CENTRAL VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

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MEETING PLACE:	**Central Valley Fire District, Station 1** **215 Wings Way, Belgrade, MT**
DATE:	**October 13, 2026**
TIME:	**Immediately following the IFC Board of Appeals Quarterly Meeting which began at 5:30 pm**

ATTENDANCE:		***(Present)***	***(Absent)***
Trustees:	Ron Murray, Chairman	X	
	Rob Holt, Vice Chairman	X - virtually	
	Mark MacLeod, Sec/Treas.	X	
	Ramie Maulding	X	
	Joel Fassbinder	X	
Fire Chief:	Jay Wittwer	X	
Operations Chief:	Jeff Hurley		X
Fire Marshal:	Jake Zlomie	X	
Acting Clerk:	Debbie Bloem	X	

NOTICE:	**ALL MEETINGS OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES ARE RECORDED**
GUESTS/VISITORS:	Samantha Honatke, Stephen McAdams, Jeff Royce, Brinn Fiorentino, Brad Appleton, Jason Anderson, Tyler Samlowski,

Trisha McFarland, Marty Kepner, Andy Lupher, Miranda Johnson, Gabriel McManus, Nick Stinson, Michael Liebmann, Steve Sorlie, Mason Bruno, Luca Rodoni, Deanna Barrick, Justin Monroe, Sean Rodino, Collin Brozka

Meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

AGENDA: As presented.

MINUTES: Trustee Fassbinder moved to approve the **September 8, 2026 minutes** as submitted. Trustee seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FINANCIAL REPORTS: After Financial Manager Samantha Honatke explained the journal adjustments included in this month's financial reports for approval, as necessary adjustments to financials that aren't recorded as checks or other transactions but which the trustees should be made aware of:

Trustee Fassbinder moved to approve **the financial reports**. Trustee MacLeod seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

COMMUNICATIONS: The District received a thank you through the website from Baylee, a grateful recipient of a quick and effective **EMS response** from the crew upon landing at the airport. Terry Williamson of the Klamath National Forest Service wrote a lengthy letter thanking the department for the steady, respectful, and professional service that the CVFD crews brought to the Salmon Scott community during their **deployments**. He also offered some helpful recommendations. Natalie Kelly, also of Klamath Forest Service reiterated their thanks in a separate letter. Sue and John sent a note through Pintler Billing, CVFD's **transport** billing agency, thanking the crews and adding that they are "appreciated wherever they are called to duty". And Kathleen, of the Belgrade Community Library thanked A shift for the calm and professional manner in which they handled a nearby emergency affecting a **Babies & Books event** at the library.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Trisha McFarland of Summer Ridge said the banner at Station 2 was still down and reported being told employees were waiting for Board approval. She said the department website indicated that Station No. 2 was open and staffed, which she said was inaccurate, and that community members continued to believe the station was open.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT:

As submitted. **Chief Jay C Wittwer** announced the **Blazing Pumpkins** events will take place at Station 1 on October 14, with activities beginning at 4:00 p.m. and a second group at 6:00 p.m. He invited a trustee to attend an October 22 presentation with Fire Marshal Jake Zlomie at the **Belgrade Economic Summit**. CVFD is planning to assist with **Belgrade High School Key Club's haunted house** and participate in the Chamber of Commerce's **Halloween booth** on Main Street on October 31. The Department holiday party is tentatively planned for December 9th. Chief Wittwer stated that future written reports would be consolidated into fewer sections. He reported 282 calls for the month and 171 EMS incidents in September and added that more than $1 million in **grants** has been awarded to CVFD over the preceding six months.

Chief Wittwer reported that CVFD had not received a decision on the **SAFER grant** by the expected September 30 notification date. EMS Division Chief Pat Songer described the $385,000 award from **Montana's Rural Transformation Funds** for startup costs for a Community Integrated Health (CIH) program, including staffing, equipment, supplies, and travel. He said the program was intended to bring care closer to people's homes, reduce barriers to care, support follow-up care, and assist underinsured, uninsured, and other people needing additional support. In response to a question, Chief Songer said the funding flowed from CMS to the state under an approved state plan. He also explained that the grant was directed toward EMS and community-integrated health, including personnel and other expenses, and that the application was designed to serve underserved rural and super-rural areas despite many district ZIP codes not meeting the grant's HERSA requirements.

Chief Wittwer also addressed **Medic 5-2's** activity and transports, training-division work, fire-prevention activities, and upcoming discussion of state fire-code adoption. He reported continued work on a countywide EMS system and provided updates on local community matters, including the City of Belgrade water system. Community CPR and first-aid courses are continuing, and recent September 11 remembrance events were well received. The **community risk assessment and standards-of-cover work** is progressing, with another presentation anticipated in November with the goal of being ready to seek accreditation the following summer.

