Recall of Bridger Canyon Fire District Trustees Underway

BOZEMAN, Mt. Sept. 16, 2013 – A group of residents calling themselves the BCFD Safety Coalition has initiated a recall petition to begin the process of removing all five trustees from the Bridger Canyon Fire District Board. According to the petition, trustees should be recalled from office for two reasons: Violating their oath of office in failing to uphold the Constitution of the State of Montana, and official misconduct on the grounds that they routinely held unannounced meetings without public notice or public input. These actions were a direct violation of open meeting laws as specified in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 2-3-103, MCA 2-3-203 and the public’s right to know as guaranteed in Article II Section 8 of the Constitution of the State of Montana.

“Bridger canyon residents are entitled to a fair and open process, where the board includes the community in making vital decisions that affect us all,” said Thom Hughes, Bridger Canyon resident. “A fair and honest meeting treats everyone, most importantly the fire fighters, with respect and conducts its business openly, under the bright lights of public view. This board, deaf to their fire fighters’ needs, is making decisions in the shadows. They have divided this community and put it at risk for too long.”

Recall Petition Requirements

In order to initiate a recall petition, at least one of the following conditions must be present, according to MCA 2-16-603: Physical or mental lack of fitness, incompetence, violation of the oath of office, official misconduct, or conviction of a felony offense. The Montana Recall Act specifies the steps involved in
initiating and conducting a recall, under Title 2, Chapter 16, Part 6 of the Montana Code Annotated. In addition, the form of recall petition must be reviewed and approved by Election Office officials. This recall petition, the first effort of its kind in Gallatin County in at least 20 years, is the first phase in the recall process. The recall petition requires signatures from 15 percent of District residents who were registered voters at the time trustees were elected, in order to place the recall on a ballot. According to the Gallatin County Election Administrator, the Bridger Canyon Fire District has 693 registered voters, which means petition gatherers must obtain at least 104 signatures within 90 days. If they are successful, the Elections Office has 30 days to verify the signatures. The Election Administrator then notifies each trustee that the recall initiative will move forward. If the trustees do not resign from office, then a special election is called, and the ballot initiative is mailed to every active, registered voter in the District. In order for the ballot initiative to pass, a simple majority of active, registered voters in the District who return their ballot initiative must vote “yes” to recall each trustee.

**The BCFD Safety Coalition**

The BCFD Safety Coalition is a group of Bridger Canyon Fire District residents and concerned citizens who initiated these recall petitions in order to hold trustees accountable for their misconduct and failure to uphold their oath of office. The group formed after the mass resignations of 19 fire fighters from the Bridger Canyon Fire Department on May 21 and 22, 2013. The Coalition is comprised of numerous residents, five former District trustees, and two former fire chiefs from the District, united in their concerns for public safety, given the loss of so many experienced fire fighters under the direction of the current Board.

For more information about this recall effort, go to [www.bcfdsafetycoalition.org](http://www.bcfdsafetycoalition.org).