



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

Station 32, 8905 Koch Field Road, Flagstaff AZ

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Timney called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

2. **ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS / AFFIRMATION OF QUORUM**

Members Present: Chair Jim Timney, Board Members Rick Parker, Scott Walton, Robb Faus, and Jim Duskocil

Administration: Deputy Chiefs Mark Wilson, Chris Fennell, and Jerry Bills, Interim Battalion Chief BJ Fisk, Administrative Officer Vivian Fennema, and Administrative Assistant Tammy Schieffer, Eng. C. Robinson (Zoom)

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

4. **CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

- a. **John Ruggles, 11731 N Copeland;** concerned that District is not providing public with all the information being addressed at the board meetings referencing ARS 48-853. (per statute, we are only required to post the agenda, not all the attachments).
- b. **Marilyn Ruggles, 11731 N Copeland;** referencing request that Daniella had brought up several months ago- 2 minutes is not enough time to address the board. Please put this on a future agenda to increase the amount of time that people have to speak.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Discussion and Approval of the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of March 22, 2023, and the Budget Workshop of April 12, 2023
- b. Approval of Reconciliations and Financial Reports for March 2023.
 - Viv- Mr. Chairman, any questions on the financial reports that were provided in your board packets? If board agrees, we will be reviewing the Account Balance Synopsis at future meetings, and then if there are any questions on the reconciliation reports, or the Profit & Loss Reports for the month we will address those individually instead of going over each one.
 - BM Duskocil would like to see the "% of the year" we are at added to the P & L. MW said we will add it to the synopsis.

Board Member Parker motioned to approve item A and B on the agenda. Motion was seconded by S. Walton.

Vote Conducted. MOTION PAST ALL IN FAVOR

AYES: Parker, Duskocil, Walton, Timney, Faus

NAYES: None

6. **Current Events Summaries, Reports, and/or Correspondence**

a. Monthly Run Report

Interim BC Fisk reported:

- Run report for March 2023. Total of 100 calls, with 63 being emergent calls. District 31 ran 15 calls, District 32 ran 19, District 33 ran 10, and District 37 ran 10.
- Avg response times: Sta# 31 at 7.44min, #32 at 6.92 mins (this station was manned), #33 at 7.76, #37 at 8.2 mins and GMT at 12.39.
- Sta #37 had a structure fire off of Bader Rd. (detached garage) 1st alarm with auto aid from Flag Fire. The very next day Sta #5 (FFD) had a structure fire in Cheshire and E37 was pulled in for the initial attack. This shows our automatic aid working well.
- BM Faus- any issues with accessing Sta #37 with the flooding in that area? BC Fisk- not that he is aware of. There are issues with access at FFD Sta #5, which DC Wilson will address.

b. Monthly Chief Updates: Gaillard, Wilson, and Fennell

Chief Gaillard:

- 3 new SFMD employees started at the academy this week.
- Tomorrow at 1:30pm, @ Highlands there is a Coconino County Fire Districts Revenue Support Group meeting for all district fire chiefs. Discuss surrounding prop 310 and the aftermath of the failed attempt to secure more funding for Districts. While it failed statewide, there was a 63% support of it here in Coconino County. Purpose of the meeting is to brainstorm if there are any thoughts on how we can get supplemental funding for fire districts.
- Board Chair and Chief Gaillard did receive an email from Rob Wilson, business owner and resident of the district with same concerns addressed by Mr. Ruggles. The Chief contacted our County Attorney, Paul Garns, who evaluated our agenda, and he felt very comfortable that we are adhering to the state statutes. We also contacted our experts at the Arizona Fire Districts Association to talk about their practices.
- It has not gone unnoticed that the new approach to draining this water off that Mark described which has affected the district and area surrounding it has been a lot by the personal efforts of Chief Wilson as far as his relationships in the community, getting the right people in the room to talk about solutions- it has not gone unnoticed on the City side, and how it is going to improve conditions in the district as well.

Chief Wilson:

- Tier 2 purchases continue, identified needs still outstanding and additional funding to cover some of those needs.
- Some of the area behind Sta #37 had been affected by the flooding but the station is in a good spot, so no damage there. Still waiting for some sustained warmer weather for the asphalt drive to be repaired.
- Sta #5 as it affects the auto aid provided to us out on 189, we have had some damage to the front of the property due to the snowmelt runoff coming down Schultz Pass. We were looking at the possibility of running our engines out of #37 if access to #5 was impeded. City Council approved last night for an open channel to run to the side of Sta #5, then onto the Rio which is where the water wants to run.
- One way we are going to address the concerns expressed here tonight is we are going to attach the "action Items" page out of the board packet to the agenda when it gets posted for the public's viewing which will provide better depth of communication to the public on what those agenda items specifically represent.
- BM Parker- had the area by Government Tank be addressed for the flooding that occurs out there? Chief Gaillard suggested we get a representative from the County Stormwater to come speak to that at our next board meeting. DC Wilson- County has secured federal funding to address that specific area.

