

MOAPA VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 13, 2023 Location: MVFD Headquarters

Board Members	Joseph Davis (Chairman), Gene Houston (Vice Chairman), Chance Munford, Adam Smith, Judy Metz, Josh Jensen, Anthony Rivera.
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- I. CALL TO ORDER
 - A. Joe Davis call's the meeting to order
 - B. Pledge of Allegiance
 - C. Conformance with the Open Meeting Law
 - D. Roll Call/Introduction
 - 1) Board Members:
 - a) Joe Davis, Chairman
 - b) Gene Houston, Vice-Chairman (Absent)
 - c) Judy Metz, Board Member
 - d) Adam Smith, Board Member
 - e) Chance Munford, Board Member
 - f) Josh Jensen, Board Member
 - g) Anthony Rivera, Board Member (Absent)
 - 2) Additional Representatives/Guests:
 - a) MVFD Chief Stephen Neel
 - b) MVFD Executive Assistant Samantha Empey
 - E. Discussion & Possible Action: Adoption of the agenda as posted.
Josh Jensen motions to adopt, Adam Smith seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - A. (none)
- III. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
 - (none)
- IV. GENERAL BUSINESS
 - A. Discussion & Possible Action: **Authorize salary increase for Fire Chief Stephen Neel**
 - Chief Stephen Neel begins the discussion; During the last meeting on September 5th, there was a request for an agenda item wording to be changed and it could not be changed in time so it was tabled and added to this agenda. Chief Neel emailed PERS to ask why it is not all employers paid if that is what has been chosen. PERS responded that it is 50% employer paid and 50% employee paid for the PERS

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increase. All other departments in Clark County have increased all salaries to make up the difference. During the last meeting there was discussion regarding the separation and how there was concern for financial stability as our own department long term, so an agreement was made to take the minimum salary as Fire Chief, but after discussions regarding other Clark County Chief salaries, Chief Neel makes significantly less than his counterparts at Mount Charleston. With inflation and the salary decrease due to PERS, Chief Neel requests the 3% salary increase, retroed from July 1st and moving forward, to cover that decrease.

Chair Davis comments that he appreciated Chief Neel taking the time to follow up and clarify this subject. Although it was agreed upon that Chief Neels PERS be 100% employer paid, Chief Neels contract was a Clark County negotiated contract, which follows the same verbiage as all other Clark County Fire Department employees. This increase will be to make up for what was lost due to that PERS decrease. In December's meeting will be Chief Neels evaluation and salary negotiation which will follow protocol and be in line with what Clark County has negotiated for other Fire Department employees which will also need to be planned for in future budgets. If Clark County is doing the negotiations, it will need to be taken into account. Chair Davis asks Chief Neel to research the recommendation for salary increase for the upcoming evaluation.

Chief Neel responds; During a discussion with Commissioner Kirkpatrick, it was mentioned that Chief Neel will be put under a contract which will detail increases in salary which ranges from 5%-10%, but will ultimately be up to the board members based on Chief Neels performance.

Member of the public, Bret Empey, comments that it is definitely appropriate for Chief Neel to receive the 3%. More importantly, the position of Fire Chief itself, regardless of who is in that position, does not make enough to keep any one person in that position for very long. Having worked in Clark County in emergency response long enough to know that Chief Neel is doing an excellent job and has an ability to

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put a resume together and get hired elsewhere that pays significantly more. Chief Neel has yet to do that because his heart is here in Moapa Valley and with Moapa Valley Fire District, but having a family to raise and nothing else keeping him in this valley, his heart is not going to have much say if he is offered a job elsewhere with better pay. Boulder City is looking for a Chief. Hurricane Utah is looking for a Chief. There's a Chief that works on Mount Charleston who gets paid significantly more than Chief Neel, and does not have near the workload nor producing near the income. If for nothing else, dealing with seventy plus volunteers is worth a lot more money than he is getting paid now. When discussions start on Chief Neel's evaluation in December, take into consideration the base pay of surrounding areas. Also, take into consideration the amount of work and good that Chief Neel has done in getting Moapa Valley Fire District well established and compensate accordingly. That way, if Chief Neel does ever leave Moapa Valley Fire District, someone else can be hired that can do the job at least as well as Chief Neel has done, and the only way that can be done is if the compensation package is appropriate.

