



Rexburg-Madison County Emergency Services Meeting 1330 hrs * March 27, 2025 * Meeting Minutes

Board members in attendance:

Brent Mendenhall, County Commissioner; Jerry Merrill, City of Rexburg Mayor; Ken Anderson, Fire Protection District Commissioner; Dr. Jeffrey Zollinger, Medical Director

Others in attendance were:

Troyce Miskin, Deputy Chief; Amber Steckley, David Ivey, Joseph Haeberle, Spencer Rammell, Matt Nielson, Terri Hill

Meeting Called to Order: 1332

Items on the agenda include:

1. **Welcome:** Commissioner Anderson – welcomed those in attendance and thanked them for being there.
2. **Roll Call of Board Members:** All in attendance as noted above.

Mayor Merrill pointed out that #7 on the agenda needed to be amended to remove the words 'Action Item' due to any vote having to be done outside of executive session.

Mayor Merrill motioned to put the action item after #7 and also to move discussion of #4 into executive session, seconded by Dr. Zollinger, all ayes.

3. **Approval of Minutes from last meeting:** Dr. Zollinger motioned to dispense with the reading of the minutes, seconded by Mayor Merrill, all ayes.
4. **Addendum to Joint Powers Agreement:** Commissioner Anderson passed out a hand-out "A History of Cooperation" about the Rexburg-Madison County Emergency Services Board and emphasized that for the past 43 years, we've had cooperative function among the three entities; he also emphasized all the good being done by Chief Corey Child and Deputy Chief Troyce Miskin. Deputy Chief Miskin explained that the addendum is a summary of the joint powers history and continued intent, and that the board had asked Chief Child to create this. The addendum was fully read through by Deputy Chief Miskin. In the first paragraph of #3, Mayor Merrill said he had an issue with the verbiage "any authority," based on the current 2015 Joint Powers Emergency Services Operational Agreement due to the City of Rexburg having to administer that. Mayor Merrill emphasized that desires and dictates have to be in compliance with laws. In the second paragraph of #3, Commissioner Mendenhall said he had an issue with the verbiage "only...to meet the minimum requirements" with regards to why the City of Rexburg was named as "the employer," stating that it was done to meet the requirements. There was discussion that this addendum is not replacing the 2015 Joint Powers Agreement but is an added addendum to clarify numerous aspects of the intent of the Joint Powers Agreement from its inception. There was commentary from Spencer Rammell about what is considered a material change, and that if there are material changes, then that would replace or supersede the current 2015 Joint Powers verbiage. Deputy Chief Miskin clarified that we already have exceptions for MFD in the City of Rexburg's Employee Handbook/Policy Manual pertaining to needs and requirements and differences of MFD from the City of Rexburg. Mayor Merrill felt a vote to approve the addendum needed to be unanimous, which resulted in discussion of whether a majority was needed to approve the addendum or whether it needed to be unanimous. Spencer Rammell again brought up modifications versus material modifications. There was discussion of whether the provision of an addendum becomes a material modification. Commissioner Anderson asked how we determine what needs a majority vote versus a unanimous vote. Commissioner Mendenhall motioned to table the addendum to the Joint Powers Agreement due to desiring some different vocabulary. Commissioner Anderson said we should just consider rewriting the whole agreement. Dr. Zollinger seconded the motion, no further discussion, all ayes. Commissioner Mendenhall suggested that

anyone who wants changes get those changes to Deputy Chief Miskin. Commissioner Anderson said we probably still need to rewrite the full Joint Powers Agreement.

5. **Combined #5 Payroll considerations and #6 PERSI Exemption:** Dr. Zollinger motioned to table these items due to needing additional advisement, which was seconded by Commissioner Mendenhall. Later both agreed to remove the motion to table these items and discussion proceeded regarding a motion to move forward. Mayor Merrill said there's misunderstanding on what PERSI and DOL really want us to do and motioned to schedule phone calls with PERSI and DOL with everyone in the room that needs to be in the room and all get the final say. Commissioner Anderson said there are varying understandings of what PERSI statute allows. Discussion about who needs to be on these phone calls and decided that Chiefs (Chief Child, Deputy Chief Miskin, Battalion Chief Ivey), Amber Steckley, all four board members (as available), Spencer Rammell, Matt Nielson, Terri Hill, as well as Abigail French, the Fire Protection District's attorney, will be on the phone calls. Seconded by Commissioner Mendenhall, all ayes.
6. **Other items approved for discussion by the board:** Commissioner Mendenhall asked if there's anything the City of Rexburg feels needs to be decided right now. Spencer Rammell commented that it's in the interest of the board to come into compliance as soon as possible. Terri Hill said if we go back to these agencies, then it could open us up to an audit; Commissioner Mendenhall and Commissioner Anderson said "so be it" if they audit us. Commissioner Mendenhall again asked and specified asking if anything needs to be done *today*, and the City said no, just that the City's deadline for the board making their decision about retaining the City of Rexburg as the employer of record is 4/2/25.

