

So Here's The Deal...

I had a friend that started a conversation that way if he had something really interesting to tell you. Even to this day, even if I haven't talked to him in 2 years, he'll call me and start the conversation with "Here's the deal", no "Hello", just "Here's the deal". You knew something good was going to come out of the conversation.

So here's the deal...

The town of Seeley Lake is at a crossroads. The discussions of a sewer system, the dependence more and more on tourism, the growth of the residential side of our area, and so on. The Seeley Lake Fire Department is no different.

We have outgrown our current facility. We have a need for a stand-alone rescue truck and another structure engine. We have had major growth in our district that we have struggled at times to keep up with.

With this in mind the Seeley Lake Fire District board is currently developing a 5 to 10 year plan to ensure that the Fire Department can continue to meet the needs of our community. This 5 to 10 year plan takes on the task of developing a second station, expanding our existing facility, the purchase of additional apparatus, replacing some of our existing equipment and apparatus, and a myriad of other things to better serve you. For a more detailed look at the plan, please visit our web site at www.seeleyfire.org; it will be posted once it's been refined and approved by the board.

With an aggressive plan such as this, time and money are always the issue. In this case money is not the primary concern, believe it or not. The biggest concern is time.

Since we are a volunteer department, time is a sliding commodity. Sometimes we have a little and sometimes we have none. Why is time so valuable? There is a limited amount of grant money available that relates to our specific needs. We must compete with other departments not only in Missoula County but throughout the US for these limited funds. To ask someone to dedicate their time to pursue the grant writing issues and secure the funding requirement to meet Seeley's need and not get any financial reimbursement is unfair.

With this in mind the Seeley Lake Fire District Board has hired me as a full time paid Fire Chief. Effective May 1st.

Obviously, the need for this position goes far beyond just grant writing. It is the commitment of the fire district board to ensure that the community it services gets the best service it can offer. We can only accomplish this with constant vigilance in maintaining a safe environment for our responders and ensuring they have the most up to date training and equipment. That in itself is a 24 hour a day job.

We have acquired funding of over \$200,000 in fuel mitigation projects alone, making the Seeley Lake area more "fire safe" than it has ever been. Our commitment to you is that we will continue to acquire funding to help mitigate fuel loading in the Seeley-Swan Valley. We will strive to acquire the most up to date equipment as our funding will allow. We will continue to ensure that our fire fighters and medical staff receive the most up to date training. We will make Seeley Lake a safer place to live when it comes to fire and your general well-being.

If you or your homeowner organizations wish to sit down and talk about your specific needs, please do not hesitate to call me. Your input is important. The best way to fill your needs is for us to know what they are. Thank you for all of your kind words in the past; I can't tell you how much they meant to me. There have been days when I just wanted to throw in the towel and someone said "You're doing a great job" and that made it all worth it.

I haven't forgotten the Fire Fighter Ball. I'll get to that some other day. May 5th we will be doing live fire propane training at the helipad at the Medical Center. It should start around 7:00 pm. If you see flames over there don't get nervous, we're just "playing". We do ask that if you want to look, be careful, stay out of the way, and DO NOT stop on Highway 83 to look.

A quick note regarding my other projects: KaFra and Computers For Kids (CFK). These are still around. The CFK project has fallen behind because of a family emergency back in Illinois that I am still attending to. As far as KaFra goes, I am still trying to catch up with everything that happened while I was in Illinois for 2 weeks. So please hang in there. As far as the future goes, I am still available in the evenings and on weekends.

That's it for now. Don't forget the web site www.seeleyfire.org. It's been updated and it's lookin' pretty good.

*Frank Maradeo, Chief
Seeley Lake
Fire Department*