurfaced. The Fall Festival is this weekend and the Chamber is making food trucks available this year in lieu of the big community feed. The City continues to work on water storage for future water needs. The Main Street grain elevator is in the process of being purchased by the City of Belgrade as an iconic landmark to be part of the downtown redevelopment plan. Responding to a question regarding new developments providing infrastructure and additional support for fire services, City Manager Cardwell said that Cities are limited in what they are able to require developers to provide.

Trustee Holt moved to accept **the reports** as submitted. Trustee MacLeod seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION ITEMS: **None.**

ACTION ITEMS:

Consideration and Approval for EMS Division Chief Position.

Chief Wittwer presented the documents included in the Board Packet for the EMS Reserve Division Program for inter-facility transports. He emphasized the improvement in service that this program will provide to the District along with the additional revenue that will be realized and the need for the position of EMS Division Chief. There is an ongoing dire need for increased EMS services in this region even as some current providers are stepping back from providing this service. The revenue that will be received will not only fund the additional part time positions and the EMS Chief position but will provide supplemental revenue for operations. Contracts are currently in place with rotary and fixed wing transports along with confirmed active interest from Bozeman Health for inter-facility transports. There is a consistent need for several transports each day.

The District currently has an ambulance to use for this program. Union President Stinson added his support for providing this additional resource for EMS response to help alleviate some of pressure on the on-duty crews. The Union has seen the need for an EMS Division for a few years now. Medical Director Birrer is in full support of this effort as well and has warned of the need to ensure that this demand is met with a solid program.

There was some discussion regarding possibly proceeding without an EMS Chief or making it a less senior position initially, internally recruiting for this position and concern over committing to this expense considering where the District currently is with Operational Revenue. Chairman Wilkins requested that while efforts should continue with this program, he would like more in-depth information outlining the budget for this program to have a firm grasp of the District's full obligation considering the current revenue situation.

Trustee Murray moved to **postpone** the approval for the EMS Division Chief Position until more information is available. Trustee MacLeod seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Consideration and Approval for Increases to Liability Coverage with VFIS.

Trustee MacLeod moved to **approve the increase to the District's VFIS coverage pending the EMS program moving forward.** Trustee Murray seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Consideration and Approval for Selection of a Lender for Heavy Rescue Apparatus and Shop Construction Loans

After discussion of the request for loan RFP process, the board asked that staff ensure that more bids are received in the future. It was confirmed that the 8-year, 4.06 % interest rate is the best available and there is some urgency in securing these loans in order to keep these projects on schedule.

Trustee Murray moved to approve **Stockman Bank as the Lender for both Heavy Rescue Apparatus and Shop Construction Loans.** Trustee Holt seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next regular meeting of the Central Valley Fire District Board of Trustees is scheduled for **October 14, 2025.**

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.



Darren Wilkins, Chairman



Mark MacLeod, Secretary/Treasurer

ATTEST: 

Debbie Bloem, Clerk