

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Directors
of the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District
2 March 2015
6 p.m.**

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call - The record will reflect all board members present.

Izzo- We are going to deviate a little from the published agenda tonight. The next item will be board member comments and then followed by that, I believe, we have a special statement from Battalion Chief Venos. And then we will be going to the call to the public. If you wish to address the board, you will need to sign in and there is two places to sign in. One is to address the board where it says item four in the agenda, that's before we make any decisions, if we make any tonight. And then the other place is at the end of the meeting, there is another opportunity to address the board. So we'll have to sign in for each of those, if you want to address us twice or whatever you want to do. And there is still plenty of time to do that. We also will be moving item six which is new business up in front of item five which is old business. So we will open it for board member comments.

Rinaldi- I'm going to be the first comment tonight, and I'm going to do this in a little bit unconventional way so bear with me, because tonight I'm appealing to all of you here in the room. It's a very important subject to me and this is something that I have lost many a night of sleep over, as I'm sure many of you in the room have.

Dear citizen, firefighter and board member, what I'm about to say tonight stems from the battle scars that were inflicted long ago from both sides that have been reopened during this last few months. This community again is pitting neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend, and the fire house against the board. The sad part about this is that no matter which side wins, this community is the loser, all of us.

A personal attack was made on me. These attacks sadly are commonplace, and I use this only as an example. The author of said comments never addressed me with them personally, instead they browbeat a friend of mine. It deeply saddened my friend and me. We both were in agreement that these attacks of a personal nature do not help communication on any level. And besides that, I'm sure many of you are as weary as I am of all of the negative press and all of our negative conversations. We tend to stand with neighbors and this is what we're talking about. This community, this nation has more important issues to deal with than this. The issue here is not what was said or by whom. So many things have been said at this point that can never be taken back. The question here is what can we do about it tonight? What's the answer? How do we turn negative energy and gossip into positive solutions? How do we begin open communication between the board, the public and the firehouse? I propose we form a taskforce that includes a few board members, firefighter staff and public. We start by discussing possible ways of changing community perception and opening communication. I mean this from my heart.

I'm not here to distribute law or to hurt lives any more than any of you were. We're shooting arrows at each other for no reason. I know this community can pull together and find common ground, and I believe we can do a much better job than our own Congress are showing us. I'm appealing to you tonight and I need your help. I think we owe it to each other to try and stop the bleeding and begin the healing here. Please let me know by contacting me at my new email address. I will leave it out here at the end of the night. Contact me. Let's get together. Let's have a round table. Let's talk about this.

Mike Wright has offered to be part of this. John Fielding has offered to be part of this, and any of you who want to be involved including board members, please talk to me. This isn't a committee of the board. This isn't a committee of the fire station. This is a committee of human beings. And we're going to get to the

bottom of this, and we're going to solve some of this pain and we're going to make this fire department what it's supposed to be -- something happy and positive for the community. I'm open and willing to facilitate. That's all I have to say tonight. Thank you for your attention.

Izzo- Any other board member comments?

Neal- The only comment I have is last week, I know it was a surprise to all of us, with Kevin's resignation, and I just want to say that I want to thank you for your service and we appreciate everything you've done and wish you well.

Izzo- Kevin

Venos- This will be long enough. Hopefully this won't be negative, this is honesty. There are some questions as to why I've resigned my position as Battalion Chief here at Sonoita Fire. This statement is being made to clarify the reasons. Due to recent actions and statements made by the current board and the unstable environment created by these actions, I have decided to seek employment with another emergency services provider in order to protect myself and my family from any potential employment issues that may come up. In particular, the board's handling of the contract with the chief left me with an unpleasant and uneasy feeling. This contract is so one-sided and quite possibly illegal that it leaves me with the feeling that if this is what I have to look forward to as far as treatment from the board, I don't want anything to do with it. If the chief decides not to accept the contract, I was afraid the board would then expect me to sign one if offered the position of chief. And I would never sign such an awful agreement. I feel that the only purpose of a contract written like the current one could only mean one thing, let's get the chief to leave.

Second, there have been statements made by individual board members regarding the operations of the department, specifically that the board is responsible for the operations of the district. I feel this is incorrect. In my opinion, the board is responsible for hiring a chief to run the operations, and the board should oversee these actions to make sure that the chief is doing so in a fiscally responsible manner. The board should support that person in every way possible to make sure that the community is properly covered for emergency services. There is no member on this board even remotely qualified to run this department, and to think that this should be a function of the board is again, in my opinion, completely irresponsible. In fact, many of you have not spent any time with me or the chief, one-on-one, to learn anything about it. What kind of communication is that? What signal do you think that sends to the staff and volunteers regarding the unified management structure that we all feel should be in place between the board, chief and staff?

Lastly, the board has stated that with the passage of the budget last year that they finally stopped kicking the can down the road with regards to financing the future replacement of vehicles, PPE and SCBA equipment, etc. I believe that by cutting the chief's recommendations to fund the replacement program, all you did was kick the can a little shorter. No one has talked about the shortfalls that are going to occur in just a couple of years when the SCBAs come due or how we're going to fund the PPE when the time comes to replace them in order to remain in compliance with NFPA. What is the plan? In closing, neither the chief nor my job and its responsibilities had anything to do with my decision to leave. That decision was made entirely on the board's philosophical differences with my own. Thank you for listening. And if I can help clear up anything, please feel free to ask. I'll help in any way possible. Kevin Venos.

Izzo- Okay, we have our first call to the public. And before you start, I do want to remind everyone, try to keep this on a professional basis and try to refrain from any personal remarks. You can say whatever you want about the board, but try refrain from saying anything directly about us individually, okay? So that keeps it on a very professional level. So we'll move on.

Linda Ford - I'm Linda Ford, and I reside in the Sonoita community just off of Curly Horse Road. Mr. President and board members, I'm providing my comments in writing so that there will be no uncertainty about what I'm going to say. My comments regard the minutes and Terry Plympton's concerns stated in her comments of February 23, 2015 regarding whether minutes accurately reflect board discussions. She

specifically references that there was not a detailed discussion of the source of the \$96,000 surplus in that meeting, only that there had been a few other discussions regarding the matter.

My reading of the transcribed minutes makes no reference to this matter at all with the financials approved as presented. However the September 22, 2014 minutes do have a discussion regarding the source of the carryover funds as Item 12 on the agenda. Mr. Bianchi provided explanations for the source and comments from the audience were addressed. The October 24, 2014 transcribed minutes indicate the matter was discussed in an executive session during the September 22 board meeting contrary to the statutory of limitations on subjects for executive sessions. However, Miss Rinaldi, to her credit, pointed this out to the board and since the matter had previously been disclosed in a general meeting, it was apparently not considered to be any kind of reversible error.

I bring this up to question whether the transcribed minutes are in fact omitting. And I quote from the statute, "An accurate description of all legal actions proposed, discussed or taken and the names of those who propose each motion..." and then I skipped a little bit, "and the names of the persons as given making statements or presenting material to the public body and a reference to the legal action about which they made statements or presented material." That's Title 38, section 431.01 b-board. If you as a board feel that the transcribed minutes do not meet the requirements of the statute and you are not individually reviewing the recorded minutes, then you may have a real problem because you're signing off on those minutes each month. One other matter is addressed to Mr. Bianchi, when you expressed your frustration to me following last week's budget and finance committee meeting about how you felt things were being left out of the minutes and that you could not find out who did the actual transcription. I told you I would find out and I did. It took me approximately 30 seconds after asking the question. Heather Kahla is now doing the transcribing, and previously it was done by Katie. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Mike Wright.

Mike Wright- Well the meetings are getting bigger and bigger all the time. Good to see everybody here. And I guess, like usual, I'd like to just offer you a prayer. Lord God, this board and this evening is dedicated to serving this community, and I just thank you for this fire district and the lives that it protects. We just thank you for the blessing that it is among us. We ask your blessing upon each and every one that serves in this district -- our staff and volunteers, our firefighters, our EMTs, our paramedics, our chief. Lord, we ask a special blessing on Battalion Chief Venos as he leaves our organization here, Lord. I thank you for his service and I just pray your blessing upon him.

Lord, I pray your blessing upon each board member, Lord, and if you would give them strength and wisdom and discernment in all that they have to do. Lord, it's not an easy task, and so, Lord, I just pray that you may empower them and equip them. And Lord, I pray your blessing upon this community and this meeting tonight. Help us all to discuss and not hate, disagree but not hate. Help us, Lord, to discuss items in a meaningful manner, in a respectful manner. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Rinaldi- Anna Corson.

Courson- Thank you. Okay. I don't know how this works.

Izzo- Just identify yourself and say where you live.

Rinaldi- Where are you from?

Courson- I'm from Sonoita.

Rinaldi- Okay.

Izzo- It's for the person transcribing the minutes, they know who's speaking.

Courson- I'm going to read this. I want to know why this board is a negative board. You should be a positive board and rally the community to help and support this fire department, to make it the best fire department in southern Arizona. But so far, it seems you want to tear it down. This fire department one third Chief De Wolf, one third Kevin Venos, and the last one third is the personnel, paid and volunteer. When you take one third from it, it is not whole.

I don't know if Kevin Venos wants to leave or if you are forcing him to leave by what this board is doing, but remember, you should treat people how you want to be treated, and shame on each of you for not doing that. Not having Kevin with this department is like not having adhesive on a Band-Aid. There is all over the present personnel, this department that makes it run smoothly and benefits the community. Wake up, guys, and stop trying to fix what is not broke. Do you want a greased wheel that goes smoothly down the road or do you want to be the board ringer as the one who broke the wheel? It is your choice. Be a positive board. Remember what goes around comes around. And remember, you are for the whole community, not the negative few who cannot find positive in their lives. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Rene Prentice.

