

Pine-Strawberry Fire District

PINE-STRAWBERRY FIRE BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES December 15, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm

1) **Pledge of Allegiance**

2) **Roll Call** – Present were Board Clerk - Bob Papke, Member - Bob Bennett. Member - Dave Burkhart, Member - Melvin Palmer, Board Chairman - Chuck Ackerman was absent.

3) **Presentations** - None

4) **Correspondence** – None

5)

6) **Call to the Public** – Several members of the public wished to speak to the Board:

Katie Calderon – wished to thank the Firefighters for all they do and feels they have gotten a very raw deal. As a member of this community, she wants to tell the firefighters how very much she appreciates every one of them.

Marty Speakman – thought that it was a requirement for the Fire Chief to live in District and the one who has been appointed does not. Because Chief Morris is willing to come back and I don't know why he is not brought back as the interim chief until we find a permanent one.

Michael Mattal – Wishes to thank the firefighters as well and appreciates the opportunity to be here. In terms of selection of a Fire Chief, we do have options, we have an interim option (Morris?) I would like to put that forward. Obviously, you've been working on this. It is not easy to find someone who lives in the area. I don't know if that is a requirement, but I think it would be ideal for us to have someone that does reside here.

Phil Paine – 25-year resident of Pine and also a 25-year employee for the District. Captain Paine expressed that he felt Pine Strawberry Fire District has always hired the “Best of the Best”. The reason, in his opinion, is because we have specific criteria and testing. He outlined the hiring criteria for a Firefighter. He outlined the hiring criteria for an Engineer. He outlined the hiring criteria for a Captain. Then he outlined in six steps what he thinks the competitive testing process should include for a PSFD Chief. To appoint a candidate that is unqualified for this position would be unsafe and recklessly irresponsible. Captain Paine feels that we should be looking outside our walls for qualified candidates. Then, from those candidates, choose only the best of the best.

Ron Calderon – I would like to know why there is such procrastination in hiring a new chief. It's been a long time, and this is ridiculous that the Board hasn't done something to hire a new chief. And I know there's a volunteer chief who would like to come back, and I know that there are some qualified people here that would like to run. There's no reason that you, the Board, should not be able to hire a new chief immediately. It's ridiculous not to have a new chief in our office.

Mike Brandt – I'd just like to say, “Thanks, Guys.” I know what it's like getting battered up there.

Roger Miotto – 25-year resident – I've been on a lot of Boards in my lifetime and read a lot of articles about how you “Run” a Board. Members, when they answer or talk to the ‘choir’ out here, that when you start something as an answer and you say, “I feel personally, that that shouldn't be that way.” Well you can't make decisions for 1,700 residents taking it “personally” – you have to think about all of the

residents inside your district. That's what your responsibility is. I'm not telling you how to 'run' your Board, I'm just saying you need to follow all your articles.

7) **Approval of Previous Minutes**

a) **November 17, 2022** – Regular Meeting Minutes – Dave Burkhart made a motion to accept the minutes as written and authorize the Board Clerk to sign them. Melvin Palmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

8) **Financial Report of November 2022, Finances** – Ben Archer-Clowes of the James Vincent Group was in attendance and he presented the financial report to the board. Dave Burkhart made a motion to accept the Financial Reports as presented and authorize the Board Clerk to sign them. Melvin Palmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

9) **Fire Chief's Report**– (Given by Interim/Acting Chief, Joel Brandt) Including but not limited to:

a) **Significant emergency incidents** –

b) **Other non-emergency Fire District Activity**

c) **The Fire Marshal's office** has reviewed 7 plans, adding 6,205 square feet of construction and totaling \$1,354.08 of revenue.

d) **Report on emergency call volume from previous month** – responded to 65 calls for service.

e) **Report on vehicle maintenance from previous month** – Total Vehicle expenses for the month of November were \$ 3,759.01.

f) **Report on training activities from previous month** –197 hours of training reported.

