Sonoita-Elgin fire District

Minutes to the Board of Directors Meeting

February 26, 2024

**Chair of the board Chris Johnson calls the meeting to order at 9:01a.m.**

1. **Roll call and confirmation of Quorum.**

Chris Johnson, Russ Kolsrud, Robert Garber, Eddie McArthur, and Ruth Ann LeFebvre are present at the meeting and the Board has a quorum.

1. **Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.**
2. **Call to the public.**

* **Members of the public are invited to address the Board and/or submit written comments for inclusion in the minutes.**

No call to the public.

1. **Approval of the minutes from January 22, 2024.**

*Russ Kolsrud makes a motion to approve the minutes for Board Meeting, January 22, 2024, Ruth Ann LeFebvre seconds the motion and it passes unanimously.*

1. **Report from the Fire Chief.**

* **Administration and Budget:** We will be moving to bill.com for all account payables. Bill.com will be more responsive to our vendors, quicker payment turnaround and includes the needed approval process that include James Vincent Group, Chief Meredith, Tricia Flaherty, Chris Johnson and Ruth Ann LeFebvre. As a district we are going to start using a new medical billing company as of February 29th. They have much to offer and will be charging us less than AeroMed was. We are working with AeroMed to determine how best to manage any existing accounts. We will provide an update in March as we will be live with AMB. The station has had some repair needs: We had the roof repaired with some much-needed maintenance and has been leaking for a while. We have a proposal on the agenda today for septic repair that will need review and approval.
* **PSPRS Local Board:** PSPRS Local Board should be meeting before June.
* **Operations:** We had another two recruits start the process in January. We have signed an IGA with EMS University to provide their students with ride along opportunities. So far five have spent time with us. No new members completed the process in December. With training, we have started our wildland refreshers and need pack test yearly and be red carded. Apparatus: E822 remains in the shop. Estimated return is late April. U819 continues to be prepped for service. Parts have been back ordered but once they arrive, install should be quick. January incidences was 59: 34 Fire, 6 EMS, and 19 Service. Incident count by zone: Zone 1 had 29, Zone 2 had 9, Zone 3 had 7, Zone 4 had 0, and Zone 5 had 14. Breaking those down by shift: A Shift had 20, B Shift had 29 and C Shift had 10.
* **Legislative Update**: With our CON, our HB2609 GPS waiver was approved for 12 months, we are looking at compliance solutions. Chief Meredith reviews the existing House bills, and Senate Bill. Noting that Monday 2-05-24 was the last date to introduce bills for the 56th second legislative session.
* **Questions:**
  + Ruth Ann LeFebvre asks about renewal of the Board Members, is there training required? Chief comments that the training is once per term. Robert Garber asks about Board Member terms and then how to continue. Chief comments that we will let the county know of our election, if individuals choose to run for election, then the district hold an election with those individuals on the ballot. If no one chooses to run then the county and district can appoint individuals for the Board Member openings.
  + Robert Garber asks about the controls in place for Bill.com and both Chief and Ben from James Vincent Group will present that information.
  + Ruth Ann LeFebvre asks if Chief has had a chance to meet with Sounth32. Chief responds that he has a meeting the coming week and will express our concerns about the activities of South32 and how it will impact SEFD. Chief clarifies that the mine does not have a fire crew, but they do have onsite EMS, paramedic.
  + Chris Johnson comments on the increased traffic on 83. Everyone comments that they also have experienced increased traffic in the area.

1. **Presentation and Approval of Monthly Financial Reconciliation and Reports pursuant to ARS Sec. 48-807.**

* Ben from James Vincent Group is in attendance to present the January 2024 financials.
* On the balance sheet you will see an increase in year over year of cash, which is what you want to see.
* Ambulance revenue was slightly under budget by $4,000 and then over budget on tax revenue by $6,000. The month of January the district was $2,000 under budget in revenue. On revenue side trending over $73,000 to date in the wildland revenue.
* The three items we are trending over in expenses is vehicle maintenance (page 8/9 of 13), member overtime (page 8) and then the ATV purchase. All others are pretty close within the budget.
* Robert Garber asks about the large expense of overtime**.** Chief responds that his priority is to have shift coverage 100% of the time and with the assistance of JVG we can review trends with payroll to make future recommendations. Robert Garber comments that he looks forward to a more accurate budget proposal. Chief also reminds the Board that we went from 3-member shift to a 4-member paid shift in fall of 2022. We have both paid and non-paid members as a district and the percentage of our members who are not paid is decreasing. Eddie McArthur reminds the Board about the current pay rate and how the members depend on overtime to pay their bills. Ruth Ann LeFebvre comments about the low budget for recruitment and retention.

