

Pine-Strawberry Fire District

PINE-STRAWBERRY FIRE BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES November 18, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm

- 1) **Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2) **Roll Call** – Present were Board Clerk Bob Papke - Board Member - Bruce Dow, Board Chairman- Chuck Ackerman, and Member - Mel Palmer. Board Member Dave Burkhart was absent.
- 3) **Presentations** – None
- 4) **Correspondence** – None
- 5) **Call to the Public** –None
- 6) **Approval of Previous Month’s Meeting Minutes**
October, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes –Bruce Dow moved to accept the minutes as written and authorize the Board Chairman to sign them. Mel Palmer seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
- 7) **Financial Report** – Approval of Previous Month’s Finances
September, 2021 Financial Reports - Ben Archer-Clowes of the James Vincent Group was in attendance and he presented the financial report to the board. Melvin Palmer moved to accept the financial statements and authorize the Board Chairman to sign them. Bruce Dow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
- 8) **Fire Chief’s Report**– Including but not limited to:
 - a) **Significant emergency incidents**
 - b) **Other non-emergency Fire District Activity** -
 - As directed in the last PSFD board meeting, staff determined that the original seed funds used to establish the Employee Assistance Fund was in fact \$1,000.00 and not \$2,000.00 as thought and those funds were returned to PSFD general account. The remaining publicly donated funds were transferred to the PSFD Firefighters Association, after they voted to assume responsibility for administering the Employee Assistance Fund using the same criteria for award and consideration. With no remaining funds, the PSFD Employee Assistance Fund account at National Bank of Arizona was closed.
 - Trunk R Treat was hosted October 30th at St. 41. By all accounts everyone involved had a wonderful time, especially the children. Thanks to everyone who helped set it up and to those who helped.

- Tonto National Forest fire crews conducted two burns. One was located on the Southwest boundary of Pine along Hardscrabble road and the other was on the West boundary of Strawberry South of Fossil Creek road and FR 428. Unfortunately, the burns did not carry and consume as many hazardous fuels as hoped.
- Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management conducted burns in camp Lo Mia this week with mixed results. Like the forest burns, the Lo Mia burns did not carry and consume as well as hoped. PSFD personnel and equipment assisted in the efforts. Thank you Captain Joel Brandt for coordinating and representing PSFD in this project.
- The Awards Banquet is scheduled for December 15th at Pinewood Tavern, 6 p.m. Please make sure you sign-up at Station 41 with the number attending by November 27th.
- I wish to thank Board members Bruce Dow and Melvin Palmer for traveling to the San Carlos Apache Tribe to accept our grant award. The Gila County Board of Supervisors officially agreed to pass the funding through the county last Tuesday. The funds have been received and new fire nozzles have been ordered for all of our apparatus. We were also able to order new Blitz-Fire master stream nozzles for each of our structure engines, giving our firefighters a new tool that they have never had before.
- We have final authority to purchase the powered extrication tools awarded in the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. The crews wish to test one more manufacturer's products before selecting and placing our order.
- Captain Paine is working with the vendor to purchase the two new cardiac monitors, bringing all of our cardiac monitors up to the latest standards.
- AZDEQ has informed me that PSFD will be awarded \$4,000 dollars in gas testing equipment. This is not the total amount requested, but it will be helpful.
- Currently no fire restrictions are in place in The Tonto National Forest or the fire district.
- The Fossil creek recreation area is closed due to the Backbone fire and may remain closed until next year.
- The Engine 411 apparatus committee is working with one of the vendors to complete the details of our new specification. Afterwards, it will be sent out to vendors for proposals/bids. We should then be able to know more about pricing and delivery time-frame.
- The policy review committee will meet as soon as practical after Board member Dave Burkhart returns from his vacation December 1st.
- I attended a presentation by Mr. Mark Reader of Stifel, Nicolaus and Company, Inc. concerning restructuring Hellsgate's pension and other debt. The presentation was intriguing

and informative. The following week, Mr. Reader, Ben Archer-Clowes and I had a telephone conversation on the subject of restructuring PSFD's unfunded pension liability as well as bonding possibilities for capital facility needs. The three of us agreed to speak again and possibly have Mr. Reader present to the PSFD fire board on the subjects. This will require giving Mr. Reader some additional financial information from the district, which he will use along with information available from PSPRS so he can make a presentation.

The Fire Marshal's office has reviewed 2 plans, adding 209 square feet of construction and totaling \$50.16 of revenue.

- c) **Progress report on Fire Board directed business activities or projects** –
- d) **Report on emergency call volume from previous month** – responded to 64 calls for service.
- e) **Report on vehicle maintenance from previous month** – \$5,865.99
- f) **Report on training activities from previous month** – No report given.

9) **Other Fire District Related Reports**

- a) District Board Chairman's Report – None
- b) PSPRS Board Report – The Local Board held its required meeting Nov.17, 2021 at 4:00pm
- c) Firefighter's Association Report – None Given
- d) Labor Organization Report – None Given
- e) Fossil Creek Access Report – CLOSED

10) **Old Business**

- a.) Discussion and possible action related to developing a fee schedule. Nothing to report at this time.
- b.) Residential Lock Boxes – The Board will hear an update on this topic. Chief Wisner reported that he is still looking into other district's "hold harmless" agreements. He stated that he will try to bring back final wording on this at next month's meeting.
- c.) Reserve Pay Scale – Chief Wisner presented the Board with a Proposed Reserve Pay scale and break-out for various qualifications. He stated again, that the problem of overtime remains an issue and that if we had a more robust Reserve program, we may be able to curtail some of that expense by filling with qualified Reserves. However, we are having trouble attracting them at minimum wage. The proposed reserve wage scale would give the Chief the ability to offer a little more to part-time employees with the intent of beefing up our Reserve pool.

Mr. Ackerman asked the Chief if there would potentially be some of our full-time employees who would then be making less than the part-time Reserves.

Chief Wisner stated that, yes, there would be, but that he had already had that discussion with those employees, and pointed out that although their hourly pay rate would be less than the Reserves, they should also consider their health and pension benefits as part of their employment package.

The Board agreed that the District needs to offer a higher hourly rate for the part-time Reserves in order to be competitive and Mel Palmer made a motion to accept the proposed Reserve Personnel Pay Scale. Bruce Dow Seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- d.) **End of Year Bonus** – Chief Wisner stated that he had talked to our attorney, Bill Whittington, on the phone and shared that conversation with the Board. Mr. Whittington stated that a de minimis gift of \$250.00 or less would “probably” be ok. He encouraged the idea of an actual gift and was not fond of the idea of a cash bonus.

At the time of the start of the Board meeting, Chief Wisner had received an email response from Mr. Whittington’s office which he read to the Board. Chief Wisner stated that when he had spoken with the attorney, Mr. Whittington agreed to be available by phone if the Board wished to go into Executive Session during the Board meeting and speak with him further about this subject. The Board did not feel it was necessary to engage the attorney at this point. All Board members stated that they felt uncomfortable with the idea of a monetary bonus and based on the facts discussed by all, Chuck Ackerman made a motion that we do not give a year-end bonus to the employees. Bob Papke seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- 11) **New Business** – No new business

- 12) **Future Meeting Date** will be Thursday, December 16, 2021, at 6:00 pm. Items for consideration- Renewal of Mutual Aid Agreement, District fee schedule, Lock Box implementation.

- 13) **Adjournment** –Bob Papke made a motion to adjourn. Bruce Dow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously at 7:40 pm.