



HIGHLANDS FIRE DISTRICT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES · 03/19/2024

A regular meeting of the Fire Board of Directors was held on **Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 5:00 PM** at Fire Station 23, Administration Board Room, 3350 Old Munds Hwy, Flagstaff, AZ. The meeting was also available through Zoom Video Conferencing.

1. Call to Order. Clerk Bippus called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

2. Roll Call.

Board members present were Clerk Brad Bippus (Acting Chair), Director Carl Nelson, and Director Dan Stoffel*. Chairperson Hanecak was absent due to his obligation to oversee elections; however, he returned to the meeting at 5:22 PM for firefighter recognition and left the meeting at 5:30 PM. Director Smith arrived at the meeting at 5:44 PM.

Administrative personnel present were Chief Todd Miller, Battalion Chief Mitch Lopez, and Ms. Jayme Jones.

Staff present were Captains Eric True and Ben Howell, Engineer Matt Gross, Firefighters Alfredo Villa, Faith Aguirre, Louis Hawkins, and Jacob McIntyre and left the meeting at 5:30 PM.

*Attended through Zoom Video Conferencing.

3. Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation, Mission and Vision Statements, and Board Responsibilities.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and a silent invocation was offered, and the district's mission, vision, and selected Board responsibilities were recited.

4. Welcome Visitors. Clerk Bippus welcomed visitors Sarah Benatar, County Treasurer; Sue Walka, Deputy County Treasurer; and Armando Ruiz, County Assessor. In addition, Mr. James Vincent of the James Vincent Group arrived at the meeting at 5:17 PM.

5. Call to the Public. There were no public comments.

6. Approval of Minutes

A. FEBRUARY 20, 2024 SPECIAL MEETING – The Board reviewed the minutes of the February 20, 2024 Special Meeting. Clerk Bippus noted a typo on the last page of the minutes. **A MOTION was made by Director Stoffel and was seconded by Director Nelson to approve the minutes as corrected.** The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

7. Finance

A. WARRANTS – **A MOTION was made by Director Nelson and was seconded by Director Stoffel to approve the warrants as presented.** The Board reviewed the District's warrants and credit card purchases paid in February; the motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

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- B. FINANCIAL REPORT – Chief Miller presented Financial Report including the District’s General Fund, Capital Fund, and Bear Jaw Fund Financial Reports including the Profit/Loss Budget Overviews, Bank Reconciliation, County’s Fund Balance Summary, and Cash Flow Projection. Chief Miler noted that he has nothing specific to report; finances are tracking normally.

8. Summary Reports & Correspondence.

- A. IAFF LOCAL CHAPTER 1505 SUMMARY REPORT – Local 1505 did not present a report.
- B. BATTALION FIRE CHIEF’S SUMMARY REPORT – Chief Lopez presented the Battalion Chief’s Report. There were 51 calls for service in February. Chief Lopez described significant incidents and training events. See the written report for detailed information.
- C. FIRE CHIEF’S SUMMARY REPORT – Chief Miller presented the Fire Chief’s Report. He noted that the District has received \$3.576 million for the General Obligation Fund. The Apparatus will begin the purchasing process. Budget Committee will be meeting this month. James Vincent Group will be handling District finances; Gabe Buldra will be joining us this evening. See the written report for detailed information.
- D. FIRE BOARD CHAIRPERSON’S SUMMARY REPORT – Clerk Bippus did not present a Summary Report.
- E. CORRESPONDENCE – The Board reviewed a thank you letter from Don Muise regarding the use of the Hirsch Center for a memorial service for Ed Freed.

9. Topics of Discussion and Possible Legal Action.

- A. (B.) RECOGNITION OF PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTERS AGUIRRE, HAWKINS, AND MCINTYRE. Chief Miller explained many of the Firefighter probationary requirements. Chairperson Hanecak joined the meeting at 5:22 PM. Chief Miller reviewed a memo relating to the successful completion of GFR 4th Quarter Probationary Firefighter Skills Evaluation. Chief Miller recognized Firefighters Aguirre, Hawkins, and McIntyre for successful completion of their probationary period and all that it entails. Chairperson Hanecak told the firefighters that it is an honor meeting them, he thanked them for their service this past year, and congratulated them for their successful completion of probation. The Board members thanked the firefighters and congratulated them as well.

