

**WILLIAMS RURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**April 9, 2024**

Call to Order: 10:01am

**Roll Call:**

**Board Members Present**

Position 1 – Heather Glass

Position 2 – Brian Barton

Position 3 – Claudia Pratt

Position 4 – Bill Ertel

Position 5 – David Applegate (via Zoom)

**Williams Staff Present**

Interim Fire Chief – Nicco Holt

Administrative Assistant – Jennifer Vetter

Lieutenant – Oskar Sundell

Fire Marshal – Jon Scaroni

Firefighter – Devin Brennan

Firefighter – Charles HooperLee

Ash Martell – Community Relations Coordinator

Firefighter – Heather Sundell

**Public Presence:**

Applegate Fire Ops Chief – Cody Goodnough

Oregon State University Professor – Chris Adlem

Amber Guient – Williams Community Member & Librarian

Alan Brahn – Williams Community Member

Judy Grimsby – Williams Community Member

Karen Rogers – Williams Community Member & Williams Fire Support Team Secretary

Marni Brown – Williams Community Member

**Zoom Attendees:**

Fire Chief Chris Wolfard – Applegate Valley Rural Fire Protection District

Allison Cleveland – Williams Community Member

Maurice Strickland

Unknown Attendees: one un-named (aka Samsung Phone)

**Announcements:**

Board Chair Heather Glass stated public speaking is changing from 2 minutes to 5 minutes and wait to end of the meeting to provide input and it is still the policy to address questions at the next board meeting.

Board Introductions took place for new people in the audience.

**Approval of Prior Board Meeting Minutes:**

- March 12, 2024 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Board Member Claudia Pratt discussed the regulations and rules to adopt regulations and stated that during the last meeting the Interim Chief had inquired if the old policy manual would be suspended and she stated that there was a policy that she would be bringing in and handed out a handout to address the Interim Chief’s inquiry.

- A motion was made by Bill Ertel to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2024 and it was seconded by Brian Barton.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye

Discussion: Board Member Claudia Pratt noted an action item that she completed within the board minutes

- The motion was approved unanimously

---

Per Board Chair Heather Glass that the meetings are open to the public and via zoom unless the meeting is an executive session.

- A motion was made by Heather Glass to add Ash Martell to New Business to talk about community events. The motion was seconded by Brian Barton.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – No Answer (technical difficulties hearing)

- The motion was approved 4 ayes and 1 no answer
- 

- March 15, 2024 Board Workshop Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made by Heather Glass to approve the Board Workshop Meeting Minutes of March 15, 2024 and it was seconded by Bill Ertel.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye

Discussion: None.

- The motion was approved unanimously
- 

- March 29, 2024 Special Board Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made by Heather Glass to approve the Special Board Meeting Minutes of March 29, 2024 and it was seconded by Brian Barton.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – No Answer (technical difficulties hearing)

Discussion: Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that she didn't know if a statement made by Board Chair Heather Glass in reference to Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt "didn't want the job" was an opinion or statement made during the meeting. There was some back and forth and Board Member Claudia Pratt insisted that Nicco Holt wanted the job. Board Chair Heather Glass agreed to disagree and she made her statement based off of the Interim Chief and Captain's uncertainty to the idea to being chief during fire season.

Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that if someone abstains that no reason needs to be given. Board Chair Heather Glass disagreed and stated that she can put that in writing.

- The motion was approved 4 ayes and 1 no answer

### **Chief's Report (Given by Interim Chief Nicco Holt):**

The report was given out electronically to the Board. Board Member Bill Ertel asked questions about bullet point items on the list of the chief's report and his questions were answered by Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt. Board Chair Heather Glass inquired if a stronger effort is being made at communicating. Interim Chief and Captain stated, 'yes'.

### **Operations Report – Lt. Sundell:**

Lt. Sundell's report was provided electronically before the meeting. Board Member Claudia Pratt provided a thank you to Oskar for taking care of a leak in the old station building. Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about a hydrant at the school and who is responsible for it. The fire district is responsible for the hydrant. The hydrant will be replaced with a new one.

### **District Fire Marshal Report:**

District Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni's report was provided electronically before the meeting. Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about items on the report such as the chipper program and Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni provided answers. He stated Applegate's side of the program is busier and the Williams one is getting a revamping with technical and email updates. Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni is using some of his budget on Pennington Creek to help clear an area for someone who cannot afford or qualify for a program to have such done that is one of the worse areas of the fire district for fire.

