

February 24, 2009

Fire Alliance Conference Call

Leonard Lundby, Brian Crandell, Ken Mergenthaler, Susan Mergenthaler, Tom Kuntz, Rich Cowger, Bruce Charles, Ross Johnson, Gallatin River Ranch Fire, John Semple, Brett Waters, Butch Weedon, Gary MaHugh,

5 year new agreement, Brett, 12 month get out clause. Inflationary adjustment, moving forward, working with city manager. Won't have to go to vote to public, continued relationship. Very supported of the continued services.

Legislative review – It would be considered a CAN report if we were on the fire ground.

HB408 – Kuntz

This is a presumptive disease bill within workers compensation. As originally written, it would have provided coverage to volunteer firefighters and EMTs. It contained a lot of costs, with the potential to be fairly expensive. Career firefighters had planned all along to pull volunteers out to save money and an amendment to remove volunteers, EMTs and peace officers did exactly that. HB408 then went to the House floor. Tom tried to work something out with career firefighters. His theory was that we should be working together, both paid and volunteers. Tom offered to work on getting some affirmative votes for HB408 as a gesture of good will...they basically said they weren't interested in a gesture of good will. There was a tie vote in the House, yesterday, and the bill was pulled back on the floor by the Speaker of the House today. It has become a partisan bill. Should pass today but huge challenge in Senate. The Montana State Firemen's Association is good to work with, but they show a reluctance for any compromise. They can't compromise on SB373. Leonard thinks HB408 could have ramifications to volunteers if passed. Fiscal Note says increased premiums will be necessary to offset the cost of the bill. Work Comp puts all firefighters, paid and volunteer, into one rate code. Thus volunteers will probably be faced with increased Work Comp premiums to help pay for the expected increase in cost. Insurance associations opposed the bill based on expected cost increases and the fact that they are carving out a small specialty group for coverage. This could have been a great opportunity to work with union folks. Our future is with working with Union. We need to keep trying to continue to make that happen. Passed 57 to 43, 9:31 a.m. 2/24/09.

Never good when we end up fighting. We have tried to include Union since the beginning of Montana Fire Alliance. Huge challenge to make cooperative effort happen.

Bruce – pulling the EMTs out makes this very self serving. We should not support as we are not supporting our own people.

Lots of things going on in Helena, a lot of partisan stuff going on.

SB373-Brett

Last week met with State Fireman's association. Had a good meeting. Talked about leaving 373 tabled. We were going to see about looking at actuary figures and go with SB372. When the retirement board was met with, they were not able to get all the information they needed. The Chairman of the Committee had questions regarding actuarials and retirement folks information on age. In the end, SB372 was tabled and SB373 came out of committee. The move came as a surprise to Brett and others. Wanted to work with MSFA and get a commitment to sit down in the interim and have SB372 and SB373 go away. Interpretation of retirement board has had adverse decisions. SB373 is moving and we are watching. Cowger, Belts, Waters offered continued working with MSFA and they were open. Working together we all are going to look a lot better on the hill. To help move this along, some phone calls may still be effective. It is third on list and they start at 10:00 a.m.

Actuary information shows older person doesn't have an adverse affect. No one wants to hurt anyone's retirement system, want it fair and equitable.

Tom said the committee was very receptive to us. Chairman did say some of the information given him, was not correct, Tom provided actuary. Problem is volunteers don't have a retirement age. They were not using the right facts.

Others:

SB255 transmitted to house, hearing next week. It is moving along with no opposition, so far.

We will have a better idea at close of voting on Thursday. Really out of our hands. Leonard will provide an update on Saturday.

John Semple, bill from Flathead Valley, Brueggeman – some Flathead folks, probably from outside of our system, wanted to make misdemeanor for certain fires. No one from Flathead showed up, so Brueggeman had it tabled.

- A) We need to be aware of these types of bills
- B) They need to show up and support their bills
- C) If they don't show up, we all look bad

Bill came out from someone not involved in fire service. Mark Peck was behind it. SB365. People thought things were happening that weren't.

When SB373 comes up on the House side, we will need to have a good group of people there. Is there someone, that is an actuary, that can show up? Finding an actual actuary is challenging. Tom will work on. Could be accountant. Tom thinks he could testify on the numbers. The actuary that was consulted for the bill stated he didn't have enough information which is reflected in numbers. According to fiscal note there would be no change in FURS. Too many variables.

Die

Retire out

Interest the fund gets in the meantime

Enter into system

Financial impact to FURS occurs when positions are added. This bill is for the differential costs, it is zero, doesn't add positions. Talking about draw and age participating. Guy that draws for 20 is going to be less than a guy drawing for 40. Could speaker not bring up the bill? Capability is there, don't believe that will happen.

Tom – thank you for all the work you are doing, Leonard along with John. Great job.