Rene Prentice from Sonoita. I've been here since before the formation of the fire department, as I stated before, and I've never had to come down here to address the board before, until two meetings ago. So it's very difficult for me to say this, but my feelings are raging over this. I was in on the beginning of this because I felt that our community wanted this fire department and I carried a petition. Because I carried the petition, I got sued for a million dollars. I got personally sued by someone I felt was my friend. And that friend never picked up the phone and said, "Hey, Rene, let's discuss this," just laid a lawsuit on me. Boom.

Well, I now have heard other people ask this board what your intentions are. Do you want to put somebody who sued 50 people on a finance committee? What are your intentions? Are you trying to support this community and this fire department or are you trying to put it under? I hope not, because I don't feel that you do but it certainly needs some explanation. And I've had no explanation from you when other people have asked for clarification as to why you're doing some of this. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Kathrine Prentice.

Kathrine Prentice- Hi, I'm Kathrine Prentice. I'm a homeowner and a tax payer here. Our family moved here in 1972 and my mom still resides on a family homestead that was homesteaded in 1906 here. I'm a single parent with two boys. I've been with the department since '99 and I'm currently a captain here. I want to thank the board for donating your time and your service. It's not an easy position, I understand. It takes a lot of personal time and research and management. They often say if none of the public is attending your meetings, people are happy and things are rolling smoothly. Take a look.

On mornings I get up early to complete needed work and I see Chief DeWolf come in as early as 5-30 in the morning. He often stays until 5 or 6 p.m. I was offended with the board's contract proposal. You, the board, think he must attend 90-someodd percent more of the calls that are going on in the proposed contract. I cannot think of one structure fire that he has not showed up to and I cannot think of any wildlife fire that he has not showed up to. This is in the 16 years that I've been here.

I've never called him on the cell phone and not been able to get him to call me back within three minutes. Do you really think that he needs to attend transports to Patagonia area, snake removal calls, calls to pick somebody off of the floor, calls where we need to change somebody's smoke detector battery at 4 in the morning, calls where somebody needs help to feed their dog at 5 in the morning, cattle loose somewhere on the highway, calls where people need help changing their tire, they can't get their gate open to get into their property, and they can't get their neighbor to answer the door, so they call 911 and find out that the person is really sleeping. These are real calls that have happened within the last couple of years.

I about fell on the floor when I heard that BC Venos's resignation came up at the board meeting. I see BC Venos stay until 6 p.m. every day. He is our backup ALS provider 24/7. For those of you that don't know what ALS is, that means you have a secured paramedic responding. He does not get any overtime and he has never once complained about this. He provides CPR courses to the employees, Elgin school, Sonoita Community Church, scouts and many others. He never complains and never asks for pay for that either. He fills in as a paramedic when somebody's sick or if they have a family member goes to the ER themselves. He

trains us, mentors us, supports us in the field when we ask for help. We've lost a great and dedicated employee.

When we became district, Karla Cafarelli and her husband actively pursued a lawsuit against the formation to district which included filing a suit personally against myself, my mom, and many other people in the community. I know that we're not supposed to bring up personal issues but when I get pursued personally, I take that personally. I cannot believe that she can serve on a financial committee with an unbiased decision. And I think we should have utmost concern and observation on her decisions. This community needs to be very concerned with the actions and decision this board is making. The decisions have direct repercussions on the district that is serving you, the community's fire and EMS response, the welfare and the safety of your families. Thank you.

Rinaldi- David Hetrick, David Hetrick.

David Hetrick- Thank you. My name is David Hetrick. I'm a resident of Sonoita. I bought a property here in 2012. I've been living here fulltime since June. This is a beautiful place to live, wonderful neighbors. My wife and I live here now, we can live here forever. I'd like to submit my name and my nomination to the finance committee. I understand that there may be up to three members, I'd like to submit my qualifications for that position. I did attend the finance committee meeting last week and submitted my nomination there and Mr. Bianchi suggested to come to the full board for consideration.

Please let me tell you about myself. I have a master's in business administration and a master's of health service administration from the University of Michigan. I've extensive experience preparing and presenting budgets and managing human resources. I served in the strategic planning office of Blue Cross Blue Shield in Michigan for a number of years. At the time, Blue Cross in Michigan was an \$8-billion nonprofit organization served by a 35-member community board. I assisted in the preparation of presentations to that board including budgets, new programs and program updates.

Subsequently, I worked as Vice President of Finance and Operations for one of their subsidiaries, DenteMax. I was with that company until 2012. In that position, I was responsible for accounting, budgeting, human resources and operations. I've worked with QuickBooks for more than 15 years to report to both for profit and nonprofit entities. One of my strengths is the ability to clearly communicate the reasons behind a decision and its expected impact. I think that's an important objective in the finance committee, as I think we've heard so far today. I'd like to serve in this committee. I believe my background and skills can help make this community a better place.

As a new resident, I did not vote for or against the formation of the district. I believe that I can be a highly qualified and impartial member of that team. I've only just began to learn about the district. I have a lot of questions. As Karla said, there's a lot to learn. But I pledge to work diligently to get those answers and do whatever the community needs me to do, whatever reports. I'm excited about the chance to help in any way I can.

I'd like to thank you, the board, for your service, Chief DeWolf, Chief Venos and all the staff. They're servants. They give out their time. They sacrifice their lives to save ours. I've talked to a lot of people in the community this week. I met a gentleman who has lived here longer then I have been alive and he said he said this department saved his life, and I think they should be congratulated for that. And thanks for this chance.

Rinaldi- Thank you. Vicky Rutter.

Rutter- Vicki Rutter, from the fire district resident. You've heard from many district residents over the past two months who have called in on the chief's contract. Those in support of giving the chief a fair and decent contract have far outweighed those who oppose the chief. You've heard from district residents who have never

been to a board meeting but felt strongly enough about giving the chief a fair contract to come and address the board. You should listen respectfully to those residents and not just listen to the same people who come to every meeting and applaud you for taking on the chief's contract. I don't understand the need for applause. His contract is expiring and you need to act.

I do believe that none of you would accept what you have offered him, so I hope you will negotiate more reasonable terms tonight and finalize this contract. You have not given any reason for the outrageous terms you are proposing and you have not done a performance evaluation on the chief that would warn punishing his performance. The only comment that has been made was by the treasurer who said it's economic to save the district money. But that only touches on the pay, not the other unreasonable terms. The uncertainty that you have created has damaged morale and resulted in the loss of more employees. With the loss of Battalion Chief Kevin Venos, the chief does not have the same level of backup he had before. You spend a lot of time at one meeting questioning BC Venos as to whether or not he could take over for the chief and for how long, if needed. You knew how important he was to this fire district, and yet when the chief announced Venos was leaving, the audience gasped, the staff standing in the kitchen went into shock, and you, the board, said nothing and went on to the next agenda item. You tried to cover later by saying it was district policy not to comment when session announcement is made, but I've yet to find such policy in the district documents.

The contract you offered the chief already has him working 24/7 and needing your permission to leave the district. I'm not sure how you plan to address that, but I hope you reconsider it tonight. The district residents who voted you onto the board are the losers if you cannot come to a satisfactory contract with the chief and end up losing him too. The most important comment made was from Chief Chris Pendleton who said you should offer Chief DeWolf a contract with generous terms that would keep him at Sonoita-Elgin Fire District for as long as possible. I hope you will seriously consider his comments as they are from experience not emotion.

Renewing the Chief's contract should have been one of the easiest things you had to do as a board. Sadly it has turned into a community side show and further divided the community between those who support the fire district with the loyal dedicated chief and the few who seem to want disruption and are using the Chief's contract to achieve their goals. Please come together as a board and do what is best for the fire district. Finalize the Chief's contract and show that you are a board that is for the fire district and not for uncertainty and chaos.

And I'd like to comment on the budget and finance committee. There are two community residents that have asked to be on the budget and finance committee. Since no one seems to know the process for adding community members to the committee, I would ask that you hold a special board meeting for the purpose of adding those two residents to the committee before the next committee meeting on March 10th so they can be involved in the entire budget process. If you're unwilling to do that, I think Karla Cafarelli should be removed from the committee as the community members since the process is not open and fair. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Don Webster.

Don Webster- If you need a third person on the budget committee, my resume hasn't changed.

Izzo- Could you please just mention your name.

Don Webster, from Sonoita. I'm sorry. Just a quick question for board -- what is the chief's involvement in the budgeting process? And I ask that question because it's been my experience that budgets are prepared by the head of the organization, as the person that's responsible for carrying out the function of the organization. And then it's reviewed, modified if necessary, and passed by the board. It seems strange to me, for many reasons, that the board is preparing the original budget and not the chief. I'd appreciate some points or comments on this question. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Sandy Ruppel.

Ruppel- My name is Sandy Ruppel. I am a citizen and tax payer of Sonoita. First I want to thank the board again for your time. I know that being part of the elected fire board takes a lot of time and energy. I appreciate that. It is also a position that carries a lot of responsibility when you consider that it is your authority to hire the chief and that is what directs this department. You are the ones ultimately responsible for this fire department and what happens in this district. Again, I thank you for taking this obligation. This meeting concerns the Chief's contract. I am very concerned about this contract. We, as a community, cannot afford to lose Chief DeWolf especially in light of Battalion Chief Venos's resignation. I think the fact that the second in command of the fire department has resigned as a direct result of this board's actions demonstrates that the concerns I have expressed and the concerns of others that have addressed this board are valid.

This is not Kabuki Theater or grandstanding. This is growing group of citizens, registered voters, your neighbors that are disturbed by the effects of the actions that some on this board are having on our fire department, and by default, on our own health, safety and the protection of our property. I ask that you make this contract not just something that Chief DeWolf can live with, but rather make it the contract that reflects the fact that we want him to stay. We need him to stay.