A scenario of what the Fire Marshal services looks for are how far brush is from the home, venting around the home, roof clearances, gutters, vegetation planting around the home, deck clearances, and moving past the 30ft mark discussion the trees and brush in that area. The Chipper Program and Dump Trailer Program are also available for chipping and transporting brush away.

Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni and Jennifer Vetter completed and received their Burn Manager Certificates.

**Community Relations Coordinator Report:**

Community Relations Coordinator Ash Martell’s report was provided electronically before the meeting. Board Chair Heather Glass inquired about the Chili Cook Off. It will be held on May 4 at 1pm. Members of the fire district are invited to cook and the public is invited to attend for a small cost and it is National Firefighter Day and awards will be given out.

Team Teaching was discussed as Smokey coming to elementary schools and presentation for the children in both Josephine and Jackson counties.

The Applegate Fire/Williams Fire mailers for Williams will be mailed out soon. They did not get out due to a printing service mailing list mistake.

**Chair’s Report**

Nothing to Report

**Unfinished Business:**

Modular Home Update: Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that modular home repairs are done and the tenant is disappointed that the repairs had some compromises made but are adequate.

- A motion was made by Claudia Pratt to allow Devin’s mother to stay up to 15 days for business per visit until July 1, 2025. The motion was seconded by Heather Glass.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye

Discussion: It was confirmed as 15 days per visit for business. The lease is currently written that no one can stay for more than 4 to 5 days without permission. This would allow it for a duration.

- The motion was approved unanimously

Property Behind Fire Station: Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that the property is a total of 9.88 acres. The property will be auctioned in late August. There is a second on the home and the lender is wanting to sell the property to the fire station. The 2<sup>nd</sup> lenders are willing to do an owner-carry with \$150k-ish down that is flexible. Purchase price of \$370k with a chance of it

being different with an owner-carry. No interest rate or loan length negotiated at this time. The bank will not loan the fire district on the property behind the station due to legalities. All persons would be evicted.

- A motion was made by Claudia Pratt asking does the Board want to proceed with purchasing the property behind the fire station to include the discussion from Claudia Pratt and further investigate it without a commitment. The motion was seconded by David Applegate.

- ✚ Heather Glass – No
- ✚ Brian Barton – No
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – No
- ✚ Bill Ertel – No
- ✚ David Applegate – No

Discussion: Board Vice Chair Brian Barton recalled the minutes from March 12<sup>th</sup> to abandon considering the property behind the fire station. Board Chair Heather Glass stated that after discussion with the staff that it was concluded that the department should utilize the property the district already has and she does not want to pursue the property. Board Member Bill Ertel is not interested in moving forward. Board Member Claudia Pratt is just being informative with the information.

- The motion was unanimously NO

5-Year Plan Update: Using IV Fires Strat Plan as a template and the goal is to get all the way through it as a draft before looking at it with the rest of the Board and community members. It is about 5% complete and a couple more months to go.

Board Policy Manual: Tabled

### **New Business:**

Community Burn Liability: Jennifer Vetter introduced Professor Chris Adlam from Oregon State University. He spoke to the benefits and why burn plans are important. The statistics are backed by ODF and lots of research goes into community burn plans. Professor Adlam discussed prescribed burn associations and how many communities are moving towards learning and training and making connections with fire professionals and fire departments in order to use the tool appropriately and safely, including smoke management. He hopes that over time skeptics can understand the benefits and role of fire as a tool. There are requirements and responsibilities holding Certified Burn Managers to higher standards requiring a 'Burn Plan' and a burn manager is required to provide notifications to all neighbors. As an individual land owner, there are no requirements to notify or have any training when burning as opposed to certified burn managers with requirements to follow to be safe and promote safe outcomes. Professor Adlam referenced

an article near Greenville (the Dixie Fire) which burned the town. One property owner saved their home and property with the use of prescribed fire.

Chain of Command Clarification: Board Member Bill Ertel stated that there have been some misunderstandings withing the department recently and an agreement will be finalized soon from Applegate Fire for oversight help. Board Member Bill Ertel stated he is unsure if the chain of command is being followed and in very short time Applegate will be in the chain of command and is unsure if the chain is broken. Board Chair Heather Glass rephrased Board Member Bill Ertel's question asking if "Nicco is still willing to be the chain of command until Applegate Fire comes on board?". Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated, 'yes'. And it was asked and answered to be understood by the staff that the staff does understand the chain of command.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired if Fire Marshal Jon Scaroni and Firefighter Jennifer Vetter went through the Interim Chief for the class. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated that he saw value to the district that they attend the class and that they would be reimbursed the \$60 for the class. Interim Chief and Captain Holt stated that he would have attended it himself if it wouldn't have fallen on a Wednesday (a training day). Interim Chief and Captain Holt stated that there was no problem that Jon Scaroni and Jennifer Vetter went to another training on the same day.

