

Regular Meeting of Pinetop Fire Board  
**May 15, 2023 5:00pm**  
Pinetop Fire District Station 12  
Video & Conference Available  
1845 S. Pine Lake Rd, Pinetop AZ 85935

**Call the meeting to Order: Chairman John Rowlinson called meeting to order at 5:00pm**

**Roll Call of Board Members; Present- John Rowlinson Carla Bowen, Wayne Booher and Ben Borrego, Ernie Lawes was present virtually**

Administration present; Chief Jim Morgan, Asst. Chief Richard Wallace, Gabe Buldra (JVG), Karen Robbins, Attorney Bill Whittington present by phone and Sara Simonton virtually

**1. Call to the Public:** None

**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 for Executive Session Minutes for April 2023**
- 2) Approval of April 2023 Meeting Minutes**
- 3) Approval of Warrants paid in April 2023**

Carla Bowen made the motion to accept the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Ernie Lawes. Motion passed unanimously 5-0

**III. Personnel**

Badge Pinning Captains  
Greg Chavez; pinned by his wife Denys and family in  
Ben Altop; pinned by his wife Alison and family  
Badge Pinning Firefighter  
Cameron Collins pinned by his father Robert Collins and family

Congratulations to all, we are so proud of the hard work and dedication.

**IV. Board Business**

- 1. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Action re: Presentation of April 2023 Financial Reports.**

Gabe Buldra (JVG) gave an overview of the April 23 Financial Reports – all documents were included in the packet. Some highlights included;  
Navajo County Revenue is \$24,025 over budget.  
Non-Levy Revenue was under budget by \$18,000

Wildland and grant revenue were also under budget. Misc. revenue was over budget.  
Expenses for April were under budget totaling \$637,208.

**Year to date** total revenue was \$6,821,900 which was over budget by \$488,922

Percentages; Personnel 79%, Ops at 12%, Administrative at 6% and Communications at 3%

Wayne Booher made the motion to approve the April 2023 Financials as presented. Seconded by Ernie Lawes. Motion carried 5-0

## **2. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re; 2023-2024 Budget committee report**

Chief Morgan gave a brief summary of budget responsibility and scheduling.

Gabe Buldra (JVG); Even though there was an increase in AV and FDAT, our operating costs have also risen due to inflation. PFD must be careful and be good stewards of district funding.

Discussion about the C.O.L.A. raise and how chief Morgan would like to give the labor group the requested 8% increase. We just cannot responsibly reach 8% COLA for everyone with the other challenges we face. Raising employee wages, in turn increases worker's compensation and PSPRS unfunded liability, all figures into the total. PSPRS sits now at 18.06%. A 5% increase across the board would be doable and would still allow us to balance the budget.

Discussion about being competitive for paramedics and raising the paramedic stipend. Currently PFD paramedic stipend is at \$6500.00 annually – the neighboring district is at \$10,000.00 as are most of the districts in AZ. We just can't compete for new medics at \$6500.

Gabe Buldra (JVG) talked about the economic challenges to special taxing districts. He showed the board a graph so they could better understand the negative trend with our tax revenue growth from 2019 to 2024 with the cost of inflation. Inflation has outpaced our tax revenue steadily since 2021 with COVID 19. Problems started with the 2008 downtrend in property values and we still haven't fully recovered. Chief Morgan explained the ripple affect it has from state level all the way to the homeowner.

There was some confusion about the Western States CPI being at 8.5%. But the thought was that Arizona is at 13.5 and it would be a more accurate tool for budgeting if we had the correct CPI percentage.

There was discussion about tax rate increases. Mr. Buldra recommends we only increase a small amount. He told them if they raised to 3.35% it would be an increase to homeowners of about \$38.90 or .017%. He explained that by increasing the tax rate slightly we could safely balance the budget. Wayne Booher asked if we were stable for 6 years what was prior? Chief Morgan told them from 2.82% to 2.9% and then to 3.17% currently. We would like to keep it the same forever, but inflation dictates we must increase slightly to continue to serve our community effectively. We cannot limit ourselves by increasing to the cap - not knowing what the future holds and the needs to come.

