

**Minutes to the Regular Meeting of the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District Board of Directors  
Monday, January 28, 2013  
6 p.m.**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call** – all members present

**Approval of minutes** – minutes of December 17, 2012. Pfitzenmaier commented on two changes... he'd like to add the word "unless" to page three, second line from the bottom... I don't think we should apply for the grant ... the word unless should be there. Also, I'd like the text of the grant language added to the minutes. Motion to approve the minutes as correct by Pfitzenmaier, seconded by Rinaldi. Motion carries.

**Chief's Report –**

Chief De Wolf handed out disclosure forms for each Board member to fill out , they need to be filled out yearly and any other time that any conflict of interest that may come up.

**Out & About** – Chief De Wolf advised the Board of the meetings he attended in the past month; Arizona Fire District Association (ACCHHS billing, House Bill 2144 (gives County Board of Supervisors the right to take over a fire district); Sonoita by Starlight – we had over 20 individuals stop by; Casas Arroyos Homeowner's Association; Fire House Chat, attended by 2 individuals; Board meeting next month will be on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday due to President's Day holiday; Open Meeting Law training, Katie and I attended it along with Tony and Larry, good information, every time we go we have a tendency to learn a little more. Rinaldi – the folks at North Suburban Fire were very forthcoming with giving information to anybody who might be interested in those PDFs and how that all works because I was not able to attend. I was very impressed, I got all the same information that you got. De Wolf – the biggest thing about going to the meetings is you get to hear some of the struggles that the other Boards are going through. The conversation in the classroom is really valuable. With that, we're going to change our agenda, we need to be a little more specific. The chief's report is not detailed enough – the description on the agenda. We'll work out a new draft agenda and send it out to the board later this week. We also learned that on topics like under new business, crew quarters, the Board member can give us a topic but it cannot have a solution – it can't have a slant, a direction that the Board member wants to go. Newsletter – last month Jennifer asked about newsletters, for a four-page, black and white newsletter we were paying \$1232, for the last newsletter (double-sided, color) we paid \$640. **Izzo** – Who did that Chief? **De Wolf** – Arizona Lithographers. **Pfitzenmaier** – the perception is everything, in which case did we get the most calls saying we were wasting money? **De Wolf** – We haven't got a call on any. **Pfitzenmaier** - Including the stiff color page? **De Wolf** – the only comment we got was from Jennifer that someone had questioned her about the cost of it. **Rinaldi** – more than just somebody, quite a few people, and that's why I brought that up because it's my job. **De Wolf** That's why we wanted to clarify it, it was brought to our attention and we wanted to show it was a savings. We are in the process of putting another newsletter together. With that, we've had 20 responses to our fuels mitigation and have received 12-15 new contacts for our crew from this newsletter. **Rinaldi** – on your Website, wouldn't it be prudent to add this information - it hasn't been updated in a while, in fact the old Board members are still there. **De Wolf** – We're in the process of doing that. Jerry mention to me on Saturday night, Katie does do a wonderful job, but there's only one administrative personnel in this department, and for her to spend time doing 11 pages of minutes and things for financials for our treasurer, it's a time thing for us – that's been our struggle with our website all along, getting the information updated. What about some outside help there are several people in this community who could help? We have a

young lady who comes in and helps us file. It's not just coming in; it's putting the information together. Sometimes a person coming in for one hour a week just doesn't have access to the information.

**Website** – We had 702 hits in December up a few from last December, we'll continue to follow this through the next year. **Runs**; we had 37 runs in December, 27 during the day, 10 at night, 10 simultaneous runs in December. We wound up last year with 473 calls, 64 calls less than we had in 2011. We had 118 simultaneous calls for last year, 2 building permits for Santa Cruz County, none for Pima County. Medic 831 ran 121 calls, Medic 832 ran 124 runs. We continue with Officer training with Grow Your Captains, an online interactive training. Ready, Set, Go! Program, this is the time we need to get our homes ready. We did receive a certificate of appreciation from Ready, Set, Go! for all we've done last year. **Finances** – we're right on track. (Spreadsheets were projected on the screen) FDAT, we get a little over \$50,000 each year, there is legislation to do away with this tax. We'll be watching this as it progresses. Expenses, we're six months into the fiscal year and we are right on track as well. Fuels crew and wildland fire – we're scheduling training for the upcoming fire season. We bill directly (rapidly) to the state, and have received all our monies. Nationally, there is 8.1 million owed to fire departments throughout the state for back wildland pay. Tubac is in the hole over \$100,000 for wildland. We're paid, full, 100%. De Wolf gave a brief update on the current and upcoming grants as he has done for the past many months. **Budget Schedule**... projected on the screen, the two dates in red are special meetings.

