

**Minutes to the regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District  
September 17, 2012  
6:00 p.m.**

**Call to order:** the meeting was recorded

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call of Board Members:** Present; Izzo, Bianchi & Pfitzenmaier. Absent; Tomlinson and Ruppel.

**Approval of the minutes** of the Aug 20, 2012 meeting: Motion Pfitzenmaier, seconded by Bianchi.

**Old Business -**

**Chief's Report -**

Our biggest event was with the Santa Cruz County Fire Chief Association. We're working on a new wildland deployment. The State wants to do a draw down so they divided the state into 3 regions; northern, central, and southern. We're in the southern. They want the fire districts to get together and break themselves into 5-9 departments and those break downs will have duty officers. Then what we'll do is if it is in the 5 Santa Cruz County departments you'll have Tubac on top say Sonoita second and when an order comes in for a Type 6 and Tubac takes it, they drop to the bottom and Sonoita moves up. If you don't have a piece of apparatus, like we don't have a Type 3 engine and that's the request we aren't penalized. It will just drop to the next department say Rio Rico. They will take the assignment and drop to the bottom and Sonoita will stay at the top until we have a piece of apparatus we can get out. They are trying to make it fairer so everyone has a chance to go out. These are extended stay assignments – in state or out of state. These are not initial attack assignments. Initial attack will still remain closest available units. So that is where we're at with that. We're actually looking at the 5 Santa Cruz County departments, Green Valley, Corona de Tucson, and Rincon Valley has asked that we all talk together as a group and see what we come up with. One of the other things I'm pushing and would like to see is us not only working with apparatus, but also personnel. Tubac happens to have 5 crew bosses, Sonoita has one, and Rio Rico has one. I want to be able to trade out engine bosses so if I have a Type 6 ready to go out, I'll be able to take an engine boss from Tubac and move them onto our apparatus getting our people trained and develop more engine bosses. This is ultimately the best for all departments to have and for the protection of the state. So, we're making headway with that. There is a little bit of resistance. But when you explain it as it really is the best for the fire fighting capability of the state, I think that we'll go along ways with this new system.

As all of you know I wasn't here at the last board meeting because I was back in Virginia with FEMA. It was a long week. It was a very interesting week. I learned a lot about grant writing and needs of other departments. There are a lot of needy fire departments throughout our country. The process is we all evaluated anywhere from 7-10 grants a day. We worked 7am to 7pm. There were 300 of us. The process is you write a grant and then it goes to a computerized process. This basically makes sure you hit all the word points and didn't leave something blank. If you did, it kicked you out. You weren't moved to the next level. The next process was the peer review which is what we did. We sat at a table reading these grants. Then we recommended which moved on to another peer review. This consisted of only 24 people. They are all FEMA employees. What they do is call the grant recipients and ask if they still want to take the grant and are they able to take the grant. It was a good process. It was a lot of learning there. Part of what we learned is how the states work with financial needs and budgeting and how the budgeting works into whether you are eligible for a grant or more eligible than other departments. It is truly looking for a need. Departments that are financially strapped, communities that are financially strapped is what they are pushing for right now. If communities have a way to financially help buy a piece of apparatus and get some grant money for it, you had a better chance of getting it. If the community is not helping themselves get apparatus or whatever you are applying for, then you had less of a chance of receiving that grant.

Izzo – really?

Pfitzenmaier – Chief in what you just said in the few minutes to me is very important. I reflect back and we talked about this earlier in the month and it was a surprise to me. I wasn't aware of how this worked. A fire district will be favored for a grant that has a higher tax rate than one that has a lower tax rate. The understanding being or belief being that there is a greater need for additional support in the district with the higher tax rate. I think I've got that right. Is that?

Chief – Well, yes it is kind of right

Pfitzenmaier – If that is right that is really a problem

Chief – not necessarily because it is a need. Now if you have a higher tax rate and you have a huge savings account, no you're not going to get the grant because you have to state that saving account. So, if you have a district that just raises taxes to put the money aside for a rainy day and saved up a lot of money.. there are districts in Arizona that have over \$1,000,000.00 in a savings account. So, no they're not going to just because they are sitting at \$3.25. They're not going to be anymore eligible than us where we're down on the low side of our tax rate and we don't have any savings at all. So, they'll look at that and say; well if you come up with your tax rate a little you could afford part or all of this apparatus.

Pfitzenmaier – So, the grant writers or grant grantors have visibility into the finer details of the district budget?

