

**FRY FIRE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
June 24, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Andersen called the Regular Meeting of the Fry Fire District Board to order at 6:04 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members in Attendance:	Eric Andersen, Acting Chairman Norman Sturm, Acting Clerk Robert McMurtrie, Board Member Thomas Tucker, Board Member (electronically)
------------------------------	--

Board Members Absent:	Joseph Huish, Board Chairman
-----------------------	------------------------------

Staff in Attendance:	Mark Savage, Fire Chief Diana Mercier, Billing Supervisor Billy Seamans, Deputy Chief Steven Rodriguez, James Vincent Group
----------------------	--

Others in Attendance:	John Price, Shive-Hattery Architects (electronically) Friends, family, and co-workers of award recipient
-----------------------	---

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

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

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr. Andersen 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. Andersen opened the call to the public at 6:05 p.m.

There were no comments from the public.

Call to the public closed at 6:05 p.m.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

- a. Firefighter Harley Babich Firefighter Oath and Badge Presentation.

Chief Savage administered the oath of office and presented Firefighter Harley Babich with her badge after her successful completion of one year of probation. Harley Babich responded to over 400 calls for service, completed over 200 hours of firefighter training this year, and successfully completed all of the assignments in her Probationary Firefighter Taskbook. Harley Babich has also deployed solo on wildland tender assignments, completed our physical fitness test, and the wildland firefighter pack test, exceeding our expectations for probationary firefighters.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Board Meeting on May 27, 2025.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to accept the Regular Board Meeting minutes of May 27, 2025. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.
Motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT

- a. Review, discussion, and possible action on the monthly financial report for May 2025.

Steven Rodriguez from James Vincent Group (JVG) gave a PowerPoint presentation reflecting a summary of the financial reports for May 2025, and year to date. The non-tax revenue was over budget due to ambulance billing. Tax revenue was over budget for the month and under for year to date. Total expenses for the month were over budget. Year to date non-tax revenue was over budget due to ambulance, interest income, and wildland. Total expenses were over budget. A discussion followed. The board reviewed the warrants for the month and there were no questions.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to accept the May 2025 financial reports. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.
Motion carried.

- b. Review, discussion, and possible ambulance write-offs to bad debt.

Steven Rodriguez from JVG requested Board approval to adjust ambulance billing accounts that have been in collections for at least one year without activity to bad debt.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to approve the ambulance write-offs to bad debt not to exceed \$435,000.00. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.
Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FRY FIRE DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET.

- a. Open the Public Hearing.

Mr. Sturm made a motion to pause the Regular Board Meeting and open the Public Hearing Meeting for the FY2026 Budget. Mr. McMurtrie seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion carried.

The Regular Board Meeting was paused, and the Public Hearing meeting was opened at 6:20 p.m.

No members of the public were present to comment.

b. Close the Public Hearing.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to close the Public Hearing Meeting for the FY2026 Budget and resume the Regular Board Meeting. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion carried.

The Public Hearing Meeting was closed, and the Regular Board Meeting was resumed at 6:20 p.m.

COMMAND STAFF'S REPORT

Chief Savage provided Board Members with the following monthly report:

Operations and Staffing – Chief Savage shared that Deputy Chief Seamans recently completed his bachelor's degree. We will formally recognize DC Seamans once his degree arrives. Deputy Chief Mauzy was also recently approved by the Arizona Center for Fire Service Excellence as an instructor for several courses. These courses include: Instructor I & II, Fire Officer I & II, Firefighter I & II, Hazmat – Awareness & Operations, and Driver Operator. The Driver Operator course will help us develop and deliver an internal program to train and certify apparatus operators consistent with the Advanced FF/DO rollout.

The DCs are continuing to work on clarifying and communicating our expectations for our Captains and are updating their administrative assignments. These updated assignments will be included as part of our annual employee review process.

