



**Clarke County Fire & EMS Commission**  
**101 Chalmers Court, Suite B**  
**Berryville, Virginia 22611**  
**(540) 955-5132**

MINUTES

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019      6:30pm

Clarke County Government Center – Meeting Room AB

Attendees:      Matt Hoff, Chairman  
                      David Weiss  
                      Tony Roper  
                      Jacob White  
                      Bryan Conrad  
                      Doug Lawrence

Absent:            Diane Harrison  
                      Andrew Nicholson

Staff:             Brian Lichty  
                      Pam Hess  
                      Melanie Radford

Chairman Hoff called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

1.      Mr. White requested to add to the agenda under Unfinished Business to discuss the vote on Option #2 for the budget request from the last meeting. Mr. Conrad made a motion to approve the amended agenda. The motion was passed with all in favor.
  
2.      Public Comment –
  - Mr. Jason Burns announced that he has stepped down as Chief at Blue Ridge. He noted that he did not want to come across as always being negative or to be perceived that way, he felt as though some decisions were being made too quickly and needed further discussions before acting on. Mr. Burns apologized directly to Mr. Conrad for the length of time it took regarding the residency question. He expressed that a simple question should have been answered quickly instead of going around and around. Not everyone has to agree with the answer that is given. Mr. Burns appreciates all that Mr. Conrad has done for the county and continues to do, it was never a personal issue. After the last Commission meeting and reading back through the minutes, Mr. Burns does feel that some decisions are being made too quickly. Specifically in regards to Blue Ridge staffing, the option voted on would actually be a decrease in service. It has been shown that Clarke County can't hire medics due to salaries and would make Blue Ridge more of a BLS service. There is a good part time pool with the career staff and has allowed for medics on days when needed and providing a great service. Mr. Burns feels that the vote for the Monday-

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Friday coverage on the budget request doesn't provide as well as what is currently in place with the part time staff. Even though there are some holes in the schedule they do a good job, are motivated, provide a good service, for the majority meet the driving qualifications, and has been a good experience for Blue Ridge. Mr. Burns asked the Commission to take into consideration, the proposal that was voted on last month, the weekends are not covered and still in need of ALS coverage. He does appreciate what the Commission is trying to do and realizes that he has been negative at times. He prefers things to move quicker than others at times and he thanked everyone for their time. Chairman Hoff took a moment to recognize Mr. Burns for his 21 years of service and thanked him.

- Mr. Jay Arnold addressed the Commission in regards to the Association discussion that was tabled until this meeting. He requested that the discussion be kept about the Association and not just about Boyce Fire Company. He then gave the definition of an Association. He stated that he has heard some concerns about how the Association would operate with just two companies. The number of the companies does not make up the Association, it's the number of representatives. There are many representatives from each company as well as members that attend the Association. Any member or group can join or drop out as they wish. As previously stated, the Association has been in existence for nearly 40 years and is very important. He recalled that the Association use to have four companies and when the county shut down Shenandoah Farms Fire Company on June 18, 2013, they were also active in the Association. The Association didn't go away then and wasn't shut down because of them going out. This is the same situation now with Boyce, it should still be there and recognized. Through the unity of all the companies that is what is responsible for many of the ways things are done today. Changes will occur and continue to occur but it is important to the volunteers for the Association to remain and provide a voice for them. Although Boyce has chosen not to participate at this time, you should not discard the other two companies. The volunteers run the calls with the career staff and provide valuable input. Mr. Arnold stated that Fire and Rescue is a very complex issue and the Association feels that this is something that the Commission can't do alone.

3. Mr. Roper made a motion to approve the December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 minutes. Mr. Lawrence pointed out an error in section 7 near the end, his name is listed as saying "confirmed that more people are signed up, but sometimes they are not showing up to the calls" this was incorrect. Mr. Lichty was the person who made that statement. (recording was verified) Mr. Lawrence made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was passed with all in favor.
4. Committee Reports -
  - Standards – (see attached) Mr. Lichty stated that after Dr. Beth Lethel left the subcommittee, no one replaced her and is that something that needs to be considered since it was originally a three person panel. No other questions or comments.

