

Special Board Meeting
Date: February 9th 2015
6 p.m.

Call to order

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call – Bianchi, Neal, Izzo and Rinaldi

Izzo- Welcome all of you it's nice to see you here. I kind of wanted to go over our procedure for those of you it might be your first time here. If you wish to address the board you are certainly welcome to do so. You will need to sign in. There is a sign in sheet and we will be glad to put that back up there so you can sign your name in. So there are two opportunities to speak to the board. One is before we take any action and that is the first call to the public and then there is another opportunity towards the end of the meeting to address the board. You will need to sign in and tell us which time you want to address the board. There are a considerable number of people that would like to address the board so just from saving us all from sleeping here tonight we will be limiting comments to 3 minutes. We have a timer here. You are welcome to give us any written documents anything you have that is in writing you are welcome to hand that to us so we can look at that as well. Now if the board decides to go into an executive session we will be leaving here and going over to executive session. Now the rules say we can't actually take any action in an executive session. So for us to actually do anything or make any decisions we have to come back in the public meeting and make that public whatever the decision was. We cannot vote in executive session. We can't even take a consensus all we can do is discuss. So that may occur and I would certainly encourage all of you to stay if we do that. I don't know yet what is going to happen I just wanted to get that covered. So we will move on so again if you would like to address the board you are welcome and need to sign in in this sheet. So we do have a limited amount of copies of the packet that Chief DeWolf has given us and it has the draft contract with his comments and some other information that he has given to the board so if you would like that we can pass it around and maybe if there are a couple of you then you could share. You are paying for this.

Call to the Public Chief's Report –

Mike Wright

My name is Mike Wright I live here in Sonoita. Mr. Chairman and board I would like to thank you for your service to our community and what I have to say tonight is really a prayer for you as I have done in the past. So for those of you that would like to bow with me in prayer. Lord, I pray for tonight's meeting. I ask that you may grant wisdom to this board in the discussions and decisions that are too made. I ask for your blessing upon this board, the Chief and all of the employees and volunteers that make up this fire district. May you grant them all prosperity and protection as they serve us in this community. Lord I also ask you for cool heads as a matter of the Chief's contract is discussed tonight. Guide everyone to arrive at an agreement that is good and fair for all. I pray these things in Jesus name Amen.

Izzo- Thank you

Sue Archibald

My name is Sue Archibald and I live in Sonoita. I have some written comments I am going to read. I have 3 points I want to address I am a fairly new 3 year resident to Sonoita and I want to let you know how much I appreciate the services offered by our fire district. I have learned that there were over

400 calls to the station last year and I believe our fire district both paid and volunteer are passionate, experienced and appreciated by our community. Secondly, I got to know our Chief I have seen his leadership in action. I want to express my concerns the potential the proposed contract says to our community. When a person's salary is reduced without cause as there has been no former evaluation of his job performance in many years the community members begin to question what is occurring. I have learned that his current salary is within a salary survey that was presented to you at a previous meeting. I have also learned he has learned to maintain his current salary of is upcoming contract. To me this would be an outstanding solution. Chief would be happy and all of you would have a great Chief under contract. Thirdly, I have worked under an employment contract with a board for over 30 years they don't also work the way we hope. One solution I have seen work affectively is mediation. If the board and the Chief cannot come together to an agreement I would recommend engaging a third party outside mediator to assist with the negotiation. This would enable both parties to voice their concerns and ideas and regard to the contract. Once the mediator listens to both parties he or she would assist both parties in an agreement that would be mutually acceptable. In closing I am hopeful that an agreement can be reached that is fair and acknowledges the strong leadership we already have in place in our community with your board and our Chief. Thanks

