

CLE ELUM PUBLIC SAFETY & HEALTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

OCTOBER 15, 2025

1:00 PM

**119 W FIRST STREET
CLE ELUM, WA 98922**

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Present:

Cassidy Buechle-Curtis
Ken Ratliff
Beth Williams

Staff Present:

Debbie Lee - Clerk
Mathew Bailey - Public Works Director
Ed Mills - Fire Chief
Rich Albo - Police Chief

2. Unfinished Business

a. Cle Elum Municipal Code Chapter 2.15 Fire Department

The committee met to continue work on Municipal Code Chapter 2.15, which pertains to the Fire Department. It was agreed that no preemptive changes will be made to the code related to the bankruptcy situation. During the discussion, the term “charter” was brought up, and the committee acknowledged a need to clarify its use and meaning in the context of the code.

Committee Member Ratliff raised concerns that Section 2.15.020 does not make sense as currently written. Chief Mills agreed to rewrite this section to better reflect how the department operates today and will present a revised version at the next meeting. It was noted that the current structure involves the Chief Fire Administrator being elected each year by department members. Chief Mills, in his role, reports to the elected membership, which ensures the fire department has an internal voice in its leadership. However, it was also noted that the existing budget does not account for funding a second fire chief position.

A larger discussion took place about the relationship between the department’s bylaws and the municipal code. The committee questioned whether repeating the bylaws in the code might save time and effort, since the bylaws were initially created to establish operational standards. Chief Mills expressed interest in reviewing the bylaws, which were last updated in 2019. A key issue raised was whether it is appropriate for volunteer members to create bylaws that essentially function as code, and whether that dynamic gives volunteers the

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authority to dictate policy outside proper legal channels.

Chief Albo asked for clarity on what parts of the bylaws, if any, are significantly different from the municipal code, and what elements actually need to be codified. He referenced how the police department transitioned from a city-specific code to referencing the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and suggested exploring whether a similar approach might be beneficial. The committee agreed that it is important to define the goal of this update and seek guidance from legal counsel on the best path forward. Specifically, they need to determine which elements are essential for inclusion in the code and which can remain in the bylaws.

It was noted that the municipal code has not been meaningfully reviewed or updated since 1926, underscoring the importance of this effort. As a next step, Chief Mills will provide a list of what he believes should be included in the code versus what should remain in the bylaws. The committee will then consult with legal counsel to prepare a more focused draft and begin planning a conversation with the Mayor to get his input on priorities and direction moving forward.

3. New Business

4. Other Committee Comments

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:31 p.m.


Cassidy Buechle - Curtis, Chair
Debbie Lee, Clerk