

Summit County Wildfire Council
Meeting Minutes
June 20, 2018
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Buffalo Mountain Room
County Commons
Frisco, CO

Attendees: Chapin LaChance, Peter Grosshuesch, Shellie Duplan, Steve Lipsher, Jim Cox, Deepan Dutta, Sarah Thorsteinson, Brian Bovaird, Paul Kuhn, Dan Gibbs, Adam Bianchi, Bill Jackson, Catherine Schloegel, Dan Schroder, Greg Roy, Ken Wiegand, Beth Huron, Char Bloom, Matt Shiltz, Cary Green, Chuck Vale, Allison Richards, John Drake, Lisa Lewis, Lisa Loncar, Tom Koehler

- I. **Approval of Agenda:** The Chair opened the meeting at 1:35 p.m. and all participants introduced themselves. The council approved the June 20, 2018 agenda without changes.
- II. **Approval of March 29, 2018 Minutes:** Char Bloom moved to approve the March 29, 2018 minutes. Jim Cox seconded the motion; all were in favor and the council approved the minutes without changes.
- III. **Summit County Government Emergency Management Director Presentation:** Brian Bovaird gave an overview of the Buffalo Mountain Fire incident, which started on June 12 and forced the evacuation of the upper Mesa Cortina and Wilderrest neighborhoods. County officials and fire departments had originally planned a wildfire exercise for June 20 in the same location as the actual fire. Officials cancelled the exercise, but will still host a community wildfire prevention event tomorrow from 5-7 p.m. Brian called out three aspects of the response which led to containment of the fire without injury or loss of structures:
 - Incident Command (IC) – Multiple agencies coordinated to make tactical decisions in responding to the wildfire;
 - Emergency Operations Center (EOC) – The county and other agencies provided resources such as food, bathrooms and showers, and used the public notification system to send out the initial evacuation warnings;
 - Joint Information Center (JIC) – Thirty public information officers (PIO's) from different agencies worked together to provide a unified message to the public, and set up a phone bank so callers could speak to live people. Brian commended the JIC for their exemplary efforts.

The chair asked for the perspectives of people who were involved in the fire.

- Bill Jackson: It really came down to the good relationships between various entities to take this thing on. We were well prepared, have carried out exercises, held annual operating plan meetings, and have had some practice with fires.
- Allison Richards: Tabletop exercises have absolutely helped to prepare for this event.

- Brian Bovaird: Firefighting efforts were nothing short of phenomenal, including wildfire mitigation done prior to the event. There were no reported injuries and no structures were lost or damaged. The estimated value of infrastructure that could have burned was around \$1 billion; the cost to create fuel breaks in that area was around \$1 million.
- Dan Gibbs: Multiple entities have worked together to create defensible space and it made a huge difference.
- Steve Lipsher: Summit Fire showed the press the burn area and the feeds went all over the country, showing that these efforts are helpful.
- Shellie Duplan: Buffalo Mountain Metro District has enforced tree removal for several years, but her job just got easier. With only two routes for evacuation, the area around Lowe's became quite congested. That area should be evaluated in the future to avoid congestion. Firefighters were able to use the water tanks at the top of the hill, but the loss of power prevented BMMD from pumping water from the lower tanks to upper tanks. The district is currently shopping for a generator to prevent this issue in the future.
- Lisa Loncar (Incident Commander): The fire quickly transitioned from a type 4 to a type 3, then type 2, then eventually back down to a type 4. The fire is now a type 5 and is 100% contained. A brief discussion on the rationale for transitioning a fire to different stages followed:
 - The IC may feel the team's ability to fight the fire has been maxed out and may need to call in a larger team to help with resources.
 - Many complex factors contribute to determining the fire type, including values at risk, weather, available resources, amount of beetle kill and fuel type. The Wildland Fire Decision Support System helped document how the team made decisions in managing the fire.

Further discussion of the fire continued:

- The county qualifies for financial assistance through the Emergency Fire Fund (EFF). Summit is one of 43 counties in the state that pays into the EFF. The actual cost of the fire has not yet been determined.
- The Forest Service has several fuels reduction projects under contract throughout the county, with the biggest focus on Ophir Mountain (around 800 acres). The Forest Service is looking for partners to help fund other projects, and is looking at the CWPP to determine new projects.
- Forest-wide thinning needs to occur on existing fuel breaks, and the Forest Service is analyzing these as well as looking at projects to benefit aspen stands affected by sudden aspen decline.
- The county is laying the groundwork for asking voters to continue funding wildfire effort.
- The Forest Service invites private landowners to collaborate with them on projects under the good neighbor policy, but there is a process to go through on such projects.