Palominas Fire District - Mark Prince is continuing to serve as Interim Chief with Palominas Fire District. We continue to offer him our support. We are roughly on par with Palominas FD for annual calls for service and will continue analyzing the apparatus and personnel numbers to streamline some of our automatic aid responses. Chief Prince is anticipating heading to Oregon to support an incident management team in a few weeks.

Deputy Chief Mauzy is continuing to work with all crews to assess their training proficiency through crew performance reviews. The engine company drills are working to improve our operational consistency, which was a target we identified during the Safety Surveys. This week crews are rotating through night drills at Station 143.

Our new contract with the Town of Huachuca City has been signed by all parties and will be effective next week.

We hired Ian Zatarain as a full-time Firefighter and are working to update our recruitment video and full-time job announcements in anticipation of another new hire in July.

The proposed FY2026 Budget includes funding for 2 additional full-time Firefighters which will help us round out all three shifts with 14 personnel each. This will continue to improve our ability to provide 3-person engine companies and reduce the frequency of 2-person staffing and station brown outs. The budget also includes an Advanced Firefighter / Driver Operator pay rate which reflects our need for competent personnel to frequently fill the Driver Operator position when Engineers are unable to fill their regular role. The addition of this pay rate will replace the Driver Operator stipend.

Facilities – Deputy Chief Seamans is continuing to work with Shive-Hattery Architects to develop our options for Fire Station 143. The CMAR contract with Marsh is on tonight's agenda for discussion. Mr. Matura's comments were forwarded by email, and we are looking forward to continuing to move this critical project forward.

We are still working to coordinate a matching paint job for the maintenance shop.

Apparatus and Equipment – The 2000-gallon tender been re-listed for sale on Public Surplus.

Grants – We will be working on a SAFER grant request over the next week with the hope of acquiring additional funding for full-time Firefighters to continue to bolster our staffing.

We received some positive feedback from Senator Kelly's office on the Congressionally Directed Spending request that Firefighter Michael Bocook submitted. The request for \$150,000 to purchase a suburban outfitted for patient transports will allow us to better support the Cochise County Regional SWAT Team. There is no feedback yet on the request for an additional \$2.5M to support renovations at Fire Station 143 and our Fire Training Facility. Thanks to Cochise College, Palominas Fire District, Palominas School District, and the Sierra Vista Fire and Medical Department for their support on this request!

No news on our Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grant requests submitted for an air trailer and vehicle-mounted exhaust filters. Senator Ciscomani provided a letter of support for the regional air trailer request (FFD and PFD).

We have received no feedback on the Sunsites Pearce Fire District submission of a Gila River Indian Community Grant request in the amount of \$192,000.00 to update the Cochise County radio cache. If funded, this request would establish two new radio caches for fire agencies (West and East) with 20 radios each.

We have received no feedback yet regarding our grant request to the AZ Governor's Office of Highway Safety for approximately \$90,000.00 to support the purchase of additional stabilization equipment and extrication tools for Station 141. Ms. Martinez informed us that they are still waiting for federal approval and anticipate decisions coming out in August or September.

We are continuing to make progress on our 2024 HFI Fuel Reduction Grant and continuing to work with USFS to refine the POD Lines (anticipated fire breaks for large scale fires). Fire Crews are continuing to add structure triage data to the NIFC map that will better inform incident managers working to prioritize limited resources across our area.

There is still no feedback on an EMPG request for our newest command truck (DC141). This is a 50% match grant for reallocated federal funding that could see us reimbursed for emergency management-related capital improvement dollars we have already spent. If approved, we may see approximately \$53,000.00 in grant funds.

The Florian / 3am team is continuing to work to improve the usefulness of the system for departments like ours. We are scheduled for ongoing status meetings with them to ensure functionality is maintained on the platform.

SEACOM – Director Wilkins continues to improve operations at SEACOM. The County Board of Supervisors approved the amended Joint-Powers Agreement that will return responsibility for managing finances back to Cochise County. We anticipate this continuing to support operational improvements and streamline administrative functions with HR and Finance now collocated.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Review, discussion and possible action regarding Resolution 2025-002 adopting the FY2026 Annual Budget and Payscale.