Jade Deforest

My name is Jade Deforest, I live in Sonoita and I would like to say that I have been with several fire departments over many years with 12 different Chiefs. I have worked with Chiefs that were never there and I have worked with Chiefs that were always there. Chief DeWolf is always there always. I have seen him on calls were he was had the patience, blood on him I have seen him sucking on large amounts of smoke I mean he is there. He is active and part of it. He is not standing in the background telling us what to do. He is there and I am a volunteer and I am very important to be part of this department and I love this department and I love this Chief. The other thing I think the message to be giving him is not a reduction in salary which I see as a punishment but to at least keep it the way he has it now. He works hard 24/7 I don't know anybody who would work 24/7 for what he does. He lives here and has a commitment to this community and loves this community, he loves the people here, he has a home here and this is his life. I appreciate that deeply as part of this community. I think about the fact that here in Santa Cruz County what do we get for our taxes? We don't get a lot but we get this service. I know when I pick up that phone and if I call 911 and I got a medical problem under 2 min. people will be rolling toward my house. If I pick up the phone and I say someone is breaking into my house I need help I may not see a sheriff for 45 min. to an hour. It's a fact. But if I have a medical emergency I know they are going to be there. So I urge the board to consider Chief DeWolf's proposal. Thank You.

Sanya Johnson

I don't have much to add to that. What I was going to say she said it. I do want to say is this that I recently bought a house like yesterday and as I was thinking of doing this for the last time in my life I hope I felt very safe a secure because as I was beginning to think about it you seemed permanent. I thought ok I can live here because I have never seen anybody act like this and be like this as a Fire Chief. I have only worked under 1 as a first responder and you were there all the time as a volunteer you were volunteer for years before I mean you knew what this was all about. So when you became Chief I thought who better knows how much time it takes and who knows better how to put out a fire if I had a new house. Then learned perhaps your position was unstable and I had already signed the paper for this house. You know I am not 100% sure I would have if I didn't know that this fire department was not going to stay this way. So please do something today.

Chuck Carlson

My name is Chuck Carlson and I was the Chaplain at this fire department for 10 years and so I have 2 things on my heart tonight. Last time I talked about the salary and I will bring it up again

Rinaldi- Hey Chuck someone asked where you are from.

I am from Huachuca City. Thank you whoever said that. My church is right here and my people are here in this community so I feel like it is home. After last meeting I thought we had lost our Chief because a \$75,000 salary is still well below the average that we could conceive of for a fire district not just principalities but fire district chiefs. But then as I talked with people and began to realize there is a resolution we could come to suppose you and the board met the Chief half way \$79,900 would be about half way and a good compromise and then on top of that I would encourage you to offer a bonus to him for a job performance a job well done. A job review that the Chief has not had for some time I understand and he needs an evaluation so an evaluation would be good for him and it would be good for you to ask the questions on that evaluation that is probably available to you. I think it force you more to go into the nitty gritty of what goes on with the fire department. That leads me to my second critical point and that is communication. After spending a number of hours with some of you and the Chief for the past few weeks as well as others in the community it appears to me the Chief and the Board have a communication problem. Lack of communication leads people to make assumptions that leads to anxiety and leads to distress. I have had a sense of anxiety from the last meeting and I sense that something needs to be done to deal with that. A key to every successful enterprise is open communication. Now I realize that we have the open meeting law that inhibits just a little bit but it could be done even despite that because the Chief needs to meet with each of you one on one he needs to hear what is going on in your lives and he needs to hear from you what is happening in the fire department and the same token you need to hear from him. So I would plead with you to open up the communication line and realize there can only be one or two of you at a time but please meet with the Chief one on one. And I would say can I get a commitment from each of you to do that the days coming to meet with the Chief one on one go work with him and Chief will you make the same commitment to go out and meet with them go have coffee with them, invite them into the office, take them on a ride. And so having said that if you work that out there will be less anxiety, greater communication and a lot of the problems we are facing to be solved. Thank you.

Doug Ruppel

I want to start by thanking you all for your services.

Izzo- Identify yourself

My name is Doug Ruppel I am 18 year resident in this community. I have spent 11 years on the board. I am here to talk to you about the Chief's contract obviously and as say it is no secret in this room that I am a longtime friend of the Chief. I wonder sometime when I hear what is going on in the department where some of this is coming from because the things I see directed at him now don't seem to have resemblance to a man of his statue outta have. The time I have known the Chief he has demonstrated himself immensely integrity and an immense ability to have commitment to this department and to this community, a man with an ability to pursue through a very difficult time and there has been a few years ago. Throughout that time he has demonstrated the ability to be civil in his discourse even people he had disagreed deeply with. He is widely respected in this community; he is sawed after with his advice in council which is a good thing. He has a deep and wide understanding of the threats facing this community. So when I look at those things those are the things I would want in an employee. It makes me wonder what do you hope to accomplish by cutting his salary because only negatives can derive from that from what I can see and from my knowledge of this department and this community. If you had counted the true cost of having done that I think it will be immense. If that is the case then I am left with only one thing to motivate some people in that regard and that is there is some personal animosity

