



Copper Canyon Fire & Medical District

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REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Station 81 – 494 S. Main Street, Camp Verde
Tuesday, May 19, 2022 / 9:00 am
~ MINUTES ~

1. **Call to Order:** Pursuant to notice, a Regular Meeting of the Copper Canyon Fire & Medical District was called to order by Chairperson Linda Welsch at 9:00 am on Thursday, May 19, 2022. Payroll/Benefits Assistant Kerrie Tarver recorded the minutes. A quorum was present, and the meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.
2. **Roll Call of Board Members** Linda Welsch – Chairperson; Brandi Bateman – Clerk; Carol Keeton; Steve Darby; Justin Largent (9:52) - Members.

Staff Present: Fire Chief Terry Keller; Battalion Chiefs Eric Strauss & Daniel Elliott; Fire Marshal Ken Krebbs; Administrative Manager Robyn Cook; Captain Tyler Rezzonico; Engineer Clint Gillespie; Firefighters Travis Adcock, Taylor Hammond; Tanner Rezzonico; and Austin Stutzman; Payroll/Benefits Assistant Kerrie Tarver – Recorder.

Public Present: Janet Aniol President of Beaver Creek Community Association (for call to public); Debbie Roulette of Camp Verde.

3. **Salute to the flag of the United States of America and Moment of Silence to Honor all American Men and Women in service to our Country, Firefighters, and Police Officers.**
Chairperson Welsch led the pledge of allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
4. **Call to the Public** – Janet Aniol, President of the Beaver Creek Community Association stated she heard there is consideration of balance billing on ambulance service in regard to budget adjustments. She urged the board to drop the discussion as she feels it is inappropriate to consider. Ms. Aniol stated that during the formation of the Copper Canyon Fire and Medical Authority there was an agreement both in writing and verbally that billing will remain the same and considers it an enormous breach of faith.

Debbie Roulette made a statement to the Board regarding the potential increase to the property taxes. She stated that the increased in assessed value should automatically provide more revenue to the district without needing to increase the mil rate.

5. **Approval of Minutes**
 - A. **Executive Session Minutes for January 18, 2022.**
Clerk Bateman made a motion to approve the Executive Session Minutes for January 18, 2022. Board Member Darby seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.
 - B. **Regular Meeting Minutes for March 15, 2022**
Board Member Keeton made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes for March 15, 2022. Chairperson Welsch seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed with 3 ayes and Board Member Darby abstained.

C. **Regular Meeting Minutes for April 19, 2022**

Board Member Darby made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes for April 19, 2022. Board Member Keeton seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed with 3 ayes and Clerk Bateman abstained.

D. **Special Meeting Minutes for April 29, 2022**

Board Member Keeton made a motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes for April 29, 2022. Clerk Bateman seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

6. **Reports:**

A. **Fire Chief**

B. **Operations**

C. **Fire Marshal**

D. **Financial/Administrative**

Chief Keller delivered the Fire Chief Report, which included updates regarding repairs to the Rosenbauer Pumper, modifications to Station 82, as well as a request from Scottsdale School of Film and Theater, Reserve hiring, Verde Lakes coverage, and updates regarding grants and donations. Chief Keller stated there are over 900 open firefighter positions in the state of Arizona and it is difficult to maintain a reserve list.

Chief Strauss presented the operations report, which included call volume, types of calls, wildland updates, training, public education events. He commented that call volume was down, but they are remaining busy with district activities. He provided Kudos to crews for containing a recent fire from spreading to additional residential properties in Verde Lakes.

Fire Marshal Ken Krebs provided updates on the new growth in the area and the impact on infrastructure capabilities. There will be no fireworks for the Casino's anniversary due to fire restrictions. The possibility of 4th of July fireworks will be assessed as the date approaches. Fire Marshal Krebs provided details on housing development in the district.

Administrative Manager Robyn Cook presented the financial report. The ambulance revenue is trending over budget and is expected to reach two million for the year. Overtime continues to be over budget and is expected to reach \$275,000 by the end of the year. Some costs will be offset from the other over time budget categories. The budget to actual is trending on target. At this time of the year, it should be 84% expended and it is currently at 83%.

There was a discussion regarding refueling, specifically at the Beaver Creek Gas station rather than the County to maximize cost savings. Chief Keller is to reiterate instruction for ambulances to be fueled at the county fuel yard. Clerk Bateman stated she'd feel better about making other difficult budget decisions if she was confident that staff was doing everything possible to reduce costs.

7. **Discussion and possible action on the approval of the financials for April 2022.**

Clerk Bateman made a motion to approve the financials for April 2022. Chairperson Welsch seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

8. **Budget Workshop – Revenue and Expenses**

Administrative Manager Robyn Cook explained confusion encountered by districts with a new form required by the Arizona Auditor General. The form conflicts with state statute and has errors in the calculations. The Auditor General's office interprets that an override election is necessary to increase the mil rate because there is an old portion of the law in the statute. Ms. Cook obtained confirmation from John Flynn from Arizona Fire Districts Association that an override election is not necessary. There was a

discussion regarding the impact of an increased mil rate on residential properties and they range from \$120 to \$32 a year increase based on property value.

There was a discussion on the status of legislation that could impact district revenue and worker's compensation premium costs. There were no definitive answers available.

The current draft budget included the increase to the worker's compensation premium and balance billing for ambulance revenue. There was a discussion on the estimated increase in revenue the district could realize from balance billing. Clerk Keeton discussed reducing the COLA increase in lieu of balance billing.