g) **Specific program updates or demonstrations** –

10) **Other Fire District Related Reports**

a) **District Board Chairman's Report** – None

b) **PSPRS Board Report** – The Fire Board Chairman needs to appoint a new Member to the PSPRS Local board to replace Bruce Dow who resigned.

c) **Firefighter's Association Report** – Tommy Cordova said he was reporting on Firefighters Association and Labor Organization together. They have not had a meeting in a couple of months. The staff will be having a meeting on the 20th of December, and we will be discussion and working on the MOU Labor Contract at that time.

d) **Labor Organization Report** – (see item c)

11) **Old Business** –

a) **Discussion/Possible Action on Policy 2.1 Employment Status** – Mel Palmer made a motion to approve Policy 2.1 Employment Status with an effective date of December 30, 2022. Dave Burkhart seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

b) **Discussion and possible action on Recruitment of Fire Chief** - Mr. Burkhart addressed the Board and noted that the recruitment is not something that is done hastily. There are a lot of things to consider. Like whether or not we have qualified internal candidates, if we go external, if we want to go state-wide, whether or not we are going to do the recruitment ourselves or hire an outside agency. It will take months for the position to be filled if we do recruitment. We have some input from our members as well as input from our "Acting" Fire Chief. Mr. Burkhart recommends that we go outside to recruit and that we have a recruitment period. His recommendation is that we start in January and that the recruitment period end by the 30th of March – in which all applications/resumes would have to be turned in.

Mr. Palmer – stated that he thinks we should stipulate that the applicant be an Arizona resident. The last time we did this, we went nation-wide and we received 54 applications. The main reason is that the person should know Arizona fire, he should know the people and the government, the state laws – somebody from out of state would have to learn that. I think we should stick with Arizona residents.

Mr. Papke asked about a situation where someone had Arizona experience but perhaps, they were recently retired and moved out of state.

Mr. Palmer stated that would be up for discussion and that's what the Board is for.

Mr. Papke stated that it is his understanding that we can post this opening several places at no cost to us, such as the Arizona Fire District Association, The Arizona Fire Chief's Association other fire related social media options.

Mr. Palmer inquired about sending out the opening through the Firefighter's Union.

Tommy Cordova responded that he would have to inquire from the State President.

Interim Chief Joel Brandt stated that we are going to do our best to make sure it gets out to as many places as possible.

Mr. Burkhardt made a motion that we do recruit in the State of Arizona for a Fire Chief, that we recruit ourselves by posting it in the different magazines and organizations that we can present it into, that we establish a cut-off date of the 30th of March for all applications and resumes to be submitted in.

Mel Palmer seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Burkhardt stated that if this goes through, we will have to look at the postings that we currently have because we only have another week or two before January, I know AFDA has their conference on the 11th of January, so we need to have that over there, so we need to finish up talking about what we want on the posting at this point in time.

Mr. Papke suggested we see if that is what the Board wishes to do at this time and then we can discuss the posting. Mr. Papke stated that we have a motion, we have a second, that we post as soon as we can in January, closing the applications and resumes by March 30th, and that the recruitment go only to the state of Arizona at this point. And that we handle the recruitment ourselves.

Mr. Papke called for the vote – it passed unanimously.

The specifics with regard to the posting, is there input on that?

Mr. Burkhardt stated that we have a couple of examples. One is five pages, and the other one is a one-page posting. The only change Mr. Burkhardt would like to see is the fact that it says "Managing a Fire Department budget, and he would like to see that changed to District. Fire Districts have unique budgeting systems we have to do and unique reporting systems that we have to do. Most of the other stuff sounds pretty good, except we should add the closing date.

Mr. Palmer thinks we should also add the "Arizona Residency – or time served in Arizona."

Mr. Papke thinks that on an initial posting we should keep it brief, but that we could add the Arizona residency on it.

A great deal of time was spent on the discussion of "Arizona residency" – if it should be stipulated, how it should be worded, etc.

Mr. Burkhardt stated that he talked with Timber Mesa and was told that they spent \$10,000 to do a recruitment.