**Old Business** – Report from the Chief about the legal status on leasing land for the Sign. De Wolf – I have the response would you like me or the Clerk of the Board to read this into the minutes. The short of the short is No we cannot do it. The reason is that the, and she quotes some case law and everything, the District land is for District use. If we were dissolved the land doesn't go back to the District, the land goes to the county. All our assets go to the county and the county liquidates them. So we cannot get into a contract leasing a piece of land that isn't technically isn't really ours. Pfitzenmaier – it would hold the county liable in some circumstance. **De Wolf** – Right. Then there's the other thing if we do it for the Chamber then where does it stop. The Rotary, anybody else could come up and we'd have to put a sign up on the property. Izzo – She's citing the gift clause and state statute that says the state or subdivision cannot give anything away. So, you know what happens in big counties and the state, for example, surplus property has to be declared surplus and goes to auction, and then whatever isn't wanted, the Salvation Army is there formally to take it, you can't give surplus property away. You can't give anything away. There's a formality – ultimately ends up in the Salvation Army, but they go through the whole auction process. She was looking at that as a gift, and that makes a lot of sense. So, if there aren't any other questions we'll move on to new business. De Wolf - The other thing we're going to have to address Ron, public comment. Your public comment at the end, and that's all right, do we want to add public comment again at the beginning or at the beginning of each topic. The Board can just allow public comment at the end. **Pfitzenmaier** – the thing I think Chief, it would be inappropriate for us to have an agenda item and to vote on it without the benefit of the public having had a chance to speak prior to our vote. So, if it's something that's leading to a motion that has an interest in public comment, it's on the agenda, and the people have signed in to talk about it, we should not vote on that, we should encourage the public to comment during the course of our discussion prior to voting on the issue. **Rinaldi** – Is it okay for me to mention that us as Board members have received two emails from different members of the community, I have them printed out here, in regards to the sign. **Izzo** – If you want to discuss the sign its okay, it is on the agenda. I think the matter is a moot point. **Rinaldi** – it's a moot point, but my point is there was public comment. **De Wolf** – well, for all the Board members, if you receive an email that concerns something on the agenda, it has to go to our office so we can make it a public document so we can have it present. **Izzo** – you're talking about a comment on an agenda item. We're not going to give you all the emails we get, Chief. **De Wolf** – well that's good, I get plenty of my own. Izzo – so to that, we do have two people signed up to make a comment on the sign. If you understood what's going

on, it's a moot point, the sign will not be here, so, Mr. Soliere, did you still wish to comment (no) and Mrs. Plympton, did you wish to...(recording of Mrs. Plympton voice not understandable – she did get up and make a public comment.)

**Plympton, Elgin.** I understand that this is a moot issue, but for everyone that is in this room and just because..... I'd like to make a few comments. First of all, I don't think that this proposed electronic sign in general is in keeping with the nature of our community, I think it would be an additional eyesore to the crossroads and a potential safety hazard. For those of you who travel through West Gate on Fort Huachuca, I don't know if you've been noticing all of the electronic signs that are popping up all over the place out there. It's very incongruous to the natural surroundings, the buildings, the traffic, the signs, everything else, they can be very distracting to drivers trying to navigate the road when trying to see when the new golf tournament might be scheduled. Also, as a point of reference here, going back to the origination of this particular proposal, this is my understanding and please correct me if I'm wrong here, that Mr. Izzo and Mr. Bianchi were involved with the original decision to solicit the grant monies for the electronic sign while serving on the Chamber Board. Is this correct? **Izzo** – That's correct. **Plympton** – if this is true, I believe this is a conflict of interest and Mr. Bianchi and Mr. Izzo should recue themselves from any decision the SEFD Board will make regarding the sign or any decision along this line. I think this has been covered by the Chef then too. I also believe that the installation of the sign would not be using District property ..... (unreadable)... that has also been addressed. I want to encourage everyone at this meeting to be aware of the following, that this proposal may be dead here tonight but there is every possibility that there may be future attempts to place the sign in our community, so I'm going to urge all of you to attend a meeting being sponsored by the Crossroads Forum on February 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m., at the Sonoita Court Complex. The Chamber has been invited to update the community on its plans regarding this project and the public will have opportunity to ask questions and express opinions. I've got flyers to that if anybody needs any. Chief, thank you very much for doing the due diligence, I appreciate it. Thank you.