Chief – We have to submit 4 years of our budget. So, they look at the history of your budget over a 4 year period. And then we look at individual state laws. I learned in NM when I took a vacation there about a year ago and visited numerous small departments. They had nice buildings and a lot of nice apparatus and they operate off a \$18,000 to \$25,000 budget. I'm like well how on earth do you do that? I sat down with several chiefs and what happens is the state of NM, as a state, buys most of the apparatus, SCBA's, and turnouts. So, they will buy Albuquerque a new engine and in 5 years Albuquerque will send that down to one of the volunteer departments and get another new engine. So, all the departments, depending on your call load and population are getting engines replaced on a regular basis. So, they don't have to buy any major apparatus, SCBA's, turnouts and things like that. Their moneys are totally for the volunteer fire department is for their day to day operations. So, there is a difference in how each state functions. So, they do look at that and talk about whichever state you're reviewing happens to function.

Pfitzenmaier – Okay, well my main concern is that our reward for maintaining a tax rate which is well on the low side of average in AZ is no grants?

Chief- Well, grants become more challenging. I wouldn't say no grants. We've been , as I displayed last week on the screen, fairly successful in writing grants and receiving grants. Actually, to the tune, over the last 8 years, I believe was \$875,000.00 which comes out to about \$109,375.00 annually for the past 8 years. So, we've been fairly successful.

Pfitzenmaier – So, we're going to have a hole in this coming budget year for a grant that expires.

Chief- expires this year, yes.

Pfitzenmaier – significant grant

Chief – yes. It also takes into effect your call load and we only run 600 calls a year. The population you serve, so all that is taken into calculations on figuring out what grants get awarded and to where. But it could look as if we're being good stewards of our money, but yet we're getting penalized in some ways.

Bianchi – Chief, were these practiced grants or were these actual grants you were working with?

Chief, No, these were actual grants. They were the awards for 2012.

Jerry – Okay, what general classifications do they fall in – personnel? Equipment?

Chief – You have apparatus, personnel, fire prevention and PPE, our protective gear which includes turnouts, SCBAs

Bianchi – Anything for structures?

Chief – what do you mean “for structures”?

Bianchi – Buildings

Chief – No. FEMA has no brick and mortar grants. They have to remodel a station, but no building a completely new station. There was a grant this past year for some extra money FEMA had for the building of a station. But then again, with running 600 calls and a population of 3,000, we're really out of the running for something like that with most of the departments that are running for it. Most of the grants around the country are condensed towards the Midwest where you have a lot more population and a lot more fire

departments. Some of these guys have 5 stations and they cover 8 square miles. When you start looking at it back East, it's small and the mutual aid is within 5 minutes. Another thing FEMA is looking at is like the ladder truck. They are trying to stop every department from having a ladder truck. When you have a mutual aid department 5 minutes away, there is no need for that mutual aid department to have a ladder truck. And then they classify it if you have so many buildings over 3 stories then you can apply for a ladder truck. There are departments in Arizona that have a ladder truck and they don't have any two story buildings.

(Story on hotel fire)

**Septic System:** We had a problem and had to re-file the paperwork. The state wants us to in a 1000 gallon grease receptor tank because of our breakfast and yearly banquet for the volunteers. We don't want to do this. We don't want to take on the extras cost of it. I want to make the Board aware of that. I'm not sure if they're going to waive it or not. The other problem is we don't have room to put this tank in. My recommendation to the Board is if the state insists on this, we consider ending our breakfasts and use of the kitchen as a commercial kitchen. It may come up I the next few weeks. The state may say, after our rebuttal, okay we'll let you do it. We don't know yet. We are at their mercy

Izzo – what might the cost be?

Kevin – Will the live with an under the counter grease interceptor?

Izzo – No the 1000 gallon one

Kevin – We'd re-pipe the kitchen sink and dish washer not the whole system. So, dig up the slab inside the building, grab the pipes before they went into the main system and reroute a pipe from outside the system to go through the grease receptor and then through the septic tank. So we're talking several thousands of dollars.

Chief – The other issue is with the leech field we planned out. We don't have the space for this tank. So, we either have to extend or come up with a new design which would be another expense.

Jerry – What are we looking at for a time table Chief? Where are we at?

Chief- We're at the states mercy. Until they give us the permit, we can't do a thing. Our contractor states that within 60 days they can get into the ground, but we can't move until we get that permit. And as this extends, we're going to have to ask our contractors for a rebid, hopefully a decrease, not an increase.

