



# Copper Canyon Fire & Medical District

26B Salt Mine Road, Camp Verde, AZ 86322  
[www.ccfmd.az.gov](http://www.ccfmd.az.gov) Phone (928) 567-9401

**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**  
**Station 81 – 494 S. Main Street, Camp Verde**  
**Thursday, June 23, 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, June 23, 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 (9:07 am); Justin Largent - Members.

**Staff Present:** Fire Chief Terry Keller; Fire Marshal Ken Krebs; Administrative Manager Robyn Cook; Battalion Chief Daniel Elliott; Captain Tyler Rezzonico; Engineer Nic Dubs; Firefighters Taylor Hammond, Shane Gage; Brady Elliott, Jake Spleiss, and Chad DeWitt; Payroll/Benefits Assistant Kerrie Tarver – Recorder.

**Public Present:** Janet Aniol President of Beaver Creek Community Association; Debbie Roulette; and Carlie Androus 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 Beaver Creek Community Association repeated their stance about adamantly being against further billing for ambulance services. She stated that when the district combined with Montezuma Rimrock that was an agreement with the Montezuma Rimrock Board, the Association, and the Beaver Creek public that the same free ambulance continue. They have worries that people who need help won't call for it because they're concerned about billing, or they will try to drive the 22 miles for medical assistance. She stated the association does not think it will benefit the Beaver Creek area or the Camp Verde area. Ms. Aniol stated that she hopes the Board does not vote to balance bill because the association won't let it go quietly.
5. **Budget Workshop – Revenue and Expenses**  
According to Administrative Manager Robyn Cook, the recommendation to raise the mil rate to 3.375 and impose balance billing for ambulance services remains. Ms. Cook stated that the Board has the option of automatically writing off people on Medicare and that it is a requirement of AHCCCS (Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System). There was a discussion about the budgeted amount for balance billing revenue and who would be affected by the change. The conversation included concerns regarding the elderly and people with fixed incomes. It was pointed out that the intention of property tax is to fund fire suppression rather than ambulance services. Board Member Keeton disagreed with the comment. The discussion progressed to how private ambulance companies bill 100% for services, and the district subsidizes ambulance services with fire suppression funding. Board Member Keeton stated the mil rate had not increased for 12 years. Chief Keller said the district was not legally permitted to do so until this year.

Fire Marshal Krebs stated that although he does not want his taxes to increase, he is in favor of both because of the Safer Grant. If the financial issues aren't fixed now, it may cause layoffs and affect services when the subsidized grant money is no longer available.

Board Member Keeton stated she felt the new growth in the area was being ignored. It was noted that new growth will increase the call volume and require more personnel. Chairperson Welsch stated that the Board has agonized over the budget and is looking to sustain services. She understands and appreciates the community not wanting to pay for ambulance services, but it is pushing the burden to all taxpayers. Chairperson Welsch stated that she believes there was not a written agreement at the time of the merger to not balance bill and given the economic situation over the past four to five years she is unsure the district is able to continue to absorb the costs.

There was a discussion regarding the cost of fuel. The district is spending over \$10,000 a month on fuel and Chief Keller is engaged with the Beaver Creek School District for consideration of exploring an IGA (Inter Governmental Agreement) to purchase through bulk pricing. He is unsure of the potential cost savings. Chairperson Welsch commented that each transport is consuming costs and DHS (Department of Health Services) allowed a rate increase, but the costs continue to increase.

Chief Keller expressed his frustration that the district is considering doing what it pledged not to do, but he believes there are no other options. He commended the Board for being committed to providing the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) and recognizing the need to retain employees and remain commensurate with the industry. Chief Keller discussed the increase in expenses and loss of revenue the district had to absorb over the past three years due to the pandemic. He discussed legislation that has impacted the district financially as it relates to worker's compensation, reduction in commercial rates, and Proposition 117. Chief Keller stated the merger helped to deliver better service to the community, but he is unsure if it will continue to be possible. He discussed COVID relief funds the county received, and nothing has been distributed to the districts in the county. Chief Keller stated he is still pushing for relief and encouraged the community to contact the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors. He stated there is hope that the sales tax initiative will be on the ballot in November as it is pending legal challenges and a referral to the ballot by the Secretary of State. If the sales tax initiative goes through the district should be able to lower the mil rate next year. Administrative Manager Robyn Cook stated that the district can not count on those items and there are no options but to increase the mil rate and balance bill.

Clerk Bateman stated the safer grant is one of the primary reasons she does not want to increase the mil rate now. She stated those funds will be spent and if the mil rate is increased there will be nothing available to increase revenue and the district will be laying off firefighters. Chairperson Welsch stated the mil rate could be increased in portions but if it is not raised the district can not recover the revenue. She stated that the mil rate can be lowered at the next budget if the other funding is realized. Board Member Keeton stated she would rather see the mil rate increased because the district could not return to not balance billing. Board Member Darby stated he felt the Board was backed into a corner and they are not trying to balance a budget because there is a \$1,000,000 deficit. He discussed his concerns with approving a 5% COLA, absorbing the safer grant costs, and debt; stating that increasing the mil rate and balance billing only provides \$300,000 of revenue. Board Member Largent agreed with Board Member Darby. Chairperson Welsch stated that the district was at risk of attrition if a COLA was not approved, and Board Member Keeton agreed that discretionary items need to be cut.

The Board reviewed the different budgets and discussed the significant differences. There was further discussion regarding the different reasons for overtime costs, the tremendous demand for firefighters around the state, and the Board's position on raising the mil rate and balance billing.

The Budget Workshop ended at 9:54 am.

6. **Discussion and possible action to publish the proposed FY 22 – 23 budget for a public hearing and adoption on July 21, 2022.**

***Board Member Largent made a motion to include balance billing for the FY 2022-2023 budget. Board Member Darby seconded.*** There was a discussion for clarification that the motion was to publish the budget with only balance billing and not to include an increase in the mil rate. ***Board Member Largent withdrew the motion.***

***Board Member Darby made a motion to publish the budget with a 5% COLA, increased mil rate to 3.34, and include balance billing. Board Member Largent Seconded. Chairperson Welsch called for a roll call vote. The vote was 3-2. Chairperson Welsch and Board Members Darby and Largent – Aye. Clerk Bateman and Board Member Keeton – Nay. The motion passed.***

7. **Adjournment**

***Chairperson Welsch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:56 am. Clerk Bateman seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.***

Original Signed by Brandi Bateman

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Brandi Bateman, Clerk