

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

MEETING MINUTES
Regular Board Meeting Agenda
May 11, 2023
High Country Fire Department
6593 High Country Lane, Williams Arizona
ATTACHEMENTS AVAILABLE AT www.summitfiredepartment.org

Public Hearing

1. **CALL PUBLIC HEARING TO ORDER** Meeting was called to order at 9:10 am

2. **ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS / AFFIRMATION OF QUORUM**
Present: Chairman Terry Warnock, Member Michael Osendorf
Absent: none
Administration: Administrative Assistant Tammy Schieffer
Public: High Country Fire Department Fire Chief Robert Trotter, Williams Fire Chief Chase Pearson, Flagstaff Fire Department Chief Mark Gaillard
Via Zoom: County Attorney Mark Garns

3. **PUBLIC HEARING TO ADOPT FY 23/24 BUDGET FOR POSTING**
 - a. Proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget Plan Overview/Public Budget Hearing
 - i. Overview of proposed Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget
 - ii. Public Hearing/Comments
The Governing Board Chairman will consider audience comments/questions on issues related to the proposal Fiscal Year 2023/2024 Budget. Speakers are limited to three minutes and comments/questions should pertain to the proposed Fiscal year 2023/2024 Budget.

The board reviewed and discussed the proposed budget for FY23/24 for 20 day posting

4. **ADJOURNMENT PUBLIC HEARING**
Board Chairman motioned to adjourn the Public Hearing. Board Member Osendorf seconded the motion.
Vote conducted. **MOTION CARRIED**
Ayes: Warnock, Osendorf
Nays: None

Public Hearing was adjourned at 9:22 am

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

Regular Board Meeting

1. **Call to Order** Meeting was called to order at 9:22 am.

2. **Roll Call of Board Members / Affirmation of Quorum**

Present: Chairman Terryl Warnock, Member Michael Osendorf

Absent: none

Administration: Administrative Assistant Tammy Schieffer

Public: High Country Fire Department Fire Chief Robert Trotter, Williams Fire Chief Chase Pearson, Flagstaff Fire Department Chief Mark Gaillard

Via Zoom: County Attorney Paul Garns

3. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- a. Approval of Reconciliations and Financial Reports of March and April 2023
- b. Approval of Minutes from March 9, 2023

Woods Fire Board reviewed the reconciliations of March and April 2023, and the minutes of March 9, 2023. Board Chair Warnock motioned to accept the reconciliations of March and April 2023, and the minutes of March, 2023 as presented. Board Member Osendorf seconded the motion.

Vote conducted. **MOTION CARRIED**

Ayes: Warnock, Osendorf

Nays: None

4. **Current Events**

- a. Administrative Updates There were no Administrative updates
- b. Other Items

Flagstaff Fire Chief Gaillard reported that administration is working on getting a list of registered voters as requested by Board Chairman Warnock. Board Chairman reported to County Attorney Garns that the subdivision has 94 lots. As of a few years ago, only 22% of those lots had full time people who could help with the fire district board. she has requested a list of voters in the district to try to get new board members to relieve Jeff Johnson and Osendorf from the board. That is why we want to consider this expansion of our district because we just about too small to live as an independent district.

Williams Fire Chief Pearson reported:

Last week we received finalized report from ISO that rates your fire districts and it affects your insurance rates. Since we cover your area; the Woods subdivision is outside the 5 mile limit from Williams Fire Station, but you are within that 5 to 7 mile range. That makes you eligible for 10W. Williams was at a 5Y and improved to a 4/4Y. That 10W can be improved by showing a hauled water credit. The report is good for 5 years, so you can use it for future planning to improve that rating.

5. **New Business / Action Items**

- a. Review, discuss, possible action on approving FY2023/2024 proposed budget for 20 Day posting.

Board Chairman Warnock motioned to approve the FY2023/2024 proposed budget for 20 Day posting. Board Member Osendorf seconded the motion.

Vote conducted. **MOTION CARRIED**

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

Ayes: Warnock, Johnson, Osendorf
Nays: None

- b. Review, discuss, possible action on Special Meeting date in 20 days to approve proposed FY2023/2024 budget.

Woods Fire Board and Administrative Assistant Schieffer discussed setting a date for Special Meeting in 20 days to approve the proposed FY2023/24 budget. The date is set for June 8, 2023.

