

MEETING MINUTES OF THE VERNON FIRE DISTRICT BOARD

12/17/2024 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 were Randy Mifflin, Gregg McClendon, John Vehar, Tony Anderson, and Grey Murphy.
3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER:** The Pledge was recited, and Randy Mifflin prayed for the meeting.
4. **RECOGNITION OF GUESTS:** Chief Collin DeWitt, Wendy Sharp, Kathy Schlichting, and Jacob York.
5. **REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE**
 - A. Financial Report and Discussion – Jacob York presented the financial report for November. Total revenue was \$98,000 from property taxes, which is under the projected budget for the month, but over the projected budget for the year to date. Expenses were approximately \$125,000 for November, which is over budget by approximately \$40,000, but the bulk of that is from wildland expenses including wages and travel expenses. Cash is approximately \$960,000, and approximately \$242,000 of this is earmarked for future grant expenses. Jacob York called for questions, and Collin DeWitt expressed appreciation for the mention of the earmarked funds.
 - B. Chair Summary – John Vehar reminded the board that the AFDA conference is coming up next month. John also mentioned that the new board member, Tony Anderson, and continuing board member, Grey Murphy were sworn in earlier.
 - C. Chief's Report and discussion – Chief Collin DeWitt noted the number of calls in the previous month was 75, a few of which were special in that the troops performed remarkably. The silent auction is ready for preview and final auction the following day. Chief DeWitt expects a good showing for the event. There are currently 12 applications for the Fire Chief position, and approximately half of those will be reviewed more in depth with the other half likely being cut in a first round of review. There will also be an appeal for applicants during the AFDA conference.
6. **CONSENT AGENDA**
 - A. The Board has reviewed the Financial Report for the month of November 2024
 - B. The Board has reviewed and approved the meeting minutes for 11/19/2024
7. **BUSINESS**
 - A. **Consent Agenda:** Randy Mifflin motioned to approve the Consent Agenda, and Grey Murphy seconded the motion. John Vehar called for a vote, and it was approved unanimously.
 - B. **Discussion and possible action: Grants,** Chief Collin DeWitt reported that an Incident Command Suite grant is being worked on. There were ten laptops loaded with software to serve the units and assist dispatchers in their duties and assist in communicating with other agencies. We are in year two of a three-year grant with \$11,000 still available. There will be a class held on Friday, December 20, to orient users to the software. Truck modifications will also be needed in order to mount the laptops. John Vehar asked for clarification that he is speaking of the ADASHI grant, and the Chief affirmed. John asked about the software working with the original laptops, and the Chief affirmed that as well. No updated laptops or software will be needed. The mitigation grant has opened up again, so we will be applying for that in the coming year. John Vehar asked about the status of the tender, and Chief DeWitt promised a report at the next board meeting.
 - C. **Discussion and possible action: Wildland,** Chief DeWitt reported that the crew went out in November and returned. No equipment had any issues; however, one individual became ill and was hospitalized. He returned without the crew and is recovering. Currently, the wildland crew has been deployed to California and will return possibly after Christmas. John Vehar asked if there was a possibility of the wildland crew being sent to Texas after that, but the Chief did not have any confirmation.
 - D. **Discussion and possible action: Review Sunstate renewal contract,** Kathy Schlichting reported that the proposal was lower than the previous contract. Randy Mifflin mentioned that he works with Sunstate, so will recuse himself from voting but can answer any questions about the company. Kathy reported that Sunstate is responsible for covering the server and virtual server that contain all of the district's computer data. They also update all of the computers weekly, making sure they are free from viruses, etc. There are eight workstations supported, and they also do firewalls, routers, switches, access points, phones (VOIP). Randy Mifflin mentioned that it is a full management contract meaning that all IT is supported, and weekly updates are included as well as no cost site visits if necessary. There is also a first responder discount, and Sunstate currently manages 43 fire districts. All hardware and software are supported as well as backups of desktops and servers, on site and in a cloud, as well as managing the Office 365 subscription. Kathy mentioned that tech support is called often, and they are able to assist in all aspects of software, email management, security, QuickBooks, etc., and that tech support is indispensable. There will be some moving and retiring of workstations in the new year as well. Grey Murphy motioned to accept the Sunstate contract, and Tony Anderson seconded. The vote was unanimous except for Randy Mifflin who recused himself.
 - E. **Discussion and possible action: Pay off new Brush truck loan early,** Chief Collin DeWitt reported that the terms of the lease/purchase on the 2011 F550 brush truck included \$33,250 in interest, which is approximately 35 percent since it is compounded. With the wildland funds being approximately \$89,000, he proposed to pay off this lease/purchase to avoid the rest of the interest that has not been accrued yet. This will save the district approximately \$26,000. The twice-yearly payment that would have been made on this lease could then be made to a reserve account instead. Clarifying questions were asked and answered regarding the amount of interest saved, the method of interest calculation, financial feasibility, and the payoff amount. Discussion was also made regarding waiting until February to pay off the vehicle, and how that may affect the incoming Fire Chief's duties and responsibilities. The point was made again by Chief DeWitt that a reserve fund will

