

Regular Meeting of Pinetop Fire Board
Monday October 19, 2020
Pinetop Fire District Station 12
Video & Conference Available
1845 S. Pine Lake Rd, Pinetop AZ 85935

Call the meeting to Order: John Rowlinson Called Meeting to order at 5:00 pm

Roll Call of Board Members, John Rowlinson, Ernie Lawes, Brad Baker and Doug Wright by phone conference. Carla Bowen was excused

Attorney Bill Whittington by phone conference and Finance Directors from James Vincent Group, Gabe Buldra, Sara Simonton

- I. *Call to the Public:*** Mr. John Beeler from White Mountain Veterans Association spoke to the board and Chief about the programs benefits available for veterans in our area. He talked about the need for aid. He told Chief Morgan he would get more information on the programs, such as transportation, rent, utilities, help for families and maybe help through the grant for the firewise and thinning program possibly even firewood assistance, any help at any form would be greatly appreciated. Chief Morgan said we haven't any requests as of October but we would like to help however we can.
He also mentioned the firefighter and Medic of the year award where the veteran's honor one of each from each district. He wanted to thank the board, firefighters, and fuels crew for jobs well done on wildland fires and the firewise program.

II. *Consent Agenda Board Business*

The items on the consent agenda are considered routine and will be adopted in one motion unless a board member, staff, or member of the public in the audience requests, before the vote on the motion, to have the item considered separately. If any item is removed from the Consent Agenda, the Board Chairman will indicate when it will be discussed in the regular agenda.

1. Approval of Minutes of Board Meeting held in September 2020
2. Approval of Warrants paid in September 2020

Brad Baker made the motion to approve the consent agenda, as presented, seconded by Ernie Lawes, motion carried unanimously 4-0

IV. Board Business

1. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Action re: Presentation of July Financial Reports

Gabe Buldra presented the financial report by go-to-meeting, all documents are included in the packet.

Highlights; Navajo County revenue for September was over by about \$91,553.

Non-Levy Revenue was under budget in September by about \$43,070. We are expecting some wildland fire revenue as well as ambulance and grant as well.

Expenses for September were over budget by about \$146,988. Which is largely due to Wildland Fire expenses and travel expenses. As non-tax revenues come increase there is a correlating increase in expenses. Personnel Expense was overbudget by \$122,346, wildland personnel expense is always a large expense during wildland season, you have overtime backup for employees on fires, who are traveling back and forth with mandatory days off afterward, all contributing to personnel expenses.

Fiscal year Revenue is trending under while expenses for the year are trending over. Total Cash is \$327,201 more than August 2020 and \$574,385 more than this time last year.

Other Assets have decreased- A decrease in our unfunded liabilities with paydown of our long-term debt contributing to the decrease.

There was again discussion about prop 207 the marijuana bill, how the funding from that would absolutely benefit our Fire District, helping to pay down the unfunded liability.

Cash is sufficient for the foreseeable future. There is no need for a draw on our county line of credit.

Summary: 83% personnel Ops-- 13% Admin/managerial--2.1% and 1% communications. This is right in line with other districts during this time.

There was discussion about our CAFR audit, the GFOA Award, and the upcoming budget award.

Chief Morgan predicts we will see three million cash reserves this year or by year end closeout.

Mr. Baker asked if the State was tapped out yet for WL fire payments, Chief Morgan told them it was not which spurred some discussion on wildland fire season.

Doug Wright made a motion to approve the September 2020 financial reports as presented, seconded by Brad Baker, motion carried unanimously 4-0

2. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Action re; Updates on Covid 19.

Chief Morgan; included in the packet is some information and numbers for the current uptick in COVID 19, for Arizona. We had a sharp uptick in Pinetop Lakeside just in the last week or so, possibly due to the huge numbers of fall visitors in our area. Summit Hospital is still holding firm and handling the numbers – there also were 3 new deaths in Navajo County. There are firefighters in Heber-Overgaard with the virus, we are so very fortunate and we continue to stock good numbers of PPE. Our firefighters are being very careful and mindful to not bring it into the district or their families. It looks as if Arizona and several other states are continuing to see uptakes in numbers.

Informational only, no board action.

3. Discussion/Consideration/Updates on Wildland Fire Season

Discussion on the ERC's and continued fire season, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest closures, some local fires in AZ and New Mexico. Chief Morgan updated everyone on our wildland deployment, fire restriction probability, and prescribed burning. He told the board that ignition probability is getting pretty high on a daily basis. We definitely need moisture. This is the type of weather we see in a dry June. We are experiencing a very weak La Nina which leaves our Ski Season questionable, which is very sad when combined with COVID 19 – for our local economy.

Chief Morgan told everyone that we were looking at Stage 1 Fire Restrictions as soon as Friday. There was discussion about the mismanagement of forests in California and Colorado and how dense the forests were and are there.

Informational only, no board action.

V. Summary of Current Events

1. Fire Chief's Report regarding district activities

Chief Morgan spoke about the "burn-over" he and Kevin Short experienced while on the fire in CA. There was some discussion about the damage to the vehicle and what they experienced. Chief told them about possibility of "cat faced trees" on a fire which makes things very dangerous. It is a term that firefighters and tree cutters use for weakened trees that become widow makers in the field and could fall on vehicles or firefighters at any time. He painted mental picture of what a "medical deployment" experience was like and told about the saw module boss whom a tree fell on and broke his leg and he sustained possible spinal injuries. He painted a very good picture of the dangers that wildland firefighters face in the field.

We lost an employee to Timber Mesa Fire and Medical, Training Officer Marc Rova. Chief explained to the board it isn't Pinetop Fire - they would prefer to work here, but there are more opportunities for advancement over there. Chief Morgan explained we should also have some opportunities in the next few years as people finish the drop program and retire creating openings for Captain or Engineer opportunities. He explained that we have personnel working on task books right now and training, they can "act up" as captains or engineers which help prepare them for advancement. Congratulating Omar Apodaca on his Engineer Testing, stating that he can now "act up" as an Engineer. We have some others coming up and have had many already in the "acting position", Ben Altop, Chad Ashcraft, Omar Apodaca, Cory Esparza, Richie Halcomb, Curt McKinney, Charles Mead, Jimmy Meek, Alison Moseley and Kevin Short.

There was some discussion about the Strategic Plan, about hiring a few more employees and having a stable tax rate for the considerable future.

Kelly Wood's retirement Party on Friday 11-6.

2. Verbal Chair report, John Rowlinson thanked the firefighters and families of the firefighters once again for working so hard on the fires and here at home. He spoke about having backfill for fires as well as hunting adding everyone pitches in.

VI. Future Meeting Dates:

November 16, 2020

VII. Announcements

AFDA had been cancelled this July due to COVID 19.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:42pm

Respectfully Submitted

Karen Robbins