- c. Review, discuss, possible action on proposed contract with High Country Fire & Rescue Department.

Chief Gaillard: From a staff perspective, the attorney has given comments on the agreement and back in Chief Trotter's end and he is working on it, and we have not seen a response yet.

Board Chairman Warnock: We had a little trouble getting stuff to people on time because me and tracking changes just don't get along.

Chief Trotter: addressed Attorney Garns. Everything was fine, it is 36.228B gives me authority to transport people. That is the state statute. You were looking for that. I will give you copies of our VFIS and workers comp. We do the insurance in August of every year. We upped our insurance for 23/24 from \$3M to \$6M.

Workers Comp is state regulated. The state picks someone for us. It is Brookshire Hathaway Guard.

- d. Review, discuss, possible action to end IGA with Williams Fire Department and entering into Contracted Services with High Country Fire Department for protection services.

Chief Gaillard: addressed attorney Garns maybe a necessity of an e-session with the board to advise the board. Is it the kind of thing to do now?

Attorney Garns: I believe pulling out of the IGA with Williams should be pretty straight forward. I have been looking for the agreement there. I know it was emailed to me at some point.

Chief Gaillard: I received a copy from Board Chair. It is pretty standard iga language, 30 day notice requiring notice to city of Williams Fire Chief, and county attorney's office.

Attorney Garns: If one of the board members can write up a quick letter, nothing fancy saying Woods FD is wanting to terminate the IGA with the City of Williams FD, put effective date. Want to be sure everything is ironed out with Chief Trotter so there is no gap for coverage. As soon as I can get a copy with Chief Trotter's comments, with my changes and comments, we should be on our way. I am just here to cover all the legal bases. Make sure the contract is legally binding. As far as the policy decision and what's best for Woods FD, and looking after the Woods FD interest is up to you, Chair Warnock and your board. I am just the legal beag can help with the contract. Whether or not to enter into the contract is up to you.

Chair Warnock: addressed Attorney Garns, I want to take a moment to thank you for engaging here and appreciate your help. I have a question about how we, don't know where it falls on the agenda. How do we move forward? I pulled the

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

information I had about consolidation and merger from the training, but I don't think either of those procedures really apply. That is between 2 duly organized fire districts. We have 1 fire district and a non-profit. The agreement for services is an interim step. Ultimately to absorb High Country. How would we go about that? Attorney Garns: Like I indicated in the email, that is definitely another ball of wax. I don't know how best we would structure that whether dissolution of Woods Fire District would be the best way to go about it, then put another fire district in place? A lot of that would depend on High Country Fire & Rescue is willing to do. I understand the kind of trajectory you are going for here. It would be a process of a lot of legal I's to dot and T's to cross. It is more than doable. That is where I am sitting right now. As things continue in that direction, there may be issues that need to be ironed out, but from what I looked into so far, there are provisions for doing what you want. Just how to structure all that, would be a conversation we have going forward.

Chief Gaillard: My perspective under the administrative contract, I think it is important for the board to have a real clear sense of what that path looks like. Before you enter into contract with High Country simply because you want to have a plan to see if you can get to. High Country has really attempted to get a district formation and found difficulty. So, I would caution the dissolution of Woods FD without a clear path.

Chief Trotter: I would strongly suggest to not dissolve Woods FD. It was the same thing I told Junipine FD when the board asked my opinion if they should just dissolve theirs. No, because of the difficulties. The main difficulty, is the lots out number the structures and people that live out here. So, when I go to the county to say this is the area I want to try and do, the County Board of Supervisors tell me, well you have to have a minimum of \$120,000 tax revenue coming in. I want to start small district and expansion would be easier than to start one. Example, the last attempt, we mailed out 750 petitions, which included the whole entire package for statute that we have to give; the Impact Statement, the maps, everything. So, that was \$8.00 per packet going out to 750 people and we only got 7 petitions signed back. That is throughout the whole United States, and Europe. There is a German company that owns 57 lots out here that sold it to an English company in the midst of us trying to become a district. Strongly suggest do not dissolve it. Keep it going. You contract with whoever you want for fire protection. In the mean time, I am going forward with my plan turning this whole area into a fire district, so we can consolidate with you and Sherwood. Chase knows this plan, John and I have sat down and explained it to him, so it is not a secret, we want to take over Junipine, because we think it is better for this whole entire area and communities that we become one big gigantic fire district, so we can have full-time people 24/7 like Chief Gaillard and Flagstaff with a full-time fire department, 24/7, 365 days a year. Have 2 or 3 manned stations with engines out there. That is extremely expensive to do, but I think we can pull it off. It is just getting with the county supervisors when we go for a small district next to Junipine, or next to you to consolidate and spread out and expand this whole entire area. We had a lunch meeting with Patrice Horseman, and Matt Ryan. We always do an open house every year with Matt Ryan and tell him what we have done, and with Patrice also. We explained that to them. It would be easier if you would allow us to do smaller and they took it under advisement and consideration. Of course, they can't say anything until it goes through the process. That is the new plan, But, again, whatever is best for you, Chase and I as still good friends. Whoever you go with, we still going to be mutual aid buddies. We are working together on new communications project for the whole