towards the Chief that is being satisfied here. If that is the case I would simply tell you that you owe it to this community to explain why that personal animosity trumps our desires to have the best Chief we could possibly have. Replacing the Chief is not as simple as you may think it is. I was on the last board that had to replace the Chief we went through many applicants some of them were qualified and some of them were not but none to whom could begin to approach his abilities, his grasp of the situation or his commitment to this community. He has been a highly effective Chief who has brought in an immense amount of funding he has diversified our fundings, he has brought in grants, he has brought in great recognition to the community and to this department professionally and through all of that he has increased corporation with our neighbors and demonstrated the commitment that we need that we would be sorely pressed to develop in a new Chief if we were trying to find one. Make no mistake I think that is what we are talking about here. If you do this you tell the Chief that you do not appreciate his dedicated service of 13 years as the Chief and 19 years in the department. You remove his motivation and the abilities to do the very things that have made him so successful and by extension made this department so successful for so many years. You tell others and command staff and then the general staff the very same things that you don't value them. I would ask you to listen to what this community is telling you instead of going into your upcoming executive session or if you do have one with your minds already made up. I would ask to put aside your own personal agendas if that is what is driving this. Decide this based on integrity and the character of the man sitting here at the end of this table. Thank You.

Dawn Webster

Switching topics to...

Izzo- Dawn identify yourself

O I am sorry Donald Webster I am about a 7 year resident of Sonoita switching the subject to hiring an accountant \$30 to \$40,000 a year I told you the last time and I still think I want to say a few more words because I have a real aversion to that and I have grown up dealing with boards we have already talked about wanting to hire an accountant or some other overhead expense I had to jump through hoops to justify it. Engineers, sales people, marketing people, production people no problem but those are line people as soon as an overhead expense pops its ugly head I had a hard time doing it. We always said look for alternatives but I gave you some alternatives last time. First one was possibly hiring a consultant I f you must feel you need to change the accounting system to do the switch over for you instead of hiring an accountant. I gave the email list to Jerry and didn't get a response so here is a list it's called **pro advisor into it consultants for quick books**. You can look it up on the internet I have included a couple of their descriptions and you will find most of them are accountants and have a lot of experience. In fact make really good candidates for an accountant here full time. I don't think we need that. Secondly I would say try it in baby steps before you go on and hire an accountant. I understand grants may be a problemreported try that one on accrual basis and separate it out in a separate company and look at the reports and just combine that into your normal P and L. Then look at the next big problem you have and take that baby step to correct it. Lastly, you do have a yearly auditor that comes in and knows the books this is your contact and your safety valve. In other words, this is what keeps you from going to jail if it is done properly. If you feel you need more contact or someone reporting to the board on the financial issues hire an auditor to do quarterly audits. Make them your friend that is what they are there for they are supposed to help you. Now ...before times because to the yearly audit. The yearly audit should come way down because he's here quarterly. So the overall expense I would guess would be a lot less in that four times. Keep in mind guys this is a small organization \$1.4 million um you don't pay taxes and there is not much to it. Thank you.

Wes Chambers

My name is Wes Chambers and I have lived here for 27 years. I was on the board early on when it was volunteer and I was a Fire Chief for 8 years. I have a couple of comments I would like to make about the contract I have seen. First of all you have a couple of options where the Chief can leave the district requirements are duties as a Fire Chief that he can either go to Santa Cruz, Pima or Cochise County or the other option is going anywhere in the state of Arizona. So with that in mind I go back to the section of hours of work and here it says he will devote full time to the district 24/7 to respond to emergencies. Well the Chief doesn't need to respond to emergencies his job is to administrate to make sure that you got qualified crew that people on duty to perform what is necessary in an emergency. It is a critical emergency they need additional help they will ask for it and he can respond if he is in the district. Based on that that he has to be here 24/7 he can't leave the district to go get his teeth fixed. His teeth cleaned or a checkup without getting Board permission. And to this it has to be in writing. I don't know anybody in their right mind any of you sitting up here would take a job like that to where you have to answer to the Board for everything you do. An example, if at 1 a clock in the morning his wife gets extremely ill he calls 911 the district shows up the paramedics say well we think she has a gallbladder or maybe a ruptured appendix we got to take her to the hospital ok off they go. So he has to write a letter to the Board saying I need to go to Tucson to be with my wife at the hospital. I just can't believe that is in any type of contract. Thank you.

