

**FRY FIRE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
April 4, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Huish called the Regular Meeting of the Fry Fire District Board to order at 4:04 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members in Attendance:	Joseph Huish, Board Chairman Eric Andersen, Board Clerk Robert McMurtrie, Board Member Thomas Tucker, Board Member Norman Sturm, Board Member
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Board Members Absent:	None
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Staff in Attendance:	Mark Savage, Fire Chief Diana Jones, Billing Supervisor Ben Archer Clowes, JVG Steven Rodriguez, JVG
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PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Mr. Huish led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mr. Sturm gave the invocation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr. Huish reminded board members that they shall declare any conflict of interest. No board member declared a conflict at this time.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Huish opened the call to the public at 4:04 p.m.

There were no comments from the public.

Call to the public closed at 4:04 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Board Meeting on March 28, 2023.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to approve the Regular Board Meeting minutes of March 28, 2023. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

- a. Review, discussion and possible action on the monthly financial report for March 2023.

Ben Archer Clowes from James Vincent Group (JVG) gave a PowerPoint presentation reflecting the financial reports for March 2023 and the fiscal year-to-date. Mr. Clowes reported we are \$69,000.00 under budget from tax revenue and slightly under year-to-date. Non-tax revenue is over budget by \$68,000.00 mostly due to ambulance revenue. We are \$31,000.00 over budget on expenses due to personnel, buildings and land, utilities and station supplies, vehicles and equipment. Mr. Huish asked if the employees hired under the grant are being captured under personnel costs and offset in grant costs. Mr. Clowes said it adds to us being over budget. Mr. Andersen asked how the new City Station has affected ambulance revenue. Chief Savage stated the impact has not been significant because of the automatic rate adjustment last year, our call load, and the conservative budget for the fiscal year. The board reviewed the warrants for the month.

Mr. Andersen made a motion to accept the March 2023 financial reports. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0.

Motion Carried.

COMMAND STAFF'S REPORT

Operations and Staffing – The Huachuca City Staffing Trial started April 1, 2023. The first two shifts personnel covered 24/7 without floating. Last night and tonight we plan to float crew back into station 142 to minimize overtime costs during off-peak hours.

We are interviewing one full-time and five part-time applicants today and are hopeful about both.

Our wildfire season is off and running. Sunday and Monday both saw our personnel supporting wildfire responses in the Palominas Fire District. Monday's fire was significant and pulled in several crews and federal partners. It demonstrated our great interagency teamwork and ability to collaborate with evacuations supported by US Border Patrol, Cochise County Sheriff's Office, Sierra Vista Police Department, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Fire resources included the US Forest Service, BLM, and Department of Forestry and Fire Management with hotshots and hand crews plugged in and working. Absolutely incredible support from federal, state, and local agencies.

Apparatus and Equipment – There is no news on our new Type 1 Engine. It is still in Phoenix for warranty repairs. There is also no news from Demers on our new ambulances either.

Grants – We submitted a reimbursement request for \$75,000.00 to cover the costs of handheld radios through the Arizona Division of Emergency Management's Border Security grant.

Mr. Ayers is continuing to install the Cradlepoints we were awarded under last year's AFG grant.

The Philips Tempus Pro modules for our new cardiac monitors are still pending.

The Southeastern Arizona Communications Center is continuing to work through staffing shortages. They are still working to get the rest of the Dispatch Academy Graduates through their initial background, VSA and psychological evaluation. The Interim Director, Tammi-Jo Wilkins is continuing to do great work.

OLD BUSINESS

- a. Review, discussion and possible action regarding new communications tower and associated lease.

Chief Savage reported there is no news regarding the communications tower lease contract from AT&T.

No action was taken on the item.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Review, discussion and possible action regarding FY2024 Annual Budget.

Ben Archer Clowes from James Vincent Group (JVG) gave a PowerPoint presentation overview of the fiscal year 2024 budget revenue and expenses. The Fire District assessed value increased by 5.81% generating additional tax revenue. We increased our non-tax revenue from Prop 207 and ambulance services. Two additional FTE personnel were added, the paramedic stipend was increased, PSPRS costs increased, a 2.5% COLA and a step increase for eligible personnel were added, and workers' compensation increased. Mr. Clowes reported managerial, travel and training expenses decreased slightly but all other operational expenses increased.

Mr. Clowes stated the FY2024 budget as presented has a \$158,000.00 deficit and went into detail on the reasons for the increases.

Securis increased our workers' comp by \$61,000.00 due to COVID. Mr. Huish asked how long we are going to have to pay workers' comp for COVID. The American Rescue Plan Act funds may be available to help cover COVID expenses, but it has not been distributed. We are looking at other options for coverage. PSPRS costs increased due to a change in their assumptions and an increase in their rates.

Mr. Huish asked if PPE includes uniforms. Chief Savage stated the budgeted PPE should outfit 100% of our personnel with two sets of bunker gear. Vehicles and maintenance expenses are up due to apparatus breaking and being fixed correctly.

Two additional employees would round each shift to thirteen; minimum staffing would stay the same. Being fully staffed should help reduce the overtime burden. Mr. Andersen asked if the 2.5% COLA increase keeps us competitive. Chief Savage stated it does when everything is taken into consideration. Labor was asked if additional personnel, COLA, step increases, or benefits are a priority for the budget, but has not provided a fixed answer. Mr. Sturm believes a 2.5% COLA increase is too low and would rather increase the COLA than hire new personnel.

Mr. Clowes said we can balance the budget by increasing the tax rate by thirteen cents. Mr. Tucker said he would like to get an informed response from Labor. Mr. McMurtrie asked if there is anywhere else in the budget to make up the difference other than personnel expenses. Mr. Clowes said we could use the \$150,000.00 reserve funding. Then the budget goes up and we would be further away from the unrestricted fund balance recommended by JVG. Chief Savage believes we went conservative on the ambulance revenue. Mr. Sturm questioned adding two additional positions at \$160,000.00 to round out the shifts just because the Huachuca City crew was moved to the 48/96 schedule. Mr. Tucker believes we can justify increasing staff for safety reasons. Mr. Huish said firefighters are getting burned-out on overtime covering shifts and believes we should not cut the additional positions.

Mr. Clowes stated we can balance the budget with a combination of changes. Mr. McMurtrie stated he would like feedback from Labor. Mr. Andersen said we need to have a cushion considering the \$50,000.00 loss from annexation, and possible future annexations by the City of Sierra Vista.

No action was taken on this item.

REQUESTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

There were no requests from Board Members.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 6:08 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Tucker.

Meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

DATED THIS 6TH DAY OF APRIL 2023.

Eric Andersen, Board Clerk
Fry Fire District Board