be added to every six months, and that the funds to pay off the vehicle are currently available. John Vehar made a motion to pay the balance of the 2011 brush truck. Randy Mifflin seconded the motion. Grey Murphy called for the vote, and it was unanimous.

- F. **Discussion and possible action: IGA Dispatch**, Chief DeWitt reported that we have been waiting for an IGA from Show Low, and nothing has come of it yet. Things are taking longer than anticipated because of the holiday season. This discussion will be tabled until next month.
 - G. **Discussion and possible action: Estate Auction at Station 26**, Chief DeWitt reported that the estate has been notified of the auction and we are set to hold the auction on Wednesday and Thursday, December 18 and 19. There should be a report on the outcome of the auction for the next board meeting. There is also interest in the ambulances, so they may be sold as well. Kathy Schlichting asked if there would be a quorum at the auction, and it was answered as a possibility, so a notice will be posted. Logistics and security were discussed.
 - H. **Discussion and possible action: Staffing**, Chief DeWitt reported that staffing has been reduced by eliminating the Assistant Chief position and the Administrative Captain position. Office staff has also been reduced. After meeting with the accountant, the financial targets have been met regarding staffing. Kathy Schlichting will be leaving, but available on a consultation basis. Wendy Sharp will be the front line in the office with the other secretary working on an as-needed basis. Discussion was made regarding certain office logistics, practices, and skills needed, and Chief DeWitt assured the board that he believes that financially this is a prudent move. John Vehar then stated that the meeting would need to be adjourned, and an Executive Session started to discuss other staffing matters.
- 9. **ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR SESSION**: Tony Anderson motioned to adjourn and enter Executive Session and Grey Murphy seconded. The board voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session. The meeting was adjourned at 6:47pm, and the board entered Executive Session.
 - 10. **RECONVENED**: John Vehar reconvened the regular board meeting at 6:59pm.
 - I. **Discussion and possible action: Voting for new Board Chair and Clerk, 2025 Board meeting dates, Public notice, Banking**, Randy Mifflin made a motion that the Chair and Clerk positions stay the same as last year. Tony Anderson seconded the motion. A vote was held and unanimously agreed upon. John Vehar then shared the dates of the 2025 board meetings. Randy Mifflin made a motion to accept the 2025 board meeting dates as written. Tony Anderson seconded the motion. A vote was held and unanimously passed. Regarding public notice, John Vehar mentioned the posting locations. Regarding banking, John Vehar made a motion to remove Paul Kovic III from the banking documents, Anthony Anderson be added, and Grey Murphy be renewed on the banking documents for the next term. Grey Murphy seconded the motion and called for a vote. The vote was unanimous. Kathy Schlichting shared information about the banking forms and advised that copies of driver's licenses are needed, as well as obtaining copies of current board members' licenses that may have expired or need updating.
 - 11. **CALL TO THE PUBLIC** – No members of the public were present.
 - 12. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**: Items to discuss on the next agenda will include IGA dispatch, vehicles, grants, wildland, auction results, 4-acre property on Highway 61 valuation and possible sale.
 - 13. **ADJOURNMENT**: Tony Anderson motioned to adjourn the meeting, Randy Mifflin seconded, and a vote was held. It was unanimously approved. The board meeting adjourned at 7:11pm.