Board Member Bill Ertel wanted to make sure the staff is clear and Lt. Sundell stated that there was never a problem and they weren't confused at all. Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about the duty shifts and if they are being worked on and Lt. Sundell stated that yes they are being worked on and all shifts are always covered with 3 people. Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that it is good that members verify if they want to attend outside classes due to staffing. Interim Chief and Captain Holt stated that staffing is generally a daily talk.

Board Member Bill Ertel stated that he is uncomfortable with a community burn program and if concerned if damages occur that the fire department would be held liable. Professor Adlam addressed that if the fire department has a role to ensure that people are safe he posed the question, "Wouldn't it be beneficial to have the fire department there?" as it can be posed the other way as well if the fire department chose not to be there. Professor Adlam also stated there has never been a prescribed fire on private land escape in Oregon as it is difficult with 60 people and 4 engines on 10 acres for this to take place. Board Member Bill Ertel is concerned that if Jennifer Vetter and Jon Scaroni who have certificates attend a burn that their attendance will make the fire district liable. Interim Chief and Captain Holt stated that certificates make no one experts. Professor Adlam stated that class certificates are not certifications in burning. There is a process that Professor Adlam explained before certification books are issued and then a certification process takes place along with renewals every 5 years. Per Interim Chief and Captain Holt, the only district participation right now is there may be personnel working on certifications and he supports the public burn associations by gladly putting a wildland engine and personnel working to support safety on the burn effort in conjunction with opportunities to getting

experience and training. Board Vice Chair Brian Barton remembered that the local Prescribed Burn Association attended Coffee with the Chief and presented at the fire department in the recent past in which Board Member Bill Ertel attended.

Professor Adlam discussed negligence and some of the legalities around prescribed burns including who is subject or not subject to lawsuit. Board Member Bill Ertel stated his discomfort still.

Amber Guient, Chair of Williams Community Council – Emergency Preparedness Plan: Her and Alan (representing the Williams Grange) are actively working around the idea of emergency preparedness, evacuation, communication, and the possible need to shelter in place. Where is the evacuation center and where will animals go? A Greater Applegate had reached out to Amber with interest in who in Williams is interested in being a part of ‘Emergency Resilience Hubs’? There are grants for these hubs that A Greater Applegate will apply for and include Williams in. Amber would like to know if she can receive a letter of support from the Williams Fire Department. Grant application is due April 30. Lt. Oskar Sundell will write a letter of support.

Marni Brown stated that she works with livestock evacuations and stated that she can speak with Southern Oregon Emergency Aid to help with the grant as well.

- A motion was made by Heather Glass to write a letter of support for Emergency Resilience Hub with the signature from the Chief. The motion was seconded by Bill Ertel.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – Aye

Discussion: Alan stated that the Grange is considered emergency shelter at this point but is not prepared. He wanted to open the discussion of what does the fire department think of the grange being the emergency shelter and Lt. Sundell said it makes sense.

- The motion passed unanimously

Safer Grant Application: Jennifer Vetter is 50% through the application. The grant is for hiring or keeping staff. It is a 3-year FEMA Grant. The window closes on April 12 and was open for 30 days.

HVHS Graduation Assistance Program Letter: A letter was received from Laura Saunders of Hidden Valley High School for a presentation. The letter will be posted on the web page.

Siren: Put in a future workshop or add to next agenda possibly.

Tone-Out System: The issues are ongoing and intermittent. It has been narrowed down to something at dispatch. Per Interim Chief and Captain, he is not sure what is going on. A radio repair person did come out and was unable to figure it out as of yet. The problem is significant but not interfering. Dispatches are happening, but the audible tones are not coming through.

Lawn Mower:

- A motion was made by Heather Glass for \$3500 for the Williams Fire Department to acquire a riding lawn mower. The motion was seconded by Brian Barton.

✚ Heather Glass – Aye

✚ Brian Barton – Aye

✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye

✚ Bill Ertel – Aye

✚ David Applegate – No Answer (technical difficulties hearing)

Discussion: Board Member Bill Ertel inquired if the amount motioned is enough. Interim Chief and Captain Nicco Holt stated some recommendations for a lawn mower with his experience of a 42inch blade/deck. Firefighter Devin Brennan stated that he will do some shopping around. Board Vice Chair Brian Barton is recommending that the purchase be local to the region in person. There were discussions of riding lawn mowers to zero turns.