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- Technology – Mr. Roper stated nothing new to report at this time.
- Budget/Preparation –Mr. Lichty asked to move Mr. White’s request to discuss option #2 for staffing in this section instead of Unfinished Business. Chairman Hoff approved. Mr. White admitted that he misunderstood what option #2 actually meant and voted incorrectly. He didn’t realize it would be a reduction of two days in the current Blue Ridge temporary staffing. He doesn’t think that going backwards from what is already established is a good plan that it needs to continue with the full seven days. Mr. Lichty reviewed with the group some additional information regarding adding back in the two additional days of coverage and the personnel it would take. Everyone discussed different scenarios relating to the hours, days, shifts, station fills and the cost of these potential extra personnel as well as the impacts on current personal, part time schedules, overtime, floaters and leave balances. Mr. Lichty confirmed adding one additional person would cost \$66,000.00 and two additional people would cost \$132,000.00 on top of the already submitted option #2 budget request for three people at \$198,000.00. Mr. Roper commented that his understanding was that the temporary staffing at Blue Ridge was going to continue and be covered under the new budget request. Mr. Lichty explained that option #2 only covers part of Blue Ridge. One person would also be used at Boyce and it is still only for the five day coverage not seven days. Mr. Roper suggested to Chairman Hoff that the proper course of action for this group would be to have someone make a motion for the additional funding if the days are to change from five to seven. Mr. White asked if Boyce requested additional staffing from the county. Mr. Lichty explained that Boyce had asked for an increase in their stipend to pay for additional staff but it was the Budget Subcommittee’s suggestion to ask for as part of the total budget request. Mr. Lichty expressed that he is seeing better results and improvement with the staffing at Blue Ridge and has no reason to think that it wouldn’t help at Boyce as well. Mr. Weiss expressed that the financial numbers are important, but there is a need to create a scenario that makes the whole system work better. As he stated last month, you can try to fill with “X” additional people, but what is the feeling from the companies-what will your members do with the extra people, can the problem be solved that way. This Commission needs to make the true/best recommendation that they feel will work for the county. Mr. White made a motion to add an additional two people at the cost of \$132,000.00 on top of budget option #2 staffing request. The motion passed with all in favor.

5. Unfinished Business

- Blue Ridge Staffing Request - Mr. Lichty reviewed the last month’s data from December 2018 with the group. Mr. White asked where the number comes from under station staffing. Mr. Lichty explained from IAM responding, but the 6am to 6pm career staff may not necessarily be added into that. Mr. White made a motion to continue funding Blue Ridge’s temporary staffing for another month. The motion passed with all in favor.
- Association-role in fire-rescue – Mr. Weiss passed along the Commission’s conversation and comments to the BOS. Mr. Roper and Mr. Lichty, who were both present at the meeting and

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agreed that Mr. Weiss presented it as fairly as possible. The BOS agreed in the end as previously stated, the Association is not a codified organization without all three companies apart of it and wants to encourage this to be resolved with Boyce in hopes they will come back. They value what the Association has done and continues to do but they are not comfortable as it was presented last month without the “third wheel”. It does not mean that the Association isn’t critical to the county, they feel that if it’s going to be put into the structure then it has to include all active companies. After discussion everyone agreed to have a few members from the Commission sit down with the Association and Boyce to work as a mediator or liaison to discuss the issues and try to help resolve them amicably. Mr. Lawrence made a motion for two members of the Commission to meet with Boyce and/or the Association first to explore what the problems are and whether there are any solutions. Discussion-everyone agreed that the two members should probably be Ms. Harrison and Mr. Nicholson since they are both citizens and really have nothing in the situation. Mr. Conrad made a motion to table this until next meeting since both Ms. Harrison and Mr. Nicholson are absent this evening. The motion passed with all in favor.

- Dispatch changes – see Directors Report - reviewed with the group. No questions or comments.