Board Member Largent joined the meeting at 9:52 am.

There was a discussion on the impact of balance billing in the district. It was noted that the balance billing is automatically written off for Medicare, Medicaid, and AHCCS recipients and transients who do not have insurance are not billed. There was a discussion on how to minimize the impact to the largest population. It was noted that when the district merged Camp Verde Fire agreed not to balance bill but the ambulance rate was increased which offset the revenue.

Ms. Cook addressed Ms. Roulette's statement regarding the property taxes. She noted that there is a 5% cap on increased assessed value when it comes to property tax. If assessed value increases 10%, the district is not allowed to collect taxes over the 5% increase.

There was a discussion on added expenses out of the district's control. These expenses incurred are due to Craig Tiger Act and cancer coverage through worker's compensation. Commercial property tax rate was reduced by 2%, which shifts the burden to the residents through an increased mil rate. The district has incurred a 13% increase in call volume which increases operating expenses.

Ms. Cook clarified that the budget provided includes the increased mil rate, balance billing, and 5% COLA. It would not be possible to give staff a COLA at all if the balance billing and the increased mil rate is removed. There was a discussion about what changed from the April 29th special meeting as the budget was balanced. The roll over funds were removed from the budget because there will not be any money left at the end of the fiscal year to roll over. Rollover funds were included in the past fiscal year budget that were not there at the end of the year.

There was a discussion regarding making a decision regarding a COLA but without being able to discuss other issues the Board did not want to provide specific direction. Chief Keller reminded the Board about the current open positions within the state and the difficulty of finding staffing and risk of losing current staff due to the high competition. All Board Members were in agreement to try to remain at the 5% COLA.

Budget workshop closed at 10:15

9. **Discussion and possible action on approving Resolution 2022 – 001 for a Call to Election for three board seats.** *Clerk Bateman made a motion to approve Resolution 2022 – 001 for a Call to Election with correction to date and spelling of Clerk Bateman's name.* Ms. Cook stated the corrections have already been made. ***Board Member Darby seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.***

10. **Discussion and possible action on changing the time and day of Board Meetings.** There was a discussion regarding the ability of Board Members to attend 4:00 pm meetings and balancing the desire of the public. In an effort to ensure that a quorum is possible for the regular Board Meetings that are required by Arizona Revised Statutes, the Board Members discussed their availability.

Chairperson Welsch made a motion to change the Regular Board Meetings to the third Thursday of every month at 9:00 am. Clerk Bateman seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

11. **Discussion and possible action on the submittal of a letter to the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors requesting the release of ARPA funding for COVID-19 relief.**

Discussion to pressure BOS to release some of the county funds received to the fire districts to relieve expenses incurred by districts due to COVID coverage and PPE. Sedona Board crafted letter to BOS and copied legislation at the state level.

Clerk Bateman made a motion to have Fire Chief Keller draft a letter to the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors requesting the reallocation of ARPA funding for COVID-19 relief to the Copper Canyon Fire and Medical District. The letter is to be signed by the Board Members and copy provided to the Arizona State Legislators. Board Member Largent seconded. The Board discussed the opportunity to bring awareness to the issues and open conversations. Chairperson Welch called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

12. **Discussion and possible action on the Stardust contract for Taurus (Merit) to construct a tower.**

Due to the inability to obtain materials to build a tower, Taurus Technology requests permission to construct a smaller tower in the interim at their expense to keep the agreement in place until a final tower can be achieved. In essence, it is a modification of the expectations in the agreement.

By consensus the Board Members agreed to allow Taurus Technology to erect an interim tower and start paying rent.

13. **Discussion and possible action on the approval of Hinton & Burdick CPS's & Advisors as the auditor for the District per the RFP that closed on April 21, 2022.**

Clerk Bateman made a motion to approve Hinton & Burdick CPA's & Advisors as auditors for the district as it relates to budget because the district used them in the past, appreciate their services, and they are cost effective. Board Member Largent seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

14. **Discussion and possible action on the approval of Merit Technology Partners as the IT Provider for the District per the RFP that closed on April 20, 2022.**

Merit Technology Partners agreed to reduce the cost in their proposal to \$5,000 per month. There was a discussion on the reasoning for the reduction.

Chairperson Welsch made a motion to approve Merit Technology Partners as the IT Provider for the District. Board Member Keeton second. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

15. **Discussion and possible action on the approval of VFIS of Arizona as the liability insurance carrier for the District.**

Ms. Cook informed the Board that Cindy Elbert Insurance was able to obtain a reduced quote of \$71,000.

Clerk Bateman made a motion to approve VFIS of Arizona as the liability insurance carrier for the District as it relates to the current budget. Board Member Largent seconded. There was further discussion regarding driving instruction training and that both organizations provide a comparable program. Chairperson Welsch called for the vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Keller informed the public that the district shopped vendors to get best value.

16. **Discussion and possible action on listing district owned property for sale.**

There was a discussion regarding liquidating district owned real estate based on the inability to build a station anytime soon. After a discussion, the board directed Chief Keller to obtain comps on market value for the Arena Del Loma and Howards Road properties and schedule a special meeting if necessary for further discussion and direction.

17. **Future Agenda Items**

Executive Session Minutes for April 19, 2022.

Budget Workshop

Discussion and possible action on listing district owned property for sale.

Update on the Stardust tower in the Chief's Report.

18. **Adjournment**

Clerk Bateman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:38 am. Board Member Largent seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Original Signed by Brandi Bateman

Brandi Bateman, Clerk