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July 12, 2023

Ravalli County Commissioners
215 S 4th Street, Suite A
Hamilton, MT 59840

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Dear County Commissioners

I am genuinely concerned about the situation of our Sula Rural Fire Department. In the past few months, it has continued to go downhill. I resigned at the beginning of May 2023. I was the bookkeeper and did various secretarial duties. My husband had sat on the board and had lost the election by a small margin in May.

We hesitated to write this letter. Under the circumstances of our positions. We discussed it among ourselves and felt it would be better for us to back off and let the situation run its course. We can no longer wait for this to be resolved.

My husband had made his decision to resign if he won the election. What prompted this decision was a board member had talked to our Fire Chief and told her that the board decided they would look for a new chief and keep her on to do paperwork. That was the final straw. This was not discussed, nor had it been decided on with the other board members. Nor had it been voted on. (There are witnesses to this occurring.) It was the last straw and that was when my husband had decided to resign if elected. He felt the board was not being ethical and the board meetings were not being run properly. And it was not beneficial for the community. Let us clarify it was not all the board members.

I decided to try and stay on. I felt if I did quit, I would be letting the community down. We had lost another valuable board member. The situation continued to get worse. It was very apparent that this board was not for our community and continued to do unethical things, and blame others, and not take any responsibility. I just could not be part of it.

Before we got this new Fire Chief, we had Board Meetings once a year, sometimes every year and a half. We did not have any consistent training. People rarely showed up on calls. We have had a lot of challenges over the years for our little fire department. Some of the challenges, to name a few we have a lot of ground to cover and dealing with an older population. It seemed we were finally pulling it together.

When we got a new Chief, we started having Board meetings every month. We started having training for our members. We were learning that we had other items we needed to be doing. Our Chief organized fundraisers. We started receiving donations from the community. New members signed on. We started replacing trucks that were old and replaced old, outdated equipment with much needed new equipment. Calls were being responded to.

At the Board meetings I witnessed Our Chief was constantly being degraded by our chairperson. It was a constant personal attack. The public was being told false information. It was apparent this was more of a personal vendetta. It was very frustrating to continually attend board meetings each month and hear this personal vendetta. I have never seen a human being treated so badly, especially at a public meeting. Important Issues at hand were not being addressed and overshadowed by this constant conflict.

Our board majority now exists mostly of Springer and Bonanza residents. We have one volunteer to cover the south end of the district. Several volunteers have quit or been asked to leave. Calls are not being answered. My understanding community members have attended meetings if and when they have been informed of a meeting. They have asked questions, voiced concerns they are timed and cut off. Treated rudely. Questions are not being addressed or answered. Blame is being put on others with no merit. False information is being told. I can go on and on.

Recently, Friday, June 30th my husband was hit head on by a drunk driver at 5:30am on his way to work. I was so thankful that the Darby Fire Department responded. Since his accident we have had more accidents. Know one from Sula Fire is here to help. I have found out that the equipment has been moved to the upper end of our district. People in our community have had concern and calls are not being answered. I have witnessed for several years; it was said that the volunteers on the other end of the district would not respond to our end of the district. It seems Sula Fire has turned into Springer Fire. That has been the threat that I have witnessed at the Board meeting for 2 years now by unnamed people. They got what they wanted. I live at the other end of the district, and we all sit here unprotected.

This is appalling, it cannot continue. I know you have other issues to deal with, but this matter needs immediate attention and needs to be resolved promptly. There is too much at stake. Our community deserves better than this. PLEASE HELP.

Sincerely,

Nick and Sue Kormanik
406-821-1901
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CC: Darby Volunteer Fire