6. Report from the Fire and Rescue Association – No meeting in December.

7. Report from the Director of Fire and EMS – (see attached) Mr. Lichty reviewed with the group. There was a discussion regarding the new way of announcing mutual aid and the pros and cons. Mr. Roper explained that it was done as a time saving mechanism, it’s still under review but is clearly doing better. Changes may still occur but can’t guarantee it will be what everyone wants, they have to do what will make the operation better. Mr. White asked to clarify on the front top line, the 243 total calls for the month of December with an average failure of 7.4% is countywide and how many of those call went completely unanswered. Mr. Lichty confirmed that none of those calls went unanswered. Mr. Lawrence asked about the mutual aid calls, would billing improve if hiring extra personnel, would it help towards their salary if we had to rely less on mutual aid and collecting more on transports. Mr. Lichty confirmed if we answered more of the calls, yes we would bill/collect more. Mr. Lichty stated this is something he does track and can add to the chart for reporting.

- Incentive Program update – Mr. Lichty reviewed with the group and asked for a recommendation from the Commission to submit to process the payout for the two companies that qualified for the quarter. Mr. Roper made a motion to recommend the payout. Mr. Weiss asked what the conclusion was with the concern that one company had higher hours logged, the company that had marked as staffed but scratched. Mr. Lichty explained that there was a meeting setup but due to an incoming response call they had to reschedule and it has not happened yet. Mr. Weiss also asked if there was a stipulation concerning Boyce’s paid staff not counting as part of their hours. Mr. Lichty confirmed and did state that Boyce would easily meet the criteria required if there paid staff did count towards it. Mr. Weiss then asked if the metric needs to be adjusted. Mr.

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Conrad stated if Boyce is paying for their own staff themselves, then that should not be discounted the same as the career staff that the county pays for. Mr. Roper reminded that there is a motion on the floor and can be discussed after. The motion passed with all in favor. Mr. Roper asked who established the current matrix. Mr. Lichty confirmed he designed this one with several other options, this Commission then reviewed and voted on approval of this option that is being utilized currently. Mr. Roper asked if this could be revisited and looked at again, potentially reworked next month due to Boyce being penalized for having their own paid staff. Mr. Lichty stated that he can see both sides of the fence on this. He reminded everyone that the point behind this county incentive program was to bring in more volunteers. Mr. Roper would like to relook at all four of the options that were previously presented again. Chairman Hoff asked for this to be added as an agenda item under unfinished business for next meeting. Mr. Weiss expressed his congratulations for getting more volunteers out.

8. New Business

- Election of Chairman – Mr. Roper made a motion to have Mr. Hoff continue as chair for another year. Other nominations from the floor-Mr. White nominated Ms. Harrison. Mr. Lawrence made a motion to close the nominations. Mr. Hoff requested in the interest of fairness a show of hands for voting. Mr. Conrad, Mr. Roper, Mr. Hoff and Mr. Lawrence all voted for Mr. Hoff, Mr. White voted for Ms. Harrison. Motion for Mr. Hoff to continue for another year as chair passed 4 to 1.

9. Summary of required action –

- Update the budget request adding the two additional people/costs to option #2
- Add the mutual aid response information to the standards report
- Process the payments for the incentive program for the two companies that qualified
- Bring the four original options of the incentive program to the next meeting
- Mr. White added one other item-to verify if the BOS does or does not allow a company chief to be a representative on this commission. Mr. Weiss stated that he does remember a conversation about it but doesn't think anything was ever finalized with it, it's not in the written rules. Mr. White is seeking replacement for his position to keep the commission fair and in balance. Mr. Weiss explained that Mr. White will need to submit a letter to the BOS and they will take it under advisement.

10. Mr. Roper made a motion to adjourn. The motion passed with all in favor at 7:45pm.

All meeting documents will be distributed at meeting. Next meeting is on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 6:30pm in the Clarke County Government Center – Meeting Room AB

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Minutes Transcribed by Melanie Radford

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