Pfitzenmaier – So, we're just waiting to get a waiver?

Kevin – We stood firm and said no we aren't going to put in a grease receptor for 6 breakfasts a year.

Pfitzenmaier – So, it is up to them to call us?

Kevin – Yes, we have given them everything else they requested, information on how we came up with our populous load and all the things the engineer and I put together for the project. This is the one thing that we said absolutely not. We don't have the funds for it. It is ridiculous to ask for it and you need to work with us on it. That is where we stand.

Pfitzenmaier – I'm looking for who is kicking the can next. Can we call? Get them to call us?

Kevin – They have so many days from the initial, but I don't know how many for the resubmittal to answer you.

Pfitzenmaier – There is a statutory requirement there?

Kevin – Yes, but I don't know if it is the same for a resubmittal as for an initial submittal. They have 75-90 days for an initial submittal, but I can call my engineer in the morning and ask him if he can give me that information.

Pfitzenmaier – I think we should do that and try to learn if they have that requirement. Circle the day on the calendar and if they don't call – we have to do something and figure out what we have to do next.

Izzo – For those of you who haven't been following this....our septic system has failed and the ground here doesn't perk. So, we can't use the traditional sewage treatment system. Kevin has retained an engineer who is helping us find a system and helping us deal with the state. As you can see, this is just the latest in a whole maze of delays. The current tank has to be pumped on a regular basis. That is how we are getting by – paying a company to come out and do this.

Chief – As well as an outhouse outside that one of our volunteers donated to use and cleaning of until we get it fixed.

**Website:** 401 hits in Aug

**Calls:** 55 runs – 39 daytime; 16 night; 20 simultaneous - A lot of calls this past month were just booked in one day where we had 4 or 5 calls within a matter of a hours of each other.

2 MVC 35 Medical 8 WF – WF increased even though we were in the green – parts of the district has had a lot of rain, Canelo with 22”, but the northern side of our district had only a couple of inches. So, we’re still pretty brown in some areas and pretty lush in others.

PA 8 SF 0 VF 0

Out of 55 runs no helio transports

19 ambulance in district ; 6 out of district

10 patient refusals; 5 walk ins

Year to date: 331 runs

23 helio; 108 ambulance in district; 67 out of district

Jerry – I’m able to understand the lack of fires, but why is there a lack of medical runs?

Chief – That is state wide right now. All the counties – Cochise, Santa Cruz, and Pima fire chiefs say the departments are low right now on runs. People are taking better care of themselves? Our prevention programs are really working. That’s what I like to think. Our prevention program is just wonderful.

There is no rhyme or reason for it. Over the history, we go back to 1996 on our stats, and you see this. That some years have a high call load and then it will drop for a year or so and then spike back up. We have even tried to match months so you can look at manpower. Say, on these months you can increase and these months you can decrease, but you can’t even pick a month where it’s steady. It’s all over the board on ours and we follow it by the month.

Jerry – So, Aug is not a typically low month?

Chief – No actually, we’re above last month. I believe it was 35-38 calls. So we’re up from last month, but down for the year.

Kevin – Again, this is simultaneous calls if you look. 20 in one month is a pretty high number and it brought our year to date up to 89. The Sat morning of the fair set – up, we were trying to set up for the fair and we had 2 medical and a propane leak within a 2 hour period which took both our ambulances out of the area on transports. This left us real tight on personnel. It continues to be an issue.

**Audit** – Right on track with everything. We said that it will be completed around the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. I sent an email off this morning for a status. I have not received an answer back. I’m hoping that by the end of this week we’ll have everything in and it will be completed per our agreement with the audit company.

**? program:** This is a new program that we have started, actually an addition to a program we have going on. About 3 years ago, we started working with an on-line training company that goes from myself to the BC to engine companies. What he does is live broadcasts. You can sit in and learn from other fire departments around. He hits on topics that are going around the country for our industry. We enrolled 5 of our personnel: 3 captains & 2 individuals that are interested in promoting up some day. It is a 10 month program and in this first month we hit on the leadership for the middle of the fire service. It is an hour long session they sit through. There are tests and worksheets they do throughout the month. In October we’ll hit on the topic of “What it means to be a professional in the fire service”. In November it is “motivating people on the line”. This is going to be a real big boost to not only our morale, but the education to the leaders below us. And as we get to November, I’ll add on the slides to keep you up-dated on the topics they’ll be training on in those months. They will get a certificate at the end stating that they completed the National Officer Academy.