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

entire area. Whatever way you wanna go, you will not hurt anyone's feelings. Again, don't dissolve your fire district.

Chief Gaillard: Patrice Horseman is the Board Supervisor and current board chair for the county.

Board Chair Warnock: Dissolve is a scary word. No one wants to think of that. My question is about the next step. I like the idea of expanding. I thought we had discussed at a board meeting some time ago about expanding boundaries of Woods subdivision to include this small initial and incremental inclusion of High Country Fire area and it was going to work because we could do some creative map drawing to make it contiguous. That was going to be the first step.

Chief Gaillard: I have shared this with Chief Trotter. I think that is a good plan. I think the recent experience with High Country with district formation is tough in a rural area. It becomes even tougher when you need the support of absentee owners, that to them is why would I sign on to more taxes when I don't have a risk except bushes. At the strength of, if you want to grow, and create more resources through regionalization makes a lot of sense to hang on. Your most valuable commodity is you are a formed fire district. What is important also, is a vision that says we are going to grow the district is very incremental and will take possibly years to get to that. I think it is really important you to get a sense of we are going to do all this, and we are going to be a larger, financially solvent district next fiscal year will take years.

Chief Trotter: I think we discussed. Our idea of having this area, Red Lake connected to Woods and Sherwood and Deer Park area is a 5 year vision. Anything north of here is year 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 out towards the Valle area that is Patrice's district.

Chief Gaillard: there are moving parts. I like the vision. I don't want you to have sunglasses on with the respect to it is a process that is going to take time. It is a long haul decision for that vision. It is really important to me everyone sees that.

Board Member Osendorf: We are actually just starting this step; Jeff and I both. This is not going to be done next year. It is going to be years from now.

Board Chair Warnock: How much can we get done in three years?

Chief Gaillard: I don't have a sense to that. I think a really good question is how would we get to that stage? One of the things to be considered is how fast can Woods annex and grow? Chief Trotter probably has sense of it. Then it's how willing are those parcels to support that? There is a block of parcels north of Woods kinda moving in this direction. We are kinda stuck. That is why it is nice to see that Junipine is in the same sense that they might grown and Woods might grow, and depending on, quite honestly, the geometric location. Then it becomes a possibility. I don't have a sense of that.

Board Member Osendorf: What do you mean Woods grow?

Chief Gaillard: To get to the regional piece, the Woods Fire District has to get larger. Chief Trotter's vision is there is two distinct fire districts. On a map down south, Junipine north and a little west, and Sherwood Forest south and east. To make the vision work you consolidate and grow these three districts until they are all one. It will require piecing meal annexation, which a lot easier than district formation. It will require consolidation. The second that Woods is contiguous with another district, now Woods will not have to staff a board with part-time owners of 94 lots. All the while, Williams will be a municipal fire department. They, also have grown, to my knowledge. Their public policy is changing, but previous public policy was they were not interested in annexing Woods into the city. From a potential standpoint, and I have talked to both of these chief's about, there are not enough resources out here for anybody to be on their own and

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

uncooperative. I see the model the chief's understand that and acknowledge that no matter how this goes, we are all we got.

Chief Trotter: Whatever you think is best for your community is ok with me, ok with them. If you want to stay with Williams, that is fine. I am still going to come over and help Chase no matter what the deal is, and vice versa. There is a lot of different options that you can do here. I was just one of the options. To get my vision of this whole entire Red Lakes, Woods, Sherwood, Deer Farm area into one fire district, I would say 5 years. Depending on if we could start a small district close to you and expand to you, or start growing next to Junipine and consolidate with them, and spread east. We have three different plans we are working on here, depending on the cooperation of the Woods and Junipine.

