



**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**SOUTH AREA FIRE & EMERGENCY RESPONSE DISTRICT**  
**Fire Commission Regular Meeting**  
Tuesday, January 14, 2025 @ 16:30

**A. Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the South Area Fire and Emergency Response Fire Commission was called to order at 16:30 by SAFER Fire Commission Vice President Jean Jackan.

**Members Present**

Campbell, Jackan, Phelps, and Tatro were all present, Hebbe was absent and excused. Also present: SAFER – Fire Chief Finke, Deputy Fire Chief Lang, EMS Division Chief Gordon-Haessly, Fire Marshal Christiansen, Battalion Chief McBain, Captain Klapoetke, Lieutenant Bartus, Lieutenant Zellner, Engineer Brandt, Engineer Kolb, Firefighter Pound, and Administrative Assistant Latimer. There was one guest present.

**B. Correspondence/Comments from the public on issues related to the SAFER District**

None

**C. Consent Items**

Approval of prior meeting minutes from July 9, 2024.

***Motioned by Campbell to approve prior meeting minutes from July 9, 2024. Second by Tatro.***

***Motion carried 4:0.***

**D. Business Items**

Staffing Updates.

- Chief Finke said Director of Medical Services Gordon-Haessly's position has changed slightly and her title is now EMS Division Chief. She was working three days a week and is now working four days a week. We took one day a week from our Fire Inspector Rheinschmidt who was helping Fire Marshal Christiansen two days a week.
- At our last Board meeting we were given the approval to apply for a SAFER Grant, which is a Federal Grant for funding of additional firefighters or retaining current firefighters. We plan to recruit and hire nine additional firefighters, an extra three on each crew. We are hoping to apply for that grant in the next several weeks, we are just waiting for it to open. When it does open, it's only open for thirty days, so Deputy Chief Lang and I are gathering some of the work so we're ready as soon as it opens.
- Campbell said you can only use it for personnel.
- Chief Finke said it is only used for fire personnel.
- Jackan asked what is the time frame of the grant.
- Chief Finke said we apply for the grant, and they pay for the wages and benefits for three years, and then in year four, it goes back to the municipalities to make up that difference.
- Campbell said can I ask what that amount is.
- Chief Finke said each firefighter is approximately \$105,000.00 with wages and benefits. We actually applied for and were awarded the grant about six years ago, and the Board at that time their plan was to get rid of them once the grant ran out, so we chose not to pursue it any further. This time the Board is on board with it.

- Deputy Chief Lang said Firefighter Kolb was recently promoted to Engineer, and we hired a couple of full-time Firefighters, Tabitha Allen, and Erik Butt. Engineer Ewan completed paramedic and passed his test, he is currently going through the phases and is almost to phase three. Full-time Firefighter Massa passed her paramedic, and full-time Firefighter Welch just completed paramedic and will be testing in the next week or two. We have a union contract with Local 5452 that goes through the end of 2026, which added an additional six full-time staff.

**Action: No action was taken.**

#### E. Staff Reports

Report from Fire Chief

- Fire Chief Finke said we had a structure fire at the top of the hill a mile and a half straight south of here. When the fire call came out, we had no one in the district available to respond. The crew from this station was in the Town of Guenther for an EMS call, and there was a multi victim crash in Weston that we already had Riverside and Wausau bringing extra ambulances, and then the structure fire came in. It was about 20 minutes before the first truck got to that individual's home, although he was very nice about it, he certainly wasn't happy. The whole neighborhood attended the November Board meeting, and certainly spoke their minds. That spurred some of the additional staffing that is going on.

Report from Deputy Fire Chief

- Deputy Fire Chief Lang said there are a couple of reports in your packet and I'll give you the highlights.
- **Personnel Report:** Discussed prior.
- **EMS & Fire Incidents:** Our EMS responses with 911 calls is up for the year over 200 calls. Our fire responses where up a bit for the year.
- **Training:** Listed.
- **Apparatus:** Listed.
- **Fire Prevention/Public Education:** We will be adding one big event in 2025, with Country Fest and Rock Fest in Cadott we will be at Force Fields Festival.
- **Grants/Projects:** EMS Division Chief Gordon-Haessly secured over \$20,000.00 in grants for new laryngoscopes.

#### F. Business Items

Presentation of Awards for Retirements of Firefighter Robert Pound and Lieutenant Bruce Bartus.

- Deputy Chief Lang said what we try to do is anyone who retires from the department with 10 or more years in good standing, we give them an axe award. Lieutenant Bartus started with Rib Mountain in 1994, in 2000 he was promoted to Lieutenant for Rib Mountain Fire, in 2014 he was promoted to Captain, in 2022 we reorganized the department and command staff with Captains being full-time, and he became a Lieutenant.
- Firefighter Pound was the interim Fire Chief in 2002 for Rib Mountain Fire Department, in 2013 he was hired at Weston Fire, in 2014 at SAFER as a firefighter till now, and that is just a fraction of his service. He was a Captain with Maine for 20 years, he taught for the Tech.
- Chief Finke said the fire service has changed a lot especially over the last decade, as some of you know that many years ago things have changed between volunteers, full-time, call volume, expectations, there has been a lot of change in a really short amount of time. The number of the people in the state and in the country that are willing to volunteer for fire departments or volunteer for anything has really dwindled. Both of these guys have volunteered a lot to their community, and expecting nothing in return. The number of guys that are around willing to do that anymore are pretty minimal.

#### G. Remarks from the Fire Commission to set the next meeting date as well as discuss items for the next meeting agenda.

- Next meeting TBD.
- Campbell has nothing.
- Phelps has nothing.
- Tatro has nothing.
- Jackan has nothing.

**H. Adjourn**

***Motion by Tatro to adjourn. Second by Phelps. Motion carried 4:0.***

***Jackan adjourned at 17:00.***

Respectfully submitted by Cher Latimer, SAFER District Administrative Assistant.