

Regular Meeting of Pinetop Fire Board

March 17, 2025

Pinetop Fire District Station 12

Video & Conference Available

1845 S. Pine Lake Rd, Pinetop AZ 85935

Call the meeting to Order: John Rowlinson called the meeting to order at 5:07pm

Roll Call of Board Members, Present John Rowlinson, Edie Webber, Ben Borrego, Carla Bowen, and New Member Marcus Harding

Administration Attending: Chief Jim Morgan, Asst Chief Richard Wallace, Karen Robbins, and Attorney Bill Whittington, Gabe Buldra and VFIS Attorney Jeff Matura

Note: *Several things were moved around for the meeting schedule. Items were not in order of the agenda.*

IV. Board Business

1. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Swearing in Mr. Marcus Harding as a board member.

Clerk Edith Webber swore Mr. Marcus Harding in as our newest Board Member – welcome Mr. Harding.

II. Possible Vote to go into Executive Session

Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: possible vote to go into executive session pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03 (A)(3) for legal advice and A.R.S. §38-431.03 (A)(4) to give instructions to legal counsel re: JD Ottman personnel disciplinary appeal.

Mrs. Webber made the motion to go into Executive Session at 5:40pm to receive legal instruction and to give instruction to legal counsel regarding JD Ottman. Seconded by Carla Bowen. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Executive Session concluded at 6:02pm Back in Public Session

Mrs. Webber made the motion to authorize Attorney Jeff Matura to proceed as directed in Executive Session. Seconded by Mrs. Bowen. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Back to normal schedule -

1. Call 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 February Board meeting 2025 minutes

2) Approval of February 2025 warrants

Carla Bowen made the motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Seconded by Ben Borrego. Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

2. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Presentation of the February 2025 Financial Reports.

Mr. Gabe Buldra was present to summarize the February Financial reports.
Highlights for February were:

Navajo County Property Tax Revenue was slightly under budget.
Non-Levy Revenue is over budget by \$370,478.
Wildland, Grant, and Ambulance were also over budget.

Total Expense for February was over budget by \$167,233 which was mostly driven by Wildland Deployment and overtime wages.
Managerial costs were also over budget due to the bond payment.
Travel, Meetings and training was over as well driven by wildland fire deployments.

Year to Date Total Revenue is over budget by \$1,659,457.
Wildland and Ambulance were also over budget. Comment that it is good to see ambulance on an upward trend finally, if it stays on this trend, we will easily see an over budget at the end of the fiscal year.
Year to date expense is also over budget – also driven by wildland deployments.

Personnel 76%, Ops 16%, Admin 6%, and communications at 2%
There was discussion about the process of trending numbers for the new board member.

Mr. Borrego made a motion to accept the February Financial Reports as presented.
Seconded by Edi Webber. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

3. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Purchase of grant funded Portable and Mobile Radios not to exceed \$65,238.79.

Chief Morgan reminded the board that they accepted this grant back on October 21, 2024. This is the purchasing for Phase 8 of the project Chief Morgan has been working on. We were awarded the SHSGP grant for the replacement of P-25 compliant hazard mobiles and portables in the amount of \$60,900.00. Our Local Vendor White Mountain Communications had the better quote of \$65,238.79. This is a joint grant with TMFMD. This was budgeted for, and the amount will be \$60,900.00 or \$4338.79 as a match over grant amount. This will be split jointly with TMFMD.

Mrs. Bowen made the motion authorizing staff to purchase all hazard mobile and portable radios from White Mountain Communications not to exceed the amount of \$65,238.79 inclusive of shipping and taxes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Harding. Motion passed 5-0.

4. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Ratification of appointment PSPRS member Sue Wood.

Sue Wood has been a part of our PSPRS board for a long time. She would like to continue her position. This ratification would allow her to continue serving as PSPRS board member.

Mrs. Webber made a motion to ratify the appointment with Sue Wood to the Pinetop Fire District Public Safety Personnel Retirement Board (PSPRS) as presented. Seconded by Mr. Borrego. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

5. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re; Update to the Bond Sale Process

Power point included in the packet.

Chief Morgan told the board that Mr. Dodd would be present at the next meeting to summarize the bond update overview. The bonds have all sold and there were over twenty million in orders. There were nine different institutional investors, local retail buyers and customers and we achieved a blended rate of approximately 4.21%. Chief Morgan will be sending the transaction closing documents that have been prepared by the bond attorney. These are all provided for signatures.

Chief Morgan has submitted a \$3.3 million dollar grant for the wildland response station. This is informational only, there is no board action.

6. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re; Wildfire Conditions

Chief Morgan – Documents are included in the packet. You can see how the drought progression has been going towards a frightening conclusion. We are already in Stage 1 fire restriction. ERCs are included and you can see by the trend that we are already well above past historical values. Fine fuels are drying out and will continue to dry out which increases fire fuel behavior. Even with the precipitation we have received it is just not enough. We are steadily climbing to the same conditions as the Rodeo-Chedasky Fire. This is informational only – no board action.

IV. Summary of Current Events

1. **Fire Chief Report** – Included in the packet. Discussion for the new board member, Chief explained and summarized his Chief's report, he told the board this is the breakdown of district activities for the month of February. He summarized his Radio Projects for the board, Chief Morgan has been working extremely hard on the radio infrastructure in the White Mountains for Public Safety, not just Fire but also Police and Sheriff's Office for a long time. In the future we may be able to rent space to cell phones but for now we are mostly focused on getting the Fire/Public Safety aspect completed as this is the most important.
2. Chairman report - Mr. Rowlinson went over the legislative actions that were being taken as of late, highlighting the EMS portion that has just been quashed.

7. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re; Fire Chief Contract-Consulting Agreement; Grant writing and new Chief onboarding.

Possible Vote to go into Executive Session

Discussion/Consideration/Possible Action re: possible vote to go into executive session pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1) for personnel matters, A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3) legal advice and A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(4) to give instructions to legal counsel re: Fire Chief Contract Renewal and Employment Discussion.

Mrs. Bowen made a motion to go into the Executive Session at 6:41pm for the purpose of legal advice and Attorney instruction, regarding Chief Jim Morgan's Employment Contract and new Chief hiring. Second, by Mr. Borrego. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Return from Executive Session at 7:03pm

Mrs. Webber made the motion to authorize Mr. Whittington to develop an extension and consulting agreement and a grant writing agreement as directed in Executive Session. Seconded, by Mr. Borrego. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

8. Discussion/Consideration/Possible Approval re: Direction to Staff regarding potential Fire Chief Hiring Process.

Chief Morgan, we need to start thinking about hiring a new Fire Chief. There was discussion about the process, hiring Nationally and who we could use for the process. Mrs. Bowen told the board that the process with hiring Chief Morgan took about 6 months total. She said that John Flynn, Simon, and Brenda Tranchina were very instrumental in finding and vetting Chief Morgan. Chief Morgan told them John Flynn is retired, but he does participate in selective opportunities. We could reach out and see if we could hire him. There was a discussion about dates and timelines.

Consensus was to follow the Motion for #7- Authorize Attorney Bill Whittington to develop an extension, consulting agreement, and a grant writing agreement as directed in Executive Session. All Agreed.

V. Announcements.

We will stay in Stage 1 Fire Restrictions unless something changes drastically.

AFDA summer classes – Chief explained the requirements and classes for the Mr. Harding. He told them to let us know as soon as possible to reserve one of the six rooms.

Next Board Meeting is April 20, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 18:50 pm

Respectfully Submitted

Karen Robbins