Chief Gaillard: Chief, that is interesting to me. So, the part of putting this all together, you think you can be successful in couple new districts formations in addition to growing these existing districts in the area?

Chief Trotter: The whole entire first process was we start closer to Woods with a smaller district, and then expand towards you, you expand towards us, we hit that little gold spike in the ground and go, we are one. Then, we start expanding over towards Junipine and up north. The only issue is your tax rate. If we were to consolidate, we are going to have to with the higher tax rate. If we start a district at 3% and you are only at 1.7 now, you will have to have that huge pump up if we are going to consolidate. It won't be a slow process of every year raising a little, if we would to consolidate our 3 with your 1.7, you would have to agree to our tax rate so we can do our vision of manned fire stations 24/7, and have engines.

Board Chair: Is it still the rule that as long as both boards are 100% in agreement, we would not have to take this to the tax payers first?

Chief Trotter: Correct, because you are a government entity, our district would be a government entity. The two are consolidating the two. Just have to follow the statute as far as consolidations. But, you don't need the voters to vote yes or no on. You are representing them.

Chief Gaillard: You would still have to do the public disclosure. You have to do the public statements, mail them out to inform the public. As Chief Trotter points out, if there is different tax rates can be a real thing. If the lower tax rate entity asks the reasonable question are we subsidizing the service to another area? Next year, chief, the budget is proposed to be at \$1.15. That becomes a real issue as well.

Board Chair Warnock: Our too low tax-rate has been a stumbling block all along.

Chief Trotter: I threw a 3 out there. We were always going to be a 2.89. The same as Sherwood, so it wouldn't be a shocker, except for the Woods people. As we discussed before, over the next two years, if you raised that up, I started at 2.8 and you are getting closer to 2.8, and we started to expand get closer together, and actual touch and consolidate By that time you are closer to the 2.89 to where it is not such a shocker to everybody in your community. Then, as time goes on, we raise ours per statute, once it is all big, and start telling people you want additional fire station, we are going to have to raise this.

Chief Gaillard: addressing the board. To put it into context, you currently at 1.15 next year, you are going to raise about \$20,000. If you double that and went to 2.30, you will be at \$40,000. That does not hire a fire fighter and pay their employer related expenses. So, the growth piece is what the opportunity for you is to grow the fire district, now you have more Assessed Value. But, it is a rural area, and you are going to have rural collections. So, it doesn't solve everything. To put context in place, Woods currently could max out the rate at 3.50, and we could decipher that pretty soon. Let's just say that is closer to \$60,000 annually.

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

\$60,000 if you could legally get to that rate, but you can't, it will take a couple years. The growth of the district is how that happens. Consolidating is certainly a fast-forward approach. So, you could consolidate with Sherwood and grow a new fire district. But, those numbers are low. I am trying to support the board in what you want to do. My biggest thing is do we have knowledge of how to get there and what that looks like, in the context of how long it might take? I have heard some things in our conversations that suggest that next year. This is a long-haul issue that public policy is, which frustrates Oz. Oz is a firefighter, he wants to put the work in, and see the result.

Board Chair Warnock: As long as we are doing reality check here, I do not expect Ozzie or Jeff to be down for that long haul.

Member Osendorf: We will see.

Board Chair Warnock: We talked about this. There are other issues. That is why I am trying to get the list.

For instance, my fire protection for 2022 was \$164.63 for the year. So, that could double or better?

Chief Gaillard: To get to the vision of 2.89, yes absolutely. This board have never been about trying to get something for nothing. We always recognized that you get what you pay for. We were not paying enough, initially, for fire protection from the City of Williams as the people in the City of Williams did. So, that is not good. We want to be fair with the money. It is a hard sale to raise taxes for anybody. Until they need it.