Steven Rodriguez stated nothing has changed on the tentative FY26 Budget that the Board adopted last month and requested final adoption from the Board tonight.

Mr. Sturm made a motion to accept Resolution 2025-002 adopting the FY2026 Annual Budget and Payscale. Mr. McMurtrie seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion carried.

- b. Review, discussion and possible action regarding the FY2026 PSPRS Pension Funding Policy.

Members of the Board were provided with copies of the Pension Funding Policy. Steven Rodriguez stated this is an annual requirement by PSPRS for information on our goals for funding our unfunded liability.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to accept the FY2026 PSPRS Pension Funding Policy. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion carried.

- c. Review, discussion and possible action regarding design work and capital improvement planning with Shive-Hattery Architects for Fire Sta. 143. This item may include direction to

execute contracts for construction, and direction moving forward with plans, phasing, adopting a fee schedule and gross maximum price.

John Price, project manager and architect of Shive Hattery provided Board Members with an update. The design phase has been completed, and we are getting into the design development phase where they will work with Marsh Development to bring the project into budget.

Mr. Price suggested we have our attorney review the General Conditions Contract that covers all construction between owner and general contractor. Chief Savage stated our attorney has already reviewed the contracts. Our concern is the payment timeline of 7 days because our process takes a few weeks. Also, the missing GMP and construction timeline.

Update on the design. Mr. Price shared a survey from the design team. On Friday, June 13, they met with County officials onsite. The County agreed to a 10-foot abandonment of the right-of-way for our use. The transformer will be moved into the abandoned area so it will not be in the future right-of-way. They will go back to the surveyor and ask for an amendment to their contract to include the 10-foot abandonment. The document will need to be recorded at the County Recorder's Office.

Mr. Andersen asked if there is an estimate on how long the phases will take to complete. Chief Seamans said the first phase start date is dependent on delivery of a cabinet to deliver electricity. Mr. Price stated Marsh estimates 40-52 weeks, but they hope to have a timeline next month to share with the Board that includes the different phases and budgets.

No action taken on this item.

d. Review, discussion and possible action on Annual Leave Policy.

Chief Savage stated feedback from some of the Retention Surveys is frustration over the PSPRS pension reform for Tier 2 & 3 that now requires 25 years of service before pension eligibility. Historically our annual leave benefit has only considered 20 years of service prior to retirement eligibility. Chief Savage stated the update to the policy is to keep good-standing tenured employees. We do not have a short-term disability policy, and our long-term disability policy does not kick in until an employee has been out of work for 6 months.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to accept the updated Annual Leave Policy. Mr. Tucker seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.

Motion carried.

e. Review, discussion and possible action on DROP / Retention Incentive Policy.

Chief Savage stated the only change from the last draft reviewed by the Board is to pay the DROP / Retention Incentive as a quarterly (rather than annual) bonus based on 7.5% of an employee's annual salary. Employees eligible for the incentive should be strong role models with solid attendance and performance appraisals and no significant disciplinary actions. Each rank also has associated minimum requirements.

Mr. Sturm made a motion to accept the updated DROP / Retention Incentive Policy. Mr. McMurtrie seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.
Motion carried.

f. Review, discussion and possible action regarding Mule Mountain radio repeater replacement.

Chief Savage stated the quote for \$33,629.55 is to replace the Mule Mountain repeater that allows compatibility with some of our partners who still use VHF radios.

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to approve the Mule Mountain radio repeater replacement for \$33,629.55. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-0.
Motion carried.

REQUESTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

There were no requests from Board Members.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McMurtrie made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:28 p.m. Mr. Sturm seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

DATED THIS 25TH DAY OF JUNE 2025.

Eric Andersen, Board Clerk
Fry Fire District Board