- The Forest Service is using stewardship contracts for most of its current projects to avoid having to burn slash piles. Lisa Loncar oversaw the burning of 90% of the existing piles last winter.
- The county and Forest Service collaborated to hire a four-person crew to patrol the county backcountry this summer. The crew is checking on campers and other people using the forest, and hands out citations where necessary. The Sheriff provided a deputy to assist with patrols.
- Very little land on the Dillon Ranger District is suitable for prescribed fire, or for allowing wildfires to burn, due to the high population density in the WUI and values at risk.

IV. 2018 Wildfire Prevention Grant Request Review: Dan Schroder presented the 2018 wildfire prevention grant applications and asked the council to make recommendation to the BOCC for approval or disapproval.

- CWPP Grant Requests
 - North Star Village Cisterns - \$45,000 / \$5,000 match. The community will install two cisterns near Hoosier Pass to serve homes not accessed by two existing cisterns. The council recommends approval for the project.
 - North Star Village Signs - \$2,374 / \$2,374 match. The community will install reflective directional and address signs throughout the neighborhood. The council recommends approval for the project.
 - Summit County Resource Allocation Park (SCRAP) - \$70,000 / \$41,000 in-kind match. This fuels reduction project will complement Forest Service work on adjacent land in a highly used area. The review subcommittee recommends proposing this project as a CWPP project because it will protect valuable infrastructure (the county landfill, as well as multiple recreational uses). The Forest Service is conducting a harvest project along the power line corridor. SCRAP is an enterprise; not funded by county funds. The council recommends approval for the project.
 - Montezuma Hydrant Installation - \$7,295 / \$25,885 match. The town will install a fire hydrant to service the lower portion of town, as well as to provide a bleed in the winter to keep the system from freezing. The Department of Labor Affairs (DOLA) is providing the matching funds. The council recommends approval for the project.
- HFR Grant Requests (50/50 match)
 - Breckenridge - \$30,737.50. A contractor (Beetlekill Tree Guys) has worked with nine property owners in the southern part of Breckenridge to create a defensible space plan for each property. One property appears to be undeveloped, and the council asked Dan to investigate whether the project would be for fuels reduction or land clearing on that property. Dan will follow up with the contractor; otherwise, the council recommends approval for the project.
 - Galena Gulch – \$5,000. The grant request comes from one homeowner with a cabin on 20 heavily forested acres adjacent to the Golden Horseshoe recreation area. The homeowner would like to initiate a multi-year project to improve forest health and

defensible space on his property. The review subcommittee as well as several council members felt that the homeowner should focus on creating a safe egress route before working on defensible space. The council agreed that staff should work with the homeowner and come back later with a more effective proposal.

- Pebble Creek Ranch Foundation - \$10,230. This year's project will continue Pebble Creek's multi-year efforts to create and maintain defensible space and improve forest health by removing standing dead and blowdown. The council recommends approval for the project.
- Peak 7 Rocket Fuels Reduction - \$8,450. One homeowner initiated the project by recruiting her neighbors to conduct fuels reduction on a total of three properties adjacent to a Forest Service clearcut. The council recommends approval for the project.
- Town of Blue River - \$31,230. The project continues a multi-year effort to create defensible space on individual properties by removing trees and ladder fuels in zone I. The council recommends approval for the project.

John Drake from Ruby Ranch requested an extension of two weeks for the 2017 Ruby Ranch hazardous fuels reduction project. The contractor cannot access the final section of the project until the road dries from a water leak that occurred several weeks ago. The council recommends approval for the extension.

V. Round Table Discussion – Activities of Wildfire Council Members and Partners:

- Summit Association of Realtors (SAR) sent out their annual wildfire mitigation mailer at the same time as the Buffalo Mountain Fire and received many calls for their grant and assistance programs. SAR is also giving out free work gloves and goggles. Sarah offered any resources that SAR has in the event of a fire.
- Red, White & Blue A and B shifts are conducting wildfire training since only C shift was involved in the Buffalo Mountain Fire. The district is ordering a new Type VI engine.
- Summit Fire and EMS received a new Type III engine this week.

VI. Education Updates: The Wildfire Prevention Solstice Party is tomorrow evening from 5-7 p.m. at the Silverthorne Pavilion. The event will include wildfire education booths, food carts, live music and fun and games.

VII. Legislative Updates: The Emergency Fire Fund (EFF) Committee is exploring how other states fund wildfires. The fund is severely depleted and the governor has declared a state of emergency, allowing the fund to be backfilled. The committee is looking for funding partners.

VIII. Next Meeting Date: September 20, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Mount Royal Room, County Commons, Frisco

IX. Adjournment: The chair adjourned the meeting at 3:27 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Beth Huron, Summit County Community Development