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Pine-Strawberry Fire District

PINE-STRAWBERRY FIRE BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
December 30, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.

1) **Pledge of Allegiance**

2) **Invocation –** Marilyn Bennett

3) **Roll Call** – Present were Interim Board Chairman - Bob Papke, Member - Bob Bennett, Member - Dave Burkhart, and Member - Melvin Palmer. Board Chairman - Chuck Ackerman was absent.
4) **Old Business –** Discussion and possible action on hiring a full-time Fire Chief.

Interim Board Chairman Bob Papke stated that the Board still needed to decide on the direction they will take for this hiring process. There are several options available to the Board including Appointing a Chief, Recruiting a Chief, Hiring an Interim Chief, or even contracting with another Fire District for shared services of a Fire Chief. There was much discussion regarding the option of shared services.

Current Interim Fire Chief Paul Voakes explained that the overtime it is costing the District to cover his position as Captain is significant, and that it is his intent to return to that position as soon as possible. He reluctantly agreed to continue in his current position as Interim Fire Chief until the end of March.

The Board discussed the possibility of hiring an Interim Chief for a period of 6 months to determine if that would be a good fit for both the new Chief and the District. After much discussion, Member Dave Burkhart made a motion that the Board hire an Interim Chief (to be determined) for a period of time that would end no later than June 30, 2026. Member Mel Palmer seconded the motion. After clarification from Interim Chief Voakes that he would remain in his position through the end of March 2026, the vote passed unanimously.

Chief Stoltenberg of Tonto Basin Fire District was in attendance, along with his Board Chairman, John France. Chief Stoltenberg clarified that Tonto Basin Fire District Board had not yet discussed or endorsed a Shared Services Agreement. The only way he could accept an Interim Chief Job offer would be if the two districts entered into an IGA with TBFD being the employer and PSFD contracting for Fire Chief services.

John France, Chairman of the TBFD Board addressed the Board to the effect that, although he was aware of the potential for a Shared Services Agreement, it had not been discussed by their Board, and he could not guarantee the direction any discussion would take. He did say that Chief Stoltenberg could present the issue to the Board at their next meeting, the third Thursday in January.

No further action toward hiring was taken at this time, pending possible discussion with TBFD as to whether a Shared Services Agreement is a viable option for an interim or permanent hire. Consensus was that should TBFD wish to pursue an IGA, PSFD would join them in discussion.

Chief Stoltenberg then gave a brief presentation of the nature of a Shared Services Agreement, including that some agencies (Verde Valley) are currently using such agreements, and that others are seeking to do so. He stressed that the only thing "shared" would be Fire Chief Services, and that all involved districts would retain responsibility for administration, budget, and identity.

The Board will await input from the TBFD Board, and Interim Chief Voakes will continue in his position for the time being.

5) **Future Meeting Agenda Items and Next Meeting Date –** No future Special Board Meeting date planned at this time. Next Regular Board Meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2026, at 3:00 pm.

6) **Adjournment –** Dave Burkhart made a motion to adjorn. Mel Palmer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously at 6:53 pm.

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