Chief Fennell:

- Fire Academy started, will be graduating around June 30th.
- Engineer Academy happened over the last week. We have 3 promotions from that: Swatzell, Gia, and Brown.
- Captain's testing- D Russo was the only one who went through the process.
- We have seen some flooded areas around the Rio out here in Doney Park. Slayton and Hutton Ranch have water flow over the roads.

c. Local 1505 Update:

- Casey reported yes, we have e3 new guys in the academy, but we also have one guy who put in his notice to go down to Daisy Mountain and work, and we have another medic going through a testing process out of state. This is taking a toll on our guys who have to step up and work 96 hours in a row to cover the holes in staffing.
- Fill the Boot is coming up.
- Wildland season- One year ago today we had the Tunnel Fire. We feel for the people who lost their homes and possessions, but we are here for them to do the best job we can.
- We know the board has a tough decision to make today. We know all the research that has been done, the 18 months collecting data. Labor supports the decision you make on this. We just want something solidified moving forward.

d. Coconino County Updates: no one present.

7. **NEW BUSINESS / ACTION ITEMS - Public Comment:**

a. Amend policy #162 as it pertains to the carry-over of accrued vacation time.

DC Wilson- change in policy on page 3, from "carry-over exceptions shall not be granted for more than one time in a 2-year period" to "carry-over exceptions shall only be granted on an emergency basis at the Fire Chief's discretion". This has not been an issue in the past, but with the attrition levels we are seeing now, we need to be able to allow our personnel to retain their accrued vacation because they cannot get the time off due to no fault of their own. Chair Timney- we cannot deny them their time. If they can't take it due to circumstances within the department we should allow the Chief to make that decision to grant carryover for them.

Board Member Parker motioned to approve policy #162 as written. Motion was seconded by R. Faus

Vote Conducted. MOTION PAST ALL IN FAVOR

AYES: Parker, Duskocil, Walton, Timney, Faus

NAYES: None

b. Acceptance of Department of Homeland Security Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) of \$62,725.66 to purchase Extrication Equipment for the district.

DC Jerry Bills: \$62k grant is for medium to heavy grade extrication equipment. Our piece of that is \$3,136.29 (5%) if they spend it all. Even the stuff we have bought over the last 10 years isn't strong enough with the way they build the trains and vehicles now days.

Board Member Parker made the motion to accept the AFG grant with a total of \$62,725.66. Motion was seconded by R. Faus.

Vote Conducted. MOTION PAST ALL IN FAVOR

AYES: Timney, Parker, Duskocil, Walton, Faus

NAYES: None

- c. Presentation of the March 2023 benchmarks for the Eastside Restructure Pilot Project.

DC Fennell – For the month of March Sta #32 was staffed. 1 fire; 9 EMS calls, avg response time 7.76 mins, E32 into D33 9 times.

- d. **Board selection of which station is to be retained as the operational location for SFMD on the east side of our district; Sta #32 or #33.**

DC Wilson: Eastside Restructure Pilot- reviewed Board Goals, monthly reports, timeline, critical factors, response times, call density, facility design and function, risks- population, target hazards, and the outside consultant's analysis of our district. All this same information was gone over at the Community Meeting held on March 23, 2023.

Public Comment on specific agenda item 7d

- **Marilyn Ruggles- 11731 N Copeland:** The main reason to leave #33 open is for the concern over Government Tank area. It's going to flood and they don't have the money to take care of it. It flooded several times last summer. Hwy 89 closed several times last summer. My hope tonight is that all 5 board members speak tonight on their reasons for choosing whichever they choose. And you have more than 2 minutes per person too. Thank you for your time and thank you for your service.
- **Rob Wilson- 11920 Glodia:** Based on what we have already hear this evening, even closing a station isn't going to save Summit Fire. Keeping both station owned by Summit – you are still going to have the expense of maintenance, which is why I originally recommended closing both stations and building a new station at Silver Saddle and 89, and adding Guardian ambulance to it to eliminate the need for a paramedic on the fire truck. We wouldn't need them at all. Regarding the email sent earlier today, during the presentation today I noticed that all the board was looking down at their packet and not the TV monitor. You have the advantage of seeing the information in advance and we have to look at the monitor- we can't see that. It appears that public comment is neither desired nor encouraged in this process. The way you have managed this and the lack of transparency and the lack of information to us to be able to review in advance suggests that to me. I just hope that Sta #33 stays open. Thank you.