*Robert Garber makes a motion to approve the January financials as presented by James Vincent Group and Russ Kolsrud seconds the motion and it passes unanimously.*

* Ben from JVG asks what the Board Members would like to see for the FY24/25 Budget process. Robert Garber requests two things: first we know you have to move money around to different categories and secondly, we would like more accurate budget categories, where no miscellaneous categories exist. With an emphasis on checks and balances.
* Ben from JVG talks about the history of bill.com and that JVG has been using it with clients for over ten years. One benefit to bill.com is as a Board you have access to all the documents for account payables. Another benefit is seeing when the check was cashed and a bill cannot get paid unless it goes through the approval process. Ruth Ann LeFebvre asks who has permissions currently, Ben responds that both Administrative Assistant Tricia and Chief has access. Permissions will be given to both Chris Johnson and Ruth Ann LeFevre as they will have the ability to pay.

1. **Information item-update on new website since launch.**

* Chief let’s the Board know that we are continuing to update the website with current incident statistics and photos.
* Ruth Ann LeFebvre asks if know how many people visit the website and if those statistics are available.

1. **Information item-Strategic Planning Process 2023-2026**

* Chief updates the Board on the strategic plan and that we will be presenting something next month to the Board.
* Our goal is to at least meet monthly to move forward with the goals of the strategic plan.

1. **Review, discussion and possible action-septic repairs needed, requesting from reserves.**

* The system is working but requires some maintenance and updating of equipment. Chief explains the importance of the maintenance, updating of electrical, and pumping and cleaning of the four tanks.
* Russ Kolsrud reviews the details of the two invoices to clarify the expenses listed on the two invoices from Alternative Septics of Arizona and Arizona Roadrunner Septic Service.
* Ruth Ann Lefebvre asks about a local estimate and why we are not considering a local company. Administrative Assistant Tricia speaks to the history of SEFD using family or friends and not necessarily a professional contracted service and how that can cause issues in the future like the ones we are dealing with today.

*Russ Kolsrud moves to accept the two estimates for repair of the septic system by both ASA and Arizona Roadrunner, Rober Garber seconds the motion and it approves unanimously.*

1. **Review, discussion and possible action-increased compensation for members in FY23-24.**

* Chief explains the intention and need to increase employee compensation, and making the Administrative Assistant position a full-time position.
* We want to show the community that we are considering where the money comes from and our obligation to our community is to end the year in a cash positive position.
* Working with James Vincent Group to ensure that the decisions we make our financially viable. Chief remains concerned that we could increase compensation before the adoption of the FY 24/25 budget. In the interim we are looking at small ways by which we can help them, one way is to pay for recertification of PM & EMT certifications.
* Robert Garber asks about a resident tax increase and how much revenue that would raise
* Chief explains the different ways to generate revenue from increasing the tax rate for the district, alternative sums of revenue like wildland & ambulance revenue, and the services that we can potentially charge for in the future.
* Ruth Ann LeFebvre asks what is the timing for all these decisions to be made. Chief explains that the county has now sent in the valuations for the tax year, then will be dedicated to building the budget for FY24/25 and the Board are obligated to having a budget hearing 30 days prior to adopting a budget, and finally we would like to propose the FY25/26 to look ahead.
* Eddie McArthur speaks about the column she is writing for the PRT to educate our surrounding communities about SEFD.
* Robert Garber speaks to his appreciation of the work Tricia has done as the Administrative Assistant. Chief speaks to moving Tricia to full-time status but the timing of any changes needs to be alignment with changes for all members, not just one member of SEFD.
* Tricia, Administrative Assistant, speaks to the Board members about the willingness to wait and decline any change in status as her priority is the members and the decisions are made for all members.
* Chief speaks to the Board about the need to wait for the FY24/25 budget proposal to increase salaries for all our members. His priority is to assure the community that we will staff four full-time fire fighters on every shift.
* Ruth Ann LeFebvre asks about fund raising to raise revenue amounts. Chief speaks to the fact that our budget is public money from taxes and that we are reluctant to ask the community members for additional money.
* Ben from JVG speaks to the most recent Santa Cruz County assessment for taxes. The increase in the assessed value would generate an additional $80,000. As an example, if the tax was increased by .10 cents if would generate an additional $50,000. Ben asks for some formal direction from the Board members to look at compensation within the budget.
* Chief will have a fiscal year appropriate proposal for FY23/24 for the March Board meeting after furth discussion with JVG about available funds for an increase in compensation.

1. **Consideration of agenda items for future meetings.**

* Keep the review, discussion and possible action- plan for increased compensation for member in FY23/24 on March agenda.

*Russ Kolsrud moves to adjourn the Board Meeting and Eddie McArthur seconds the motion, all members vote unanimously to adjourn.*

*Chris Johnson adjourns the meeting at 10:28 a.m.*

A digital copy of this meeting is available to the public at the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District, located at 3137 AZ Highway 83 Sonoita, AZ 85637

**NOTICE: The Sonoita-Elgin Fire District Board of Directors may go into executive session for the purpose of obtaining legal advice from the fire district’s attorney(s) on any of the above agenda items pursuant to A.R.S. 38-431.03(A)(3)**

Minutes approved by\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Board Clerk, on \_\_\_\_­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Ruth Ann LeFebvre Date