I understand that you want to be responsible for the tax monies you control, but as elected board members, I also feel that you have a fiduciary duty to do what is best to protect this community, its citizens, and our property. It is up to you personally to make the decisions that protect our health and safety as well as safeguard our assets. It is a huge responsibility and I appreciate that you chose to accept it.

And one thing I wasn't going to address tonight but I feel that I need to is that you need to make sure that you guys are dealing in factual information too. At the end of the last board meeting, I addressed you, Jerry Bianchi, and obviously, I was emotional then I said, "I hope you're happy," and I wrote this down so I'd get it right. Then you said, "I am happy." You said, "I'm not happy that Battalion Chief Venos is leaving because he is the one that runs the department." He said I need to wake up that Chief is gone 30% to 50% of the time and Kevin is running the department and we're paying chief salary.

That said, I went and checked. The Chief was out of the department 29 days last year and then 14 days on vacation. That comes to approximately, depending on whether you count the vacation or not as part of the time out of the district, 13% to 15% of the time. That is a very different number than 30% to 50% of the time. I think you guys need to make sure you are dealing in factual information. The list that was given to the board inThank you.

Rinaldi- Terry Plympton.

Terry Plympton- Terry Plympton, Elgin, Arizona. Regarding the Chief's contract, when this process started in mid-December, the majority of this body appeared to be on the same page committed to making the tough decisions necessary to adjust the Chief's contract to be on a par with other fire departments in the state of Arizona. By the end of this process, there appears to be a little difference between the previous contract and the one presented this evening. So the question I have, especially as someone who has attended all of these meetings is- why did the board go through the rigors of a contested contract negotiation when there was no need? If you were not firm in your original commitment, then this whole exercise, in my opinion, was a waste of time and energy.

There has been an increase in the number of individuals attending the most recent board meetings. However, they do not represent a majority of the members of the community. The real silent majority has been responsible for your election or reelection to the board, based on the ideology imparted during your campaigns. This majority does not attend regular board meetings for a variety of reasons and they are very rarely, publicly communicate their opinions. However, it is the welfare of these very individuals you must

represent as you have been charged to do so by your election to this board. My advice to this board, do a better job the next time you are faced with a difficult decision.

Now, regarding the discussion of public members serving on the budget and finance committee, when this issue was raised at the last meeting, comments suggested that members of the public wishing to serve on this committee should have budgetary skills and a willingness to serve. This individual should also have an interest in the operation of the district and have attended some board meetings. I would therefore like to submit my application to serve on the budget and finance committee, if the board decides to increase the number of public members for this committee.

My district experience includes serving on the SEFD audit committee during 2011 and 2012. I am also quite familiar with the district monthly financials and the process for creating a draft budget. Members of the board and the Chief can also vouch that I have attended most regular board meetings throughout the past five years as well as many special board meetings. Because of my familiarity with the financials and the operation of the district, there would be no need for bringing me up to speed on the financial landscape during the strict schedule relating to the preparation of the annual budget.

My professional experience includes managing the office and accounts of a computer consulting business for over 25 years. Previous to that, I was employed as the assistant director of a social service agency in Tucson whose services include acting as a private fiduciary or representative payee in conjunction with the social security administration for over 1,000 individuals in the Tucson area with special needs. If my interests and qualifications are not what the board requires, I would appreciate an explanation of my deficiencies and a sound reason as to why I am not fit to serve on this committee. Thank you.

Izzo- That's it, right?

Rinaldi- That's it.

Izzo- Thank you for your comments. We'll move on to Item 6, the new business, budget and finance committee membership. Judy.

Neal- I asked for this to be put on the agenda. I would like to request that the Chief appoint a firefighter to be a member of the committee and that they give input during the budget process. This may require someone that is on duty at the time of the meetings to be appointed, so I'm not sure whether it will work to have a specific person or to have a firefighter present at the meetings, so.

Izzo- Chief?

Chief - As I spoke with Judy and some other board members on this, I have, for the last several years, felt that a volunteer and a career staff firefighter EMT be brought to all committees. My idea would be to have whoever is on duty that day attend those meetings due to the fact that we want to keep costs down and we don't want to pay overtime for somebody to come down to a meeting. So I would like to see it as who is on shift that day, a volunteer and a career is able to sit in for those meetings.

Izzo- If this is a rotating thing, how would that person gain any real knowledge about the development of the budget and how would they have any input, if they're just here, and then they're gone? I think it's a great idea, I'm just concerned that if I had a question during the budget and I ask somebody and they said, "I was only there for one meeting and I don't...", I don't know that that's providing input.

Chief- Continuity will be built over time because crews talk. And the other thing is that after every regular board meeting that we have, I do the same presentation, the PowerPoint that I do here with our financials and everything, to our volunteers and career people every Tuesday night after the regular Monday night meeting. And so all our firefighters are up, I wouldn't say they are up to experts on our budgeting, but they have knowledge of our budget. I'm not opposed to appointing one volunteer and one career, and they stay with it with the knowledge of the board realizing there would be overtime that is accrued during that period.

Izzo- We're talking like how many hours a month, two or three?

Chief- We have three or four meetings scheduled, so we'd be in a couple of hours a month for a couple of periods, yeah, for a three- or four-month period.

Neal- I don't think that's a lot of money to have some continuity, honestly.

Izzo- Now, I'm asking Judy the question here because Chief is suggesting two and the policy, I think, that we adopted allows up to three members, so that would fill the budget and finance committee. I'm asking you the question, is that true? I'm asking Judy the question, are you just recommending one?

Neal- I was recommending one, yes, a firefighter.

Izzo- A career person?

Neal- Yes.

Izzo- Would you like to make that a motion?

Neal- Yes, I would. I would like to make the motion that a career firefighter be appointed to the budget and finance committee. And I would leave that person, the appointment to the Chief, who he would think would be most appropriate.

Izzo- With the understanding we would absorb the costs?

Neal- Yes, of overtime.

Berry- I second.

Izzo- Okay, any discussion? Any more discussion? I'll call for the question, all those in favor? Aye.

All- Aye.

Izzo- It's unanimous. It was unanimous. We will move on to old business, the discussion action concerning a contract format. We will not be going into executive session today. And we can begin with... so we have another document that is another draft dated today of the employment contract. And what I'd like to do, and you guys can weigh in here, is just to go through page by page, and if you have anything to add, if I miss something then let's get that in.

You need the colored copy. Did you get the one today, dated today?

Neal- Yes, I did not. I don't have the colored copy.

Rinaldi- Yeah, I didn't print one out. I just have my own copy. Thank you.

Izzo- It seemed to me that it was not clear about the commencement, when the contract shall begin. We discussed this starting on July 1, that there was a lapsed time when the old contract expired. Is July 1 a good day? Could we just let things go for a month with the current contract in place, with no contract, the current terms in place? discussion...

Berry- Wouldn't it make more sense to just extend the current contract until June 30?

Neal- The other option is to start this one on May 25, but then...

Izzo- Then we've got 25 months?

Neal- Yes, basically.

Izzo- Yeah, are we talking about 37 days here?

Neal- It sounds like it, yes.

Izzo- May 24, there's a suggestion we extend the current. I don't know if we can extend it for 36 days. At the end of the fourth year, the agreement shall be renewed for another four years. There is not a clause here that asks for extension.

Neal- May I ask what's wrong with July 1st?

Izzo- That's what I'm suggesting, and then we just ... Chief, we have no contract for 36 days.

Chief- So I don't get paid for 36 days?

Izzo- It will be our understanding that the current contract would remain in force.

Rinaldi- Until the new contract was signed.

Chief- So then what?

Izzo- And we can put that in here. "The current contract shall remain in force."

Rinaldi- Okay.

Izzo- That might work. Is that acceptable, Chief?

Chief- Yes.

Izzo- Okay, the termination clause. We had two options here. Does anybody have anything else? Chief, did you?

Chief- No, my proposal is B. I think we're going to go for it.

Rinaldi- So are we voting on A or B?

Izzo- We have two options here, option A or option B. I'm sorry you guys are in the dark. There is a lot of language in the contract that we're not going over that has been available all through this time. There's not been revisions to that. In the last meeting, we did take a vote and determine term and compensation, so the next provision has to do with termination. So I think yeah, we'll have Rinaldi read those.

So what we're talking about here, and this may just seem as absurd as it does to me, is that even though we're negotiating a contract with the Chief in executive session, the law will not allow us to make a decision in executive session or take a consensus. And so what they advised me, there's an office of the ombudsman that regulates all these, they said one way to handle this is to decide on options and so we have, some of the points of contention, there is an option A and an option B that we can now agree our options and then we can vote on that in an open meeting, okay? So that's why we have these.

And generally speaking, and Jennifer will read them, one option was as Chief presented it and I may have edited some of that, but you can check me on that. And the other option is what we had in the original contract. So Rinaldi will go ahead and read this, the termination clause.

Rinaldi- Okay. This is termination clause option A. "Chief shall serve at the pleasure of the district. This agreement may be terminated at any time by action of the board of directors of the district. In the event of voluntary termination by the Chief, Chief shall provide district with 30 calendar days advance notice of voluntary termination of this agreement."

Option B, "Advance notice of 30 calendar days shall be provided in the event of voluntary termination by board or chief." Would anybody like me to reread those?

Izzo- Do we have a motion? Discussion? I'll make a motion that we approve option A. Is there a second?

Rinaldi- I'll second.

