



2422 N Firehouse Lane - Huachuca City, AZ 85616

MINUTES OF THE WHETSTONE FIRE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING 27 JULY 2020 AT 1700 HOURS

Call to Order/Roll Call/Affirmation of Quorum/Pledge of Allegiance:

Members Present: Steven Hasson, Donna Graybill, Pamela Cohen, Dave Johnson

Staff Present: Chief Bidon, BC Foster, Cathy Dyer, Union Members

Absent: None

It was determined a quorum existed with four board members present.

Call to the Public: No comments

Old Business:

-Review Amendment and Discussion of Possible Action of Possible Changes to the Huachuca City IGA for Fire Service

Chief Bidon: The contract went through the Town of HC's attorney and also our attorney back in 2017 and was approved. This was a 3 year contract and I added an Appendix E which discusses the renewal. At this point the average career of a firefighter is 25 years, and I don't think it's fiscally responsible to be renewing after 3 years. I modeled this one after Goodyear's contract and I'll have you look over this and ask HC to pick one of the options because our contract ends on December 31st of this year and I want this one to roll on so we have a seamless transition and we don't have to juggle and play with are we gonna lay off 6 firefighters and then hire back in a few months. I want the longer contract to keep career focused individuals so the firefighters don't have to wonder about their jobs every 3 years. What I'm presenting to you and the town council is a 20 year contract with 2 10 year extensions, a 15 year contract with 2 8 year extensions, or a 10 year contract with 2 5 year extensions. I want the first one but this will give HC options. We also want to annex the town but if we fail we have to wait for 2 years to try again per state law. When they look at these options we will be documenting that we want to annex them. Once the annexation is complete the contract will go out and we start receiving the property taxes from those areas but it can take 12-18 months for those properties to roll onto our taxes. HC is already an established town so it should be a smooth transition but if we stop the contract and then don't have the tax revenue coming in we can't foot that bill and afford those 6 firefighters so that's why I want it like this. Once Cathy gets notice that we are getting money from HC we would contact them and say stop paying us per the contract. We want to expand our CON for ambulance coverage to the town of HC because right now we wait for Fry to transport and it makes more sense for our guys to just transport. Obviously if it's critical we won't wait but otherwise our guys are waiting on scene for 15 or 20 mins for that Fry ambulance depending on where it's coming from, if it's the Yaqui station or if it's the Moson station we won't even wait. These long term contract options show that we are committed to the town and obtaining those CON boundaries. What I want to attempt,



2422 N Firehouse Lane - Huachuca City, AZ 85616

and it'll cost us a little bit of money, is a non-contested amended con with Fry Fire. I need all CON holders within a 110 mile radius to agree and I have them all except for one, but I've suggested that HC Town Board sits in on a Fry Fire meeting and asks them if they support the closest unit response then why don't they support this. And if HC decides that they wanna go on their own we have a year's notice or if we decide we want out they have a year because it's gonna take them time to get a fire department going. We have a thing that we won't exceed 3% for the cost of living adjustment and we gave them 3 years without raising it and I suggest we give them another 2 years before we implement that 3%. Our contract right now is \$410,000 every year which is \$102,500 every quarter and that was figured out before we gave our employees a 5% increase, so about \$350,000 goes to wages and other things go up when wages go up as well. I used basic math rules and rounded up or down to make it easier because I'm not going to fight for pennies. The rest of the contract is what we already had on there; the only difference to the contract are the 3 contract options and we asked for a year out as opposed to a 90 day out. I showed HC why we couldn't go down and they understood that. The HC police department has 5 employees including the chief and they charge the city \$640,000 a year whereas we provide them 6 firefighters and our admin personnel and they're paying \$410,000. What I would ask the board for is if you agree with this then we'll let HC pick one of the 3 options and I'll come back and tell you what they picked.

Pamela Cohen: I'm good with it.

Donna Graybill: I just have a question on the termination: are there any penalties involved for either side with early termination.

Chief Bidon: No, that's why we have that clause in there. If you guys decide you don't want to be there I'll give them the year notice and continue to serve them and with the mayor and council members they have right now I do believe they would do the same.

Donna Graybill: Okay, I'm good. Any questions or discussion?

Steven Hasson: How would you like us to frame this motion?

Chief Bidon: I would make a motion to approve Appendix E in the contract.

Steven Hasson: Okay. Another question: at some point in your discussion you said that you needed to spend, if we were receptive, some amount of money in order to get some agreement from Fry?

