

Regular Meeting of Pinetop Fire Board
Monday August 15, 2022
Pinetop Fire District Station 12
Video & Conference Available
1845 S. Pine Lake Rd, Pinetop AZ 85935

Call the meeting to Order: Clerk Ernie Lawes called the meeting to order at 5:03pm

- 1. Roll Call of Board Members; Ernie Lawes, Carla Bowen, Ben Borrego Present, Brad Baker was present electronically, John Rowlinson was excused**

Also present, Chief Morgan, Gabe Buldra and Attorney Bill Whittington

II. Call to the Public: None

III. 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 for July 2022
- 2) Approval of Warrants paid in July 2022

Carla Bowen made the motion to accept the June 2022 consent agenda as corrected, seconded by Ben Borrego, motion carried unanimously 3-0 with Ernie Lawes excusing himself as he was not present at the last meeting.

IV. Board Business

- 1. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Action re; Presentation of May 2022 Financial Reports**

Gabe Buldra (JVG) gave a brief summary of the June financial reports.

All documents and reports are included in the packet. This is first month of the 22-23 Fiscal year and usually July is a little slower.

A few highlights were; Revenues were over by \$307,000 at \$495,327 wildland fire is the attributing factor.

Expenses are also up, over budget by \$230,000 at \$701,978 which is also due to wildland fire – Personnel, vehicles, travel all wildland deployment.

Year to date total revenue we are at \$2.6 million dollars, which is \$1 million less than this time last year. We are still waiting on some grant billings and wildland income.

Wildland was over budget by \$1,584,559

District Percentages were Personnel 82%, Ops at 13%, Admin at 5%

Chief Morgan pointed out that we are going to see more than ½ a million dollars in deposits by next meeting, that did not make the July report. We still have new invoices coming in and still have more staff out on assignments in Oregon and Idaho.

Ben Borrego made the motion to accept the June 2022 Financial reports as presented, seconded by Carla Bowen, motion passed unanimously 4-0

- 2. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re; Land Purchase proposal from Martinez Investment LLC for 6 acres at \$125, 000.00 per acre with purchase/carrying terms.**

All documents included in your packet. PFD has an ESCROW account established and have sent a draft purchase agreement to Martinez for review.

We are currently waiting on Surveyors and the results of our Phase 1 and 2 testing. It is proving very hard to get anyone local to do the survey. We have a unique situation with the donated parcel #33 and carveout of another parcel. Hopefully we will see results at the next meeting along with paperwork to sign and review from Lawyers Title Co.

This is informational only – no board action at this time.

3. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Purchase of a wildland type 3 engine not to exceed \$431,250.00

Chief Morgan explained the original request previously made was for an 18 month build time, which would give time to find appropriate funding since recently we have had unexpected and large expenses. Some new information has come to light that Chief thought warranted discussion.

New information concerning the manufacture of vehicles and supply chain issues - specifically chassis. The company is having trouble getting any new ones currently on order. Mr. Jerome from Red Sky is afraid that the two vehicle options selected by the committee; a model 346 demo (the only one available – there are plans for no more) and model 34 (only 4 at this time) available now, will sell out. He is afraid if we miss this opportunity, we will be looking well into next year's wildland season for a type 3.

The board wanted to know what the differences were between the two options, to better gage the urgency if they need to make a decision today.

Mr. Jerome; explained the differences; the preferred USFS model 346, Green - painted red - type 3, primarily wildland fire, 4 door 4x4 vehicle has a 600-gallon water tank capacity and can pump 250 gallons per minute – it has one pump which can perform pump and drive. Chief Morgan commented that it can pump miles of hose which is extraordinary for wildland firefighting. Wildland firefighting is pressure vs volume for Structure fires.

The comparable Model 34 – 4x4 4 door has a 500-gallon tank and 2 pumps, the larger pump can pump 500 gallons per minute and the auxiliary pump up on top can pump 150 gallons per minute, the top pump can also execute pump and drive – not the same expectation as the 346. Model 34 is dual capable, structure and wildland. Chief Morgan told them the crew lives out of the vehicle for 14-21 days – either vehicle needs to be comfortable with air ride seats and extra gear storage.

Mr. Jerome said he would notify the chief if the other 4 model 34s started moving quickly. If necessary, the board can do an emergency phone agenda and vote.