Izzo- Okay. Discussion? And the only difference in this really is whether or not the district gives Chief 30 days advance notice. And my thoughts on this are very simple, if something is so serious that we have to terminate the agreement, I wouldn't want the employee hanging around for 30 days, so that's the reason why that's there. Any discussion? Any other motions, substitute motions? Okay, call for the question, all those in favor? Aye.

Board members- Aye.

Izzo- Okay. Was there anything on page two that I missed?

Rinaldi- No.

Izzo- Okay, now to page three, which was a new section of the duties and responsibilities, and then this came from a response that chief gave us and his version of the contract. And it's concerning grants, go ahead, Rinaldi.

Rinaldi- Okay. This is option I, and the option I'm reading first is A. "Chief is authorized and empowered to execute all grant documents necessary to secure grant funds and implement the awarded grant project."

Option B- "All grant applications shall require prior approval by the board of directors, thereafter chief is authorized to empower and empower to execute all grant documents necessary to secure grants and implement the awarded grant project." Any clarification? Anybody want me to reread it?

Izzo- Motions? Discussion?

Bidegian- I have a question. A clarification, it's not a question, it's a clarification. It sounds like the first one, the chief can write the grant, get them written, whatever, send them in, if they're approved, then they come back. And the second one is he does the same and then before they're sent in, then the board okays them and then you all end up getting. Is that the difference of the two?

Rinaldi- Yes.

Bianchi- Okay, thank you. I move that we accept option B, that the board be notified before the final submission of fund.

Izzo- I second.

Izzo- What hurt you there, Chief?

Chief- That's not the wording that's there. It doesn't say "notify." B, "All grant application should be required prior approval by the board."

Bianchi- I understand that. I was making a comment. My motion was to accept option number B.

Izzo- Second?

Rinaldi- I would second.

Izzo- Okay, any more discussion? Chief you can weigh in here. You've already addressed us in executive session, but if you want to make another pitch or something, go ahead, Judy.

Neal- The only question I have, if requiring prior approval versus requiring notification. I know there are deadlines on submission of grants. And so this would either mean that we may have a special meeting because of a deadline for a grant or we would miss possibly some grants because waited after a board meeting. So do you see that as an issue?

Chief - That has been a concern of mine that I have addressed with the board in the past when we brought grants up. We do try and keep them up a date every month I run the grants that are coming up and we apply for. There are grants that come up, within 15 days, you have to have them submitted.

Rinaldi- I think if we have to have a special meeting, we have to have a special meeting when money's involved, it's a no brainer.

Unidentified Man- Mr. Chairman, is there room for public comment here?

Izzo- Probably not, and I don't want to really cut you off, it's just we're limited here by time. And we did have an opportunity to address us and you'll have another opportunity at the end. Chief, we really didn't get in this much detail, we talked about this before. If you don't get our approval first, how can we, as a board, authorize you to commit funds? As most of these are matching funds, so when you submit the application, you're committing funds.

Chief- Correct.

Izzo- And if we hadn't done that first, if we, as a board, haven't said, "Okay, we'll commit those funds."

Chief- Well, it can go both ways, and I'll use the VFA grant we just did this year. We did a \$5,000 grant for new hoses through the Land of Rural Management. That month, we have new equipment funds already in the budget, so that was what we used as our matching funds for that grant, so it was pre-approved. However, I do understand the point, if I'm going after the SCBAs and we need \$10,000 and match it, yes, that definitely needs a pre-approval by the board that we are going to address this grant.

No grant is finalized until we find the signature on page. They awarded us the grant. We have to accept it. In that period of time, in 13 years, we've never had a problem addressing with the board that this is what's coming up or this grant has been applied for. Are we talking a small portion of the grant applications out there? Yes, we are. As Jennifer said, can we have special board meetings? As long as we can get three of you together and three of you are willing to make a decision that would be the other

Izzo- I know some of these are 30 days.

Chief- Some are 15, some are 30, some are 45, yeah.

Izzo- It's 15 days. And you obviously don't want to go through all the work to fill everything out and do that until you know we're going to do that. But another way to do that is if you know the grant's coming up, why don't you get pre-approval before it's released?

Chief- That's what we do. I talked two months ago about the grant from Patagonia. Told you there was a grant opening up, to avail it was \$5,000. I wanted to apply for a new computer system for our mainframe. Okay, that was pre-approved. What we're saying is that sometimes, there may be a grant that's not. And then, on the flipside, there's no financial burden upon the district as far as there is no match. Does that need to be brought before the board, obligation?

Izzo- To me, I've seen a number of grants, and there are strings with everything the government does. So there may not be a match, but there are some strings in there. And it might just be a reporting requirement, but there again, I think, we ought to be the ones who say, "Oh, yeah."

Chief- I'm not opposed to B. I'm just saying, they asked what the ramifications could be if we did

Izzo- So you are not opposed to option B?

Chief- We have been doing it for over two years now. All grants have been run through the board before any submittal.

Izzo- Okay, Chief said he is not opposed to option B. That means we don't need to vote on it.

Rinaldi- Okay.

Izzo- We've got agreement, all right? Good. Hours of work and outside employment, I thought that was still unclear. That's the reason why I put that in blue.

Rinaldi- Okay. I will go ahead and read it- "Chief shall devote fulltime to the business of the district. Unless district has authorized Chief to be absent from the district for a specific period of time or Chief is on paid time off, Chief shall be available to respond to emergencies within the district on a 24/7 basis. Any and all outside employment including public or private consulting must be pre-approved by the board of directors."

Izzo- So Chief, I did make some edits in there based on our discussion. I changed everything to paid time off, so that it matched that you had in there.

Rinaldi- Yup.

Izzo- A number of people have addressed us concerning this. I wrote this provision. It has nothing to do with the chief's work schedule. There is nothing in there that talks about his work schedule. When we first started talking about this, it was my understanding that we, as a board, did not want to set the Chief's work schedule, that he should set his own schedule. This has to do with two things. One is that he should be available to respond to calls, okay? And the other thing is private consulting must be pre-approved by us. This has nothing to do with his work schedule, okay? That's all it is. It doesn't say he has to respond to every call, okay? It says he should be available, all right? And that we feel that Chief should devote full time to the business of the district, okay?

Rinaldi- Give an example.

Such as a big fire, we talked about that. You had a really good example that you gave.

Izzo- Well as our Fire Chief... and 24/7 means 24/7, okay? And it doesn't matter, this is just a matter of course. If chief is on vacation and he's fishing in Wyoming, that doesn't mean we won't call him and that doesn't mean he won't get calls from here, because it's 24/7. And he will take those calls. He will provide whatever assistance he can. He may have to make a decision whether he cancels his vacation or not, but this is 24/7 job. So he sets his own work schedule. So what that means is maybe his work schedule is Monday through Friday, somebody said 5.30 in the morning until 5 at night, whatever it is. Now he might get called out Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday night, he may be out working calls, okay? So he may alter his work schedule and decide not to come in Thursday and Friday, because he has already put in 50, 60 hours. We're not getting into that level of it, okay? This has nothing to do with that.

So the other thing has to do with personal business. We're not getting into this whole idea of what Chief can do that's personal business and what's fire district business. It's very hard to separate this. And we've had this discussion before, but the simplest thing is on his way home, Chief stops with a district vehicle at the post office and picks up the mail. Duh, that's personal business. Do we care? No. Does it make sense that he do that? Absolutely. Does it make sense that he goes home, gets his personal car then gets the mail? Besides, even if he's in his personal car, he's still working, okay? So it doesn't matter what vehicle he has in there. So this just addresses those two things – did I mentioned, oh no, I didn't.

Rinaldi- Yes, you did, you did.

Izzo- Chief?

Chief- I'm uneasy with the words, "unless district has authorized chief to be absent from the district." We're in the district, so if I go grocery shopping in Sierra Vista tomorrow night, I have not asked to be absent from the district, so it's grounds for termination of contract.

Izzo- Okay, but you are absent from the district.

Chief- Yes, but I haven't asked authorization.

Izzo- I see what you're saying.

Izzo- Well, this doesn't address you being in Sierra Vista.

Chief- No, I was using that as a scenario. It addresses the authorization to be absent from the district.

Izzo- Right. So since you're not authorized to be absent from the district, you should be available to respond to emergencies.

Rinaldi- We could add in there.

Izzo- And you are, you are.

Rinaldi- We could add in, after specific period of time, such as when on paid vacation or some sort of verbiage.

Chief- Then I get a paid vacation to go to Sierra Vista.

Izzo- No, you don't. This isn't about vacation. This is about responding to calls. When you're grocery shopping in Sierra Vista, you need to be available to respond to a call. And you are, you are.

Chief- Then let's get rid of authorization and say, "The chief will be available to respond to calls."

Izzo- When you're on vacation?

Chief- It has nothing to do with vacation. It doesn't say anything about vacation. It says, "unless the district has authorized chief to be absent..."

Izzo- I can live with that.

Rinaldi- Yeah, that's fine.

Izzo- Okay. So it would just read, this second sentence, "Chief shall be available to respond to emergencies within the district on a 24/7 basis." We struck "unless".

Rinaldi- And we struck the word "authorized."

Izzo- Yeah, all of this.

Rinaldi- Yeah.

Izzo- "Chief shall devote full time to the business of the district. Chief shall be available to respond to emergencies within the district on a 24/7 basis. Any and all outside employment..."

Rinaldi- Sounds fine.

Izzo- Chief?

Chief- I'm pondering that. The outside employment, I gave my list with my proposal. I'm not worried about the outside employment at all. Can you read that one more time, Ron?

Izzo- "Chief shall devote full time to the business of the district." That's the first sentence states that. Strike "unless district has authorized chief to be absent from the district for a specified period of time or chief is on paid time off." Strike all of that.

Chief- Okay.

