

Gallatin River Ranch Rural Fire District Report to 2022 GRRHOA Annual Meeting

First, it is important for GRRHOA to recognize and thank the 24 unpaid volunteers who serve the Fire District and its Fire Department. These volunteers work to improve and ensure the safety of the GRR Rural Fire District:

Trustees: Chair Spencer Millimen, Vice Chair Richard Anderson, Treasurer/Secretary Sue Piechowski, Rick McCourt, and Wendy Ward.

Firefighters: Chief Marlin Sprow, Assistant Chief Ken Weskamp, Medical Officer/Executive Assistant John Andrews, Wayne Langel, and Bruce Reynolds.

Reservists: Coordinator Spencer Millimen, Julie Brown, Bruce Buccilli, Rick Davis, Donna Knecht.

Auxiliary: Coordinator Vanessa McMurray, Barb Cattaneo, Patti Draude, Maria Fraser, Rob Fraser, Bev MacMillan.

Wildland Preparation and Prevention Team: Coordinator Dennis Ochs, Willie Eide, Deb Harvey, Alicia Ochs.

Fire Station Project

The Fire Station Project is underway. Construction has begun in the northern two bays of the building at 5770 Nixon Gulch Road on 7/21/22. Trustee Rick McCourt is the project coordinator. The budget is \$450,000, of which about \$150,000 will come from available Fire District Funds. The rest will be financed by a fundraiser and a loan from Manhattan Bank. When complete this fall, the station will consist of a bathroom and a single bay which will house our engine, brush truck, water tender, utility vehicle, and firefighting equipment.

The fundraiser this year will be a direct appeal to Fire District residents and property owners. The goal is to raise \$300,000. We realize this is a lofty goal which we will probably not meet. The idea is to offset the amount of money borrowed from the bank to the greatest degree possible. We recognize and thank those who have donated money for this project in the past and hope some or all will donate again. There are many new owners who have not had the opportunity to donate to this vital community safety project. We hope they will be generous in helping us pay for this critical public safety project. Donations are tax-deductible under Section 170 (c)(1) of the IRS Code. We will be mailing donation requests to all GRR property owners and hope you will find it in your heart to help the community.

Water Access Project

This project began in the fall with the construction of a dry hydrant pipeline into Castle Rock Pond. This pond is probably too low to draft water from at the moment but when full it can hold around 2 million gallons of water. We plan to create a short road spur to the shore of Mossy Rock Pond. This will enable fire engines to draft water directly from the 1-million-gallon pond and improve water supply throughout the district.

Creation of a New, Larger Fire District

The Board of Trustees has been discussing the creation of a larger fire district with the Manhattan Rural Fire District for several years. Both Boards agree to that the idea is a good one. The Fire Station and Water Access Projects are both necessary regardless of consolidation but

are fundamental first steps should consolidation take place. With the completion of these two projects, the two Boards can proceed into serious discussions about consolidation.

Consolidation is the creation of a new district which combines the resources and responsibilities of both districts, with representatives of each district in a new Board of Trustees. There are many details to work out, but consolidation could occur as early as 2023. The advantages to GRR residents include: 1. reduction in fire district tax burden; 2. creation of a district and department with better long-term viability than GRRRFD can do alone; 3. improved fire protection which will improve insurability and may reduce insurance costs to some (through an improvement in ISO rating), and; 4. improvement in long-term non-law-enforcement emergency services to the current GRR Rural Fire District. The only disadvantage is a loss of total local control by sharing control of the district and department with the people who live in the Manhattan Rural Fire District.

Recruitment and Retention

We need more volunteers. Three of our firefighters live outside the District. We need more firefighters who reside within the District but realize that there are very few residents who have the willingness, time, or physical capabilities to serve as volunteer firefighters. Any who can are welcome to apply. Initial training, probationary service, and ongoing training are all managed through the Manhattan Volunteer Fire Department. Those who want to help in this critical community safety program but can't make the commitment to be a volunteer firefighter can consider the Reserve or Auxiliary. Neither of these groups fight fires or train to do so. Reservists function as guide drivers, water source coordinators, and extend the capabilities of the department in emergency management. Those with medical expertise, such as licensed EMTs, RNs, or physicians can serve as Reservists. The Auxiliary helps with fundraising, social functions, and support of firefighting operations in larger incidents through purchasing and distributing food and hydration fluids to firefighters and through the potential establishment of a firefighter rehab center in a safe location.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees conducts an open meeting to which the public is welcome each month. Meetings are announced on the Pony Express Bulletin Board and on the GRRRFD website. These are usually on the third Wednesday of each month at the Equestrian Center Tack Room. The Board thanks the Langels for allowing them to use that facility.

Website

The GRRRFD website address is: <http://www.grrrfd.org/>. All meeting notices, agendas, approved minutes and financials from FY 2018 forward, monthly fire chief reports, and monthly safety tips are posted on the website. The website also includes photo galleries showing training and other activities as well as fire and medical safety information for the public. The site is public and does not require a password to access. Please take a look at the site if you have not done so already.