

GS/B/K Collaborative Facility Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Great Scott Town Hall; 6:00-7:00

Attendees: Great Scott Township - Judy Wahlberg, Lisa Kvas
Buhl – Randy Towner, Stuart Lehman (B FD), Eric Stanaway (B FD) (and guest)
Kinney – Karl Rudstrom (Mayor and K-GS FD), Shirley Agnoli, Tara Starc

Introductions – This was briefly done to familiarize everyone in attendance.

Background/History of the Project – This was reviewed again as there were new members in attendance.

Professional Services – Initial conversations with IRRR staff about the collaborative facility project included the suggestion that the township contract with someone to lead/facilitate the project as it would require substantial time, effort, coordination, and organization. Great Scott Township voted in March to contract with Lisa Kvas to help carry the project forward. Judy mentioned to the group that Lisa has successfully led other projects for the township, and the township felt confident she would help in leading this project, too. While Lisa was just elected to the Great Scott Township Board, measures were taken to ensure serving on the Township and working for the Township at the same time is allowable.

Charter – A draft of a charter for the committee and project was shared for the group to review and discuss. The group agreed that the charter was accurate and reflective of the committee and project's purpose and goals. The charter was created to provide a written explanation for the committee and project and will be used to share with new members and others who may want to know the history and purpose of the project.

Updates and Reports

- Great Scott Township: Judy mentioned that forward movements on the project are dependent on our collaboration including if and how Buhl wants to be a part of the new facility and whether the two fire departments decide to form as one. She also mentioned that the township has not heard anything from MinnTac recently, but there is a quarterly MinnTac Community Advisory Panel (CAP) meeting coming up on April 22nd, and MinnTac will sometimes comment (in broad terms) on their expansion projects. Lisa shared that she was in contact with Pat Heinen, MBFTE Fire Service Specialist, who is Minnesota Fire's point person supporting fire departments in our region, and particularly those who are going through mergers. Pat is willing to work with Buhl and Kinney-Great Scott Fire Departments and assist them with everything from sorting through questions and concerns as well as working through the protocols and paperwork required. Lisa mentioned that once the fire departments have decided to move forward with merging, Pat would like to meet with our committee to assist the cities and township administration with their part of the process. In the meantime, Pat is available for both fire chiefs and departments to contact for questions and support.
- Buhl: Randy informed the group that a working session was held with Buhl City Council members in February where discussions were held regarding how Buhl might like to participate in the new facility. He mentioned that the city seems confident that they would like to relocate the fire department there if they decide to combine, include their public works department, and quite possibly move the two city offices into the new facility, as well. Buhl Public Works is currently residing in multiple locations in the city due to the need for adequate office, garage, and storage spaces. With only two offices being occupied in the current City Hall building, Buhl Council Members are considering whether it might be best to downsize and move

into the shared facility. Randy also said the city is considering moving the ambulance into the facility, too. Attendees asked questions about the partnership with Essentia and how the contract works. Randy mentioned that the city feels its Senior Center and Community Center/Curling Club spaces are adequate. Questions were asked about the Chisholm Police Department and if they would want space in the new facility. Questions were asked regarding the Buhl property where the facility would be located and if Buhl would require the Township to purchase it and if there could be any issues (land use, permitting, etc.) that would pose challenges. Randy thought the property (and its value) could be a part of Buhl's contribution to the costs of the project. He also mentioned that Tony (Buhl) has been communicating with the county on State Aid for the highway where the facility would be located. Regarding the Fire Department. Stuart said that members of the Buhl Fire have been made aware and have been discussing the idea of merging fire departments with Kinney-Great Scott. He said the members seem to think it would be a good idea, but they also have questions about things like how their bylaws would change, investments could blend, and general operations might work.

- Kinney (City and Fire Department): The Mayor (Karl) and Kinney City Council Members (Shirley and Tara) were asked several questions and shared about the changes taking place due to the expansion of MinnTac into their city including the implications on housing, tax revenue, utilities, and the general ability to plan and provide for the city in the next years. Regarding the Fire Department, Karl mentioned that their members were aware of the possible merger with the Buhl Fire Department. Karl (not wanting to speak in place of Fire Chief Ryan Jaeger who was absent from tonight's meeting) said the K-GS FD meets on May 13th and could possibly have the discussion and decision to merge on the agenda, pending support from Chief Jaeger. A couple potential fire department related funding sources were mentioned that could support the new facility were mentioned and included FEMA and the Gary Sinise Foundation.

Action Items to Complete by Next Meeting

- Great Scott Township
 - Lisa will contact Pat Heinen to update him on status of the potential merger of fire departments and schedule him to tentatively attend the committee meeting in June pending FD merger status.
 - Lisa will connect the Fire Chiefs with Pat Heinen.
- Buhl
 - Stuart will organize a meeting with the BFD members to discuss and decide on moving forward with merging with K-GS.
 - Randy will check with Mike Kearney, City Attorney, about the protocols and processes the city would need to go through to merge FD's.
 - Buhl will discuss and determine decisions on ambulance and city offices space at the new facility.
 - Buhl will check with Chisholm PD to see if there is an interest in having space in the new facility.
- Kinney
 - Karl and Lisa will talk with Ryan about discussing and deciding on moving forward with merging with the BFD at the May 13th K-GS FD meeting.
 - Kinney Council Members will check with Mike Kearney, City Attorney, about the protocols and processes the city would need to go through to merge FD's.

Next Meeting

PLEASE NOTE: To allow for time for Fire Departments to convene and make decisions, **we will not hold our scheduled meeting in May**. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Great Scott Township Hall.