Izzo- Sentence two reads "Chief shall be available to respond to emergencies within the district on a 24/7 basis."

Chief- Okay. And we can do this right down the board. What is 24/7 basis?

Rinaldi- Could we add when available?

Izzo- No, you want to define 24/7? You want to say 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Chief- I'm going after what we had dialogued before. This is a legal binding document and what is 24/7?

Izzo- It's 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Chief- "The Chief should be available to respond to emergencies within the district on a 24/7 basis." So basically you're saying that I just have to be available, whether I'm in Sierra Vista, Tucson, wherever I may be, I have to be available to respond.

Izzo- It doesn't say you're going to respond.

Chief- No.

Izzo- It says you're available to respond. You decide whether you're going to respond or not.

Chief- Correct. And that's the majority of the board, your understanding of what 24/7 means?

Neal- Yeah.

Izzo- Isn't that what you're doing now?

Chief- Yes, but it wasn't in my last contract, so I'm pretty sure...

Rinaldi- Now, you see what we're up against. It's one word.

Izzo- So with that revision, Chief has agreed to that, so we can move on.

Rinaldi- Okay.

Izzo- Is there anything else on that page I missed? Anybody?

Rinaldi- No.

Bianchi- That residency requirement, that only applies to Chief DeWolf in this contract, correct?

Izzo- Correct, Chief inserted that.

Bianchi- I know he did, but he inserted it with the phrase afterwards that this could apply to somebody in the future. And if that is the case, then you're going to run it to a very limited selection of people. So I think that this should just apply to the Chief in this contract.

Chief- In the dialogue we had throughout this contract was this was a contract that the district was going to use for myself or any chief. I am, as I explained to the board before, I'm a firm believer the chief of this organization needs to live within the district. That's it. They have to live here.

Bianchi- Chief, if you were applying for an outside job over in Cochise County someplace and they said, "You have to live here." You've got a house here, right? You're making payments, mortgage payments or something like that?

Chief- It bankrupts me renting.

Man- Yeah, the point being that you cannot just leave this piece of property and take on the responsibility of another piece of property over the Cochise County. If he wants to take on that sort of thing, but if you're familiar with the real estate market in Sonoita, where you're somebody into Sonoita, that is not a very practical statement to make.

Chief- The majority of the chief's contracts that I reviewed, you have to live within the district. I am really strong upon I believe the chief of this organization, whether it's me for the next 15 years or for the next four years, I believe the chief needs to live within this community.

Bianchi- And that's in the contract right now.

Chief- In my contract?

Bianchi- Yes.

Chief- This one here?

Rinaldi- The old one.

Bianchi- No, I'm talking about this contract we're talking about. This one we're discussing.

Chief- Yes, I asked the board to add it. And I don't believe it should be a Chief DeWolf, it should be any chief that comes to this organization.

Bianchi- Well, I think if there is an issue in the future of dealing with somebody else for the chief position here, the board will have to decide that the person would ultimately have to live in the district. But we'd have to get that person time to find a house here and get rid of a house somewhere else.

Chief- Oh yeah, you'd have to accommodate. Most places give you 12 months.

Bianchi- This statement does not accommodate anything. That's why I'm saying it should pertain only to you in this contract.

Izzo- So if we did it with somebody else, we would want to negotiate how long to give them and add that into contract.

Bianchi- Yes.

Izzo- Okay. Anything else on page three? Move on to page four. There were some changes. I thought they were all agreed. Continuing education, travel. Chief, am I correct? Is that travel okay now?

Chief- Yes, yes.

Izzo- Conferences, seminars, clothing, health insurance, professional organizations. Page five, the performance evaluation. Boy, this was clear as mud to me. There is two parts to this. One is "during the performance evaluation," my notes indicated there's a lot of talk about no later than November 30 of each year. And what was the reason for that? Elections?

Rinaldi- Elections.

Izzo- Seat in a new board, so that an old board will have to do it, so that's why November 30. So I thought we talked about that quite a bit. The next part had to do about setting the goals and performance objectives. And the only thing I had was February 28. Did that come from you, Chief, that date?

Rinaldi- I think that date came from the fact...

Chief- Dialogue.

Rinaldi- Right.

Chief- I don't think that came from me. It came from dialogue that February 28.

Rinaldi- No later than.

Neal- No later than.

Izzo- That is the first mistake I have ever made, that's amazing. Was that on our policy? Is that where it comes from? February 28?

Chief- It didn't come from me.

Rinaldi- It was...Judy?

Neal- I think our policy is just that the evaluation will be conducted yearly. I don't think there's a date.

Izzo- Yeah, I don't think there's a date.

Rinaldi- There's not necessarily, yeah.

Izzo- But this is setting the goals.

Chief- Goals and performance objectives.

Izzo- It still gives 10 months, doesn't it? Gives 10 months? No, eight months? Is there something wrong there?

Neal- November, January, February, if you're looking at the whole year.

Izzo- Okay, so a new board that came in wouldn't be able to do anything until February. But that only gives eight months to achieve them, right?

Neal- So it would almost be logical that you would set the goals, define goals and performance objectives after you do the evaluation. So if evaluation's done in November, then why not in December being the onset...?

Chief- It's a new board.

Neal- It is a new board.

Izzo- How about if they both done at the same time, November 30th? And the goals for succeeding year, be set at that time.

Rinaldi- What's wrong with that? Anybody?

Izzo- Jennifer go ahead and read that, we're talking without...I'm sorry.

Rinaldi- Okay, I'll read it first in its entirety and then as we change it. "District, through its board of directors, shall review and evaluate the performance of the Chief on an annual basis no later than November 30 of each year. No later than February 28 of each year, the board of directors and the chief shall jointly define goals and performance objectives that they determine necessary for the proper operation of the district."

Izzo- So it just might say, at the end of that first sentence, "no later than November 30 of each year. And at that time, the board and the Chief," does that sound good?

Rinaldi- Yeah.

Izzo- So goals and objectives. And that makes more sense anyway. It should be part of the evaluation.

Man- How are you going to word that?

Rinaldi- I'll read it all the way through. "District through its board of directors shall review and evaluate the performance of the chief on an annual basis, no later than November 30 of each year. The board of directors and the chief shall jointly..." I'm sorry, "At that time, the board of directors and the chief shall jointly define the goals and performance objectives that they determine necessary for the proper operation of the district." All we did was strike "no later than February 28 of each year" and in place we put "at that time" so that both of those things are done at the same time.

Izzo- Chief?

Chief- Good.

Izzo- Okay. So the last thing we had on that page, and the last thing period, is the arbitration clause. So what is replacing the previous arbitration by the association of arbitrators are two options, A and B. And Jennifer, go ahead and read those so that we'll...

Rinaldi- Okay. Under arbitration option A- "Any suit or action arising under this agreement shall be commenced in the Superior Court of the state of Arizona of Santa Cruz County or Pima, Arizona, but only

after exhausting all possible administrative remedies." Option B- "All claims and disputes arising under or relating to this agreement are to be settled by binding arbitration as determined by a three-member mediation panel to be selected by both parties. The party who brings the action shall be responsible to pay any such cost associated with arbitration."

Izzo- Chief, your part, option A?

Chief - Yeah, option A.

Izzo- Is there a motion, a second so that we can discuss it?

Man- I'd like to make a motion so we can select Chief's option A.

Izzo- Is there a second? Motion dies for lack of a second. Any other motions?

Rinaldi- I motion for option B.

Izzo- Is there a second?

Bianchi- Second.

Izzo- Okay, we have discussion. Option A is still on the table, just not in the form of motion. So as for me, the issue here, we're just trying to keep it out of court, because if there was any dispute, it's going to cost a fortune to settle in court. It's going to cost the taxpayers, so that's the only reason that I didn't like the idea of going to court. And as we all know, it could drag on and on and on and on. So somebody suggested appointing just a panel of three people to arbitrate and that we all agree on that. Now, picking those panel members is obviously going to be an issue, but...

Chief DeWolf- My only comment, and as you said, the first one, costing the taxpayers, well, the second one costs the taxpayers as well, because if the board brings it on myself, who picks up the tab? The taxpayers.

Izzo- Right.

Chief - My other comment on that one is I'm not sure if we can legally state that one party or the other is going to pay.

Izzo- Yeah, that's certainly a question. And we do intend to have this reviewed by an attorney. That question came up in discussion, who pays? I think normally, you don't say who pays. Normally, you go to court and the court, in your filings, the court decides who pays.

Rinaldi- The court, yeah, but if you strike the last sentence, it's going to end up being the same thing anyway. Somebody's going to pay. It's going to be us.

Izzo- The district.

Rinaldi- The district. Yeah, all of us.

Neal- So in option A, you said, I'm just curious, it says, "Exhausting all possible administrative remedies. What would outline administrative remedies?"

Izzo- That's right. That was a part of my head. I don't know what that means.

Rinaldi- That's vague. Yeah, that's why option A was vague to me.

Izzo- So you'd be in court arguing that not all the administrative remedies were exhausted?

Rinaldi- Right. So what can we do with option B?

Izzo- Can we strike that last sentence?

Rinaldi- That's what I would think.

Izzo- And just leave it?

Rinaldi- Should I reread?

Izzo- The person who made the motion has to accept that striking that sentence.

Rinaldi- I made the motion so I approve.

Izzo- Second agreement?

Bianchi- I would agree with striking that.

Izzo- Okay. Why don't you reread that?

Rinaldi- Option B- "All claims and disputes arising under or relating to this agreement are to be settled by binding arbitration as determined by a three-member mediation panel to be selected by both parties."

Izzo- Okay, Chief? We can vote on it, I'm not going to put pressure on you, but...

Chief- It sounds good. A binding arbitration, what is that? The mediation panel, what classifies the mediation panel? Three community members? Three non-community members? Three lawyers?

