

## **Minutes of the Custer County Commission Meeting, Wednesday, June 18, 2025.**

### **\*\*\*WORK SESSION\*\*\***

#### **Members present:**

Commissioners Jim Lintz, Mark Hartman, Mike Linde, Michael Busskohl, Craig Hindle and Dawn McLaughlin, Finance Officer.

#### **A. Commission Meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.**

#### **B. Adopting of the agenda**

1. Motion to approve Agenda made by Linde; seconded by Busskohl; vote taken, all aye; motion carried.

#### **C. Executive Session**

1. Executive Session as per SDCL 1-25-21(1) Personnel.
2. Motion to enter Executive Session made by Busskohl; seconded by Hindle; vote taken, all aye; motion carried. Executive Session entered at 10:01 AM and concluded at 10:48 AM.

#### **D. Actions Taken by Commission Outside of Executive Session.**

1. Motion to postpone personnel decision until Executive Session at the 6-25-25 Commission meeting made by Busskohl; seconded by Hindle; vote taken, all aye; motion carried.

#### **E. Resolution 2025-19 Appointment of Applicant Agent for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

1. Motion to authorize Dawn McLaughlin, Finance Officer, to sign as second signatory and for Chairman to sign application made by Hartman; seconded by Hindle; vote taken, all aye; motion carried.

#### **F. Custer County Volunteer Fire Departments**

1. Discussion and review of various financial options regarding a possible opt-out was held, with several members of Custer County fire departments in attendance. Chairman Lintz stated that expenses are rising more rapidly than inflation and the idea of a 1-year opt-out was mentioned as a possibility. Commissioner Busskohl said that 1 year would be to just get by; anything longer than that would go to a public vote. Klinton Rittberger said that costs are going up above the 3% CPI and

proposed budgets show a shortfall of \$379K. Commissioner Hartman stated that an opt-out is merely a band aid and that formation of fire districts is needed. After further discussion, Rittberger said that he will keep working on districts and will have something for fall, 2025. He also said that \$275K for an opt-out is a comfortable amount. If an opt-out is put into place, fund distributions will be determined by the Commission based on recommendations of the volunteer fire departments. Busskohl asked if there were specific requests for vehicles, buildings, equipment, etc. Rittberger stated that all departments could use equipment upgrades and that some are in FD budgets. Custer is looking at a new building at some point and some departments vehicles are aging and falling behind. Peg Ryan, Custer City, noted that the Custer VFD received \$200K from the city. Finance Officer McLaughlin noted that all departments are to turn in audits to her. July 15, 2025 is the deadline to act, but advertising can take place after that date. Rittberger mentioned the possibility of an emergency meeting of VFDs and he could bring figures to the 6-25-2025 Commission meeting. Rittberger stated he will set up a meeting to take place at 6:00 PM Monday, 6-23-25 to be held in the Commission room.

#### **G. Mike Bielmaier**

1. Mike Bielmaier appeared before the Commission to discuss a possible East Custer Ambulance District. He discussed the cons of creating a separate district, noting that it would be better to expand what is currently in place. He suggested the mill levy would not be able to support a new district if call volumes were not enough. He said that a fee for service makes more sense than relying on the mill levy. Bielmaier said staffing, equipment and number of ambulances would not work well in a separate district. The possibility of an opt-out was brought up in the discussion, having all taxpayers pay the same amount county-wide. He has been in meetings with Hermosa Connects and stated they are on board with expanding the current district and are in favor of housing an ambulance in Hermosa. Bielmaier has been searching for grants and has applied for a low-interest SBA loan. Busskohl asked how long the Rapid City ambulance can serve the eastern portion of Custer County and was told until the end of 2025, with a payment of \$59K will be due in January, 2026. It is unsure if Rapid City ambulance could continue to serve after that date. Bielmaier asked about enacting expansion of the district by Resolution without putting it to a public vote. Commissioner Hindle stated that is not a possibility; that petitions need to be circulated and if criteria is met, put to public vote. It was noted that Tracy Kelley will be asked for verification. Bielmaier also is optimistic about staffing on the east side and has checked into leasing commercial buildings. He stated that \$1 million would not be unreasonable for an ambulance building. There will be a meeting 7-7-25 at 6:00 PM at the Hermosa coffee shop for further discussion. State's Attorney Kelley will review proposal of Resolution designating

Custer Ambulance as the preferred ambulance provider for Custer County for possible placement on the 6-25-25 Commission Agenda.

**H. Adjourn**

Motion by Hartman and seconded by Busskohl to adjourn the meeting at 11:27 AM; vote taken, all aye; motion carried. The next meeting will be at 8:00 AM, June 25, 2025 in the Commissioner's Room in the Custer County Courthouse.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Lintz, Chairman

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Barbara Cox, Custer County Deputy Auditor

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