**New Business – Crew Quarters** – Anthony Berry – the reason why I bring Crew Quarters up is and actually I'll start out since a lot of people may not have any knowledge about where the crew stays – um Chief or Assistant Chief, could you origin of the current crew quarters? **De Wolf** – in 2006 we received two travel trailers which we brought in and we set out in back, there's one for the guys and one for the gals, they were purchased through FEMA, we paid I think it was \$2400 including hauling them in from the Midwest to here. That was the total cost we have into those trailers. **Pfitzenmaier** – And they were new. **De Wolf** – they were new, they were brand new, they were never used. They were for Katrina, but never used. We were the first ones to actually open and got to use them. They are heated by propane cylinders like any travel trailer that you have, there are drafts that come up from the bottom, they kind of rock you to sleep on windy nights, and we've been living in them full-time now for the past three years. **Berry** – Thank you Chief. As you can see these units are inefficient. I don't know how many people in the audience have lived in them for a while. In the winter they use a lot of propane and I understand there are electrical heaters plugged in there also, which also adds to the expense. In the summer the air conditioners consume a lot of electricity. So, I just wanted to bring up this topic because – also crew comfort - there's a problem there, Chief, they don't use they don't use the restrooms or the showers. Do they use the showers in them? **De Wolf** – No. The only showers or restrooms we have are back here. So if anybody has a bladder problem, getting up, this could be a discomfort in the middle of the night going from the RV into here, so basically in a nutshell I wanted the Board to think about what could be done to improve our quarters for our members of the department that are here for 24 hour shifts. If anybody has any ideas that would be great since the budget is coming up. **Izzo** – How big are they? **Berry** –The RVs? I have not even looked at them. **De Wolf** – They are 28 feet I believe. **Izzo** – And they're not hooked up to septic – our new septic system. **Venos** – We tried hooking it up to the septic

system in the beginning. Anybody that's lived in a travel trailer for any length of time knows it's – you don't use a restroom like you do a house restroom; you fill your tank up till it's full and flush it out all at the same time. It got to where we were flushing it out all at the same time and clogging it, buying snakes and trying to get the stuff, stuff was going down that shouldn't have gone down. It just became so much of an issue that we decided to take the units out of service and have the crews use the facilities inside here. **Izzo** – So, how many people will it sleep? **Venos** – The way they're set up right now, the men's sleeps seven and the women's sleeps six. One reason I bring this up is for the Board to think about and mainly the Chief, is there a room in this building for crew quarters? **De Wolf** – We've turned the building upside down and even tried to shake it out a bit hoping it would stretch to give us a little more room. There really isn't. We've talked about this room; by converting this room we'd have to eliminate any meetings, our Board meetings would have to be held in the bays, which by the way there is no heating and cooling in there either. The other problem you run into is by code you have to have a window access so we only have two. If we were to split the room down the middle and put rooms on this side and this side, it couldn't be done because of the wall on this side and there's no way to get out. We've looked around and tried to think of different ways to come up with ways to have a better more comfortable sleeping area. **Berry** – Unfortunately after I proposed this item for the agenda I walked into this room and it had shrunk. (laughter) So, in reality what you're saying is that there's really nothing to be done until we run into the funds through a grant or what other means to build that housing. **Pfitzenmaier** – this is not a new issue, we've talked about this before it's on a relatively short list of items that we have kicked down the road. Another item on that list, establishing an account to deal with our aging fleet of equipment, an escrow account of some kind – we talk about it and haven't done anything about it; we have absolutely no fall-back position other than loans or bond issues to replace any equipment that should crater on us. We know that we have grants that are expiring that are likely not to be reinstated. These are all things that are going to have to be discussed at both special Board meetings that the Chief has listed on his agenda for Board meetings in my opinion. And we're going to have to prioritize which one or two of these we're going to fight for and get done this year. I personally believe we have to pick one for sure, which is something we haven't done in the time I've been here; we have to pick one and get it done. Then move on next year and try for something better; we can't maintain the status quo any longer on some of these issues just like this one. That's obviously not a proposal for solution and before talking too much longer about the bunking issue we would have to have some notion in our heads and maybe on paper of what an alternative is and what a solution is so that we can talk about trades. But we're pointing ourselves to the next special Board meeting and this is what we need to talk about. **Rinaldi** – Absolutely, and to add to that I also want to mention that we're not in good economic times right now and as I said during my election one of the things that people are afraid of and can't do right now is they can't help themselves they can't increase their own. It would be a very sensitive issue not that it can't be done but that it needs to be seriously looked at and discussed not that it can't be discussed but it needs to be discussed but I'm just saying here of all of the times perhaps in the past it might have been an easier thing to get passed. **Pfitzenmaier** – It has not been easier to get it passed if I may, Jen, it has always been the 800 pound gorilla in the room is the economy, at least after 2008 it has been. That has always been the reason why we have been extraordinarily sensitive about raising rates as assessed values go down rates have to go up just to maintain the status quo. My argument here is we have to look now, finally, look harder beyond that very real issue of the situation that people are in. We also have the responsibility to maintain our Fire District to make sure that we can get the job done and take care of our people. And I think we've hit the wall, and we have to look really hard. **Izzo** – This seems like an excellent topic for a special committee. Anthony does that sound like an idea, we would have a special committee look into this, come back to the Board make a recommendation, working with the Chief and whatever. You know, everything from surplus canvas tents to the Tajo Mahan. Okay, so you're obviously going to Chair the committee, anyone else like to serve on