In follow-up about a previous board request of Spencer Rammell to find out more information from PERSI, Spencer said PERSI always just refers him back to the law; that they won't give him a straight answer/interpretation regarding actual application of the PERSI 8-Month Seasonal classification status and just tell him, as legal counsel for the City of Rexburg, to interpret the law.


Matt Nielson asked if they can continue the 14-day testing and Commissioner Anderson said no. The board asked Deputy Chief Miskin what he (MFD) wants and Deputy Chief Miskin said we'd have to test it to know one way or the other and we'd want the table cleared first before going forward on that, but that the 24-day FLSA work period is still what's best for MFD, as well as the current way we're doing payroll.

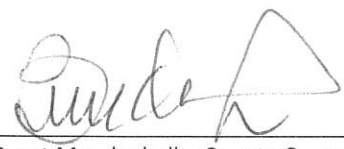
Spencer Rammell said he'd talked with Troy Evans (attorney for Madison County) and they agree and are on the same page about PERSI, that they feel we can't continue with PERSI 8-Month Seasonal. Commissioner Anderson emphasized that he wants the Fire Protection District's legal (Abigail French) on the PERSI and DOL phone calls, and everyone agreed to this.


Terri Hill said only the employer of record can contact PERSI for setting up the phone call, and she said she has the contact info for setting up the DOL phone call. Commissioner Anderson, as board chair, stated very clearly that he wanted MFD to be free to ask any questions they want on the phone calls. Terri Hill again brought up MFD needing to come into compliance, and Amber Steckley strongly clarified that MFD has zero employees classified as PERSI 8-Month Seasonal right now, which means we are not out of compliance, nor were we ever out of compliance with PERSI, because what we have been doing the last 10 years with PERSI 8-Month Seasonal had been approved of by PERSI statute and in direct conversation with the executive director of PERSI at that time. Deputy Chief Miskin said it would be good to proceed with these phone calls ASAP. Terri Hill said that ACA seasonal only allows for six months. MFD clarified that PERSI 8-Month Seasonal is a classification status solely with PERSI and doesn't have anything to do with ACA as long as the MFD employees are ongoing, year-round employees. Terri Hill continued to disagree with this, and Commissioner Anderson, as board chair, told her that this is how the board has chosen to proceed (referring to the phone calls to be set up with PERSI and DOL) for coming to the same understanding.

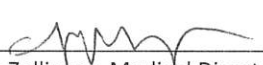
7. **Executive Session:** Roll call vote for motion to move into Executive Session according to Idaho State Statute §74-206(b)(j): To consider the evaluation, dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent, or public school student; (j) To consider labor contract matters authorized under section **74-206A** (1)(a) and (b), Idaho Code. Executive Session: The Chair called for a Roll Call Vote to enter Executive Session. Commissioner Mendenhall, Dr. Zollinger, Mayor Merrill and Commissioner Anderson all voted aye. The Executive Session was entered into at 1440. All voted aye to adjourn the Executive Session at 1510.
8. **Adjourn:** 1548. Motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Zollinger, Seconded by Commissioner Mendenhall, all ayes.

Approval of Minutes:


Kenneth Anderson – Fire Commissioner


Brent Mendenhall – County Commissioner


Jerry Merrill – Rexburg Mayor


Dr. Jeffrey Zollinger – Medical Director

Madison County Emergency Services Board

March 26, 2025

A History of Cooperation

The City of Rexburg got into the firefighting business as most do—with a volunteer fire department. It started out with a simple hose cart, and then in 1919 an American LaFrance fire pumper. In 1952 the city purchased an American LaFrance custom pumper which became known in the department as “the 52”. In 1971 the city purchased another American LaFrance custom pumper on a “Pioneer” chassis.

Starting sometime in the 1940s, the county had no protection other than an engine with a commercial chassis owned by the Snake River Mutual Insurance Co. It was manned by volunteers from the Rexburg Fire Department. With the November 2, 1976 general election, the Madison County Fire Protection District was formed and the current Snake River Mutual engine was more or less contributed to the district. The district procured an available, new 1977 American LaFrance custom pumper. This was to go with the 1964 American LaFrance—Ford pumper from the insurance company.