Discussion about utilizing alternative revenue by using the Civilian EMT/Paramedics for (IFT) - interfacility transports. Self-contained program, no impact to the budget other than creating revenue, with upfront costs only for IV pumps. \$500 to \$2000.00 depending on the unit chosen.

Discussion about grant income ARPA funding and donations. Prop 207 also came up– the funding remains stable and we may even lose a percentage to tribal entities now included.

Gabe Buldra said we have an increase to workers compensation, allowing for the wage increase and COVID 19 claims. Discussion about Employee Covid exposures and long-covid claims.

Discussion about buildings and land. The Crews need new mattresses and our station supplies have increased due to inflation.

Discussion about GFOA recommendations for special taxing districts. Recommendations are to keep 40-50% cash on hand in reserves. If we were to fund the larger C.O.L.A. we would see our cash reserves deplete to an unacceptable level.

Discussion about communication and I.T. Costs are up with computers, maintenance and the new security system at both stations. We also have an **expected dispatch** increase of 12%.

Discussion –managerial costs, prevention and a keeping a place holder for general liability and professional fees concerning the new facility/land purchase. Chief Morgan reminded everyone about grant funding for the new facility including limited fencing – requested by Carla Bowen.

There was general discussion about the other expenses, increases and decreases.

Chief Morgan asked Allison Moseley (representative from the labor group) if she felt comfortable taking the 5% salary increase back to the labor group. Allison Moseley; the labor group has always worked well with the board and administration, should be no problems.

Question from the board; “who makes up the labor group?” Currently we have 25 sworn firefighters, 8 administration, 7 captains, 5 engineers, 13 firefighters, 11 Civilian EMT and 15 Paramedics and 18 fuels crew. Our Role call currently is 62.

Mrs. Bowen told everyone she is not comfortable voting on the budget tonight – she will wait until she has all the facts and information requested. The report was requested at last meeting showing the increases and the impact across the board. Mr. Buldra will provide the comparative report including possible tax increases and expenses.

No board action at this time. Waiting for comparative report.

3. **Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Updates on Martinez Group Land Purchase and Larson Land Option**

PFD has a mutual termination agreement with Mr. Martinez who is being very helpful. Mark Larson has come to a new agreement for \$1,000,000, for 13.47 Acres. He is actively working with his Attorney and CPA to finalize the trust for the sale. We have a scheduled a walk thru with Mr. Larson on Thursday May 18 @ 9am. Next step is signed purchase agreement and moving forward.

This property will benefit the district in many ways, one of them is providing faster response times at the central and west side of the district since we are dispatched by GPS - closest unit available, it will be a functioning fire station so we can house a rescue unit there. We can also provide additional help with TMFMD for auto aid calls.

Discussion about possible lease agreements tied to the property and some of the wording on the contract but they were all minor or not applicable. No lease agreements.

Mr. Booher asked about providing press release announcements. Chief Morgan; this is the first project of its kind in Arizona, as project proceeds, we will release information to press.

There was discussion about the grant process for the new station.

This item is informational only – no board action

**V. Summary of events**

**1. Chief Report**

Grant money – Selected for the IAFC grant- community awareness  
Summer AFDA Conference July 10-14  
2024 Block Party July 15 2023

Carla Bowen thanked Chief Morgan for the Wildland Fire Report

**2. Board Chair Report**

AZ Fire District Report House bill 2803 for 150 million that was approved for public safety failed to fund.

Vernon Fire was approved for an earmark grant totaling 1 million dollars. Hopefully it will help them with their projects and necessities.

The Fire Incident Management approved a 12.2 million grant for public safety.

The problem is they keep approving money for Fire Service– but then they fail to fund the money in the budget. This is just information only

**VI. Future Meeting Dates: June 19,2023**

**VII. Announcements**

AFDA training in July in Glendale, Chief is asking anyone who wants to attend please let him know so they can reserve rooms. Carla Bowen and Wayne Booher have so far expressed interest. Chief Morgan contract is up in July.

Agenda Items;

1. Comparative report from JVG
2. Tentative Budget Approval
3. Property update
4. Wildland Fire updates

**VIII. Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:27 pm

Respectfully Submitted

---

Karen Robbins