Gunnison County Fire Protection District
Minutes
Work Session
June 30, 2026

I. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m. by Heath Smith. Meeting was held upstairs in the meeting room at the Fire House.

The following board members were present: Walt Cranor, Rob Hughes, Tom Stoeber, Scott Frazier and Heath Smith.

City Accountant present: Not present

Board Secretary present: Deborah Ferchau

Chief present: Hugo Ferchau

Deputy Chief present: Not present

Captain present: Not present

Board Attorney: Not present

The following firemen were present: Bob Gydesen and Joe Schultheis

Others: Amanda Wilson – City Manager (left at 6:55pm);
Shane Rider, Josh Pearce, Sam Gore and John Bretis - Alpha Mechanical;
David Kurtz - Neenan;
Kyle Blakely – Avant Strategies;
Joe Serre and Jonathan VanVleet - Energy One.

II. New Business:

A. Firehouse Design - Mechanical Systems: H. Ferchau stated that we are here to discuss the HVAC system for the new fire department. Josh with Alpha asked what are designs and needs the firefighters want. H. Ferchau advised that they have worked through most of that and it will come out in this presentation and discussion.

Jonathan with Energy advised that they looked at the following systems:

1. Conventional System (roof top, natural gas boiler, electric boiler, air cooled chiller system, air source heat pumps and variable refrigerant flow)
2. Geothermal System – not all systems are the same, installation costs vary based on system type, site conditions and drilling requirements. The best solution depends on the project, building size, available land, geology, groundwater and long-term performance goals. Geothermal utilizes constant ground temperatures. There are 5 types of geothermal systems: closed loop, open loop, direct exchange, standing column well and district geothermal (shared loop). Josh advised that the existing geothermal systems in town are running well. Cranor expressed concern about recovery of the system if doors are left open during calls, especially in the winter. Jonathan advised that there is a fast

recovery system (County Public Works has one at their Crested Butte (D3) shop). The closed loop system would work best in Gunnison.

Gunnison area advantages for geothermal systems: Stable subsurface temps, favorable soils and geology, heating dominated climate, high elevation and cold winters. Using other geothermal projects in the area will reduce costs for fire department. Smith asked if having too many geothermal systems in a common area have a negative effect on the neighborhood. No but there are ways to control the system and ensure proper use of the ground temperatures.

Energy One and Neenan are recommending a geothermal system for the new firehouse.

Geothermal system description: water to water closed loop system, 4 pipe hot/chilled water loop with forced air. Apparatus bay would be in-floor heat and forced air. Admin area would be forced air. Bunk rooms would be forced air with independent controls.

Questions were asked about recovery time? Hughes advised that trucks coming back from calls in the winter are frozen and need to be warmed up and ready to go to the next call quickly. It was commented that the County D3 shop did not use in-floor heat but are using hanging heaters that run off geothermal to warm up their plow trucks and they are happy with that system. There are also controls that can be used to make sure apparatus is ready to go faster. Josh stated that he is typically a big believer in gas systems but he has seen geothermal systems do good things and perform well. Jonathan stated the office space, bunk and training rooms have flexibility with hot water/chilled water systems with individual thermostats. Josh commented that the natural gas back up would be more for the winter, summer is less of a concern. Joe suggested that they could do a percent of geothermal to other systems down the line.

David stated that the controls will be similar between geothermal or conventional, heated or cooled air that are individually controlled with the apparatus bay having geothermal and radiant heat on the floor. Josh asked if there were any State or Federal rebates for geothermal. H. Ferchau stated they could look into that but cannot count on those type of programs.

Fraser asked what the savings would be between geothermal and conventional? Initial construction cost for geothermal would be $900,000 (40 borings at 315 foot depth for a 100% geothermal system. This can be easily dropped by 25% which will reduce that cost. Construction for a conventional system would cost $1.7 million. They are recommending a 90/10 system. Annual operating costs for geothermal would be $38,000/yr and conventional would be $28,000/yr. The difference in these operating costs is due to low gas rates in Gunnison. Fraser stated the backup system has to be natural gas. Fraser advised that gas will stay level but other utilities are on the rise. Bob reported that gas stays low in Gunnison because we are on a dead end line and have set costs and as long as the lines are dead heading it will stay that way. Smith asked what the standard geothermal system is for this area. Joe stated the County has been doing 100% geothermal, but John Cattles with the County is not opposed to the 90/10 system but doesn't feel the need for a backup system. Smith commented that redundancy is a must because of the water stored on the apparatus (tanks,

valves, lines, etc.). Hughes agreed that a backup has to be there. H. Ferchau asked what the representative needed from them. Joe stated just that there is a basic understanding of the system options. Stoeber commented that the options are a 100% geothermal system at a cost of $1 million, a 90/10 system that would reduce the cost of the geothermal system by $250,000, and a backup system that would cost $1.7 million. Stoeber agrees there must be redundancy. Jonathan stated that geothermal is a good system and pay back will happen in a few years. Gydesen asked with the cost of a conventional system being $1.7 without geo and $1 million for geothermal, where is the savings? David stated the savings would be the in life cycle and replacement costs. Josh reiterated that possible rebates will help as well. Joe stated that everyone thinks geothermal is cheaper and it is totally dependent on location. Stoeber stated that they need to make sure to show taxpayers that this system will break even or not and why we are going with this system. Jonathan stated that they will have the 30-year numbers. Stoeber suggested that they do the numbers based on the full cost, do not mention or rely on rebates. Jonathan stated that they will update the report and get the new version to Chief. Stoeber stated that they want efficiency but need to be respectful of how we spend the money. Josh advised David that John Cattles has years of numbers if needed. Stoeber further commented that maintenance needs to be operable and not over complicated and asked for that information to be added into the numbers. Smith asked for a timeline and next steps. H. Ferchau stated they will meet again with Neenan tomorrow, then go to the County in two weeks with this information and then come back to the District Board at the 7/16/26 meeting. True data needs to be presented accurately. Josh would like to see a 10-to-15-year comparison.

III. **Unscheduled Business:**

None.

IV. Adjourn:

A motion was made by Cranor to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m.