Chief Gaillard: In all practical purposes, I would not recommend the board take action on the High Country, or Williams until we are further down the road with the finalized documents regarding the High Country contract. I would recommend, at best, to put that on the agenda for your next regular meeting. We would have the chance to help with sharing with the county attorney's office, and High Country. We have draft agreement that needs approval of county attorney recommendations, and then we could put it back on the agenda. Perhaps, included in that discussion, I will sit down with Chief Trotter and take a look at a map. We will have a better idea from Chief Trotter where he sees a new district can successfully form. That could potentially happen way before there is this big district over-arching the area. That could create opportunity for Woods to get a little bit of size, either through consolidation, or merger, and getting different board members. All the contracts may be approved by the county attorney and move forward with that.

County Attorney Garns: Chief Trotter: are you, and or High Country Fire & Rescue represented by an attorney?

Chief Trotter: Yes. Whittington is our district fire chief.

County Attorney Garns: My concern is, if you are represented by an attorney, have you ran by that attorney what we are going over with this contract?

Chief Trotter: Oh Yeah.

County Attorney Garns: Ok. Just wanted to make sure on that. It sounds to me that we are pretty close, as far as the proposed agreement between Woods Fire District and High Country Fire and Rescue. If, at anytime, this is also your opportunity Chair Warnock to go into Executive Session with me, if you want to run anything by me confidentially. You are certainly welcome to do that. I know that you tried to send me the document that Chief Trotter had taken a look at, Chair Warnock, but it didn't work. Maybe, Chief Trotter, could you send that to me directly? We could avoid some of the issues with the tracked changes. I am your lawyer and you have the right to talk with me with the board in executive session, in a confidential way. That is the last I will put in for that.

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

Chair Warnock: Thank you very much. I don't think I have....I struggle with this job, because I still don't have enough information to ask an intelligent question. I always have to call and ask Chief Gaillard what is my opinion on this issue and why. We really appreciate the admin contract. I don't anything else to ask. I have a lot clearer understanding of how we are going to move forward with this to reach the ultimate goal of being part of a larger fire district that includes High Country Fire & Rescue, and whoever else is on board. City of Williams, if it comes to it. We are just trying to get good fire protection for our neighborhood, and exist, even though we don't have any infrastructure.

County Attorney Garns: Please don't take my silence on the nuts and bolts of all this as me not caring. It is just I, ethically, am just here to chime in on legal issues, help contracts get drafted; make sure those are good. You all have the ground knowledge of things, and it would be stupid for me to chime in on any of these policy decisions. I want to make clear, there are clear statutory provisions for consolidation, for merger, for the proposed agreement you may go forward with High Country Fire & Rescue. All of that is on the up and up. There is provisions for it. That is all I have at this point. Thanks.

Chief Gaillard: I would suggest postponing items C and D until the next meeting.

Chair Warnock: postpone items C and D until the next meeting.

County Attorney Garns: Madam Chair you are always welcome to email me. This goes into Public Meeting Law. As long as you at not cc ing anyone else of the board, you are welcome to email me. Chief Gaillard is welcome to email me. Someone else on the board is welcome to email me. We cannot have you and then someone else on the board on the same email, that would create a quorum and that would create a violation of Public Meeting Law. You can bring the other board members up to speed at the next board meeting. The whole policy behind this is everything that you and other board members discuss should be at a meeting where the public is welcome to be there, and should not be taking place over private email.

- e. Review, discuss, possible action to approve Fire Chief Robert Trotter of High Country Fire Rescue to become the fire chief of Woods Fire District with no compensation.

Board Chair. I am going to say I do not think that is a good idea. I agree with Mr Garns we should wait until we have an agreement in place with High Country before we move forward with it. It makes better sense to me to wait. The only push for that, Mr Garns, was that Chief Trotter is interested in applying for grants to help us get infrastructure built looking towards the future. So, that was why we were feeling urgency to move ahead with that. But, we have a fire chief with the city contract with Chief Pearson.

Board Chair Warnock motioned to postpone Items 5c, 5d, and 5e to our next regular meeting. Board Member Osendorf seconded the motion.

Vote conducted. **MOTION CARRIED**

Ayes: Warnock, Osendorf

Nays: None

WOODS FIRE DISTRICT

6. **Fire Board Comments-** There were no board comments.

7. **ADJOURN REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

Board Chair Warnock motioned to adjourn the regular board meeting. Board Member Osendorf seconded the motion.

Vote conducted. **MOTION CARRIED**

Ayes: Warnock, Osendorf

Nays: None

REGULAR BOARD MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:36 am

Respectfully submitted

Tammy Schieffer

Administrative Assistant