

MEETING MINUTES OF THE VERNON FIRE DISTRICT BOARD

2/25/2025 AT 5:30 PM at the Vernon Library

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

1. **CALL TO ORDER REGULAR BOARD MEETING:** Called to order by John Vehar at 5:30pm.
2. **ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS:** Present members: Tony Anderson, Gregg McClendon, Randy Mifflin, John Vehar, and Grey Murphy.
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER:** The Pledge was recited, and Chief DeWitt prayed for the meeting.
4. **RECOGNITION OF GUESTS:** Wendy Sharp, Ben Archer-Clowes, Chief Collin DeWitt, Kevin Vickers, Nate Morgan, Mary Dalton, Chief Willie Nelson, Keith Plympton, Chris Allman.
5. **REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE**
 - A. Chair Summary – John Vehar stated that he did not have a chair summary.
 - B. Financial Report and Discussion – Ben Archer-Clowes spoke about the January financial report. The tax revenue for January was slightly under historic January revenue, but year to date revenue is still trending ahead of budget. Nontax revenue was \$118,000 over mostly due to wildland revenue, which was \$120,000 over projection for January. Expenses that are over budget can mostly be tied to the extra revenue. Personnel costs are over budget by \$5,000, however, these are made up by wildland personnel reimbursement. Cash flow shows that we are spending less than projected due to changes that Chief DeWitt has made, plus the additional wildland revenue. Projections are looking better than they were at the beginning of the year.
 - C. Chief's Report and discussion – Chief Collin DeWitt reported that in January there were 59 calls, 5 fires and the balance being medical in nature. Station 26 has been shut down as propane was running approximately \$1,000 per month to keep it from freezing. The trucks and the building were winterized so that the propane could be shut off. In the future, solar lights may be utilized to reduce the electric bill. Chief interviews were conducted as well. There were 24 applicants, and after all cuts were made, there is a final list of 3 candidates. We also retrieved Engine 252 from Phoenix. The tender is still in assembly and paint, and Interstate will be giving a timeline for finalization soon.
6. **CONSENT AGENDA**
 - A. The Board has reviewed the Financial Report for the month of January 2025.
 - B. The Board has reviewed and approved the meeting minutes for 1/28/2025.
7. **BUSINESS**
 - A. **Consent Agenda:** Grey Murphy motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, and Gregg McClendon seconded the motion. John Vehar called for a vote, and the Consent Agenda was approved unanimously.
 - B. **Discussion and possible action: Shared Services, presentation by Mary Dalton and discussion,** Mary Dalton, Assistant Chief from Arizona Fire and Medical Authority gave a presentation on three options for collaborating with other entities. She began by mentioning the fact that many districts are opting for shared services because of financial limitations such as the tax rate vs property values. The three models discussed were Mergers, Consolidations, and Joint Powers Authority (JPA). Mergers and Consolidations happen by combining districts and becoming a new entity, and a JPA allows shared resources while maintaining individual identities and tax rates. These agreements can be written as simply or as complex as needed. Benefits and challenges of each option were discussed. Questions were taken and answered throughout the presentation. The difference between Joint Powers and Joint Management were discussed, and examples of current agreements were given, including when differing entities such as a district and a municipality were brought together. Chief Willie Nelson discussed the IGA's that exist between Snowflake and Taylor departments, as well as how an agreement might exist between Snowflake-Taylor Fire Department and Vernon Fire District. Wages, insurance, pensions, training, ambulance service, management, finances, equipment, investigation, and other topics were discussed. Joining with other localities was also discussed, as well as mutual aid and automatic aid that is already given between departments. Timelines, proposed financial items such as current bills in the legislature and grants, contract details, and board responsibilities were discussed. A suggestion was made to add Shared Services to the next meeting's agenda for further discussion.
 - C. **Discussion and possible action: Wildland,** Kevin Vickers gave an update on wildland activity for the current fiscal year. There were 29 billable incidents, and total billing was \$450,781, all inclusive. Personnel billed at \$222,378.50. Of the 29 assignments, Kevin Vickers has taken 20, and Mike Godleski has taken the other nine. Mike does plan on coming back to work but has not been cleared for work yet. There was one major expenditure on the Type 3 Engine. VFD will hire 6 new wildland firefighters this coming season, there are 12 interviews coming up, including an engine boss candidate. There will be a pack test on March 7, and the 11th through 13th will be a basic wildland course for the new firefighters. There are some new regulations regarding the new water tender. The conversation within the wildland community is that the task forces will start four months early this year and will include a new task force in Tucson. The state currently has six prison hand crews and one other hand crew, and six engines to cover the state of Arizona. The state relies on crews like ours to assist when needed and recently paid for our assistance in Concho because that recent fire was on state land, and we had qualified trucks that gave assistance right away. This allowed our local crews to take charge of the scene so that the state didn't need to respond with their personnel. Total wildland profit was over \$133,000 after all expenses were accounted for, and the season is not technically over. Next steps will be dealing with the aging equipment and formulating a plan for replacement vehicles to be able to continue with wildland assignments in the future. There are grants available that will be applied for next year for a newer engine, and the new Engine Boss will be helpful in taking more assignments.

- D. **Discussion and possible action: Grants**, ADASHI is in its third year, there is around 120,000 left to spend on it, this includes licenses and Tough Books. Kevin Vickers is compiling a list of all the grants we have used in the past detailing when they open and close so there is a better idea as to when and how they come available for applications.
 - E. **Discussion and possible action: Vehicles**, we are still waiting for the tender to be completed. There was an additional \$7,000 spent on a fuel pump for the engine, and it was returned in good condition. Total expenditure was approximately \$37,000.
 - F. **Discussion and possible action: Auction outcome**, Wendy Sharp reported that the estate still owes Vernon Fire District \$1,325.00, as the auction brought in \$7,265 in total. The remaining debt is not recoverable, so it will likely become a write off. There has been no further communication from the family, and the lawyer's fees are complete.
 - G. **Discussion and possible action: Challenge coins**, Randy Mifflin has investigated the cost for coins. Since there is already a design, the number purchased would determine the cost. Minimum purchase is 100, and price breaks are given at quantities 300 and 500. They would be between \$3.25 and \$3.75 per coin at a quantity of 300. The board members could put together an order as a personal expense, but the firefighters may wish to have them for trading as well. The firefighters in attendance indicated that they would like that. The original design order is not available, but a new company could simply copy an existing coin. Placing an order for 300 was suggested by Randy Mifflin since the firefighters would also like to use them, Grey Murphy asked whether a motion was needed, and John Vehar indicated no. Randy Mifflin will put together finalized information as to order cost and he estimates that it will be \$3.50 per coin.
- 8. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** A motion was made to recess the regular session by Tony Anderson and seconded by Grey Murphy. The regular session was called to recess and moved to executive session at 7:33pm.
 - 9. **REGULAR SESSION:** John Vehar called the regular session back to order at 7:58pm.
 - 10. **CALL TO THE PUBLIC:** No public statements.
 - 11. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:** The agenda for March 25, 2025, will include Grants, further discussion regarding JMA/IGA with Snowflake-Taylor, and an update on the exact cost for an order of challenge coins.
 - 12. **ADJOURNMENT:** A motion was made to adjourn by Gregg McClendon and seconded by Grey Murphy. The vote was unanimous, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.