In the spring of 1982, the decision was made to incorporate the fire command and line personnel of the fire district and the city. Up until that time two fire fighting forces were maintained, one for the city and one for the district which included two department chiefs, assistant chiefs and other officers. The incorporation eliminated the duplication of manpower of the two entities by making them essentially one in command and personnel. Over the years, this has made huge savings. At this time the new arrangement became the Rexburg-Madison County Fire Department. The apparatus, equipment, and rolling stock was owned separately by the two entities, only the manpower had been integrated.

January 1983, the Rexburg City equipment was badly in need of updating. The city and county were growing and the “52” had a temperamental 12-cylinder gasoline engine which was not really dependable, maintainable or practical. The cost of another urban pumper was high. The fire district decided to help by declaring its 1977 American LaFrance custom as “surplus” which allowed the city to purchase it at a very reasonable price. The district purchased a new pumper on a “commercial” chassis specifically designed with higher capacities for rural use.

That same year the decision was made to change the uniform color markings of all Madison County Fire District apparatus from the traditional maroon red to a new high-visibility chrome yellow. The new color, which was specially formulated, made apparatus easier to see and differentiated it from the city's. Later (1992) when the apparatus inventory of the city and the fire district were joined, the yellow color was adopted as the department color.

Also, in 1983 the first in a series of mutual aid agreements were signed. Eventually the district would have mutual aid with all surrounding jurisdictions. This also allowed the district's equipment to be used in a Rexburg City incident and vice versa which effectively doubled the available resources.

In January 1985 it was determined that emergency and medical rescue could be greatly improved if taken over by the district. An agreement was reached between the Madison County Ambulance District, the Madison County Sheriff's Office and the fire district and an engine company was dispatched with each ambulance to accident calls. This gave the EMTs more help and allowed them to concentrate on medical treatment.

July 1, 1992 the City of Rexburg Fire Department and the Madison County Fire Protection District were merged. This turned out to be more difficult than first imagined. It even required passage of a bill by the state legislature to allow such an agreement between a taxing district and an incorporated city. This merged personnel and capital assets and made the Rexburg-Madison County Fire Department a complete reality. The district continues to hold capital assets and two rural fire stations separately. However, all district-owned apparatus is available for a city emergency when needed.

1998 – The fire department was approached by the county commissioners about consolidating operations with the Madison County Ambulance. The county was confronted with the prospect of building a new ambulance facility and hiring more personnel. Several ideas were considered including simply housing ambulance operations at the fire station. Finally, after many, many meetings a plan was hammered out. It was agreed that ambulance personnel would be merged with fire fighters and both would be cross trained. This would allow for the staffing of an ambulance without having to wait for personnel to arrive, or drive around town picking up EMTs which had been the previous practice. The cross-training saved the ambulance district and the fire service from having to hire many more employees. A win-win.

The contract was signed April 8, 1998. The consolidation was to include building additional facilities on the north side of Fire Station #1 for housing personnel and ambulance rolling stock. The fire district's stations in Archer and Sugar City are also available to house ambulances.

This effectively created a new entity, which was initially known as Rexburg-Madison County Emergency Services. This new entity was to be directly and entirely governed by the Madison County Emergency Services Board (ESB). This board is made up of a MCFPD Fire Commissioner, Rexburg City representative, a Madison County Commissioner and the physician on whose license EMS operations depend. The City of Rexburg was contracted to provide payroll and other services.

Later the name of the department was changed to The Madison Fire Department with the approval of the three principal entities.

2015—The Operational Agreement was updated due to Social Security and IRS regulations.

Today, under the leadership of Chief of Department Corey Child and Deputy Chief Troyce Miskin, and the Emergency Services Board, the department has evolved to be one of the premier emergency agencies in the state and region.

Here are just a few of the accomplishments and services of the department:

- \$6.01 million budget.
- Manage 60 to 80 highly trained and qualified personnel.
- 28 full-time professional employees.
- Designed EMS medial trailer which was a \$160,000 project that has already yielded a 465% return. This valuable resource is leased out, with paramedics, but is always available if there is a local emergency here at home. In such a case it would be immediately recalled.
- **The department BRINGS IN \$2.2 million from wildfire deployment**, which also helps the standard of living of the employees as well as their training and experience.
- **MFD is the home of the Emergency Services National Academy (ESNA)**. One of only four fire department paramedic training programs in the nation. Presently, serving students from as far away as Oregon and Boston, Massachusetts.
- ESNA BRINGS IN \$370,000 revenue annually. **This brings total income to over \$2.5 million brought IN by the department.**
- Equipment includes 11 engines, 1 aerial, 9 ambulances total of 39 rolling stock.
- Completed Station 1 expansion and remodel in 2015.
- Construction of two rural fire stations.



Rexburg Fire Department (L) and Madison County Fire Protection District (R) apparatus circa 1985