

**BEULAH AMBULANCE DISTRICT  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING No. 55**

**June 24, 2012**

**MINUTES**

The meeting of the Board was held at the Beulah Community Center in Beulah, CO. This was a shared community meeting with the Beulah Valley Volunteer Fire Department, the Citizen's Committee and the Beulah Ambulance District

Board members present were Chairman and President Steve Douglas, Vice-president Jerry Wahl, and Secretary Anne Moulton. Also attending were EMS Coordinator Bryan Ware, and other presenters, Gary Kyte, Bob Thompson, Karl Potestio of the Beulah Valley Volunteer Fire Department and Polly Conlon, Ed Butkovich, Karen Romero of the Citizen's Committee as well as other EMTs, firemen and committee members. This was an open community meeting.

**1. Chairman and President Steve Douglas called the meeting to order** at approximately 5:05 p.m.

**2. THE AGENDA:** No additions were requested.

**3. OLD BUSINESS:** The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the service plan, budget, and mill levy increase to be voted on in November of this year. The Pueblo County Planning Commission will review the service plan on June 26, and then it will go to the Pueblo County Commissioners on July 10 for approval.

Gary Kyte presented the need for change in how we provide fire service. Over a year ago a Citizen's Committee was formed to resolve the current volunteer fire department's issues of aging equipment, decreasing volunteers, and inadequate donations, as has been described in prior community meetings. That committee looked into four options with the result that option #4 was most supported in a straw poll. The option (#4) to combine fire and ambulance services into one district had 62% in favor, with 90 % in favor of some tax based plan. Now it is time to present this plan to the Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation to the County Commissioners. The amended service plan being submitted to the commissioners for the current Ambulance District will add fire services to that special district. Then we expect to proceed toward a November 6<sup>th</sup> vote on the mill levy. Other options had a slim-to-none potential for resolving our problems. We have only to see the current news about the situation in Colorado Springs to know how a fire can blow up. Maintaining the status quo of the fire department is no longer an option. We need to do what is best for the community; having resources, equipment, training, people on call, radios working are essential. We need to communicate with folks who require special assistance in a fire. Really, Gary summed up, there are no other options now.

Polly Conlon called this "just taking the next step". She expressed thanks to the Citizen's Committee which has been working on this since 4/26/11. This committee is a very diverse group of people who thought in terms of the community, not their own interests. A lot of ideas were considered.

Steve Douglas added that, to make this happen, the Beulah Ambulance District has to formally amend its service plan. All three groups, the Fire Department, the Ambulance District, and the Citizen's Committee participated in developing the service plan and budget. They took it seriously. In the end, the budgeted increase to support the fire service came to 6.5 mills. This is what we need to do it right. We were limited by the economy, so there was not an option for a comfortable budget with a lot of cushion. It is a tight, clean budget. We can go through the budget line item by line item if people here want that. It is important that the community vote yes in November. Without that vote, a decision would have to be made regarding how to continue providing fire service. If Beulah fire cannot provide that service then Pueblo County sheriff's office will cover wildland fire only and the time it takes for mutual aid response will not save the structure. It will affect our ability to obtain insurance. For instance, State Farm says that outside of a 10 mile radius it will decide case by case whether or not to insure each property.

Gary Kyte stated that a mailing went to every property owner and resident in the ambulance district, explaining what the mill levy will cost. You can pick up a copy of the service plan and projected budget at the ambulance office, or you can go to the website at [www.beulahambulancedistrict.org](http://www.beulahambulancedistrict.org). What is helpful is to read the narrative about each budget line item, how the tax money will be used. If you have questions, ask anyone on these boards or committee.

Steve Douglas commented that there are revenue variables to consider, including the assessment of Beulah properties which recently took a 5% hit regarding revenues from property tax. We have been advised that our assessment next year (affecting tax income through 2015) will at best be the same or again reduced. We have a few years experience with income from insurance for ambulance calls but that is also a variable. Steve expresses respect for what Beulah Fire has done for many years. If there are too few resources, limited water, inadequate training, limited entry into structures, then they can fight only from outside. We should be able to do more with saving structures, and wildland fire mitigation. We want to do more prevention. Raise the bar. The existing fire department had to survive on \$15,000/ year.

Bryan Ware highly encouraged everyone to obtain a hard copy at the ambulance office or go to the website and read carefully.

Gary Kyte described Karl Potestio's keeping "Brush One" at his house and driving it around to be visible. He added that we still will need volunteers for both fire and EMS. A recruitment program will be crucial.

The program was then opened to questions from the attendees. Here are some of the questions and comments.

What is the game plan to get information to people who aren't sitting here, to let them know we will have no coverage if this is not voted in. How can we market to get the vote. Also how the ballot is written is important – what determines that? Attorney Tom Mullans will be writing the ballot with our input.

Many don't like tax increases, so how do we get the vote out. Bryan said we plan to talk with Beulah organizations. He asked individuals present to please help spread the word. Give us the names of any groups we might talk with. The sign board on the hill was discussed. We are not sure if it will be legal to use; we will ask. We will put notices in the Crawl, stories in the Beulah Buzz, sit in front of the Beulah store.

There is a Blue Book on issues before the voters. We must write and submit our comments for that around August.

You could have a dinner party at your house.

Jerry stated, if it doesn't pass, there will be some kind of fire dept, but it still will have funding problems.

Gary Morgan stated that the biggest pro is the insurance issue, the likelihood of much higher rates. Put that out front. We need some way to get insurance company ballpark figures on how much we will save with the fire department in a special district.

One individual stated that insurance doesn't give a darn where the fire dept is. Polly said after this summer that will change according to two companies she has spoken with. Jerry recommended you call your individual agent to ask those questions. According to a letter to Steve from State Farm, they will come to your home soon to evaluate your property. His agent had folks come to him whose company had dropped them. Individuals wondered if we could get an insurance company employee to come talk at a meeting.

Ed Butkovich suggested we put a sign on the highway, have another community meeting after the commissioners' approval, and have some insurance agents there.

Steve asked Justin Youngren what would be a rancher's perspective as a large landowner. Watershed issues were brought up by the 2005 Mason Gulch fire. If there is a rancher's group, we would like to talk with them.

***4. MOTION TO ADJOURN:*** *was made by Jerry Wahl, seconded by Anne Moulton. Motion carried with no objections. Meeting was adjourned at 5:58 pm.*

Anne E Moulton  
Secretary, Beulah Ambulance District Board of Directors

Final

## Memo

Additional comments added after the June 24, 2012 meeting was formally concluded: Could we get an industrial chipper to come to Beulah to clear brush? What is the county's method? Could Boy Scouts be involved?

There are good publications about defensible space available. Steve would volunteer to help folks plan fire mitigation.. If there is not a defensible space around the home, we can't expect the fire department to try to save the structure. Is there any recourse re absentee owners of property needing mitigation practices? Not a lot.

Gary Kyte encouraged evacuation preparedness; we need to get that information out soon. It is looking bad re fire danger. There is a county document re evacuation. There is a poster to put up in the home saying "ok" or "help" to prioritize homes to assist first. Are they going to be available per each household? They will be at the office.

Anne E Moulton  
Secretary. Beulah Ambulance District Board of Directors