

Pine-Strawberry Fire District

PINE-STRAWBERRY FIRE BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES January 27, 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 - Bruce Dow, Board Chairman - Chuck Ackerman, Member - Mel Palmer, and Member - Dave Burkhart.

3) **Presentations** –

a) **Presentation on the AFDA Conference** by Board Member Dave Burkhart.

Board Member Burkhart reported on the January, 2022 AZ Fire District Association (AFDA) Conference which was held in Tucson this year. Mr. Burkhart felt it was a good conference although more lightly attended than those in the past, also stating that there were fewer session options. Of particular interest to him, were the sessions on refinancing of the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System unfunded liabilities, Grants, and Fire District bonds. He strongly encourages as many Board members as possible to attend in order to meet with other District's members, Board Members, Chiefs, and also to see the vendors and what they have to offer.

b) **Presentation on HCR2004: FIRE DISTRICTS; FUNDING; TPT INCREMENT** by Board Member Dave Burkhart. Mr. Burkhart presented on efforts in the Legislature to enact a .001% sales tax, statewide, to assist in the funding of Fire Districts. This could potentially increase revenue to districts by as much as 60% and spread the burden across the state including those who do not live in a district but travel through, visit, or recreate in districts and utilize the service of districts. There is a concurrent effort to gather signatures to place an initiative on the ballot for this purpose should the legislature not do so. Petition forms were distributed.

4) **Correspondence** –

Arizona Department of Health Services letter regarding the application for Ambulance rate increase. PSFD and several other applicant districts received a letter from AzDHS requesting additional information in support of rate increase applications. (The James Vincent Group will reply on the District's behalf.)

Letters from Linda & Manuel Cunha congratulating Captain Billy Chester on his nomination from the Elks Lodge for Fireman of the Year.

This family also wished to thank the crews for their expert care and friendship over the years to their mom, Lelah Jones, who recently passed away.

5) **Call to the Public** –None

- 6) **Approval of Previous Month's Meeting Minutes** - December, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes – Dave Burkhart moved to accept the minutes as written and authorize the Board Clerk to sign them. Mel Palmer seconded and the motion and it passed unanimously.

- 7) **Approval of January 14, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes** – Dave Burkhart made a motion to accept the minutes as written and authorize the Board Clerk to sign them. Bruce Dow seconded the motion and it passed with three ayes. Chuck Ackerman and Mel Palmer abstained.

- 8) **Financial Report** – Approval of Previous Month's Finances - December, 2021 Financial Reports - Ben Archer-Clowes of the James Vincent Group was in attendance and he presented the financial report to the board. Dave Burkhart moved to accept the financial statements and authorize the Board Clerk to sign them. Mel Palmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- 9) **Annual Audit Report of fiscal year 2021** – Brian Richards of BDR Richards, CPA presented the audit report. Mr. Richards said that there were no Misstatements found. He reported that the PSPRS obligation currently is approximately 50 % funded. He stated the Pine Strawberry Fire District controls look to be “ok.” He further stated that he likes the fact that we have an outside financial management team - the James Vincent Group.
The audit report ends by stating “In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Pine Strawberry Fire District, as of June 30, 2021, and respective changes in financial position for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.”
Dave Burkhart made a motion to accept the audit report as presented. Bruce Dow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- 10) **Fire Chief's Report**– Including but not limited to:
 - a) **Significant emergency incidents** – There was a chimney (structure) fire in Strawberry, same (snowy) day – a vehicle collision, and 2 illness calls.
In January a structure fire on Ute in Pine, 3 dogs perished.
 - b) **Other non-emergency Fire District Activity** -
The Fire Marshal's office has reviewed 10 plans, adding 14,324 square feet of construction and totaling \$2,921.64 of revenue.
 - c) **Progress report on Fire Board directed business activities or projects** –
Grant funded extrication equipment testing is completed. Holmatro equipment was selected and is expected to arrive in March.
Grant funded heart monitors are expected in approximately 60 days.
AzDEQ grant gas detection equipment has not yet been received.

- d) **Report on emergency call volume from previous month** – responded to 56 calls for service.
- e) **Report on vehicle maintenance from previous month** – \$1,500.32
Engine 421 is out of service.
- f) **Report on training activities from previous month** – No report given.
- g) **Specific program updates or demonstrations** – Chief Wisner has applied for a grant from the Yavapai Apache Nation for a Search & Rescue drone.

11) **Other Fire District Related Reports**

- a) District Board Chairman’s Report – None
- b) PSPRS Board Report – None
- c) Firefighter’s Association Report – Tommy Cordova reported that the Holiday Adopt-a-family raised a total of \$800.00. \$200.00 was spent on food and the remainder was spent on toys and clothing for the family. They were presented with these items on December 23rd. Funds for this project have come from donations as well as money gifts from the Association members.
- d) Labor Organization Report – Tommy Cordova reported that they are working with the state union reps to promote the sales tax initiative to aid Fire Districts.
- e) Fossil Creek Access Report – Fossil Creek remains closed.