Chair Davis comments that base pay is designed off of what the budget is and what we can afford.

Bret Empey responds that is true based on three years ago, and that the budget has definitely improved.

Chair Davis agreed with Bret Empey's comments that there is no denying that, but that's where the base pay is created. Everybody would love to make more money but it has to be based on what we can afford. Chief Neel has been phenomenal with getting grants and other forms of income such as Wildland. We are leaps and bounds from where we were two years ago in regards to our budget and hopefully in two years we will be leaps and bounds even further. Unfortunately this is only an advisory board who makes recommendations and goes up the chain. We can only hope that all of Chief Neel's efforts are seen.

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Judy Metz motions to authorize salary increase for Fire Chief Stephen Neel replacing the 3% that was withheld for PERS retroactive to July 1, 2023. Josh Jensen seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

B. Discussion & Possible Action: **Approve job description and hiring of the Assistant Fire Chief position.**

- Chief Neel begins the discussion; This position and job description was approved over a year and a half ago as a board. This Assistant Chief position will be responsible for Fire Training, EMS Training, Apparatus readiness, responding to calls, and more, which will help a great deal with Chief Neels workload. This position is a three year grant funded position. After three years, it will be at the discretion of the Fire Board to retain the position. Chief Neel presents the job description to the board members to review and make changes as needed in real time. This board packet was also sent to the board members prior to the meeting so there was adequate time to review to suggest changes.

Judy Metz comments on the lack of requirement for the incoming Assistant Chief to have Firefighter 1 and 2 and running a fire scene when Chief Neel is gone.

Chief Neel clarified that the new Assistant Chiefs responsibilities are mainly EMS. There are already Fire Officers and volunteer Assistant Chiefs in the District that are more than capable of handling fire scenes. The majority of calls are EMS and require ALS which is why there is the requirement for Paramedic and not Fire Officer 1 and 2. If the job description required both Paramedic and Fire Officer 1 and 2, there is a very high chance that there will be no applicants. By removing one of those requirements, there is more of a chance to get more applicants. The job description details that the new Assistant Chief will be required to obtain Fire Officer 1 and 2 within the first year of employment. There are currently only six Paramedics that volunteer with our Fire District and all work for other entities. The need for another Paramedic is paramount for our community. Unless

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the new Assistant Chief has a background in fire, that person will not be placed in charge of running a fire scene until Chief Neel and other command staff with Moapa Valley Fire District feels comfortable in doing so.

Adam Smith is over Fire Training for Moapa Valley Fire District and responds to Judys comment for concern about the lack of requirement for Fire Officer 1 and 2 by saying that Chief Neel and Adam have been talking about implementing better command level training with scenarios that will improve the operation of leading a fire call, which will also be incorporated into the first year of training for the new Assistant Chief.

Judy Metz asks if there are any current volunteers in Paramedic School that may be eligible for the position.

Chief Neel responds with yes, there is one. Extra points will also be given during the hiring process for current volunteers that are applying for the position.

Chair Davis comments that ultimately the goal is to have someone in the position that is competent in EMS and Fire and can do all that Chief Neel is able to do. He also questioned whether there is a probationary period or not.

Chief Neel answers that the standard for the surrounding fire departments is one year from date of hire. Performance evaluations will be done yearly.

Chance Munford voices concerns from other volunteers regarding some verbiage in the job description about the new Assistant Chief being a mentor but not being required to have fire experience and the possibility of not being from Moapa Valley.

Chief Neel answers that even though it is in the job description, it does not mean they will be doing it right away. It will be at the discretion of command staff and Chief Neel to determine if and when the candidate will be ready for things such as mentoring.

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Chance Munford voices more concerns regarding the lack of requirement for Fire Officer 1 and 2, and even though it is required to be obtained within the first year of employment, he is concerned that the new Assistant Chief will not be adequately trained being with a volunteer fire department and not having live burn trainings and experiences like that as often as other professional departments. Another question regarding the work schedule of the new Assistant Chief was asked.

