Hyalite Rural Fire District

Board Meeting Synopsis Approval Form

The written synopsis of the September 15, 2026 Hyalite Rural Fire District (HRFD) Board of Trustees Annual Board Meeting was approved by motion of the HRFD Board of Trustees on October 20, 2026.

Chair Signature

Justin Miller, Chairman

Printed Name

Secretary Signature

Ken Beideman, Secretary

Printed Name

HYALITE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
SYNOPSIS

DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2026 TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Rae Fire Station, 5700 Gooch Hill Rd., Bozeman, Montana

In compliance with MCA 2017 2-3-212 and the Hyalite Rural Fire District Bylaws, the minutes of HRFD Board of Trustees open public meetings are comprised of an audio recording and a written synopsis. The audio recording is designated as the official record of a meeting. The written synopsis serves to assist the public in accessing portions of the audio recording and is a good faith attempt to provide the public with another method to be informed about the actions of the Board. The minutes are available to the public at www.hyalitefire.org/board-meeting-minutes/ or at the Hyalite Rural Fire District Administrative Offices, 4541 S. 3rd Rd., Bozeman, MT, during its standard business hours.

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:
Jason Jarrett
Ken Beideman
Bob Pailthorpe

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:
Brian Nickolay, Fire Chief
Sheryl Wyman, Administrative Assistant

0:00:01	**FIREFIGHTER PINNING CEREMONY** Chief gives opening remarks. The firefighters introduce themselves to the board. Lewis, Archibald, and Schaub are then given the oath and pinned by family and friends.
0:10:26	**LIEUTENANT PROMOTION** The following firefighters are promoted to the rank of Captain. This is the highest rank volunteers can reach. Jake Kreiger, Ruby Weinberg, and Evan Jones introduce themselves to the board. The firefighters are then pinned by family and friends.
0:15:23	**CALL TO ORDER OF HYALITE RURAL FIRE DISTRICT** Vice Chairman Pailthorpe called the meeting to order and reminds everyone the meeting is being recorded. He asks for any public comment on non-agenda items. None given. **HYALITE CONSENT AGENDA**

	Vice Chairman Pailthorpe asks if there are any requests to pull anything from the Consent Agenda for review. None given. **Motion**: **Trustee Jarrett moves to approve consent agenda as presented** Trustee Beideman seconded the motion. **Vote:** Jarrett-Yes; Beideman-Yes; Pailthorpe-Yes-Unanimous approval. *[See August 18, 2026 Board Packet for Consent Agenda items Approved]*
0:16:25	**Agenda Item 3 – Volunteer Firefighters Association Report** Kade O'Brian, President of the HVFA update. Pancake Breakfast will be this Saturday, from 7-11. Their goal is to serve 1,000 people. The next event will be Night with Santa on December 16th. The association started a Go Fund Me for Metta Trautman and her family. They have raised approximately $17,000 to date.
0:18:18	**Agenda Item 4 – Establishment of Sick Leave Fund** Chief goes over the proposed sick leave fund policy. Questions are asked by Trustee Jarrett. He would like to see the inclusion of both sick leave and annual leave must be used before an employee can go into the fund. The policy can be reviewed at any time. **Motion**: **Trustee Jarrett moves to approve the proposed sick leave fund policy with the one edit to include vacation and sick leave.** Trustee Beideman seconded the motion. **Vote:** Jarrett-Yes; Beideman-Yes; Pailthorpe-Yes-Unanimous approval. *[See Attachment A – Sick Leave Fund Policy]*
0:24:35	**Agenda Item 5 – Appointment of a Trustee to the Impact Fee Coalition of Gallatin County Fire District** There will be a round table discussion between the committee and Gallatin County commission on October 29, 2026 at 2:00pm for impact fees. There is some hesitancy on implementing impact fees on the county and who will administer the fees, collecting and appropriating it to the proper agency. The Chief and Trustee Pailthorpe will be the representatives for Hyalite. Trustee Pailthorpe asks if someone can be at the meeting to address past impact fees.
0:29:18	**Agenda Item 6 – Replacement of Rae Fire Station – Standing Agenda Item** There is a planned district tour visit with Liz Loomis on October 1st at 2:00pm. Possible signage is discussed. There may be right of way issues.