Tina Hamilton

Hello my name is Tina Hamilton. My husband and I have been property owners in Elgin since 2001 and we have lived here in Sonoita about 5 years going on about 6. When we first came down here I wanted to get involved with the community and I sawed out the fire station because we always saw things going on and the things I saw here inspired me to get involved first as a first responder then as dispatch then later on to get my EMT. I did volunteer with them and I have to say that through the EMT training I had to take through another county because they wouldn't let me do my hours here the contrast that I experienced was very different. What was supposed to be my training for my EMT education and certification was so different then what I get to experience here as a volunteer. The quality of care and the selection of people who come here the training and care they get for being volunteers here it's just far and above anything I have experienced in the other county I had to take my training in. I know some people are concerned about the taxes I know it is a little heavy sometimes to think about paying into a fire district but I can actually see where it benefits and I can see where my money is going. I come from a large municipality Phoenix area I have no idea where half my tax money went to I know where it goes here. I think the amount of time and energy and care that this organization puts towards the community is well worth what we pay our Chief for and I think that to take away anything he has already put in in terms of monetary existence here I think it would be disrespectful for what he has given us. Thank you.

Evelyn Carol

My name is Evelyn Carol we live here in Sonoita for 24 years. We have seen obviously before and after fire district and we will take after anytime. Not saying before wasn't great but more than half the people wouldn't pay their share which interested us. We knew with the fire district we all will have to pay our share every last one of us. The fire district has blossomed I think we think the efforts of Chief DeWolf of course and the other people involved to are very happy with the fire district and we would like it to stay the way it is and we would like Chief Joseph to stay just the way he is. No technical anything here.

Sandy Ruppel

My name is Sandy Ruppel I have lived here as long as he has. Thank you again for your time I would like to talk once again concerning the proposed changes to the Chief's contract. There are several portions of the contract that I as a concerned tax payer disagree with. I strongly disagree with cutting the Chief's salary at all. He is at the current level for extended time but don't cut it. Cutting the Chief's salary is a slap in the face to someone who has dedicated the last 13 years to this community and this department 19 including the time he served before becoming Chief. Another point I disagree with is the term of the contract this is a one year contract it is not a 4 year contract. It may be renewed for each 4 years or it may not. This offers the Chief no security. The brand new superintendent of the school was offered a 2 year contract and I can't see offering our Fire Chief anything less than that. I looked at some of the contracts that were examples for you to create this document I see direct wording taken from them especially the opening paragraphs but there is an important section that was in several of these contracts that was completely left out of this one. I think this says a lot about our Board towards our Chief. This is from the Pinewood Fire District which is actually smaller than ours but their Chief's salary is 93,500. Right under where the employer desires to continueit says where it is a desire the Pinewood Fire District order of directors to retain the services of the employee to make possible full work **provitivity** by ensuring immoral and peace of mind with respect to future security to act **deterrent** as **mafecence** of dishonesty for personal gain on the part of the employee, to provide a just means for terminating employee services at such time as he may be unable to fully discharge his duties or the employee may otherwise desire to determine his employer. And this is the important one. To insure continuity in the development of and evaluation in strategic planning for the good of the community and to continue improvement of employee moral through management stability and personal development. You can't count these seconds. To be honest this whole action really concerns me. I have spoken to several of you personally concerning the motivation behind this and it was expressed to me that there is someone on the board that would like to see Chief DeWolf leave. As the board we the tax payers expect you to pursue what is best for this community and this station. Not to try to push a negative agenda or the agenda of a vocal minority. I hope you will all seriously consider what will happen if the Chief leaves. You were so concerned about the effects of the extended disability. What would happen during the time it would take to replace him. What would happen when a new Chief took over? This Chief knows the district and that is valuable. Do you know where everyone lives in this district? Or all the names of all the low canyons along the Sana Ritas were people have been hurt or where fires have been started or even where I live on Papago Springs Road. Chief knows this. How long would it take for a new person to have that kind of intimate knowledge of this area? This district is not laid out in neat little blocks with names on each quarter. It's huge, spread out, rough and rural. The knowledge of this area saves times which lives and properties. Instead of trying to push Chief DeWolf out you should see him for the valuable asset that he is and be trying as hard as possible to keep him. In the time that Joseph has served in this department there has been at least 5 super intendants at the school. Can we afford that kind of turnover in this department? If Chief leaves I suspect the department will become a career stepping stone much like a school district. I can save the rest of this for afterwards so thank you so much.