**Ready Set Go** We are always marketing Fire Wise and the latest program in the Nation is Ready Set Go. I told you several months ago that we were getting in the Ready then we got a 200 acre wildland fire. So last month we got back to the Ready trying to get people to prep their properties and get their defensible space up. It is an on-going program. We worked this at the fair last weekend. Again, I meet with the Rotary and Forum throughout the year and discuss this as well.

**Financial** Balance and Financial statements for the month presented by Chief. No surprises or unexpected expenses. District is on target for income and expenses. We are still receiving some tax moneys from Santa Cruz Co and the ambulance money is coming in monthly. We will start showing a loss here because we have no big income coming in. We won’t see the majority of our income until Dec/Jan then we’ll start seeing this reverse the other way.

**Position** – Posted the Captain position. Testing done 9/10. The test was a written test with 50 questions, in-basket tasks of 16 e mails to prioritize – giving them to the Chief, BC, or deal with them with your crew. They had to teach a class on spinal immobilization. They had to do a consulting session with a fire fighter that was free-lancing around the station and scenes. We looked at the consult and how they handled that situation. They also did 2 incident command scenarios. They had to IC a wildfire and medical call. To top it off, they had an oral board with 7 questions and 3 assessors. To help us get this done we had Fry Fire, Whetstone, Corona de Tucson, AirEvac, and a civilian from the community. It went from 7 am to 5 pm with 3 candidates; FF/EMT Jackson, FF/EMT Kelly, and FF/CEP Ochoa who are all from within the department. The decision to attempt to hire internally if we had good candidates before going to outside applicants. Jacks and Kelly are full-time firefighters and Ochoa is a volunteer. All they needed was certifications to apply for the captain position. This is the first time we've done this and we learned a lot. I've done several assessment centers around the state for Captain, BC and Chief positions. Actually, Sept 26 & 27<sup>th</sup> I'll be in Tucson to do the assessment center for Rincon Valley Fire Chief along with Rio Rico and Golder Ranch Chief. Our candidates were very pleased with it and learned a lot about themselves and our growing points. We did consul each individual after the assessment center was done. By our HR policy we have 96 hours to choose our candidate and within that meet with the individuals and told them their strengths and weaknesses. We are helping them develop a program to build on their weaknesses. FF Jackson, who joined us in 2006, will take the captain position on October 29, 2012. The next was FF Kelly, we have given her the opportunity to be acting captain. So, if any of our captains were on vacation or out on wildfire assessment, she could fill in as captain for the duration of their leave. This is another step for us that we were able to do this year.

Next step now is to hire 2 FF. We'll open positions Sept 20 for applications. Again we are going to try to fill internally from our volunteer and stipend personnel. The close date is October 8 with testing October 22. This is a little different. We don't use an assessment center for these folks. What we're looking for in the captain is more administrative and managerial position so you test skills in that area. These are front line FF, so we test their EMS and fire skills. We have an obstacle course they run through with all their gear on; SCBA, turnouts, etc. You have to demonstrate you can use a pike pole, climb a ladder, crawl over the peak of the roof, carry so much weight, carry an uneven load – a full 5 gallon bucket on one side and a partial full one on the other to see how they balance that. EMS skills tested on are boarding patients, splinting, and all the EMS skills that they do on a day to day basis.

Pfitzenmaier – just for clarification for the record, we are moving people up into vacant positions. The level of staffing remains the same.

Chief – Yes, not adding positions. WE are filling positions that had opened due to the personnel leaving going to other fire departments.

Izzo – Do we have an acting captain now?

Chief – actually no. What we have are people we are calling “leads” and we use Pete Daniels as an acting caption/CEP. Right now we have Brian Jackson running a shift and Annette Kelly is running a shift. The reason why we didn't use the terminology of acting captain is because we have never tested for that and had that available. Through this testing process, we have been able to develop that and come up with the acting captain. Annette Kelly is also going through the 10 month course that our other captains are going through.

Izzo – So, these leads don't get paid anymore?

Chief – No, they get paid whatever their regular wage is.

**Helicopters:** LifeNet did approach us and ask if we would host them for a place to keep their bird. It hasn't developed any further than that. They did move their bird off the SV Hospital. One of the other local companies that was moving onto the hospital, decided to put another bird in the area. So, they have 2 birds in the area. LifeNet is based out of the SV airport during the day and at night, the crew goes away. So, it is only a 12 hour shift availability.