	Discussion is held among the trustees and Chief. Chief will have a meeting with Falcon Hollow on October 6. He also met with Woodlands Parks. Their HOA consists of the developers. October 13th he will be meeting with the Hyalite Foothills HOA. He also wants to revisit the costs presented by the architects. After discussion the quotes may have been high. *[See Attachment B-Signage Options]*
0:37:28	**Agenda Item 7 – Fire Chief's Report** Chief goes through his fire chief's report. 78 calls in August. Membership is at 51. We have five of our needed captains. We will be losing two in the next three months. Residences are full. Fall recruitment was successful. We had 30 people show up to the informational meeting and 21 asked for an interview. We selected nine recruit firefighters and 2 EMTs to join Hyalite. Due to Metta Trautmann being out an extended time, Allie Kuntz is going to step up and help with the academy. *[See Attachment C-Fire Chief's Report]*
0:41:46	**Agenda Item 8 – Trustee's Activities** Trustee Jarrett reports on the EMS administrative board has some fairly aspirational numbers to staff ambulances. Work will be moving forward to see what can be presented to the public.
0:43:57	**Announcements** • Pancake Breakfast – Saturday, September 19, 2026 • Next Board Meeting – Tuesday, October 20, 2026
0:44:45	**Adjournment of Meeting**

HYALITE FIRE DISTRICT
SICK LEAVE FUND POLICY

Effective Date: 9/14/2026

Review Date: As Needed

Approved By:_____

Brian Nickolay, Fire Chief

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a voluntary Sick Leave Fund and an avenue for direct donation of sick leave for eligible employees of the Hyalite Rural Fire District ("District").

The Sick Leave Fund is intended to provide a means for employees to voluntarily donate accrued sick leave to a common fund that may be used to provide paid sick leave to eligible District employees. This fund is intended to support employees of the District who have exhausted their available accrued leave balances.

Policy:

The District recognizes that employees may experience a need for sick leave, as defined in the employee handbook, that requires an extended absence from work.

Eligible employees may voluntarily contribute a portion of their accrued sick leave to the Sick Leave Fund or make a direct grant of sick leave to another employee. Eligible employees who meet the requirements of this policy may request sick leave from the Fund. Participation in the Sick Leave Fund is voluntary. No employee shall be required to donate leave or participate in the Fund as a condition of employment.

Nothing in this policy creates an entitlement to receive Sick Leave Fund hours. Awards are subject to the eligibility requirements, available balance of the Fund, and approval procedures established by this policy.

Eligibility:

A. Employees Eligible to Donate

Employees who are eligible to accrue sick leave under District employee handbook may voluntarily donate accrued sick leave to the Sick Leave Fund. This includes eligible full-time and part-time employees, provided they have accrued sick leave available for donation. An employee may not donate sick leave that has not yet been accrued.

B. Employees Eligible to Receive Sick Leave Fund Benefits

An employee may request Sick Leave Fund benefits if the employee:

1. Is a current full-time or part-time employee of the District who is eligible to receive sick leave as part of their employment;
2. Has completed their probationary period required by District policy;
3. Has experienced, or is experiencing, a need for sick leave, as defined in the District employee handbook, or Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave;
4. Has exhausted, or is reasonably expected to exhaust, all available accrued sick leave before returning to work; and
5. Provides reasonable documentation supporting the request when requested by the District.

Qualifying Circumstances:

Sick Leave Fund hours may be approved for reasons for which an employee would be eligible to take sick leave under the District employee handbook or FMLA leave.

The District may require documentation sufficient to establish the existence of a qualifying circumstance without requiring unnecessary disclosure of confidential medical information.

Donation of Sick Leave:

An eligible employee may voluntarily donate accrued sick leave to the Sick Leave Fund or donate to another eligible employee through direct donation by notifying the Fire Chief and Administrative Assistance by writing via email or handwritten letter.

Donations shall be:

- Voluntary;
- Irrevocable once processed;
- Made only from accrued and available sick leave; and
- Donated in whole-hour increments;

An employee may not donate sick leave if the donation would cause the employee's own remaining sick leave balance to fall below 40 hours. Hours donated to the Sick Leave Fund or through direct grants will not be returned to the donating employee’s personal balance, even if they are unused when a recipient employee separates from employment.

