

BIG SKY FIRE DISTRICT “BSFD”
MINUTES OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING OF OCTOBER 9, 2018

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Chair Alan McClain at 1:03 pm

Present: Trustees Alan McClain, Carol Collins, Matt Dodd, Renae Schumacher and Deb Lewis via phone; William Farhat, Fire Chief; Mara Mitchell Administrative Assistant

a. Introduction of visitors and guests - None

2. Public comment for items not on the agenda – None

3. New Business

a. Personnel Matter – Possible Closed Session

- Trustee McClain stated that he feels the privacy of the individuals exceeds the public’s right to know. Chief Farhat was asked if he wanted to keep the session open to which he declined.
- Trustee Dodd asked Chief Farhat if it is his desire to waive his right to have his attorney present. Chief Farhat stated that yes, it is his desire to waive his right to have his attorney present.
- Closed Session entered at 1:05 pm
- Regular Session resumed at 2:10 pm
- Regarding allegations of personal misconduct an investigator was hired. The investigator supplied the board with a confidential report summarizing the investigation. The board chooses to adopt those findings.
 - **Motion Made and Seconded** by Matt Dodd and Carol Collins to pursue discipline of Chief Farhat based on the adoption of the factual findings by the outside investigator. Passed Unanimously
 - **Motion Made and Seconded** by Matt Dodd and Carol Collins for a written warning to be placed in Chief Farhat’s personnel file along with a sealed envelope containing the confidential investigation summary. Passed Unanimously
 - **Motion Made and Seconded** by Matt Dodd and Carol Collins that in addition to the written warning Chief Farhat refrain from behavior which led to the investigation and pursue appropriate counseling related to the circumstance of the alleged incident. Passed Unanimously
 - Trustee Schumacher questioned if a timeframe needed to be indicated. Trustee Dodd stated that details can be included in the written warning with the help of legal counsel subject to board approval before going in to Chief Farhat’s file.
- Trustee Dodd stated that the status of Chief Farhat’s suspension needed to be addressed. Trustee Dodd stated that the board has discussed the allegations, made decisions based on the allegations, and determined a course of action. Trustee McClain and Trustee Schumacher feel comfortable with Chief Farhat returning to work Wednesday (10/10/2018). Trustee Collins stated that she feels some of items discussed that Chief Farhat is to do should be done before he returns to work. Chief Farhat stated that he feels people do not want him contacting them off duty to discuss and make amends. Trustees Dodd and Collins feel that Chief Farhat should not contact people while on shift. Trustee Collins stated that she would be comfortable if Trustee McClain contacted people to let them know that the board has decided to move forward, Chief’s suspension has been removed and there still action that will be taken. Trustee Dodd stated that Chief Farhat will be responsible to address his department directly regarding the situation. Chief Farhat stated that he has to talk to

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individuals directly, and that he has to talk to the shifts as well. Trustee Dodd stated that from a purely practical standpoint it will take time for Chief Farhat to do what is expected from him. If between now and the time the formal written warning is placed in his file something happens that is actionable. Chief Farhat agrees. Trustee Dodd also said that nothing prohibits the board from reinstating the suspension immediately or taking measures including possible termination immediately. Trustee Dodd feels it is incumbent on Chief Farhat to talk to the people directly involved, but he does not know the best way to do that as he does not know what if any personal relationships Chief Farhat has with the individuals. Trustee Collins feels that Chief Farhat needs to reach out to certain people before just showing up to work. Chief Farhat believes there are people who do not want to be contacted outside of work regarding work stuff and there are people who do not care if they are contacted outside of work. Chief Farhat stated that he would like to be able to go to the station to apologize and talk to Deputy Chief Megaard and Alecia immediately following the board meeting and return to work as normal tomorrow (10/10/2018). As he has access to people that will be the first priority. Trustee Collins stated that if she were one of the individuals in the report and she was not contacted regarding the status of the situation she would be offended. Trustee McClain would like the afternoon to work on some things and will then contact Chief Farhat regarding when his suspension will end. Chief Farhat mentioned that he is supposed to be at the State Chiefs Convention in Missoula Wednesday through Saturday (10/10-10/13), another conference in Oregon beginning the following Monday (10/15-10/17), and then leaves for vacation the next day (10/18) for a couple of days. Chief Farhat stated that he and Deputy Chief Megaard would be the only two attending the convention in Missoula from the department and therefore the board was comfortable with allowing him to attend regardless of his suspension status. Trustee McClain will work on details and communicate in writing the status of Chief Farhat’s suspension. Chief Farhat apologizes for being such a distraction to the district.

4. **Old Business** - None
5. **Other Buisness** - None
6. **Public Comment** - None
7. **Date for next regular meeting** – October 24, 2018 at 8:30 am
8. **Adjournment** – 2:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Alan McClain, Chair



Board Member

cc: Board of Trustees
Fire Chief William Farhat
Local 4732
Gallatin County Board of Commissioners
Gallatin County Clerk & Records Office
Madison County Clerk & Records Office