



# Desert Hills Fire District

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## Desert Hills Fire District Board Meeting Minutes Regular Meeting, October 18, 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, October 18, 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 Roger

### 3. Roll Call

The following Board Members were present:

Tom Roger  
Curtis Schafer  
Char Beltran  
Jimmy Wilson  
Rich Fountain

Also, in attendance:

Battalion Chief Stanec  
Battalion Chief Bunn  
Administrative Specialist Harrison

### 4. Call to the Public: None

### 5. Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes for September 20, 2023: Board Member Beltran motioned to accept meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Board Member Fountain, all in favor.

### 6. Reports:

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

- The new hire update; Matthew French, from Havasu started his orientation last week. He's a bright young man and bring a new energy. Andrew Shiner, from Phoenix area, we don't know if he's coming or not. He has a lot going on and we asked him to make a decision soon.
- The Fire Prevention & Safety Grant, for the Digital Sign Board, we submitted the permits to the county. I've gotten quotes from electricians coming in and we will probably use MACK signs, a local vendor. We have multiple quotes and MACK signs is comparable and local.
- The annual Desert Hills Holiday Toy Drive; again, we're partnering with the Bunker Bar. They're going to do the big event on December 2<sup>nd</sup> which will include a side-by-side run. Also, Anderson Powersports wants to give us \$2,000.00 to support the toy drive. The Bunker Bar will do a joint advertisement with Anderson Powersports.

- The annual Poker Run is changing this year to January 13<sup>th</sup>. Anderson Powersports and the Havasu SXS association run the event.
- BC Stanec introduces Chief McMahan from Buckskin and Parker Fire District. I invited him in reference to JPA update. He's been involved with JPA and is very knowledgeable. I thought he'd be the right person to answer any of our question we may have.

b) **Fire Operation Report:** Battalion Chief Bunn reports;

- We're currently at 667 calls for service-up 51 calls from last month and we're averaging 68 calls per month.
- Captain Joey Spencer is attending AZ Battalion Chief Academy in Pheonix. It comprises 8, one day sessions over a four-week period. It's being run by the Az Fire Chiefs Association. It's modeled for newly promoted Battalion Chief or those wishing to be promoted in the future. He's last day will be November 9<sup>th</sup>.
- 1516's new bumper is in and it is schedule to go to Love's Auto Body at the end of the month to be repaired.
- New Engine update; BC Stanec and I are flying to South Dakota on Sunday, 10/22 to do the final inspection on our new engine. Once we sign off on it, the truck will be transported by flatbed to Tolleson, AZ and be there for about a month to get its final outfitting. Once that's complete, we'll go to Tolleson to pick it up. While we are in South Dakota Captain Erickson and Captain Reeder will be acting in our place. If you need something immediately, please get ahold of one of them. We can be reached by phone or text.
- ARPA Funding; The radio equipment is expected to ship in early December.

c) **DHFD Auxiliary Report:** Rich Fountain reports;

We had our first breakfast last Saturday and we served 100 more than we do in October. We purchased 10 new tables. The most of the funds came from table & chair donations, so it didn't cost the auxiliary much. It was brought to our attention that somebody said free tables from the fire department so we're being inundated with calls. The auxiliary has decided not to provide tables and chairs to the public any longer. Depending when the engine arrives, we would like to have the grand opening at the January Breakfast.

7. **New Business:**

- a.) **Discussion and possible action re: Approval of monthly Financial Report.** Administrative Specialist Harrison states that the Grant Savings Account is \$14,072.01, Payroll Account \$26,088.92, Petty Cash \$100.00, Special Revenue Checking Account \$26,376.71, Special Revenue Savings Account \$187,774.92, Warrant Account \$481,990.69, with a total balance of \$736,403.25. Motioned by Board Member Schafer to approve to accept the financial report as presented, seconded by Board Member Wilson, all in favor.
- b.) **Discussion and possible action re: Purchase of Extrication Equipment:** BC Bunn reports: It was our goal to get all new equipment for the new engine. Every time we took an engine out of service the guys spent a couple of hours swapping equipment. BC Bunn introduces Captain Erickson; he will explain the equipment and why we should buy this equipment.

Captain Erickson reports: The future is electric tools. Currently we do have a full complement of extrication equipment. All of our extrication tools are expired, they still work, still do what they are supposed to do for the most part but due to these high-end alloy steel they're just not cutting thru like they used to. Our old tools are combustion engine hydraulics, that means they have a power unit combustion motor that pumps hydraulic fluids through hoses going to the tool. The problem with that is setup time, they are heavy & bulky and they are inefficient for today's high alloy steels. They also leak and they need maintained regularly. Our current equipment is 23 years old. BC Bunn tasked me with the assignment of bringing in vendors to test equipment, we brought in Holmatro, TNT, Genesis, the only one we didn't get was Amkus. After looking at their stats, their weight to power ratio was't there. All the tools were amazing but it comes down to price and what the guys like. At the end of the day Hurst won my heart. I put into the packet a quote from MES. If approved we're getting a cutter with mount, a spreader with mount, and a ram with mount, also an auxiliary charging cord. It includes six (6) batteries. We're also looking at purchasing an 18" PPV, which is a positive pressure ventilation fan. The PPV utilizes the Hurst

battery. BM Roger asked the Chiefs is this something they want to spend the budget on. BC Stanec state as long as him and BC Bunn has been in office this has been on their list to get accomplished. Board Member Beltran motioned to approve the purchase of the extrication Equipment as presented, seconded by Board Member Wilson, all in favor.