Terry Plympton

Good evening I am Terry Plympton; I have lived in Elgin Arizona since 1999. The current board has created a draft employment contract for the Chief and I have a few questions I would like to ask the board regarding this contract. As a board do you believe you have exercised due diligence in creating perimeters of this draft contract? Anyone like to answer? Are you satisfied with the salary and contract length compensation details put forth in the draft contract?

Rinaldi- Yes

Is the Chief's contract in anyway related to the decision by the board to hire an accounting professional?

Board members- No

Are you prepared as a board to begin the process of hiring a new Chief should current contract negotiations fail to arrive at mutual agreement?

Bianchi- I don't know if there would be another choice.

Those are my questions and thank you so much for what you are doing up here.

Judy Scofield

O I'm sorry I thought I was signing here because I was here. Thank You.

Izzo- Did we miss anybody? I don't want to cut anyone off. Nobody else has signed in? We don't want to cut anyone off.

Peter Bidigain

My name is Peter Bidigain I grew up in this area but I have been in Tucson for the last 14 years and we just moved back. During those 14 years I just know what I read in the newspaper and I agree with everything that has been said here this evening. That is a huge cut and I am not sure somewhere I read in the paper where the Chief had said, "Well let's stick it at that and I'll leave it there for 8 years is that....4 years." Something along that line.

Chief- I'll take a freeze.

Take a freeze, but really what I want to say here is that I have worked with the fire service with my career and I have worked with the fire district and teaching, fighting fire across the state and this Sonoita Fire District here even when it was SEESI one of the things I have always noticed is how motivated the employees are. When we do burns in certain areas I am involved in and Sonoita is there they are motivated. They are happy to be there. Most of the time in the middle of the night they are happier to be there then I am. They really are a motivated bunch. As I looked over the contract a little bit I want to say I agree with what some have said about the contract. It is so severe for what it has been in the past it does give at least me a feeling of something is not being said of why this is all being done. But I support the Chief, I support this department and one of the things I have noticed in particularly in smaller departments like this across the state is that it is hard to get fire fighters and chiefs and officers that are committed to the community and these gentlemen here are and they are part of this community. I would encourage the Board which you got a big job and I appreciate you folks being on the Board. You couldn't rope me and drag me to be on a board of any kind. I would really like you to reconsider that contract and to make this work for Joseph and for whatever goals remember you heard the goals of why this huge cut and everything but I would really work on that and he has a ton of experience. So one of the things I have always appreciated about Joseph is that he started at the not the bottom but the beginners level and that is a real plus. You would be surprised how many fire chiefs around somehow got into the system about mid-way and they miss a lot and that is not true with Chief DeWolf. Thank You for your time.

ITEM 5

Izzo- Discussion concerning the contract. I would make a call to see if there is a motion to go into executive session.

Bianchi – I motion to go into executive session

Rinaldi- I so move

Izzo- Is there any discussion concerning that? All those in favor, motion carry

Izzo- I would like to call the meeting back to order and I will give a report and then each Board member may add to that or clarify what I said or didn't say. So we did do an executive session, negotiate with Chief and addressed for those of you that have the draft contract page 16, 17 and 18 the term, compensation, termination clause, severance pay, voluntary termination, duties and responsibilities and working facilities and hours of work. We cannot make a decision so we didn't take a vote and we didn't come to a consensus. We discussed with Chief those sections here. Does anyone want to add anything?