Izzo – Is that the only one they have around here?

Chief – Yes, they also have one in Douglas and Tucson.

Bianchi – In the event of another disaster with illegals, when they aren't operating, would they call their crews in?

Chief – That is their decision, not ours. They have not made any comments if they would do that or not.

What we would do in that situation is pull the 2 birds out of SV and the one out of Nogales and from there

go to Tucson, Douglas. And generally, when you have a mass casualty like that, you have so many patients you have plenty of time to package your patient and wait for the birds to come in. The last one we had, we had helios we had to keep in the air while we cleared the LZ. We had a 3 bird LZ, so we could have 3 birds on the ground at once. We still had to keep aircraft circling until we could get one up and bring another one down. So, the flight distance son something like that has always served us well.

Bianchi – Who’s at the SV hospital now?

Chief – AirEvac. So, AE has one on the hospital and still has one at the airport.

**Fuels crew** We’re booked up now until the end of September doing a lot of weed eating, pruning, and chipping. We’ve been down in Canelo doing a lot of land. We move up Thursday to the Papago Springs area and Casas Arroyos area. We’ll finish the month out there. We are now booking work for October. We got a larger chipper donated. This came out of the Phoenix area from AZ State Land through the Forest Service. 12 “ chipper valued at \$11,000-\$12,000. We’ve done a little mechanical work on the charging system. WE still haven’t invested much money into it. It is serving us well. It has increased our speed on clearing the properties.

**Wood sale** is going good. Down to 6 cords. We donated ½ cord to 4H for the BBQ at the fair. The rest is being sold out to the community.

**Election preparation** is on track and published in the papers. We’re working with Pima County and Santa Cruz County recorders.

**Correspondence or other items of importance** – none

**New Business** – none

**Audience Comments** – Terry Plimpton – Elgin residence. See attached letter

Bianchi – review the HR policy manual referred to and spoke with Chief about possible violations and will look at the facts.

Pfitzenmaier – the Board, district and his self don’t support any candidate of the pack. Pete is entitled as a private resident and citizen to his opinions etc.

Izzo – will defer on this matter as he is running in the election.

Ed Schaefer – Elgin residence – comment on Terry Plimpton letter

Gary Solaris – Sonoita residence. Question to the Chief about AirEvac and PHI cards still valid.

**Board member comments** – Bianchi- A few years ago, issues about the fire district arose. I was the head of the committee (acronym?) that supported the Fire District. A lot went into that. We held election and roughly 68% stated they wanted the district and it divided the community. A lot has been done to bring the community back together. At present times, I find in our community the main concerns are:

1. providing adequate services
2. do that at an acceptable cost.

No questions were raised about should the district go away. I, too, was sent the email and was dismayed and upset. What upset me was the reopening of an issue that we worked hard to close. I don’t think 25% is meaningful. I’ll tell you why in a moment. But to take the 25% and ignore the 75% escapes my reasoning. Now, why do I think the 25% isn’t important? You have heard from 2 people who were strongly opposed to the fire district. Since the election, a number of people opposed to it, including some bound in the lawsuit against the district, availed themselves to some of our services. They found a pretty damn good emergency services here. The response time was good, the people were trained and knew what they were doing. So, their attitude towards the department changed as a result of that. Other people are willing to say this is a democracy we live in and the people voted and the majority of the people want this. I will go along with it even though I was opposed to it. And finally, you have people who have decided to involve themselves in what goes on in the district and are worrying about it. So, the animosity of the district is largely gone. There are mistakes made in the email. It is important to know that this board, if the full board was sitting here under the open meeting laws and we had an agenda to dissolve the fire district and all 5 members aid yes, let’s dissolve it. It would have no impact. The reason being is the state law governs how you would dissolve a fire

district and it's got nothing to do with the board. Also, the board is under the state laws as to what we can and cannot do. And no place does it say this board can dissolve the fire district. SO, the email at that point is totally misleading and erroneous. I was really disappointed at the attempt to resurrect these old issues because I can't see how that serves any purposes except hoping to inflame people and accomplish the goal which was to support certain candidates. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm fed up with the negatives in the elections at any level and it disturbs me tremendously that I comes into this election for this fire district board members. It is my sincere hope that all candidates, pack, individuals will go forward with positive campaigns and no more negatives come into this.

**Motion to adjourn** – Motion by Bianchi, seconded by Pfitzenmaier , motion carried.