Chief Bidon: That's totally separate. That's for the CON that deals with the ambulances and those would be administrative fees to the AZ Department of Health Services.

Steven Hasson: Okay it wouldn't be part of this motion?

Chief Bidon/Donna Graybill: No it wouldn't



MOTION: Motion to accept the presentation of Appendix E, contract renewal options leaving those options up to HC

RESULT: All in favor; none opposed

MOVED BY: Steven Hasson

SECONDED: Pamela Cohen

New Business:

-Review Amendment, Discussion, and Possible Action of Public Session Minutes for June 22, 2020

Donna Graybill: Did everyone get a chance to read them?

Pamela Cohen: Who did the minutes?

Donna Graybill: It's on the bottom

Chief Bidon: It's Hannah

Pamela Cohen: They're very detailed

Donna Graybill: Yes

MOTION: Motion to approve the public session minutes from June 22nd, 2020

RESULT: All in favor; none opposed

MOVED BY: Steven Hasson

SECONDED: Dave Johnson

Discussion and introduction of the Professional Firefighters of Whetstone Union Number 5256

FF Spencer: Hi I'm Firefighter Spencer and this is Firefighter Dickey and we are honored to introduce you to the first firefighters union of Whetstone- the Professional Firefighters of Whetstone local 5256. We are proud to announce that we are currently at 100% participation in our union with all of our full time staff. We look forward to adding more members once the full time hiring process is completed. The Professional Firefighters of Whetstone local 5256 members vow to exude such qualities and traits of professionalism, pride, commitment, and compassion in any and all communities and events and in the future we look forward to a strong and working relationship with the Whetstone Fire District and the Fire Board and to work in the best interest of the District. Thank you for your time and this opportunity to speak.

Donna Graybill: Fantastic. Can we have everybody else introduce themselves that's here?

LT Speer: I'm Daniel Speer and I'm the president of the union as well as a district lieutenant and paramedic



2422 N Firehouse Lane - Huachuca City, AZ 85616

M Bidon: I'm Michael Bidon and I'm a lieutenant on C-shift at Station 324

A Torres: My name's Austin and I'm a firefighter and a paramedic student

E Prospero: Hi I'm a firefighter/EMT on A-shift

C McCloud: Hi I'm Connor and I'm a firefighter/paramedic and I work on B-shift at Station 324

Chief Bidon: Please note that when they say they have 100% we have 12 full time firefighter positions and we have 2 openings right now, which I'll discuss in my chief's report. We should also have 6 part timers but you can only advertise for so much.

Donna Graybill: Awesome. Well I'm excited and you all did a great job. I was very excited when Cathy told me you all were coming, and we look forward to working with you.

FF Spencer: Thank you

New topic- Possible New Fire Board Member

Donna Graybill: Trevor Thompson. We have read your letter stating interest in the Whetstone Fire District Board and I'm going to start it off with a couple of questions and then I'll open it up to the rest of the board. First I'd like to have you tell us a bit about yourself and what brought you to this point.

Trevor Thompson: I'm Trevor Thompson and I'm still employed by the US Army. I've been a human resource specialist for 20 years and did a bit of firefighting in my younger days with the army. We moved here and are planning on retiring here within the next couple of years. We saw the opening for the fire board and my wife and I both applied and it later turned out that only one position became available. I still work on Fort and I live right down the road on Arthur Ranch Road.

Donna Graybill: Okay so your position with your current employment: do you have long periods of TDY's or deployments?

Trevor Thompson: Definitely no deployments at this time and very minimal TDY's. This is planned to be a nice office job on the way to retirement.

Donna Graybill: What do you feel are your greatest strengths that you could bring to the board?

Trevor Thompson: I'm good at working with people and working on computer systems. I know a little bit about a lot and a lot about a little.

Donna Graybill: Any other questions? Okay since there are none we'll go into an executive session after the meeting to discuss this. Is there anything else you'd like to say for us to think about?

Trevor Thompson: I think that's it unless you guys have any other questions.



Donna Graybill: I don't. Your letter was excellent.

Chief Bidon: Are you currently an officer in the military?

Trevor Thomson: I am not.

Chief Bidon: But you are a supervisor?

Trevor Thompson: No in my current position I am not a supervisor.

Chief Bidon: So my current question for you is gonna be, just so you know you're more at the administration level and not at the operations level, so do you think that you can not overstep into operations and make that differentiation?