Izzo- If we file something against you in court, you would come back and argue, no. You would ask for that immediately to be dismissed because your contract says that there is another way to settle the dispute, okay?

Neal- And we are going to have this reviewed by legal counsel so we...

Rinaldi- We have to.

Chief - So with that on, I have reservations, but I'm fine.

Izzo- So okay, with legal review?

Chief - Okay.

Izzo- That does complete it. Now I guess, we've essentially approved everything, so perhaps now is the time to have it reviewed by legal counsel. What are your thoughts? Or should we take another vote or maybe two votes since there are some...? A vote on the whole contract excluding article one and two, which was already decided.

Rinaldi- What would be the harm in having legal counsel look at this and then...?

Izzo- I don't see a problem because I think everybody has voted or had a chance to comment on the way that it is. Neal, are you good with that?

Neal- I'm okay.

Izzo- Anthony? Okay, so we're good with that? Okay, so now the next part of this is who reviews this? And I'm suggesting that we keep our money local and that we have Leslie Kramer review this only from a legal aspect. It's not about whether it's good policy or good idea, but is there anything in here that's of a legal issue, paying particular attention to that clause that we just dealt with.

Bianchi- Are you making a motion or asking for one?

Izzo- I'll make the motion so we can discuss it. I'll make it a motion.

Rinaldi- I'll second.

Izzo- Okay. Discussion, any discussion? Chief?

Chief- I don't know anything about her. I don't know if she is a contract attorney. I don't know what she represents. I don't know if she understands fire district laws and statutes in the state of Arizona, which would be a concern of mine.

Rinaldi- Judy, is there anybody that you learned about during your training?

Neal- No, there were two attorneys present during the training. And one is the attorney that the fire district has been using that, I think, resides in Tucson or somewhere in the southern part of Tucson. And then there is an attorney, a gentleman that serves the northern part of the state and that was it, at the training.

But I think if Leslie felt like she was not qualified to review the contract that she would let us know. I mean, that she would not take the job.

Chief- Do we know how much Leslie charges an hour or anything?

Rinaldi- It's around \$225.

Man- It's around what?

Rinaldi- Two twenty five. Don't quote me on that, that's what she...the bill I saw.

Izzo- So Chief, are you suggesting that we use somebody else? Is that what you're suggesting?

Chief- We have a lawyer on contract. I don't know why we wouldn't use that lawyer. She's represented the district for 13 years.

Neal- And what does she charge an hour?

Chief- I'd have to look but want to say one.... It's under \$200.

Izzo- Personally, I'm not certain that that attorney would review this from a legal perspective. I'm just speaking on my personal, I'm not speaking for the board, my personal experience of her past comments and how she has advised the board. So I don't think we need an attorney to tell us it's not a good idea or this isn't done in other places. I think we need an attorney to look at this from a legal standpoint and say is there anything in here that's not legal, that kind of advice, not should we do this or should we not do this.

Chief- Then I think when you present it to the district attorney. You ought to state that.

Bianchi- I see no problem in letting Leslie look at this contract from the standpoint of have we done all the legal things that we could do to make it a contract.

Izzo- Okay, any more discussion?

Berry- I'd feel more comfortable if a contract lawyer looked at it compared to anyone. We're going to start off with...

Bianchi- Leslie does contracts.

Berry- She does contracts?

Bianchi- Yes, she has done them for me and so she understands contract law.

Berry- Then I feel, so we might as well start with her, work our way up the lawyer chain.

Izzo- Okay.

Bianchi- Carl Felder will be available soon.

Izzo- Okay, I'll call for the question. All those in favor of having Leslie review this?

All- Aye.

Izzo- Any opposed? Okay. Any opposed?

Berry- Aye.

Izzo- You're opposed?

Izzo- Four to one. And the mechanics of doing this, we need a rewrite in this.

Rinaldi- Okay.

Izzo- And Rinaldi, maybe as a clerk of the board, you could work with her?

Rinaldi- Sure, yeah.

Izzo- You could do it? Everybody okay? Okay, back on the agenda. We're on audience comments, the second call to the public.

Call to the Public -

Rinaldi- First name on the list is Linda Ford.

Linda- I want to congratulate you all for having gotten through this the way you have gone through it. And some of the comments that I'm going to make here are just the general things that I was writing down there even though you've already decided on it, it's this whole business of contracting at will. Because even though a state may have an at-will employment state that creates a presumption that whoever has been hired is employed at will. But if you bargain for contract terms where one party is giving this, the other party is giving that, one is getting that and it's a bargain for term, and it says, "I'm employed for two years," you should not be able to terminate me except for cause. And as long as you've got performance evaluation in there, you've got a way to have for that cause.

The other thing I want to say something about is this business of arbitration. It's been my experience that first of all, a mediation panel is not the same thing as arbitration. Mediation is one type of a way of getting the parties together, sit down with a skilled mediator and to discuss that there are various terms for the various issues that you have and work out some sort of compromised solution. It's not anything that is binding on you as far as court goes. It's just that you've worked out these terms, you agree to them, and once you agree to them, then they become more binding on you.

Arbitration is something that is generally handled under the rules and regulations of the American Arbitration Association, where you choose people who are familiar with the issues, and then you go out and those three people then become the ones who make the decision and it is then very binding on you. So I think that the lawyer you take it to will get that all cleared up, but I just wanted to point that out to you. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Thank you. Ed Schaefer.

Ed Schaefer- My name is Ed Schaefer. I live in Elgin. I was also opposed to formation of the fire district. As far as I'm concerned, that's in the past. I'm more concerned with the future of the fire district. The recent negotiations for the chief's contract have resulted in what I would consider to be more of a capitulation by the board instead of any kind of a compromise. However, I do thank the board for their efforts to bring in the contract out of the back room and into the light.

There will be more issues where it would be beneficial to the taxpayers if the board would find a middle ground. When it comes to the next budget, I would like to see decisions based on sound business practices rather than emotion. Many of us in the middle class are being squeezed by increasing taxes – federal, state, county, fire district, school. When I hear the argument that maintaining the Chief's current salary would only cost each person in the district \$6, I find that to be faulty reasoning. The costs for the fire district aren't spread evenly amongst the taxpayers. They depend on the valuation of your property.

Today, I pay more than twice what I paid for the volunteer department. I have friends and clients in Sonoita and Elgin that are paying 10 times what I'm paying. Already, the fire district's budget exceeds \$1 million a year. If we continue without firm business practices, how long will it be until we can reach \$2 million a year? I appreciate the people who have volunteered to be on the fire district board. It can be a thankless job requiring long hours and no pay.

During the last monthly board meeting, someone said in the audience that they didn't attend meetings, because they had a job. To that I would say that many of us have jobs. Attendance is a personal choice. The audience should remember that it's not appropriate to speak from the floor. And I also find it unacceptable to hear disparaging comments from the audience about a board member while they're speaking. Thanks for listening.

Rinaldi- Thank you. Don Irving.

Don Irving- My name is Don Irving. I've been a member of the community for 25 years. I'm a taxpayer here. Last Monday, Miss Rinaldi suggested that the board would like to hear from the public, that's a very good idea. I consulted a number of my neighbors, friends. I served as a member of the volunteer board, talked with many of the people that were present then and serving as volunteers, both on the volunteer fire department, on the board, in fundraising committees and a variety of activities.

I asked why they were no longer involved. Many of those folks are even older than I am. I got answers like, "It's too difficult because I can't get my wheelchair in the door or the walkers, and I don't drive at night or my driver or my spouse is dead and I can't get out." But they all assured me, many of the folks I spoke with insured me that they are continually concerned. They are aware of what's happening and they view these attacks, or they view the attacks on the Chief as attacks, but more as attacks on the concept of a fire district. A continuation of the opposition before the vote, which was overwhelming for the district, and then the suits that have been outlined here that followed. And this attack appears to many to be a continuation of that event. That's very unfortunate, but the board needs to know that, I think, and needs to be concerned about that.

Another issue has to do with this proposed position, this budget position. I reviewed the job description, and I've hired a number of folks myself, but I was with a colleague this past week who is also an expert in contracts and hiring. We looked at that job description, and it appears that that description was very specific. It was developed for a specific person, tailored to an individual. And when I hear that there is an individual in mind that suspicion grows.

Why should I be concerned? I'm only 81, I'm young. One lady asked me that, she is a lot older. Well, I do have concerns now, but I can tell you that I will have greater concerns about heart attacks. I've already experienced one, a fire suppression and even a snake on the patio when I'm 100 years old, but I want to be assured that Chief Joseph is still here running an outstanding operation at that time. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Katherine Prentice.

Katherine Prentice- Katherine Prentice again. Thank you for working with the chief and coming to an agreement. I am a taxpayer here as well, for property taxes. I also get the same squeeze everybody else does. There are other places that do incur property taxes -- Elgin School, Cochise College, the jail systems in

Nogales, libraries, so if you want to maybe look at decreasing your taxes, you might want to get involved in some other areas in accounting.

An individual stated in the last board meeting that he worked in public service for 30 years and he felt that the Chief and the Captain's pay should be decreased. I challenge this individual to tell us how much do the captains really make. I work fulltime. I need my second paycheck to roll in so I can make mortgage. It's due on the 1st and I'm always late. I have a kid in college and another with an autoimmune medical problem. I'm paying medical bills on him monthly just to stay out of debt collection. My truck has a dent on the side of it, over 220,000 miles, go Chevy. The exhaust system is falling apart. The BC hates to hear me pull up. I heat my house with wood. I don't have any AC. I don't have cable. I have a flip phone. I don't have a smart phone, but I can call 911 in case my kid has a seizure and I know that my friends will come help. I have been known to go down to the bank parking lot and get on to the internet. My kids get and send their homework there in that same parking lot, because I don't have internet at my house either.