## 8. Old Business

- a.) JPA update: BC Stanec stated there is not really anything more to report. I did invite Chief McMahan to speak to us on JPA in general and to answer any questions.

Chief McMahan gave us a timeline of his career in the fire service.

BM Beltran asks how political does it become with the ability to get decisions made and what we need in Lake Havasu? Chief McMahan replied with, that's a double head sword. it's really up to what the collective board wants to do. You can drive it to be very political, which helps to get more from the state level. Or not be political. He states the first 60 to 90 days will be a struggle because each district will be looking out for themselves and not as a whole.

BM Beltran asked how will there be a saving if everyone gets an increase in pay to Bullhead wages? BC Stanec states Chief Moore's goal is for wages to increase to Bullhead wages. Chief McMahan states I feel you look at total cost compensation, because Bullhead City has higher wages but they get less benefits. You take your total personnel costs and you equal that out to an hourly rate. The board will decide what everyone's wages and benefits are and everything is negotiable.

It was asked what was the biggest advantage and what is the biggest disadvantage to being part of a JPA, broken down by labor, management and community? Chief McMahan replies I do not know the laws for a JPA, I am going off of the same concept as the Regional Fire Authority in Washington. The advantage is you have depth. You will have more staff to select from. You will have a lot of diversity and different opinions. Each district will capitalize on what they do best and bring it to the table for the rest. The community will tend to get better service. You will not save any money. Property taxes will not be lowered. Any saves a district incurs will be put back in to the operational side to provide better service. There will be shared services that will be able to each district without cost.

Chief McMahan states we will most likely not have all 9 districts. Some will back out. But I will tell you the ones that joined later regretted not doing it sooner. Because they missed out on the opportunity for savings. What is the savings? We will share reserve equipment, which will reduce costs.

BM Roger remarks if we are part of the JPA our new engine might be the last. Other districts are large than us. Why would we want to relinquish control? Chief McMahan replies; you are buying your own equipment. You are only comingling employees. You are not comingling your assets, fire stations, apparatus and equipment or revenue. We would turn over about 80% of personnel cost. The rest would stay available as it is now. BC Bunn commented; the JPA does not want our equipment, that is not the goal for the JPA. But if our engine were to go down, could we call Bullhead and ask to borrow a reserve engine? Absolutely! BM Schafer asks would we be able to borrow a reserve engine now? BC Bunn replied with there would have to be an IGA between departments.

BM Fountain asks about what happens to the funds from pancake breakfasts? BC Stanec replies; the funds would stay within this district. It is very important that the community events stay the same after the JPA.

BM Roger stated there was a lot of good information presented. I don't feel there's a benefit to blending our wages with everybody. DHFD is probably the strongest financially, with all the new construction. By joining other weaker departments will only dilute us. Chief McMahan replies your staffing model is going to stay the same or increase. We are not robbing from the rich to give to the poor. Your 80% of personnel will remain at 80% and the 20% will remain in your district. Each district will keep their own debts.

BM Beltran asked would we loose employees? Chief McMahan replies with that's up to the JPA. If all 9 districts join, we will have 9 board members on the JPA board. The first thing the board will do is hire a fire chief. In my opinion that should be done by an outside consultant. The fire chief would than come back with what they need to fill staffing levels. Each of the 9 board members would than approve or disapprove.

Chief McMahan's closing remark; I am a huge proponent of regionalization, but it doesn't have to be one person's way. I don't agree on changing each districts name and logos. It's added cost me don't need. There's no reason to change who you are. If you have to change who you are than I would be out. We know tax limitations are coming down the pike. We know fire districts are going to get less money in the future. We have to do something. The savings in a JPA is long term not today.

BM Roger asked labor what they thought after further information? Captain Erickson replied with I am a little less excited. Chief Moore painted a very good picture. But with out the study we won't know. I don't know about wages. I know it's important to the labor side. There is a lot to take in. The labor side want the board to be open minded.

BM Roger asked the same of management: BC Stanec states he is more for it still. I definitely have some reservations. A lot of the concerned is of the unknown and we have to keep an open mind. We just need to see how the survey comes out. I do believe we need to come together for the future. BC Bunn states he will piggy back off of everything BC Stanec said, it is a lot of unknowns. For the operations side I'm pretty much for the JPA for the operational value.

BM Roger asked each board member for a comment;

Board Member Beltran states unless we let the community know but we as a board has to justify this to the community and we need to do the best thing for the fire fighters. I know another level of government is not going to be accepted really easily at the community level.

BM Wilson asked if we have savings in personnel cost would we be able to apply those savings to wages. "Yes" Our cost of living is higher and would want our personnel to have more competitive wages. When the study comes back, we will have a better understanding to the unknown.

BM Schafer comments; until we get the study, we won't have answers to all our questions. I worry about losing our chiefs. I'm more concerned with once our chiefs retire who will be here running our stations. Chief McMahan was very enlightening.

Bm Roger commented the Chief McMahan did sway him more towards the JPA. This is not a battle. We as a board will go with the flow of management and labor. We just want to provide you with some clear thinking.

- b.) Employee Retention Credit: Administrative Specialist reports on the outcome for the ERC. Everything was submitted and they got back to me with in a week. They are unable to move forward due to DHFD being an essential business and a govt. entity. Unfortunately, there are not enough qualifying factors that lead to a quantifiable impact.

**9. Board Member Comments:**

- a) New Business to be considered on future agendas: JPA workshops after survey is completed.
- b) Comments: None

**10. Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn at 10:54 by Board Member Beltran, seconded by Board Member Schafer, all in favor