Neal- I would just say that the discussion was good and whether you are in support of the initial contract or whether you are against it I think that it was a healthy discussion for both sides. This Board is committed and I think the Chief is also for doing what is best in the best interest of this community and also the responsibility we have to the tax payers and also it was a good discussion and I think that there is give and take on both sides and I think we have made a lot of head way tonight. We did not finish if we had 2 or 3 more hours we could have finished tonight. We knew you were waiting out here plus after a while your brain gets a little foggy and you just need to take a break. We will be resuming and hopefully look at things so that I won't say everyone is happy because I don't think that is possible but that we will do our due diligence on this contract.

Rinaldi- I feel like this Board has done the job that the public set before it. There is never an easy way to make decisions of this sort. We have done our best. We have actually had a dialogue that I don't think happened in the past. I am personally very proud of that. It's not easy to go through a contract piece by piece by piece looking at every single word. We are doing the best we can as community members bringing our knowledge of business and work to this table Chief included to try to come to some sort of middle ground. So please bear with us we invite you to come to the next meeting we have holidays coming up so things are going to be pushed ahead. President's Day we would have met next Monday but there is a holiday and we can't do that. Just bear with us.

Bianchi- Well once again we heard a lot of interpretation and a lot of misinterpretation from you folks here tonight I just wish everyone had come to all of our meetings we have had 6 right? So this is our 7th but our first negotiation meeting and all of the aspects of this contract it would have dispelled a lot of what people have said and think. Actually I think the Board and the Chief are working pretty good on this thing. I will let the Chief speak for himself here for a minute. But it is a lengthy deal and all I can tell you is we are getting close. That's all I got to say.

Izzo- Chief did you wish to say something?

Chief- I think we had a great meeting tonight. I do think we are moving forward. There is give and take for everybody. We will see you in a week. But it is good positive things came out of it.

Izzo- Ok we will move on so officially item 5 is continued and we will be discussing another meeting date here.

Audience Comments –

Doug Ruppel

I am going to hold my comments for right now.

Terry Plympton

I am going to keep this really short because I know everyone would like to go home. First of all I am so glad you did not turn into a pumpkin at 7 tonight. You are threatening to do that. I just want to thank you guys for all of the work you are putting into this. This has been a tough process I know I have

been here from the beginning and you done a remarkable job for keeping this professional um very business-like and think it speaks to your confidence in this. So thank you very much.

Sandra Ruppel

Just a couple of things seeing that it is an attempt by the Board to lower the budget for the tax payers and everything in my opinion is a little bit ridiculous but on the other hand you are talking about hiring an accountant when we don't necessarily need one so I and the people in the community I have spoken with see it as unnecessary as well. I would hope you would revisit that decision and possibly change your minds on that one. Also I hope you really consider the effects of the actions you are doing right now and the effect it has on this station as a whole. It isn't just about money or paper work this has actually already had detrimental effect on the department. I have spoken to the firefighters. Have you guys spoken to the firefighters? It was stated at one of the meetings that if you reduce the Chief's salary you could spread that around to pay the other workers. That didn't win any points. No one wants a raise if you have to take money out of the Chief's pocket. The department as a whole is going down. Firefighters are family. They are feeling that they are under attack because they believe their leader is under attack. We have already lost people because of this. These people put their lives on the line for the health and safety of this community. They should feel supportive and encouraged by their board and our director not unappreciated or under attack. This may not be your intention but sometimes actions speak louder than words. Thank you so much.

Board member comments

Izzo- On the behalf of the Board I thank all of you for your interest. We wish you were here every meeting. I don't know if we can set a meeting date or just say we are going to meet at the next available date. Can we set based on your calendar?

Chief- If we want to do this the 18th

Bianchi- What was that?

Chief- The 18th, Wednesday the 18th. We have a regular Board meeting on the 23rd.

Bianchi- That will work for me.

Izzo- We will set the next meeting for Wend. Feb 18th at 6 P.M. and is there a motion for adjournment?

Motion for adjournment by Neal, seconded by Rinaldi, motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Approved (date) _____ Clerk of the Board