

# **Mosier Fire District Board Meeting Minutes Wednesday, March 19, 2025**

## **Attendance:**

**Board Members:** Carol Goter, Kris McNall, Rob Miller, Todd Reeves, Joanne Rubin

**Staff:** Chief Michael Carlson

**Public:** Chiefs Jensen and Beckner from Mid-Columbia Fire and Rescue, Barb Ayers

**Call to order at 1900**

**Agenda additions or corrections:** None

**Comments from the public:** None

**Consent agenda -** Goter made a **motion** to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Reeves, approved by Goter, McNall, Miller, and Reeves.

## **Business:**

### **1. Follow-up on MFD/MCFR fact-finding/cooperative agreement meeting**

McNall and Reeves met with Chiefs Jensen and Beckner from MCFR on 3/17/25. McNall informed them of the MFD current budget, current tax revenue, our stations and apparatus. They were given a copy of former Chief Renault's apparatus plan. They were told that Chief Carlson has also completed an apparatus plan, and all agreed that a visit to Mosier would be appropriate.

Chief Jensen of MCFR reported that the topic of a partnership with MFD had been discussed briefly at their board meeting the following evening. The MCFR board will be provided with a high-level conceptual overview of capital, funding, future planning, risks, and liabilities, as well as what the benefits would be for MCFR. The MCFR board values a strong Mosier Fire District. After the MCFR board is provided with this information, they suggest that there be a joint meeting between the two full boards.

McNall stated that in her conversations with members of the community, the lack of a staff person in Mosier is a problem for many people. Chief Jensen replied that it is not likely that they would staff a person full time throughout the year. He also mentioned that the wildland program could be based out of Mosier, as well as there being a possibility of some other partnerships with the forest service. McNall offered her opinion that there should be a community meeting in Mosier to get feedback from citizens about the options available. Reeves agreed that it's important to engage the public but said that in the end, it would be the board members who would be deciding what is best for the district based on facts coming from a deeper knowledge of what's involved.

Chief Jensen was asked, based on what he knows now about our finances, if he had misgivings about a potential partnership. Chief Jensen replied that a big part of the financial piece will be dedicating resources into capital, which would be easier if a full-time staff at the Mosier station did not have to be funded. He also remarked that MFD has more volunteers than he'd previously thought and that was a positive factor.

Chief Beckner clarified that the wildland crews usually start in April and go through to early October. Chief Jensen added that the expense for wildland crews comes out of the MCFR budget first and if the work they end up doing can fall under a grant, they will claim it under that grant. In fact, any area that is in the Mosier Fire District right now would qualify under one of the grants that they have from the Oregon State Fire Marshal.

Further clarification was provided regarding the timeframe that wildland crews are not active -- mid-October to the following April -- that it would be Mosier volunteers responding first, with MCFR providing support as they do now.

In response to a question from Miller as to whether personnel would be stationed here in Mosier during wildland fire season, clarification was offered that it wouldn't be one person in Mosier, rather it would be a crew of five people working in this area. They would not be responding to medical calls.

MCFR stats:

- Total number of on duty people average is 9.24.
- There is a duty officer that is on 24 hours a day and that person has backup.
- There is a captain and a lieutenant.
- They have two separate stations.
- In July they will have three independent crews, which equates to three separate engine companies for a structure fire or for a wildland event. That would result in two type three apparatus and one type five apparatus, up to two water tenders, and one fire chief.
- Line crew shifts are 48 hours on and 96 hours off.
- Duty Chiefs do 4-day periods on call and respond to motor vehicle accidents and any fires beyond smoke investigation
- They are doing a project this year regarding enhanced communications with radios creating a simulcast system. This should result in better coverage.

## **2. Discussion of future of MFD**

Reeves and Rubin stated their support for pursuing this opportunity with MCFR, adding that the presence and response of volunteers is critical so it is important to keep them engaged.

Discussion ensued covering medical calls, needing more volunteers with EMT certification, and the current state of volunteer response. McNall: Re training, we need to have someone from MCFR come to Mosier to train the Mosier volunteers on Mosier equipment. Reeves recalled that Chief Jensen said that would happen. Reeves: Regardless of the direction we take, there may be some volunteer turnover.

McNall pointed out important financial issues to reconcile, particularly with respect to addressing MFD's significant capital needs.

Other points discussed::

- From MCFR's view, MFD would represent only 5% of their budget;
- MCFR is motivated to cooperate with MFD;
- MFD resources would help MCFR out with coverage in the Chenoweth area and west of there;
- MFD needs to be contributing funds to an apparatus plan on a yearly basis;
- In an agreement with MCFR, we need to include discussions of capital equipment;
- MFD tax rate is \$2/\$1000 assessed value. MCFR is \$2.10/\$1000. MFD could go to that rate without going to the voters. MFD would likely do that if working with MCFR.
- A local fire chief can do the fire walk throughs, wellness checks, etc., and MCFR likely would not do that.

- MFD can be seen as an entry level chief job/stepping stone to advancement resulting in the onboarding of a new chief every couple of years and the community should be made aware of that.
- Getting a fire chief at the end of their career could be a good choice.
- Before settling on a plan, it would be beneficial to have someone from MCFR come to Mosier and do some training with our volunteers.

Chief Carlson was asked to have a MCFR training crew come to an MFD drill.

McNall will be going to the next drill as a volunteer and Miller will go as a board member to try to get readings from the volunteers regarding the options we are looking at.

Miller and Goter will set up telephone interviews with the top two candidates from the resumes received. Rubin will provide information/interview questions from when she last went through this.

**Comments from the public:**

Barb Ayers asked about available funds, how the JUF fits into it, did MFD have enough money for a chief. She offered her opinion that Josh Beckner would be good in terms of recruiting and retaining volunteers. She asked if, considering that fire season in eastern Wasco County starts earlier than here, would MCFR still have resources by the time Mosier is in the middle of their fire season. She asked if a new fire chief moving here would be able to find a place to live considering the high cost of housing in this area.

**Entered Executive Session at 2045**

Executive session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a) "To consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent."

**Reconvened Regular Session at 2057.**

Goter and Miller will conduct initial interviews with two candidates for Fire Chief to get more information from them.

**Adjournment at 2058**

*Next regular board meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2025, at 6:00 pm*