Gabe Buldra joined the meeting at 5:29 PM. The firefighters, crew, and Chairperson Hanecak left the meeting at 5:30 PM.

- B. (A.) PRESENTATIONS FROM ARMANDO RUIZ, COUNTY ASSESSOR AND SARAH BENTAR, COUNTY TREASURER. Clerk Bippus welcomed guests from Coconino County. Armando Ruiz, Coconino County Assessor, presented information about the job of the Assessor’s Office. He reviewed property valuation, timeline, levy limits, and NAV. See presentation for detailed information. Mr. Ruiz answered the Board’s questions.

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Sarah Benatar, County Treasurer, introduced Sue Walka, Deputy County Treasurer. Ms. Benatar presented information about the job of the Treasurer's Office. She reviewed tax collections and timeline. The County Treasurer bills, collects, and enforces the tax laws. Regarding the financial banking side of her department, they are the "bank" for all special districts. In addition, the Treasurer invests funds for the districts. Ms. Benatar answered the Board questions. Clerk Bippus thanked the County Officers for coming; he appreciates their expertise.

Mr. Ruiz left the meeting at 6:24 PM.

- C. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING ITEMS RELATED TO THE TRANSITION TO THE JAMES VINCENT GROUP AS OUR FINANCE DIRECTOR. Chief Miller informed the Board that he selected James Vincent Group (SVG) to handle District finances, and he introduced Mr. Buldra. Mr. Buldra provided his background information, and he informed the Board that Mr. Archer Clowes would be the main partner on the District's account. SVG will handle the oversight role that Mrs. Wilson previously did. SVG will report financials to the Board, assist with the annual audit, and an accounts payable component has been added to their agreement. They will be transitioning to a POS system. They will be working on adding a payroll component beginning in July. He told the Board that the Financial Reports may be presented in a different format. After questions, Clerk Bippus thanked Mr. Buldra for coming.

Ms. Benatar and Ms. Walka left the meeting at 6:38 PM.

- D. PRESENTATION OF FLAGSTAFF RANCH FIRE DISTRICT (FRFD) OPERATIONAL REPORT. Chief Miller presented the 2023 Operational Report for FRFD. HFD responded to 15 calls for service in FRFD in 2023, with an average response time of 12 minutes. Feedback from the FRFD Board resulted in positive comments. See written report for details.
- E. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE REVISION TO HR POLICY 30.0 – COMPENSATION AND COMPENSATORY TIME. Chief Miller explained the Compensatory Time practices and informed them that revision to the policy reflects FLSA requirements. The Board discussed accrual caps and budgetary impact of pays outs. Chief Miller informed the Board that he would like to zero out accrual balances next fiscal year and budget for additional overtime. After discussion, **A MOTION was made by Director Nelson and was seconded by Director Smith to approve the policy revision as presented.** The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.
- F. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL WITH KAIROS. Chief Miller informed the Board that the District has been in a Health Care Pool managed by Kairos. The proposed renewal has a 4% increase in rates. There is a benefit enhancement for Centers of Excellence (COE) that provide exceptional care and improved results. Labor agrees with the renewal. **A MOTION was made by Director Smith and was seconded by Director Nelson to approval the Health Insurance renewal with Kairos as presented.** The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

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G. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE AMENDMENT TO SECURIS INSURANCE POOL PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT. Securis has requested an amendment to the participation agreement that would penalize members for termination without notice. After discussion, a **MOTION** was made by Director Smith and was seconded by Director Nelson to approve the amendment as presented. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

H. REVIEW BOARD TASK CALENDAR. The Board reviewed the Board Task Calendar.

10. **Board Member comments.** There were no further comments.

11. **Adjournment.** A **MOTION** was made by Director Smith and was seconded by Director Nelson to **adjourn**; the motion was unanimously **APPROVED**. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayne Jones