



Desert Hills Fire District

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Desert Hills Fire District Board Meeting Minutes Regular Meeting July 19, 2023

1. Call to order

Board Member Roger called to order the Desert Hills Fire District Board meeting at **9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 19, 2023**, at the Desert Hills Fire Station Si-Mock Room located at 3983 London Bridge Road, Lake Havasu City, AZ.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Allegiance commenced by Board Member Schafer

3. Roll Call

The following Board Members were present:

Tom Roger - absent
Curtis Schafer
Char Beltran
Jimmy Wilson
Rich Fountain

Also, in attendance:

Battalion Chief Stanec
Battalion Chief Bunn - absent
Administrative Specialist Harrison

4. Call to the Public: None

5. Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes for June 21, 2023: Board Member Fountain motioned to accept Meeting Minutes as written, seconded by Board Member Beltran, all in favor.

6. Reports:

a) **Fire Administration Report:** Battalion Chief Stanec reports;

- Battalion Chief Bunn is on vacation. I will be giving the operations report.
- Albertson donated a pallet of water. Which was much need in these extreme temperatures.
- The state grant we received for the Adashi system has come in. We have started training. Adashi is communicating with our dispatch center and they are monitoring our calls. By mid-August it should be up and running.
- Engineer testing has been completed. Captain Sayre was involved with the testing. Bryce Martens was selected as Engineer and will be promoted next month. Between the 3 candidates it was a tough competition. We were impressed with all 3 candidates.
- We are still conducting interviews for 3 new hires. We had 3 interviews and have 2 more scheduled.
- We were selected by the Arizona Center for Fire Service Excellence to host a 2-day National Fire Academy course here at Desert Hills. We will be hosting "EMS Functions in ICS on February 26 -27. There is no or very minimal cost to the district.
- I was invited to assist Buckskin Fire as an evaluator for Captain/Lieutenant testing. I also was an evaluator at Fort Mojave Fire for their assistant chief promotion. Both departments have a great group of people.

- b) **Fire Operation Report:** Battalion Chief Stanec reports;
 - Our call stats are currently at 460 calls. There was a gas leak on Lake Dr, we assisted LHCFD with brush fires on the Island and a 3 vehicle MVA on I40.
- c) **DHFD Auxiliary Report:** none
- d) **Correspondence:** None

7. **New Business:**

- a.) **Discussion and possible action re: Approval of monthly Financial Report.** Administrative Specialist Harrison states that the Grant Savings Account is \$19,604.42, Payroll Account \$77,893.29, Petty Cash \$100.00, Special Revenue Checking Account \$156,149.85, Special Revenue Savings Account \$314,744.36, Warrant Account \$854,374.28, with a total balance of \$1,422,866.20. We ended the year at 83% of income budgeted and 85% of expenses budgeted. Motioned by Board Member Beltran to approve the financial report as presented, seconded by Board Member Wilson, all in favor.
- b.) **Discussion and possible action re: Approval to support Tyler Morgan through Paramedic School.** BC Stanec states we would like to support FF Morgan through paramedic school at a cost of approximately \$5500. Motioned by Board Member Beltran to approve paramedic school for FF Morgan, seconded by Board Member Fountain, all in favor.
- c.) **Discussion and possible action re: JPA (Joint Power Authority) discussion with guest speakers.**
 - BC Stanec states; as we have discussed the County Chiefs Association and been talking about forming a JPA. The Mohave County Fire Association has sent out a letter requesting support of the JPA. You should all have a copy of that letter. I have invited Chief Pat Moore to explain and answers any questions regarding the JPA.
 - Chief Pat Moore states; I have been in the fire service since 1992, all in Mohave County. My whole career we have talked about serving our community better. If you look at what we are doing now we have lot of forward-thinking and collaborative views in all of Mohave County. We share the same numbering system, most of us share the same work schedule, most of us share 1 of 3 dispatch centers, all of us share mutual aid agreements. This has all been done to better serve our citizens.
We all agree the taxing structure is a little bit challenging for us. It doesn't go up as quickly as we would like to keep up the salary and wage increase.
3 years ago, we talked about doing an JPA up and down the river valley. We did a study and the study clearly show a benefit to the districts. On the study we were going to save about 3.5 million dollars. Unfortunately, some board members do not want to give up control of their local districts. It used to take 5 people to pass a JPA now it only takes 3. Long story short the JPA did not pass.
After the JPA did not pass we created Prop 310. This would have been a really good helping spot for us. But it didn't pass.
At this time, we would like to find out which districts would be interested in being part of the study. So far there has been 7 fire districts and the City of Kingman that has shown interest in the study. The cost of the study is dependent upon how many districts are involved. Chief Moore believes we could get the study done for about \$20,000 to \$25,000, that will be divided between districts.
The study focus' on finances. None of us want any of us to do anything to jeopardize our districts financial. The study won't tell you what color the engine will be, the name of the district, etc. That will be determined by the new board. Each district that makes up the agency will elect an official for the new authority board. Each district will keep their current board.
The benefit to the JPA is we all pay into the same pension system, health care and liabilities. There's a cost saving with the ability to buy in bulk and insure in bulk, and HR related items. We also anticipate a savings in for fire engine purchases, turn out and uniforms purchases, SCBA purchase, etc. Now we would all have an IT department, an EMS training division, maintenance shop.
JPA's are created and permitted through Article 48 and the law makers have made it simpler. They made it non punitive, there was a cap on the FDAT and that is no longer the case.
There are two authorities in our state now. There are a couple ways to form an authority. One is a joint management, but you never got the benefits of the pension, healthcare cost, etc. The other is merger consolidation, but you have to be continuously touching. This would not work for us. If you look at the two authorities in our state the have been pretty successful.
Chief Moore will answer question that have been presented to him from the labor side. What about pay? We feel no one will lose their position, pay, or benefits. Will other stations take all our equipment? That