it? **Pfitzenmaier** – I'll serve on it. **Izzo** – Okay. Some sort of report at the special meeting. Not the final blueprints, but something, since it has to do with finances. **Bianchi** – I'd like to say that in addition to having the committee do their homework that we have a study session on just this specific subject, so that the public can participate or observe at least what we're talking about. When this committee presents something, I would like to see all aspect of it covered including alternatives. You know in almost everything I've run into in life you've got more than one choice. In addition if it's going to involve, it sounds to me like we're talking about the construction of a building someplace, that's where we're heading and if that is the case I would like a complete breakdown of the building, what it is going to include, how it's going to be laid out; I would like things covered like the mechanical, the electrical, the plumbing and all that sort of thing covered so we can discuss it. Also, I would like to know how you propose to finance it and then I'd like to receive this information at least a week before we have the study session so I can look at the data before we sit down and get all this stuff dumped on me and then try to make some intelligent decisions about it. **Izzo** – That's a good idea, I like that. I don't know that we can have all that in a month, but... **Berry** – We'll try. **Izzo** – Any more discussion on this? **Pfitzenmaier** – I guess I'm not sure, we're going to gather some substantial data on the issue of the bunkhouse. That's good, that's fine. **Izzo** – With a report to the board whenever the study session that's a work session – that's the 23<sup>rd</sup> right now. **Pfitzenmaier** – I'm equally concerned – have we decided by this action here tonight that the crew space is going to take our first priority for study and look? **Izzo** – Well it's an agenda item. It's on the agenda, I thought we'd do something about it. Anthony I really want to thank you for that. Like Larry said, this thing has been pushed down the road forever since the District has been formed and we need to have a plan, we need to have some sort of - well the RVs were a plan – they have to be here.

**Audience Comments** – none.

**Board member comments** – **Izzo** – Special meeting proposed for the 23<sup>rd</sup>, is that Saturday? That's a hard night for me. That's not viable for me to do a Saturday. This was followed by a discussion amongst the Board members of the best day to hold the special study session. February 26<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. was chosen by all members. Budget Study Session; reviewing this year's budget and discussing next year's budget.

**Bianchi** – Saturday the Chief did a really decent job, for those of you who were there in recognizing the people who are part of this Fire District and things that they did. There was, because I'm sure of the sheer volume of everything that he was trying to handle that night, he missed one. **De Wolf** - I missed two, one that got recognized in that evening and one that did not. **Bianchi** – As Treasurer I get to work somewhat with Katie, and I tell you there isn't a harder working person on Chief's staff and this Fire District could not operate without her or without someone with her skills and ability. The Chief could not operate with her, she's kind of like his left hand 'cause Kevin's his right hand. But Katie does an outstanding job and I was a little disappointed that in the shuffle of things she got overlooked that night. **Pfitzenmaier** – We'll let's make up for it right now... (applause). **Goodwin** – Thank you.

**Izzo** – Chief, I want to follow up with Jerry, Chief, as usual, you did an outstanding job. I think it's a highlight for this District to have that night to recognize people and each year it seems that they're better and better and better. There are a lot of people in the community that weren't so necessarily involved who were there to appreciate that and it shows how many people in the community are involved in the Fire District. And you did a wonderful job handling that, I know it can be difficult to try to put all that together, but it was really a highlight of my year to be there and be part of that. There's one comment, because we always have comment, the joke about the dispatcher and the traffic was hilarious

except that a lot of people didn't understand it. So you just might be more aware anytime we're in the public, any time we use jargon, explain it.

**Adjournment:** motion by adjourn by Pfitzenmaier, seconded by Bianchi, motion carried.