Request for Sick Leave Fund Hours:

An employee seeking assistance from the Sick Leave Fund shall submit a written request to the Fire Chief.

The request must include:

1. The reason for the request;
2. The anticipated duration of the absence;
3. The amount of accrued leave remaining;
4. The estimated number of additional hours requested; and
5. Any documentation reasonably required to establish eligibility.

The employee shall not be required to disclose more medical information than is reasonably necessary to determine eligibility. Requests involving medical information shall be maintained confidentially.

Exhaustion of Accrued Leave:

An employee must exhaust available accrued leave before receiving hours from the Sick Leave Fund. However, the District may approve a conditional award when it is reasonably apparent that the employee will exhaust available accrued sick leave during the qualifying absence.

The Sick Leave Fund shall not be used to supplement an employee's wages for hours for which the employee is already receiving paid leave, workers' compensation benefits, disability benefits, or other compensation intended to replace the employee's regular wages, except where specifically permitted by law.

Amount of Sick Leave Awarded:

The amount of Sick Leave Fund hours awarded shall be determined on a case-by-case basis but shall not exceed 240 hours in a twelve-month window.

The District may consider:

- The employee's medical circumstances;
- The expected length of the absence;
- The employee's normal work schedule;
- The amount of sick leave already exhausted;
- The amount of sick leave available in the Fund;
- The number of other employees requesting assistance; and
- The operational and financial circumstances of the District.

Administration of the Fund:

The Sick Leave Fund shall be administered by the District through the Fire Chief and the administrative assistant.

The administrators shall be responsible for:

1. Maintaining accurate records of donations and awards;
2. Verifying employee eligibility;
3. Maintaining appropriate confidentiality; and
4. Ensuring that the Fund is administered consistently with this policy.

The District accountant shall be responsible for:

1. Processing approved donations to the Sick Leave Fund and through direct donation;
2. Processing approved Sick Leave Fund awards through payroll;

Fund Balance:

Sick Leave Fund hours are maintained as a pool of donated leave and do not constitute a separate cash account or monetary benefit belonging to any individual employee. Donated hours shall not be returned to the donating employee. An employee receiving donated hours shall not acquire ownership of the underlying donated hours beyond their use as authorized paid leave. Unused Sick Leave Fund hours shall remain in the Fund for future qualifying requests.

Termination of Employment:

An employee who separates from District employment shall have no right to receive payment for unused Sick Leave Fund hours. Unused Sick Leave Fund hours shall remain with the Fund and shall not be transferred to another employer or employee. An employee who separates from employment while receiving Sick Leave Fund hours shall cease to receive Fund hours as of the effective date of separation.

No Cash Value to the Donor:

Sick leave donated to the Fund or through direct donation shall not be converted into cash or other compensation for the donating employee or the recipient. A donation is intended solely to provide paid leave to an eligible employee under this policy.

Relationship to Other Leave Benefits:

The Sick Leave Fund is supplemental to, and does not replace other forms of leave or employee protections available under District policy.

Establishment of the Sick Leave Fund does not guarantee that an employee will receive donated leave. Awards are dependent upon eligibility, available Fund hours, and approval under this policy.

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Hyalite Rural Fire District

Fire Chief's Report

September 2026

Prepared by: Fire Chief, Brian Nickolay

1. The Hyalite Fire District responded to a total of 78 incidents in August 2026. Our total call volume for 2026 as of September 1st is 510.
    - Total calls August 2025 - 48
    - Total calls August 2024 - 77
    - Total calls August 2023 - 63
    - Total calls August 2022 - 65
    - Total calls August 2021 - 41

2. Our current roster is at 51 members (effective 9/1/2026).
    - 1 Career Fire Chief
    - 1 Career Assistant Fire Chief
    - 2 Career Division Chiefs
    - 3 Career Captains
    - 5 Volunteer Captains
    - 1 Volunteer Reserve Captains
    - 6 Volunteer Lieutenants
    - 10 Volunteer Firefighters
    - 10 Volunteers Apprentice Firefighters
    - 1 Volunteer Reserve Firefighters
    - 9 Volunteer Recruit Firefighters
    - 2 Volunteer Recruit EMTs