BOARD COMMENTS AND VOTE:

Rick Parker: A few things that I have thought about- when I heard from the public at the meeting tonight is the concerned if the road gets closed. So, I did some research and through all of that last year not one time was that road closed to emergency personnel. They wouldn't let you drive your personal cars through there. I would like to see the water channeled. I don't want to see it go over the road, but as far as closing the Hwy, I don't see that as a concern. The only time it was closed was when the fire jumped the road, and you couldn't see to drive and then it wasn't closed for very long. So I took that into consideration. That is part of the thing that is helping me make my decision. I went over all this information we've been given, and it seems to me like, I agree we should have a station out by Silver Saddle. But right now we have to figure out what we can do right now, and work towards the other. I am going to say specifically that I would prefer to see Sta #32 stay open. But I will be involved in seeing it moved out to Silver Saddle and 89, IDK when that will happen, so that is where I am at right now.

Scott Walton: Rick echoed a lot of my same thoughts also. It's kind of the best of a bad situation. Based on call load, based on maintenance of the station, and the amount of people that we serve keeping Sta #32 open, I am leaning towards keeping 32 open.

Robb Faus: It's not an easy decision. I do agree with Mr. Wilson, we need to seriously consider relocating but obviously we don't have the capacity to do that at this moment. Rick nailed a lot of the things. Scott agrees and I agree that it seems logical to keep #32 open, there is no passion or prejudice here it just makes more sense. I think about the school there, and if Sta #33 is committed then Sta #31 or FFD Sta #3 and looking at the response times for that. As far as exploring a new station that is more centrally located that will serve everybody equally. In a perfect world we close both stations, plop a new one down and be good to go. But as you know we are dealing with a pretty significant financial situation that we are struggling to get out of. Thanks, staff, for being really pragmatic and making some decisions that are guiding us in that direction. I have the utmost confidence in that. As far as public participation, I'll take full responsibility for trying to get the meeting at a later time, and get more speaking time, it's vital that you come to the meeting and participate. I do hear you. So thank you, and again, this is not an easy decision, I'm not going home and twisting my mustache and thinking I won here. This is not comfortable for me. But the district has empowered me to make a decision based on my abilities and my knowledge. Yeah, so that is where I stand now is with #32.

Jim Doscocil: So what everybody is saying, it makes sense, we are all saying it's data driven, which it is you have to look at the data. My take on it, and he said, it is not a win, to me it's a loss. It's a loss for the board for us to be closing a station. For me personally this is the 2nd station I've seen close at Summit. So that's a failure on the Board. That we are being fiduciarily responsible with the money that you taxpayers are giving us to allocate it properly for this not to happen. I take full responsibility and I apologize for it, but it is data driven, what we have, and because what one gentleman mentioned it's attrition is a lot of it. Paying the people is a lot of it, they are leaving like flies. Since 2008 til 2020 personnel costs went up \$727,000. That's a lot of money. That's a hard cost, it's not a one-time cost that goes away. It goes from one budget to the next to the next. The amount goes higher and higher for operating costs. I get it, we are trying to keep the guys here, but to what point? Like I say, I think it is a failure of us. Not catching this, not seeing this, to keep these stations open to keep the guys on the trucks. I would have to agree I think #32 is the one, just because there is more bay space, it's a newer station, and we definitely need to move it. No doubt about it. We can't let you people down like we did on the west side. They haven't done anything with moving that one, nothing. So I'm hoping that doesn't happen here. Then all the talk of moving stations gets covered up, and they move on to something else. To try to keep everyone employed. So I think 32 would be the way to go.