Trevor Thompson: Absolutely. At my current position I am an equal opportunity advisor to commanders and my previous assignments have been in human resources.

Chief Bidon: I ask because board members can get in trouble for stepping into operations and when we send you to training you'll see and we had one here who did that in the past.

Trevor Thompson: I don't foresee that being an issue Chief.

-Review Amendment and Discussion of Possible Action of the Financial Reports

Cathy Dyer: You have your reports before you. We did close out our fiscal year ending with \$90,362.84 in the Maintenance and Operations account and we carried that amount over to start the new fiscal year. We will have another deposit coming in but Chase bank closed due to Covid so I couldn't get it in before this report. The only large check was for the insurance payment for the engine out of the Capital account and it was lesser than the invoice but we're waiting for insurance to recoup the check so we can write it and send it back out to the company that did the repairs. As for the other report they're all pretty status and if you have any questions on any of the reports that were provided to you I'm here. We closed the month of June out with \$154,045.39 in the Capital account and that's not reflecting the payment to the insurance company. The county requires 2 signatures from the board if you want to move any money from Operations to the Reserve account.

Chief Bidon: Can you let us talk about it tomorrow so we can figure out what we need operationally and then come back to you?

Cathy: I'm okay with that.

*All board members expressed agreement.



2422 N Firehouse Lane - Huachuca City, AZ 85616

Cathy: We closed out the fiscal year in the Volunteer Pension and Relief with a balance of \$43,004.83. We have started to collect a few payments from State Land and we collected the money from the Mustang Fire and we should be getting money back to recoup for when Lt Speer went out on the Bighorn Fire.

Donna Graybill: Does anyone have any questions or discussion?

MOTION: Motion to accept the financial reports

RESULT: All in favor; none opposed

MOVED BY: Dave Johnson

SECONDED: Steven Hasson

-Chief's Report-

Information regarding the following topic(s) presented by the fire chief:

Chief Bidon: Here to date we have 714 calls which averages out to 3.58 calls per day. The June incidents were 110 and 52 of those calls were in Whetstone and 55 were within the Town of HC. And then we had 3 mutual aid calls. The big news is we got our ISO rating back for HC and it was a 4. And that was the key component we were waiting on before we started the annexation process because now we can show them what we have done for the town and how keeping that up would be beneficial for them. I can't take credit for this because every one of the members of this organization stepped up and if you'd have seen the binders we have and sent off... But HC deserves credit for the water department up there and the hydrant testing because a big portion of ISO is the water delivery. We did have to spend a big chunk of money at Station 324 for the A/C but we are going to send a bill to the town for reimbursement because we have done a lot for that station and I think it's time we start looking for recoupment. But I have firefighters in that building so we have to pay for it up front and seek reimbursement later. This is also why you never have a metal fire station. We are in the hiring process: Cathy and BC Foster can go into more detail on that.

BC Foster: Hopefully by the end of this week we'll have an idea of what our eligibility list will look like.

Donna Graybill: What positions are we hiring?

Chief Bidon: We have 2 full time positions, 3 part time positions, and 1 full time firefighter who is off on injury but were not filling his spot because that individual should be back in a few weeks so BC Foster and I can get off shift to deal with other matters off of shift. The full time positions are for FF/EMT. Again I'm working on developing the process of how we are going to go about the annexation process in HC and that takes time as far as me dealing with the county and I'll need to go to Bisbee for a lot of that. I'm asking for a GSI map of the town which is very detailed. And when I'm presenting the annexation I need to present a map so everybody can see. There's a couple ways of doing it: one way is if we get 51% of the property value owners and 50%+1 of the voters to agree on the annexation then we can do it but otherwise we'll have to go to a vote. And what I'm seeing is that a lot of the property owners don't actually live down here, in fact most of them live out of state or even internationally. But



I'm doing the research and working on it because when we go for it I want everything to be lined out. BC Foster came to me and he is working on the promotional process requirements for the in house testing for Captain. As you know when we put out for it a while ago we wanted a 2 year degree but right now if we test we have one guy that could go for it but that still leaves 2 Captain's positions open. We have a plan and I think it's a good plan and we'll put it out as an administrative memo because I don't want to change the policy for requiring a college degree. I think we'll set ourselves back if we don't require the college degree and it's a national standard as part of NFPA 1021 for the college degree. So it's not like I'm just pulling this out because even at the BC level they require a bachelor's degree. We put out for the Captain's position and had zero interest and our guys knew about the college degree. We're going to try to work with our employees but we're going to put strict requirements in place. We will work to get them up to that though. And unfortunately we can't pay for them to get the degree because we just don't have the money but my argument is that I pay for how many people to go to medic school which is 50 some credits towards that degree. This will open our testing pool to more of the firefighters and anyone who already has their degree will get the full on promotion.