LOCAL 4939 REPORT:

As submitted. **President Nick Stinson** reported on member participation in **community outreach and events**, including the fleet-maintenance-facility ribbon cutting, the September 11 Remembrance Service, the Story Creek Elementary Fun Run, the Heart of the Valley's open house, the Belgrade Fall Festival, and the opening of Belgrade's Pump Track. He said members handled more than 250 calls during September while continuing training. **Paramedic McManus** was close to completing field training as a hazardous-response paramedic, with firefighter-paramedic Barrick expected to follow soon. The **heavy rescue team** plans to host Bozeman Big Sky training on basic operations, extrication, and stabilization next week. Four members participated in a peer-support outing with **Madison Gallatin Trout Unlimited**. President Stinson thanked the negotiation and administration teams for work on the agreed-upon medical benefit, describing it as a significant benefit for members' careers and retirement.

VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION REPORT:

None.

TRUSTEE REPORT:

Trustee Ramie Maulding reported on the September 24 strategic-planning session, saying the board's work was intended to support the District's existing adopted strategic plan, not create a separate one. She described proposed trustee social-media and public-communications and trustee-ambassador-engagement

policies, along with a board strategic plan. Chief Wittwer praised all five trustees for their engagement at the planning session.
Trustee Rob Holt reported that he had worked for two years on portable rural AED installations across the District, county, and state. He said Stockman Bank had agreed to adopt a station and purchase an AED and heated unit, along with paying for associated training for neighbors. Trustee Holt also thanked the Volunteer Association and executive operations team for their support of the community program and grant application process. Chairman Ron Murray thanked Holt for his work.
Trustees Maulding, Holt and MacLeod will be attending parts of the Trustee / Fire Chief conference this coming weekend along with some of the executive staff from the department.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Discussion of Community Risk Assessment and Standard of Cover Process
Chief Wittwer briefly addressed this in his Fire Chief Report and a presentation will be made at the November Board Meeting.

Discussion of Future Locations for Board Meetings
Chief Wittwer relayed the executive team's recommendation not to hold winter meetings at Stations 4, 5, or 7 because winter travel could be problematic. Trustees discussed road and parking conditions and access for constituents. Station 1 was viewed as the most practical winter location with the plan to discuss future locations, including Stations 2 or 3, closer to spring.

ACTION ITEMS:

Consideration and Approval of RUDD & Company Audit Proposal
Financial Manager Samantha Honatke explained that the previous three-year engagement with RUDD & Company ended with the FY25 audit, and that the proposal would continue the engagement for fiscal years 2026, 2027, and 2028 at a modestly increased price. She recommended approval, citing the firm's professionalism and continuity

of the lead auditor, Dan. In response to questions, she said finding another auditor, particularly for FY26, would be difficult and described the working relationship as very effective.

Trustee Fassbinder moved to approve the **proposal from RUDD & Company for FY26 through FY28.** Trustee MacLeod seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Consideration and Adoption of Resolution 262704 to Approve the Establishment of the CVFD VEBA Program

Chief Wittwer stated that the proposed Voluntary Employee Benefit Association Program will be established to replace the current HRA program which is currently used by covered members to pay medical expenses. He reported that the District and the Union have discussed it for about a year and that a signed agreement regarding base wages and the healthcare article had recently been completed. Chairman Murray asked why the benefit was non-pensionable and raised concerns about the program's longevity, funding, and financial sustainability. Chief Wittwer said the non-pensionable provision followed federal guidelines, described the program as established for more than ten years and is that it is used nationally, and said a broker had reviewed available options. Trustee Maulding asked about annual review and the ability to make adjustments; Chief Wittwer responded that this program is reviewed annually and changes requiring adjustment to the plan go to a vote of affected members. Chairman Murray suggested regular annual updates on the program's financial health and progress, and Trustee Maulding stated that the Board should review the following year whether the program met expectations. The Chief recommended deferring adoption because the document was provided late and should be included in the November agenda packet for further review. He said the program would not take effect until January 1 and the District was ahead of schedule. The resolution was tabled for consideration and approval at the November 2026 meeting.

Consideration and Approval of the 2026 Personnel Manual

Chief Jay C Wittwer presented revisions to the CVFD 2020 Personnel Manual that had been outdated for years. The

administrative team worked on updates over the prior two months. Chairman Murray said he had not read every page but expressed confidence in the administration's recommendations.

Trustee Holt moved to approve the **updated 2026 CVFD Personnel Manual.** Trustee Maulding 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 **November 10, 2026.**

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Ron Murray, Chairman

Mark MacLeod, Secretary/Treasurer

ATTEST: Debbie Bloem

Debbie Bloem, Clerk