Jim Timney: I went through everything, all the comments, and I seriously looked at all that and my gut feeling is that 33 would be the one to keep open simply because it's out there. But my gut may be wrong. And this time I think we have to look at the data. And something that has not really been addressed in any of the data, to any great extent, is Sta #31's role in all this. If we close 32 and keep 33 open and 31 is on a call on the freeway, it is a very, very long haul from 33 out to Leupp Road. We have lost buildings in district 31, it was a wildfire that moved into, we lost a home, we lost a mobile home, it was an arson fire off Hidden Hills. So district 33 isn't the only place we've lost buildings to fire, it's the only place we've lost significant buildings to fire. My thoughts on mitigation of flood waters, if we anticipate something that big we can pull them out and stage them. There is not a lot you can do about a flood. We just have to deal with it as it shows up. As far as wildfire in the urban interface, that is a problem across the country. Nothing compares to the losses in California. Every year they have that. Major fires, major losses and there is nothing the ifre

department can do once it is that big. There was a note about assistance from neighbors, to help save a home. No department is fully equipped to handle the worst-case scenario, in our region, and that includes Flagstaff. That was mentioned in one of the comments that we are mutual aid for Flagstaff. Well, that works both ways, they cover us as well. Our training is identical, we go through the same program as they do. We can only prepare to the best of our ability with the equipment and manpower we have, and that is where we are at. It occurred to me this morning that if 31 is out, it is 20 minutes for 33 to get out to Leupp Road. So that really, in my mind, put 32 as a priority location. It is more centrally located.

Rick Parker: Quick thing regarding public attendance and public speaking, I know we had that as a request on the next agenda. I want to hear what everyone has to say, but if we have dozens of people then we have to cut it shorter. If we have less people we can figure out how to give them more speaking time. As far as the information here, I show up here an hour early for every meeting so I can go over anything I need to. I would encourage everyone, if you have any other questions, come on in early. The stuff is here, we can answer some questions, individually, we can do it as a board. I encourage you, if you are curious about this stuff, get involved, don't wait for us to hand it to you. We want you to get it all. Don't be afraid to ask questions. In reference to what Board Member Duskocil said I agree that we need to be able to be fiscally responsible. As far as the cost of personnel, I don't think we have been spendthrifts by any stretch. There is a few things that maybe we could have done without, but like you said, employee costs are steadfast, we still have to deal with them. That is the most important thing here. If we don't have good quality people, we might as well shut the doors to everything. If we are going to try to maintain that we have to make some hard decisions in reference to changing this or changing that, we have to maintain good quality people. We have to look at all the options, times have changed since 2008, our tax base went way down (whew). We can't tell all the firefighters, well we can't pay you anymore. We have to maintain good quality people. I am totally open to any questions you might have for me as far as what's gone on in the past to try to keep the stations open. I obviously agree with Duskocil about Station #36. I didn't want to close Station #36, but it came down to 36 or 37. We did the same thing pretty much as we did here with 32 and 31, so that's what happened to 36. I wish we could open another station. I don't see how we could, but it's not out of my mind. Until some things change financially, we just can't. So that's where I'm at.

Scott Walton: I just wanted to say, I live over on the west side, and I'm a firm believer that myself and family be self-reliant. There are things we can do ourselves to help mitigate circumstances. I live in a rural area, you guys live in a rural area, by choice. I don't have garbage pick-up, I don't have next door police service, the sheriff has a longer response, but that is what I want to do. There are things that we can do ourselves for self-mitigation, self-reliance. If you don't know what to do, these are the guys to ask. I'm working right now on my personal property, it's money out of my own pocket. There are grants available to help do that, we can't count on big brother to help us all the time, we need to be self-reliant.

Jim Timney: Just real quick on personnel cost, every time we lose somebody because we can't pay them enough, it really stabs the budget. Not only do the new people have to be paid, but they have to be trained so there is the additional training cost on top of their regular salary and benefits that we incur with every one we lose. We need to find that balance. A lot of people are leaving, not because of salary, but for other reasons. We are doing the best we can, some of things we have control over, we didn't do well. Some of the things that happened and the reason we are where we are at, we had NO control over. It's just depressing. Anything else from the board. Entertain a motion to close a station?

Rick Parker made a motion to retain Sta #32 in the east side district and close #33. Motion seconded by Scott Walton.

Vote Conducted. MOTION PAST ALL IN FAVOR

AYES: Timney, Parker, Doscocil, Walton, Faus

NAYES: None

We want to thank the people who have shared their thoughts with us. Thanks to staff. I don't know exactly how much work you have put into this, but I know it's a lot. You have managed to stay impartial and just give us the facts, and that is what we needed to make this decision. We want to encourage the public to stay involved, keep attending the meetings, and thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Board Member Parker, seconded by Board Member Walton.

Vote Conducted. MOTION PAST ALL IN FAVOR

AYES: Timney, Parker, Doscocil, Walton

Regular Board Meeting Adjourned at 7:37 pm

Respectfully submitted by:

Robb Faus, Board Clerk