would never happen. Your district funded that equipment and it will stay in that district. In a JPA we have more equipment and if a district needs to borrow equipment there would be plenty to select from. Would personnel be moved? There possible could be a bid system by seniority. There could be a few firefighters that could become rovers and as they move up in seniority, they would come off the rover list. But for the most part all firefighters would stay at their current stations. Would we still have task books and training? Yes, we would look at all task books and training and select the best for everyone. Would people be demoted and have to retest? No, that has not even been considered. We have people in key places, our goal is to leave people in those key places. There would be more opportunity for advancement. Chief Moore opens it up to questions.

Board Member Schafer asks the following questions;

Can you go into a little more detail on the study? The study mainly focuses on current operations, current staffing levels, and the current cost. They would combine all the information, then look at the savings on retirement and insurance, etc. They will also look at where you might end up financial. The study would look at each individual district financial and how we would be in the JPA. We want to use an Arizona company for the study. The reason is they understand the dynamics that's going on in our state.

How is the JPA board created? Each district will elect a member to be part of the JPA board. Each district will retain their own board. Down the road districts may elect to merge to create less districts and boards. Is each district budgeted with their own funds? It can be. We can ask the county to not remove the layered map. By not removing this you would receive your tax funds, but this could work against you by not having all the resources pooled together. Each district will still create their own budget.

Does the JPA have to be approved by the state or county supervisors? No, it will take 3 votes from each board involved. There is also a legal process to create the JPA.

What about the fund raised by donations and auxiliary donations? The funds donated by your community would stay in your community.

Which districts are looking to join? Bullhead City FD, Fort Mojave FD, Mohave Valley, DHFD, Golden Valley FD, Northern Arizona FD, Lake Mohave Ranchos FD and Kingman FD have all shown interest at the chief's level.

Board Member Beltran asks the following questions;

How realistic are the goals you stated? Would we just be creating another layer of another entity for our district? Our job here is financial oversight and policy oversight. We do not care about control but we do care about our labor and administration staff. If you add another layer of entity will the labor and administration, still be here? Is it still going to run like it runs now? I would say yes and most likely yes. If you look at the totality, what makes people leave is wages and benefits or working conditions. I don't see either one of those changing for the worst. We are not changing schedules; I think there will be more opportunities.

You don't think the funding source will look at the cost of employees someday and say it's too high, you have an economy of scale and you will have to make cuts? Chief Moore states that the economy of scale transitions to every district involved. Any time you can diversify and have EMS, Wildland and other sources of revenue this funding will help to combat that scale.

If you separate the operation from the finance and administration structure, are we adding another layer of administration? Chief Moore replied, I don't think so, we are taking what you have now and putting into one administrative layer. BM Beltran asked what gets eliminated by doing this? Ultimately, down the road a number of those administrative positions will, but they wouldn't be initially. No chief would eliminate any of our people. They have been dedicated employees and we wouldn't do that.

Would the funding source still be from the county? It would still be the same assessed evaluation.

Once the JPA is created can a district get out? No, you cannot get out, but each district will have a voice. BM Beltran feels the study is very important.

Chief Moore stated, he believes every fire district is operating at the scale of economy that they can afford. There is not a fire district in this county that is robust with either admin staff or firefighters on the floor. The economy of scale is all ready there.

BM Beltran ask than why do we need that extra layer of government? To create the single legal entity. To receive the discounts, we will receive in the pension system, health insurance and liability insurance. We won't know exactly until we do the study.

BM Beltran feels it very important to include the firefighter's input on joining the JPA. Chief Moore wants the labor force to come forward with any questions and options.

The board opened up call to the public;

Labor member FF Martens speaks for DHFD's members; most of us firefighters have been hearing about JPA's for a while now and we have wanted something like this for a long time. The main concern is the pay and benefits and as long as those things make sense, we are willing to do it. We are excited for change. I

think that once the study is done it will give us the answers on how it all works. I feel we want to support what is good for all of us, from admin to operations, labor and to the community. We have a really tight knit group at Desert Hills. We don't want to lose that, but if we can capitalize on it, great!

Board Member Wilson ask, if your station is short staff is it allowed to get coverage from another station. Chief Moore answers with, yes that's one of the benefits. You have a large pool of people. The big concern is who is the fill in firefighter? You solve this by having rover firefighters. Roving is not a bad thing, the fire fighters that are rovers will get more experience. Learns the different stations and as they move up in seniority, they know which station they would want to bid to work at.

BM Wilson states these firefighters are the ones that has to live with this and it comes down to what they want. Chief more states it might not be the best for a district and he would not want any body to do anything that is not best for their district.

Chief Moore continues; We will be talking about the start date for the study at our next county fire chiefs meeting. We have asked the districts interest to let us know by August 1st. Bullhead Fire Department has set aside the funding for the study. All districts involved will reimburse their portion of the study to BHFD. If we stay within our state, we don't envision the cost to be more than \$25,000. If anyone has any questions, please reach out to me.

Board Member Beltran motions to move forward to participate in the JPA study, seconded by Board Member Wilson, all in favor.

8. Board Member Comments:

- a) **New Business to be considered on future agendas:** None
- b) **Comments:** None

9. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn at 10:39 by Board Member Beltran, seconded by Board Member Wilson, all in favor.