One, I'm not looking for sympathy I'm just letting you know the reality. Many of the people that work here work one or two extra jobs on top of this job. They don't do it because they want to, but they do it so that they can make their bills. We've had two and now I heard a third person left because they're worried about their job stability here. That's very concerning.

I'm here to let you know what I want to do for my community. I grew up in this community. I've been here since '72. I'm here because I want to serve the community that I've known since I've been in first grade. One of the qualifications that I have on my job, I've gotten Wildland cert in the 16 years that I've been here, EMT, structure fire fighter, HAZMAT. I've done in-house engineering and I can drive and pump every single vehicle here. I'm a CPR instructor. I'm a paramedic. I was voted as class president in my paramedic class at Pima. I was elected as Cochise County EMS counsel 10 years ago where I still serve. I serve on the board of 2020 reaching out to the firefighters and EMS across the line.

I come in here and fight and be backup ALS for everybody that's out on a wildland fire and I don't ask for pay or sympathy. I forgot to mention, I have my bachelors in nursing and I still maintain my current Arizona licensure. I worked at University of Medical Center for six years. I was offering charge nurse. I co-authored a book based on hospital restructuring and presented it at a multinational conference.

I could make twice the pay rate anywhere else as a nurse than I do here, but I'm here because I love my job and I love my community. I encourage you to get to know the people that work here, their background or certifications. Come live in our quarters, shower in our showers, come eat in our kitchen with us. We would like to have people understand what we go to do. Thank you for your time.

Rinaldi- Louise Kolesar.

Louise Kolesar- My name is Louise Kolesar. I live in Sonoita. I wanted to talk about the budget and finance committee membership. From my understanding, you now will be having four people on the committee, a firefighter, a citizen and two members of the board. And I just want to bring up the idea that perhaps an even number of people is not a good idea on a committee, and again put forth the idea that another citizen be put on the committee or perhaps, if you want to expand it further, but I would always feel that it was best to have an odd number on a committee for voting purposes. So I hope you'll take that under consideration before the committee gets too far into what's working.

Rinaldi- Thank you. Vicky Rutter.

Vicki Rutter- Vicki Rutter, fire district resident. I already spoke on the budget finance committee and I'm still confused that someone asked tonight to be on the committee and he was ignored. And I would like you to revisit that because you did add someone from the staff to the committee, but you're completely ignoring the community residents, so please revisit that.

Rinaldi- Karla Cafarelli. No? Okay, now we're going to general comments. Terry Plympton.

Terry Plympton- Terry Plympton, Elgin, Arizona. Just a few thoughts regarding some of the most recent SEFD board meetings. To those of you who have attempted to make an issue of an individual who was originally opposed to tax-based fire district serving on the budget and finance committee, where were your objections when I served on the audit committee which was eventually merged in the budget and finance committee? You were absent and yet nothing bad happened. The world did not stop spinning on its axis nor was the fire department swallowed by a monster sinkhole during my tenure on that committee.

From my two-year commitment serving as a public member of the board sub-committee, I guarantee there is no ultimate decision making power in this position, none. The object of these committees is to review and investigate data for the board and to make recommendations to the board. It is then the responsibility of the full board to discuss the findings of the sub-committee, make appropriate changes, start over from scratch or whatever the entire board chooses to do. Once satisfied with the figures or language involved, then and only then, the full board will make motions and take votes on the final product. The sub-committee may start the ball rolling, but it is the board which wields the power.

It is unfortunate that there are members of the community who have chosen to dredge up instances from the past in order to malign others or impede their desire to serve the community at large and specifically the fire district. The struggle to form a fire district was not our community's finest hour and there was ample culpability connected to all sides of the dispute. However, the voters of this community ultimately chose to establish and maintain a fire district, and whether we supported this decision or not, the district is our present and our future. There is no going back.

Whatever the original offense, it has been nearly a decade since the community was split regarding the formation of a taxpayer-funded fire district. And since that time, most of us have moved on with our lives and have found ways to put the past where it belongs, in the past. When you continue to bring this issue up in public, you're saying so much more about yourselves than the intended targets, and your objectives seem to be that of conjuring evils, fostering strife and seeing conspiracies where there none exist. This is old news and many of us are tired of the time worn through frames.

These blasts from the past have no teeth and will not dissuade those of us who truly care about the creation of a more respectful community environment. We will continue to move forward toward a goal of peaceful coexistence and we hope you will join us.

Now, on a personal note, Kevin Venos, I want to thank you for your years of service to this department and to this community. We have not always agreed on issues regarding the management of the SEFD; however you have my respect for always handling yourself in a professional manner regardless of the situation. As a battalion chief, official spokesperson for the SEFD, and to my mind, the backbone of this department, your presence will be missed. Thank you.

Rinaldi- Thank you. Kurt Bahti is that right?

Kurt Bahti- That was quick.

Izzo- You got to talk faster.

Kurt- Kurt Bahti I've been a resident here for over 30 years, I think it's about 33 now. First of all, I commend the board. I know you didn't plan on getting into this type of situation when you put in for this board and got elected. I've been on a dozen boards that's handled some pretty contentious issues and I can tell you right now, the best thing you can do is get a thicker skin, if you can, or else you're just not going to make it through. And it's too bad it has to be that way, but that's the way it is.

There was comments last time that should have maybe been rebutted, after the last board comments, but when we're talking about the number of people coming to the meetings. People don't come to board meetings, they just don't. If they're comfortable with what's going on, they don't show up. It used to frustrate the heck out of me and I finally let go of it. They come when there is something contentious or when there is something that they're uncomfortable with or whatever. That's when people show up, so that's the way humans operate.

There was a few things, when you mentioned about the Chief, if he was on a fishing trip up in Wyoming or something like that, he'd have to take the call. Having been a person that was on 24/7 call, when I was on vacation though, always somebody was left in charge, acting for my position. And I can tell you, my vacations were what I called sanitary retention time, sometimes it didn't work. But I would suggest when somebody's on vacation, you go to the acting and leave them alone.

So a suggestion to the board, and it's been touched on a little bit here, what I want to see is transparency from everybody. And we've heard that term used a lot, actually, since two presidential elections ago and we haven't seen it there either. But transparency in everything that goes on, that's what we need. Then maybe we wouldn't have this whole crowd. They'd be staying home watching their favorite program too.

And in the tone of transparency, I haven't heard anything yet on a new \$70,000-account that was established and it wasn't in the last budget meeting. I'm hoping it will be in the next meeting and with also some explanation as to why it was formed, who signs it. We've already got, as I saw from the accounts that we've had accounts already, a checking accounts and savings and other stuff, so I'm curious as to why so, transparency there. That's what we're asking for. And to echo somebody else, good business practice.

Also one thing, when talking about taxes, yeah, I pay a lot more in taxes too but, we also have to look, when we got insurance, when your fire department is higher-rated, your insurance goes down. So we've got a little bit of payback on that.

Izzo- Could we open that door and that door for a few minutes?

Rinaldi- Barbara McReynolds.

Barbara McReynolds- I'm Barbara McReynolds. We moved out here about 1984, because we just love it out here. We lived up on the Kellogg Ranch, and it was beautiful. And I looked over at the Santa Ritas, quite on fire, and I've watched him and watched him because I was sure it was going to jump the highway and get us, but it didn't. We saw the slurry planes coming over and all the different fire departments. I thank every one of you who probably weren't there, but everyone that was there, and they came from all over the country. And I know we appreciated it, putting that mountain out, putting out the fire.

Now, then we moved over here to Star View. Now, Star View is something else. And I know that we appreciate the Chief, we appreciate all the members of the fire department and the volunteers that are crazy enough to go out there too and put out those fires. So all together, the fire department has put out four fires that have saved our house, four times. And I mean it came up to the door. If it doesn't teach you a lesson that they're more important than our tax bill, I learned that real fast.

When we switched to a tax thing, every year, I see my taxes go up and nobody wants their taxes go up, but there was a million dollars to me. So I just want to say thank you to all of them, all the volunteers. I'm making this very personal for a reason. And I don't know the politics. I wouldn't be on your board if you paid me. There are too many problems, but they're appreciated too. So I just want to thank everybody. It has saved us four times, once is too many.

Rinaldi- Sandra Ruppel.

Sandra Ruppel- Sandra Ruppel, Sonoita, Arizona. Just a couple of things. I wanted to agree with this woman back here. It was brought up several times before and it was an agenda item in terms of adding people to the budget committee, and you have a gentleman who is highly qualified stand up and volunteer. Why that wasn't even brought up, I'm not really sure, but I would love for you to revisit that and get another community member just for balance.

In terms of hiring attorneys to look at things, I would suggest that you go for objectivity. Go for somebody out of the community. And you need to start, possibly, I don't know, looking for recommendations for the Arizona State Fire Board Association. Katie Fair is our regional representative. She is very good I've spoken to her several times. And this as part of firm business practices means being above any appearance of impropriety, and if you just take it out of the county, then nobody can say you were going with somebody that you favored. So looking for people to look at things like this, I would seriously suggest finding somebody out of the county, somebody out of our district who could look at it.

One thing I would like to correct is, I appreciate that you all are here, but none of you were voted in by a majority of the taxpayers. Contrary to the numbers that were handed out on your list there, I called the county and there are over 1,400 registered voters in this district. Judy, I believe, you got the highest of over 500, the rest of you got less than a third of the votes, and I think you need to remember that.

The reason this room is filled like this and it isn't higher, if you had a majority of the people that wanted to do something in a different way, they would be here. So please remember that. And when the community shows up, it's because we are disturbed by what's going on and I wish that you would listen to us. I do appreciate that you did change a few things. I really do appreciate that. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Rinaldi- That's it.