Chief Neel agrees that it could take longer, depending on the candidate, to be proficient in those types of scenarios and training. This position will be mainly focused on EMS, but the candidate will be able to train faster than our volunteers because this will be his or her full time job. Regardless of certifications, it will still be at the discretion of the command staff and the Fire Chief to allow him or her to perform certain duties in the job description. The new Assistant Chief will be shadowing Chief Neel for the first few months, then will be scheduled to work Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, as the regular shift but will be able to shift adjust as needed. The job description also states that they must be available nights, weekends, and holidays as needed.

Public Comment: Andrea Smith comments on Judys concerns regarding only having a requirement for Paramedic; There have been many times where Station 74 has asked for ALS and the only available Paramedic is in Moapa which coming from that area, they don't beat the helicopter. If there were someone here in the valley, in this office, working and on call as needed, they would definitely beat the helicopter and would be in a much better position to assist when time counts the most. There have been many times where there is a fire and Chief Neel is not present and it gets taken care of just fine. It is definitely more beneficial to have the Paramedic requirement over the fire experience requirements.

Public Comment: Alecia Neel addresses Chance Munford is concerned regarding the time it will take to acquire adequate

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fire experience; Yes, a professional department might have more burns and fires, but out here you get quality training. In Vegas you have quantity but not every fire is everyone going inside or actually putting out the fire because there are so many firefighters there. Out here, you're going inside, you're doing overhaul, you're actually putting your hands on the tools because there are not as many of you. That is not often the case with a professional department.

Chance Munford comments that the concern was more so coming from the fact that we do have limited staffing and the amount of fires that do happen, the amount of jobs that have to be covered. Because we don't have a large amount of resources and staff, the experience end of it comes more into play because it is more dangerous for us out here. Our crews get exhausted faster and is this new Assistant Chief going to be able to coordinate all that and be qualified at the end of the training period.

Public Comment Bret Empey; The rank or title does not equate to your position in the field. For example, you may be the new SWAT commander, and that is your title but if you show up on your very first barricade with that new title, you are not in charge. It is the person with the experience and knowledge that is in charge.

Public Comment Karen Hughes; Addressing Chances concerns, I agree that it would be very beneficial to get someone in here that already has their Fire 1 and is a Paramedic. The problem is if you require those fire certifications, you're losing all those candidates that are flight medics, or working in the ER, or are currently working for a medic company who are great medics. They can more easily come in and get those fire certifications, but if you don't require the paramedic and only the fire certifications, there is no guarantee that they will get their paramedic because it is so much harder.

Adam Smith motions to approve the job description and hiring of the Assistant Fire Chief position, as what is dictated on the screen with the amendments that have been made.

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Josh Jensen seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed.
Motion was passed.

C. Discussion & Possible Action: **Approve hiring process for the Assistant Fire Chief position.**

- No comments.

Joe Davis motions to approve the hiring process for the Assistant Fire Chief position with the caveat that Board Member Judy Metz sit on the oral board. Adam Smith seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

V. FINANCES

A. *Discussion & Review:* (None)

VI. COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

A. (NONE)

VII. REPORTS

A. Chief Stephen Neel

- Emergency Management is coming together. There are two groups in the valley that we have put together which includes one group with all the utility companies and one with all of the stakeholders where we are going over the Annex from the Clark County Emergency Management Plan. These groups meet quarterly and have created contact lists and are working through the Annex to get it updated and to include Moapa. This way, during emergencies like the flood and weather we just had, we were able to keep everyone well informed.

B. Moapa Station 72 Assistant Chief Adam Smith

- Fire Academy is almost done. We will be graduating about twelve more firefighters.
- Will be starting Company Officer training and evolving that into an officer candidate type school.

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- Also working on getting a format lined up and implementing an engineers program as well.
- C. Logandale Station 73 Chief Neel
 - No update
- D. Overton Station 74 Assistant Chief Chance Munford
 - No update
- E. Board Member Report and General Comments:
 - (none)

VIII. SETTING OF NEXT MEETING

- A. The next quarterly meeting day and time to be determined for December 2023
- B. Next meeting is set for:
To be determined in December 2023
MVFD Headquarters. 3570 Lyman St, Logandale, NV 89021.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

- A. Chair Davis motions to adjourn, Judy Metz seconds; all in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.