- The motion passed with 4 ayes and 1 no answer

Community Events: Community Relations Coordinator Ash Martell would like to have a clear procedure or policy for use of public spaces and an understanding whether or not political events will take place. Claudia Pratt will look in the Policy and Procedure for information. Ash Martell is in the process of creating forms for use.

Marni Brown: She stated that she knows that the duty schedule has been fixed. Lt. Sundell attempted a rebuttal and Board Chair Heather Glass requested to let Marni speak. Marni Brown stated that she is told she doesn't get an answer for her statement until the next meeting and would like to speak. She stated that it sounds like this meeting things are attempting to be fixed

and her opinion is that there are a lot of problems at the Board level. She feels that waiting until the next month for a reply is too long and that meetings should be in the afternoon to increase attendance. She is hoping that public comment will be addressed after the public speaks instead of waiting until the next meeting. She also hopes that the public has a say in the hiring of a new chief.

Board Chair Heather Glass clarified the questions:

- ✚ Schedule
- ✚ Policy
- ✚ Addressing the board commenting back
- ✚ Afternoon meetings
- ✚ Community say in election of chief.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Clerk/Treasurer reports for March 2024 were reviewed by the board members. Jennifer Vetter and staff answered any questions about revenue and expenses for the previous month's expenses previously distributed electronically. Items of review in the financial reports included spending on district credit cards, payroll, regular monthly bills, employee benefits package, station maintenance/repairs items, donations, grants, and reimbursements.

Each of the reports reviewed included:

- District credit cards
- The Umpqua Bank Account
- Profit and Loss Statements
- LGIP Account

Discussion: Board Member Claudia Pratt inquired why names are not attached to some of the PPE purchases. Firefighter Devin Brennan shared that items out of date needing replaced and the purchases were made up of a lot of small items into a large purchase.

Board Member Bill Ertel inquired about payroll and Valley Web Printing missing 1800 mail boxes that the printing company will supply another bill for. Other expenses were explained including the dispatch expense and volunteer stipends.

\*\*\*David Applegate was muted due to excessive noise via his Zoom connection...

A resolution was presented for discussion and vote (Resolution 2023/2024-3). This resolution was for monies unanticipated to receive that were not accounted for in the budget.

- A motion was made by Heather Glass to sign and accept the Resolution 2023/2024-3. Therefore it is resolved by the Board of Directors of the Williams Rural Fire Protection District, to receive and allocate \$28,427.00 into the budget in the following line items for fiscal year 2023-2024. The motion was seconded by Bill Ertel.

- ✚ Heather Glass – Aye
- ✚ Brian Barton – Aye
- ✚ Claudia Pratt – Aye
- ✚ Bill Ertel – Aye
- ✚ David Applegate – No Answer (technical difficulties hearing)

Discussion: None.

- The motion passed with 4 ayes and 1 no answer

Next regular board meeting is May 14<sup>th</sup> at 10am.

**Public Input (2 minutes) with a response at the next board meeting:**

Answer Matt McLauchlin’s Questions from March 12, 2024: Board Chair Heather Glass read the answer aloud (Mr. McLauchlin was not present).

A refence to the board going through 2 chiefs in five years. There has only been Chief Vetter in place even though the board has had a change of members. The Board takes their positions and responsibilities seriously and recommends that Mr. McLauchlin attend the meetings to see functions.

Remarks about embezzlement and racial remarks. If there are remarks made they are taken seriously and investigated. Based on investigation findings an appropriate action would be done to resolve the matter. No direct allegations have been heard to or from members of the department. There are strict checks and balances and internal controls that are utilized.

Board Member Claudia Pratt stated that she heard intent of Jennifer Vetter’s intent to apply and would like to see the same limitations that the Interim Chief and Lieutenant applicable to Jennifer Vetter.

Community Member Karen Rogers stated that some of the online Facebook ‘talk’ goes around yet she hears good things about the department from the community as a whole.

Applegate Ops Chief Cody Goodnough thanked Williams Fire for their response to the 2-alarm fire in the Applegate Fire District.

Board Member Bill Ertel stated that at his church his Pastor acknowledged what was going on with Facebook.

- Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Brian Barton and seconded by Heather Glass. Unanimously approved.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:02pm

Respectfully,

---

Heather Glass, Board Chairperson