Izzo- I made our board member comments and I'm just wondering if the members of the budget finance committee would care to address that question came up several times.

Bianchi- Address what in particular?

Izzo- The question of if people were volunteering, how you would go about that. The impression was it's just being totally forgotten. So how would the budget finance committee go about considering that? So the way that it's worked is two board members of the budget and finance committee determines who's on their committee. They come to the board. The board then agrees with that. So it's not like the board doesn't just say this person should be on there. It starts with the two board members of the budget and finance committee. So I was wondering if you would like to address that since it came up several times.

Neal- I will start. I'm not opposed to a fifth member being appointed. I know we have more than one, three or four people who tonight have offered their services. And some of them I know, some of them I don't know. So I think that there needs to be a discussion and I have no idea how Jerry feels about a fifth person, but I'm not opposed to that.

Izzo- Thanks, Judy.

Bianchi- I think people misunderstand how the budget and finance committee works. We have no authority to do anything. All of this takes place by board action, so we can only make suggestions or recommendations. The question was raised, for example, about the \$70,000. That account was created last year working with the Chief and the strategic planning committee to try to provide for future needs so that all of a sudden, one year, we don't come in here and say we've got to spend a couple of a hundred thousand dollars in this year's budget for ambulances. And so we are trying to fund it. And Kevin is absolutely right in the comments he made that we haven't totally funded it.

When I made this comment before in meetings, when I studied economics in college, the definition of economics is the allocation of limited resources to unlimited wants. Now, if you all want me to double your

taxes, as far as the fire district is concerned, we can do that in a heartbeat, but I don't think that is the responsibility of a responsible board to do something like that.

So we created those three separate funds to handle finding a way to deal with the crew's quarters which are atrocious. I've been in them. I wouldn't want to spend a night in there, and people that complain about spending money on that, you should go maybe spend a night in them. And also for personal protective equipment, when we send guys out on a fire that they are properly, and according to law, prepared and dressed to go out and fight the fire. So it's a separate amount of money in that \$70,000 for that. The third item was, we've already talked about equipment replacement and the crew's quarters and their personal protective equipment, that make up the \$70,000. That was all discussed last year at our open public budget meeting.

Now, why is this segregated? It is segregated because we told people that it would be segregated, so that the money that comes from your taxes, primarily, will only be used for the intended purpose and not for any other purpose. And that is why it is a segregated fund.

Now, also the budget committee meets, we won't get into the finance end of that because we'll probably have a real good discussion about that in a couple of months. The budget committee meets first to look at the levy limit which comes from the taxpayer protection association that says this is the most amount of money you can tax people in your district. And we review that. Then we have to set a schedule. So it starts with meeting after meeting to discuss budget items. That is open to everybody in the public, talk about transparency and openness. We never, in that budget committee, do anything that doesn't take place in a public meeting and minutes are recorded for that.

The Chief attends every single one of our committee meetings. He has probably the most significant input to the budget. Am I telling the truth there, Chief? And we then work to deal with things that might come from the public. So I may come in and say I don't want that fund anymore, do away with it. And on the other hand, somebody else might come in and say hey you need to put more money in that fund. All of these comments are taken into consideration.

And then we've gotten a very good format that don't take a genius or anyone that's terribly skilled in accounting or anything like that to fill out the form we fill out. We bring that then to the board. And we have a study session with the board. And this year's going to be a little different than in the past. In the past we gave them a filled out form. This year, we're going to take care of the nitty-gritty stuff, and major things will be done at our study session where every board member can have an opportunity to have input into it then and not say we left them out and public is open to the study session.

So let's see what else? And we don't set the budget. We're an instrument that takes all of this input and creates a budget and then it goes to the public for the public meeting once the board says, "Okay, this is what we want to go with." After that it comes to the board to officially vote on what they want to have for a budget. And then it goes to the counties. And from then on, they're the ones who deal with your taxes. Now I hope that answers those questions.

Now far as firefighter pay is concerned, all you guys over at the corner there, your pay is determined, unless things have changed, Chief, by that schedule you had on how well they have developed their skills. Is that still the way you're doing that?

Chief - Mm-hmm.

Bianchi- Okay, and that's pretty much cast in concrete, so to speak. The budget committee don't do anything with that. We have no intention, at least, I don't, I can't speak for everybody, to touch anybody's pay, any firefighter's pay. We had addressed the Chief's pay when we looked at what other organizations were

paying their chiefs. I'm not going to get into a debate with the people in the audience. Anyhow, you don't have to worry about any of that taking place.

And we also, I'm speaking now as a board member, have no intention of trying to do away with this district. Back when you heard a lot of talk about when there's a big controversy whether or not we should have a district, the person who chaired that committee to keep our district was suggested by the fellow sitting right there, that that fellow be the chairman.

We took money out of our own wallets in order to put up broad size and do advertising and all the rest of it. We worked very diligently and very hard, and as a result, the district came out with a 67%, 68% favorable vote. I was the guy who chaired that committee. I have volunteered for five years as a dispatcher getting up in the middle of the night to come down to that little room back there when the need arose. So there is no intent here to do away with this district. We just want it run properly.

Something you all need to be aware of, Chief does not have responsibility legally for what happens here, unless he does something dishonest. But as far as the running of this district is concerned, the people sitting at this table, right along here, are the ones who are legally responsible, who can be sued and even have jail sentences imposed on them as they're totally negligent in their duties. So if it weren't for the amount of money I get paid, I don't think I'd want to do this job. No discussion, Bonnie. I'll talk to you outside, if you want.

Bonnie Chambers- You did it. I know you did it. I was there.

Izzo- Any other board comments.

Rinaldi- Just wanted to thank Kevin Venos for his service. He will be missed.

Unknown woman- Then you need to rehire him, to get him back.

Bianchi- We didn't fire him.

Izzo- I have a comment, and I hope those of you that have been through this whole thing stayed tonight saw the fruition of it. I apologize to you and I'm sorry that there were just so many rumors and misunderstandings about this whole process. I tried to make it clear that there was going to be a negotiation. It just started with the draft contract from the board. We're the ones doing the hiring, whether you agree to this or not, that's the way it is. And we have one employee, and that's the Chief. So it was appropriate that we prepare the contract as opposed to the employee preparing the contract. That's just how we felt about it. You may disagree with me about that, but we felt, as the employer, it was our responsibility to start the process with a contract. And many of you have heard me say, acknowledge that it was one-sided. Well, the boss is usually one-sided when they're hiring the employee. It's usually that way. It wasn't something that we were trying to do to get the Chief to quit or make him look bad or anything else. It was intended to be one-sided because we're the employer. It was also intended that that would not be the final contract. It would have been bizarre if the employee said, "Okay, that's just fine. I'll take the pay cut. I'll take every other terms." We didn't expect that. We expected to go to negotiation and we did. And I'm sorry that so much of that was misinterpreted and misunderstood as something that we were trying to do that we really weren't.

And in those executive sessions meetings with the Chief, Chief gave us a lot of documents, 23 pages of documents at one point. We considered those and we put a lot of that stuff in this final contract that Chief had asked for. So when you saw us here trying to get Chief to agree with these terms, and so we didn't meet, I'm not going to say halfway, but we came to an agreement on these terms of the contract.

I feel really bad that what we tried to do with good intentions has ended up with Venos quitting and the morale of our district severely hampered. I'm very sorry about that. I don't know what else we could have done. It doesn't matter, looking back, because the damage is already done. But I hope you see tonight that it wasn't our intent to get him to quit, to get him to leave. I hope you see that. I hope you go and ask him about it and he'll speak for himself.

I know he wasn't happy with the terms. I knew he wouldn't be when we gave it to him. And so many of you mentioned this, none of us would accept the contract that we started with. I wouldn't have accepted it either, okay? But it was a starting point, it was a starting point. And so that's the process that we went through and I hope you can see that now as a result of this. And Venos, I'm just personally going to ask you again to reconsider, because Chief isn't leaving, at least as we know it, and we're not going to ask you to fill his shoes, and things are only going to get better. Things are only going to get better.

For those of you that have been coming, you noticed, one of the things we did this year was to put chief over here at the table, because it felt like having the Chief over there was this them and us thing going on. He needs to be at the table. He is part of this. And I know it's been misunderstood when we talk about responsibility and operation. I don't think I'm responsible for the operation of the district directly. I'm only responsible for one thing, and that's Chief, what Chief does. So yes, if he screws up, okay, yes, I can be held responsible. I have no interest in running the district.

Maybe sometimes, as elected people, we step over the line when it comes to things like budgets and that kind of stuff, maybe get a little too much involved. We have personal things that we're trying to put forward. Those of you that have been around, you know how hard I fought for one personal little thing about holiday pay last year, which I'll never forget. So sometimes, we bring those things forward to try to get something that we feel like is really important done. That doesn't mean that we don't understand what the district does and that you guys are the ones that do it. It's not us, it's you. But our only responsibility is to the Chief. That's our only communication. That's our only line of communication that we have. I rambled on, I'm sorry. Anybody else?

Berry- Venos, I'm sorry you're leaving. I'm very saddened that I didn't spend enough time around the station to get to know you better. I was gone on vacation for a week and it was just... I didn't even check my emails when I got back. And this was the first meeting that I knew about it. So you'll be missed if you do leave. If there is anything I can do to keep you here, let me know.

Izzo- Any comments? Okay, call for **motion to adjournment**.

Rinaldi- I motion to adjourn.

Neal- I second.

Izzo- All those in favor.

Board members- Aye.

Izzo- Meeting is adjourned.

Minutes approved _____ on April 27, 2015.