Captain Pain responded from the audience, "Worth the investment! Completely worth the investment for a third party."

Mr. Burkhardt continued that they got 5 candidates. 2 from outside, 3 from inside and they ended up hiring from within. So that District spent all that money to hire somebody that they already had. We are tight on our budget, so by posting it ourselves and getting the applications through those organizations, we should be fine.

Mr. Papke pointed out that if one of the qualifications is that the candidate be a certified Arizona Firefighter, that would address the issue.

Mr. Burkhardt made a motion that we use this Pine Strawberry Fire District application for Position of Fire Chief, with the following changes: where it talks about the Candidate will have experience in developing and managing in : Then put "Arizona Fire District Budget" and down at the bottom it

should say “District Budget” and then also at the bottom where it says, “If interested, submit your letter” and you will receive a full information packet and the request for a resume and application packet will have to be submitted in no later than, March 30, 2023.”

Mr. Papke – “Could we simplify the motion then to be a motion to adopt the announcement as edited?”

Mr. Burkhart – “Correct”

Captain Paine – “May I ask a question?”

Office Manager Carmen Wailes reminded the Board that they have a motion on the floor. They need to have a “Second” and THEN open it up for discussion.

Bob Bennet seconded the motion.

Mr. Palmer pointed out that if you limit it to “District” then you eliminate anyone that has worked in cities. That is a concern.

Mr. Papke pointed out that he didn’t believe that Chief Morris had worked in a “District” before coming here.

Mr. Burkhart clarified that we leave it as “Fire Department Budget.”

Captain Paine addressed the Board asking, “Understanding that this is simply a job announcement, but that there are some qualifications within this job announcement, at some point, are the concerns of the community, which I heard here tonight, the residency requirement, the experience of a chief officer, the educational requirements for Fire Chief, are those going to be addressed at some point?”

Mr. Burkhart responded that once we have received applications, we take the job description that has been developed, and we will look at that application to see if they meet the requirements, we will have minimal requirements listed, then it has additional, we can give points for each of those, we review that when you’re reviewing the applications coming in.

Captain Paine asked the Board to keep in mind that for the last three hiring processes those three requirements were high on the list. “Residency within the community, Educational Background – Bachelor’s degree or higher, and then five years’ experience at the Chief level or above.”

Board Member Burkhart stated that we have not recruited for a chief for quite a while. The last time was when Chief Morris said he was retiring. There was nothing in the application that we put in that a Pine residency was required. That was something that was discussed during the interview.

There was some discussion between the Board members and those in the audience about which past chiefs had what degrees- or lack thereof.

Mr. Papke reminded the Board that the motion on the floor was to adopt the job announcement as edited.

Mr. Burkhart re-stated that we will take out the “District” and just leave it as the Department budget, we will add that the application and the resume will have to be submitted to the Fire District no later than March 30, 2023.

Bob Bennet seconded the motion again with the editing changes and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Papke addressed Resident Ron Calderon in the audience stating that we have gone past the “Call to the Public, but that in the spirit of fairness, since Captain Paine was allowed to speak he wanted to give Mr. Calderon a chance to speak.

Pine resident, Mr. Ron Calderon stated that it was his understanding that Chief Gary Morris is willing to come back, he was a good Chief in the past and he doesn’t know why we haven’t thought about him when he would be willing to come back, as your Chief, until another Chief is – I know there’s two gentlemen in this Fire Department who would like to be Chiefs, and if they got their experience, Morris would be here just in time for them to have the experience for them to take over as Chief. You got a good Chief who is willing to come back.”

12) New Business – No new Business

13) **Future Regular Board Meeting Date** – January 19th at 6:00 pm

Items for discussion –Select Board Chairman and clerk for the coming year, Select PSPRS local board chair, Job description and contract drafts for Fire Chief.

14) **Adjournment:**

Bob Bennett made a motion to adjourn. Dave Burkhart seconded the motion and it passed unanimously at 6:57 pm.

cw