Donna Graybill: Do you have anything on the resignation of the town manager?

Chief Bidon: I do! I just wanted to let you guys know that the Town Manager of HC did resign and there's all kinds of rumors flying out there. I believe it was kind of mutual between the town and the manager.

Donna Graybill: Have they hired somebody new?

Chief Bidon: No they haven't. Right now the town librarian is the acting manager and honestly she's the only one with the formal education for that position. And everybody is pushing towards that formal education. So right now the town is without a town clerk and the elections are coming up and they're minus a town manager

Donna Graybill: They did just hire a finance manager though right?

Chief Bidon: Yes. We'll see which way it goes and I think that the Mayor is gonna do a lot of the oversight but the day to day things are going to go to the librarian. But I think they need the town clerk more than anything with the election deadlines coming up. I'm not 100% sure about that though. I will tell you that he did step into some Fire District business and I had to have a conversation with him but I put him on speakerphone with Cathy so he couldn't say I was being mean or unfair. He was making phone calls to the state on our behalf and I had to stop that.

Donna Graybill: Any other questions?

Steven Hasson: I just have a general question. You've been part of a union or you're about to become a part of this union- what are we doing now with the union that is different from what we were doing before?



2422 N Firehouse Lane - Huachuca City, AZ 85616

Chief Bidon: Whetstone Fire District has never had a union and now they decided to join these organizations. I tried to get them to join several years ago but at that time they weren't ready. But it all boils down to what their union dues are.

Steven Hasson: So now they are a collective bargaining union?

Chief Bidon: Well Arizona is a right to work state so you can't call them that because they don't get to bargain for wages and benefits but they can make suggestions for those things. Most of the fire departments in Arizona have a meet and confer but some do have a collective bargaining union. In Arizona you don't have to recognize the bargaining though. The thing about those larger unions is they have the money to get the attorneys to go and do the bargaining. A lot of the right to work states have the meet and confer rather than the bargaining. Fry Fire has a meet and confer but that fractured their department a little bit. As long as the union keeps up with their dues they are fine but their relationship with the board is their business. Anything they want to bring up they need to present to the board and it needs to go through the District attorney and depending on what he comes up with they'll need to pay for their own attorney. At Northwest Fire, I was on the board for that union, we did a lot of the community events and that's what a lot of unions do to present themselves to the community.

Steven Hasson: Okay thank you I'm just trying to get up to speed here

Chief Bidon: Well don't google anything on the IAFF.

Donna Graybill: Does anybody know when the IAFF was started?

Chief Bidon: I do not but I know that Bisbee was one of the first ones in the state. When all unions first started it was for the betterment of the employees and a lot of the technology has come from unions

BC Foster: They do a lot for the safety and health of the firefighters

Chief Bidon: They absolutely do especially with the cancer and the PTSD issues in the fire service. And the IAFF is pushing for the betterment of such issues. For example some agencies have a critical incident debriefing team and we have used the teams from Sierra Vista and Northwest and it's beneficial for both agencies. And with these guys being part of their own union now it's going to make it easier for them to intermingle with other agencies and other unions.

Donna Graybill: So you plan on being a very active union?

LT Speer: Yes, that's the plan.

Donna Graybill: Excellent

Future Agenda Items:



2422 N Firehouse Lane - Huachuca City, AZ 85616

-Chief's Contract, Policy Manuals, Work Session

Cathy: I know you guys put off your schooling until after elections to prevent duplication of effort because if you are reelected to your seat you have to take that test again.

Board Members' Comments:

Pamela Cohen: I have a question- if the annexation goes through does our board grow?

Chief Bidon: No we stay 5 members but our boundaries will expand so HC residents can run for the board except if they're on the council because you can only be on one governing board.

Adjournment:

MOTION: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 1756

RESULT: All in favor; none opposed

MOVED BY: Steven Hasson

SECONDED: Pamela Cohen

Donna Graybill: We will go into an executive session at this point

Minutes Recorded By:

Hannah Sovar-Knox, FF/CEP

*Note: The abbreviation "HC" used throughout this document stands for Huachuca City