12) **Old Business**

- a.) Discussion and possible action related to developing a fee schedule. Chief Wisner has not had an opportunity to work on this as yet. Bob Papke made a motion to table this until an unspecified future date. Bruce Dow seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

13) **New Business –**

- a) **Gila County Fire District’s Mutual Aid Agreement** – The current Mutual Aid Agreement is expired. There is already a new agreement that has been signed by Payson and a few of the other fire Districts. It has substantially the same language as the previous agreement. PSFD attorney, Bill Whittington, added some HIPAA language, but stated that the agreement is within PSFD power and is correct as to form. This language does not appear in the agreement already signed by the other Districts. Mel Palmer made a motion to authorize the Board Chair to sign the agreement that has already been signed by the other participants. Chuck Ackerman seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
- b) **Purchase order consideration for the new fire pumper.** The Chief will report on the specifications and pricing quote for a new fire pumper (engine).

The “Intent to Purchase” letter was sent to H&E Equipment Services after the Special Board meeting of January 14, 2022. H&E of Phoenix bid the Sourcewell (co-operative purchasing group) price on the E-1 Typhoon 4x4 780 gallon/1500 GPM pumper with specifications developed by the PSFD E-411 replacement committee. The price is \$874,824.77 including \$66,922.77 City of Phoenix sales tax. There was a lengthy discussion on purchasing at this price without PSFD conducting a competitive bid process as required by ARS 41-2532. Information from Ben Archer-Clowes of the James Vincent Group was that co-operative

purchasing groups, which are allowed by ARS 41-2632, generally do the competitive bidding among qualified vendors to set their price. In essence, they are doing the bidding process for all members of the group, but he could not specifically address Sourcewell's process. He said that there are other co-operative purchasing groups operating in Arizona. General discussion of the Board was to have staff research the Sourcewell process and other co-operative purchasing groups.

Discussion turned to the merits of the E-1 Typhoon being the only manufacturer to meet our District's specifications. Engineer Shane Johnson, our vehicle manager, stated that the current E-411 is 22 years old and has served with minimum maintenance problems. E-421, however, 16 years old and by another manufacturer has had several maintenance issues and is currently out of service. Shane stated that the E-1 is the only manufacturer offering a hydro formed aluminum cab, and is the most highly rated in crash testing. Board member Robert Papke asked him to get specifics on cab safety as a highly desirable quality that may disqualify other manufacturers. E-1 also has a highly rated hydro formed steel chassis.

As our "Intent to Contract" letter has no stated expiration date, the Board directed staff to return with information on 1) other co-operative purchasing groups operating in Arizona, and 2) factors such as cab safety, which might indicate that the E-1 Typhoon is the only equipment to meet our needs and specifications and could qualify as sole source. No action taken.

- c) **Staff directives concerning PTO usage for COVID 19 related quarantine/isolation** – The Health & Safety Officer, Labor representative, and the Chief will present and make recommendations on the use of PTO for COVID 19 related quarantine/isolation.

Firefighter Association representative Tommy Cordova presented a prepared statement requesting that PSFD provide time off of work without charging employees PTO accounts for CDC Mandated quarantine following a documented work exposure to COVID 19.

After the Families First COVID Response Act, with extensions expired, Chief Wisner directed the use of PTO for COVID quarantine and/or recovery as of January 4, 2022.

Health and Safety Officer Billy Chester provided information that PSFD has experienced 14 cases of COVID among 12 employees in 2 years in two separate spikes. Six cases during the winter/holiday season of 2020-2021, and eight during the winter/holiday season of 2021-2022 with no cases between the two spikes. Recognizing that exposure may not be work related there are currently 4 open workman compensation claims for documented work related exposure. Captains have the authority to preclude an employee from working if unfit for duty, including display of COVID symptoms or know exposure. Known exposures are REQUIRED by current CDC guidelines to quarantine for five days then may return to work with a negative rapid test result, masking or other safety measures may be required. All reports of work related exposure are reported through the employee's supervisor and reviewed by the Health and Safety Officer before submission to the workman's compensation carrier. Current PSFD policy Wages and Benefits 3.1.1 specifies that employees with any work related illness (not specifically Covid) submit a workman's claim and will be paid by the District without charging PTO time if insurance time requirements are met and compensation to the employee is made for time missed the employee will endorse that check back to the District as reimbursement.

Discussion by Chief Wisner and Member Burkhart regarding practices at other Districts and Departments was that many but not all require quarantining employees use PTO.

The specific request from employees and the Health and Safety Officer is that the practice currently described in PSFD policy for employees with a documented work related COVID exposure, who submit a workers compensation claim continue to be paid by PSFD at their full rate during CDC REQUIRED quarantine without charge to the employees PTO account, but that if workers compensation pays compensation to the employee for time missed, that that compensation must be reimbursed to the District. If there are no CDC mandates requiring quarantine, then symptoms, fitness, and current PSFD policy will dictate the use of PTO for illnesses.

Dave Burkhart made a motion that as long as the CDC mandate is in effect regarding quarantine of COVID 19 virus, employees infected with COVID 19 reported as work related, will be covered without the use of their PTO (Paid Time Off) retroactive to December 29, 2021 and to be revisited at the April 2022, regular Board meeting.

Mel Palmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- 14) **Future Meeting Date** will be Thursday, February 17, 2022, at 6:00 pm. Items for consideration- E-411 replacement, Mutual Aid Agreement, COVID 19 quarantine leave status – cost and effectiveness to be reviewed in April.
Special Meeting scheduled for February 7th at 2:00 pm. Presentations by vendors/PSPRS on refinancing unfunded liability.
- 13) **Adjournment** –Bob Papke made a motion to adjourn. Chuck Ackerman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously at 9:48 pm.