3. I am happy to report we are now staffed with our needed five (5) Volunteer Captains for covering overnight command shifts. Unfortunately, we know this number is going to decrease in the future. We have been made aware that one of our Captains will be relocating to Washington in the month of October for job opportunities. Another captain will be leaving in December after MSU graduation and moving out of the area.
    - We currently have five (5) of our needed five (5) volunteer captains.
        i. Nick Blommel
        ii. Evan Jones
        iii. Jake Krieger
        iv. Alexi Ness
        v. Ruby Weinberg

- We know Metta Trautmann is going to be out on extended family leave. This is reducing our captains to cover overnight shifts by one.
- Our Recruitment and Retention Captain continues to work a modified schedule and cover a night of command per week.
- Myself, Assistant Chief Dahlhauser, Division Chief Malone and Division Chief Prato still will provide coverage at night where we lack availability.
- I will soon have a long-term proposal for the board to review. This will include a permanent solution to our command coverage issues.

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4. We currently have eight (8) resident firefighters living at the Sourdough Fire Station.
    - Current Sourdough Residents -
        - Kade O'Brian, Evan Jones, Ruby Weinburg, Zach Fredach, Garrett O'Tool, Logan Gillespie, Henry Davis, and Miriam Genter.
        - Sourdough resident firefighters continue to fill weekend shifts Friday 7pm – Monday 7am.

5. We currently have four (4) resident firefighters living at the Cottonwood Fire Station.
    - Current Cottonwood Residents –
        - Keegan Torsdahl, Sarah Shenk, Jake Teselle, and Ben Tuma.
    - Cottonwood resident firefighters continue to fill weekday night shifts Monday – Thursday 7pm – 7am.

6. We currently have three (4) residents at the Rae house.
    - Current Rae Residents -
        - Kate Brownell, Tyler Palmer, Colton Rue and Brandon Pelton.

7. Non-resident volunteer firefighters continue to cover six-hour shifts at the Sourdough Fire Station on Monday - Friday 7am – 7pm. With our current level of staffing, we are able to cover 4 of our 10-day shifts with at least 2 volunteers.

8. We continue our regular multi company fire and EMS training every Wednesday night and command training twice a month. Our training through the month of August has focused on completing our wildland fire tactics. We then trained on patient rescue from a structure fire. For EMS we have been training on patients' traumatic injuries.

9. Fall firefighter recruitment was very successful. We held our informational meeting for our fall recruit firefighter academy on August 31st. We had roughly thirty people attending. From there we had twenty-one people sign up for interviews. After interviews were complete, we selected nine (9) recruit firefighters and two (2) EMTs to join our agency. Our fall academy started on Wednesday September 9th and is expected to be completed in December.

    With our Training Captain Metta Trautmann out on extended family leave, we asked our Shift Captain Allie Kuntz to step up and take a special work assignment to help with the fall academy. Allie graciously excepted and will work with Chris Leeper on overseeing and coaching our fall recruit firefighter academy.

10. I will be meeting with the Hyalite Foothills HOA on October 13th. I also have contacted the Falcon Hollow HOA and am working on getting a meeting scheduled this fall. The meeting with the Falcon Hollow HOA will be specific to the Rae Fire Station replacement project. Falcon Hollow is a large development that will immediately benefit from this project due to proximity to the Rae Fire Station.
11. The fire district continues to be involved with the EMS Steering Group in Gallatin County. I am still one of the steering committee members.
12. I am still on the Board of Directors with Montana State Fire Chiefs Association as a combination section director.
13. I am still on the Montana State Fire Chiefs Wildland Fire Committee.
14. I am still on the Montana Intrastate Mutual Aid Committee through the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services.
15. I am still on the operational committee for the Northern Rockies Coordination Group.
16. I continue to sit on the board of the Gallatin County Fire Council as Vice President. I also continue to chair the Gallatin County Fire Council communications committee.
17. I am still a Gallatin County Deputy Fire Warden.
18. Assistant Chief Dahlhauser continues to chair the SOP committees with the Gallatin County Fire Council.
19. Division Chief Prato continues to be a member of the Search and Rescue Communications group.
20. Division Chief Malone continues to be a member of the Tactical Emergency Medical (TEMS) group.
21. We had no firefighter injuries in the month of August.
22. All apparatus are in service.