Ben Borrego made a motion to table the decision for the purchase of a type 3 engine, until the committee has had a chance to review the new information and administration has time to review funding options. Seconded by Carla Bowen. Motion passed unanimously 4-0

V. Personnel

a. Badge Pinning for;

1. Captains not present

2. Engineers

Chief Morgan reminded the board that these traditions are important and the photos are a welcome addition at retirements and parties.

Kevin Short received his Engineer Badge and bars pinned by his wife Amanda and two daughters, Mckinlee and Rylee.

Erick Roberts received his Engineer Badge and bars, pinned by his wife Meichelle. His daughter Jocelyn, her husband Isaac and granddaughter Lela Schimmel were also present.

3. **Firefighters** not present

IV. Return to Board Business

4. **Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Personnel Survey/Results**

A letter was received by the fire chief and the board chairman. It mentions a couple of our officers by name, and has an unsubstantiated claim that one of them is secretly working behind the scenes with TMFMD to merge the districts. This claim is unwarranted, however Chief Morgan discussed this with party involved and there is no basis for the claim.

In response to the letter and upon chief direction, our HR consultant – Brenda Tranchina helped Chief Morgan and Chairman Rowlinson develop a survey for district employees to gage morale collectively. A majority of the employees took the survey, most of the comments seem to relate to leadership style, not action. By breaking the data down by morale, it does not appear to be an organizational problem, but one mostly from within the fuels crew. The survey was unbiased, no one but the Fire Chief and the Chairman of the board saw the letter prior to the survey.

Carla Bowen commented that she read every one of the remarks in the employee surveys. After reading them she noted the majority had no concerns but a few had serious claims that need to be addressed. She concluded if there is even a perceived notion of workplace hostility- it should be taken most seriously- if confirmed- those responsible must be held accountable.

Ben Borrego made a comment that the culture today is different, but everyone has to be treated with dignity and respect. Everyone needs to be heard, but tolerance should be present on both sides. The supervisors mentioned may have a leadership style that could be interpreted wrongly but that does not diminish their role as supervisors.

There was discussion about rank and command in fire service. Wildland fire service is culturally different than other work places, but the work force has changed. There tends to be an old-school heavy-handed approach that the district and forest service have been working to revise. Pinetop Fire as an entity, has always tried to remove the stigma of rank and file, work place violence, hostility and bullying, these things are always unacceptable so having an anonymous whistleblower is terribly disappointing. It probably is someone who isn't familiar with Chief Morgan's open-door policy, there has always been an overwhelming understanding that you can go to him with anything - without fear or reproach.

Chief Morgan feels with leadership and tolerance training, PFD can help our supervisors learn and do better. If we help them identify their weaknesses, and adjust their trainings accordingly, they will be better equipped to deal with internal problems. Ernie Lawes commented that if we train them to be better leaders, we are investing in a better future for the district and all involved, the other board members agreed.

Very recently, after the letter, there became an issue within the fuels crew in which we also enlisted Mrs. Tranchino's help. She conducted several live electronic interviews and spoke to all parties involved. Chief Morgan is waiting on her report before he proceeds.

A comment was made that it could be dangerous for the district to discuss names of employees mentioned in the letter. Chief Morgan assured them that our attorney is present at the meeting and there is no cause for concern. No disciplinary action will be taken during this meeting, this is informational only and we are taking things seriously by being transparent in review of the concerns. The Chief has met with all involved.

The board is in agreement that Chief Morgan appears to be handling everything in a professional timely manner, he should continue with his investigation, proceed with identifying weaknesses and train accordingly. If he needs any further direction, he can bring it back to the board. They have complete confidence in his management ability to address the concerns accordingly and to further develop the leadership. PFD always takes reports of workplace problems seriously and deals with them quickly – it is policy.

This is informational only – no board action

VI. Summary of Current Events

1. Chief Report

Report included in board packet.

2. Board Chair Report

Nothing significant to report

VII. Future Meeting Dates: August 15, 2022

1. Carla Bowen would like to see some form of information concerning homeless encampments on district property and how to address the problem, on the next agenda.

VIII. Announcements

1. Chief Morgan explained that the formal adoption of the 2018 Fire Codes has been completed. State Fire Marshal approved the contextual changes for the District and TMFMD, it is final.
2. Flu POD Coming up at Blue Ridge High School Oct 8, 2022 9am - 12pm, times and dates subject to change. This is a county wide event, Summit, Navajo County, Pinetop Fire and Timber Mesa Fire

IX. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 6:27 pm

Respectfully Submitted

Karen Robbins