

**MINUTES OF THE WHETSTONE FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING, DATE 1 JUNE 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER AT 6:02PM

2. ROLL CALL/ AFFIRMATION OF QUORUM:

Chairperson Steve Hasson called the meeting to order. The meeting was held in the Whetstone Fire District Station 321 classroom, 2422 N Firehouse Lane, Huachuca City, Arizona.

Members:

Chairperson	– Steve Hasson
Clerk	– Absent
Board Member	– Bruce Harris
Board Member	– Rodney Weichelt
Board Member	- Vacant

Staff Present:

Fire Chief Jarvis
Financial Chief Cathy Dyer

Absent:

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

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: NONE

5. CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

- Layce Phillips informed the board that she had heard about the meeting and wanted to come and speak with the board and inform them she had never met Brent Kusama, but that he had been coming at her for years and she wanted to let the Board know what kinds of a guy they would be dealing with; She stated her left side is paralyzed do to a traumatic brain injury and that Mr. Kusama thinks it's funny to call her Limpy Layce, she continues to inform that her mother was murdered in 2020 and it took Phoenix PD a month to find her body, and that Mr. Kusama found it hilarious to make fun of the situation saying we barbequed her or it was cartel hit and that her family was into crime. Reconfirming that she had never met him or his wife and they just came at her so hard. She states personal stuff aside, since he had been attacking them, they started paying attention and found that every organization that he is a part of he ends up suing them, including the Arizona Rangers and including the Military Purple Heart who both had kicked him out of the organization. She states he concern for Whetstone Fire Department is for the Fire Board, that she feels he will do the same to them, that it is just a liability, she informs that there was a BLM event in town and they had made a counter event an All Lives Matter event where a man had ended up bear spraying a woman in the face and claims that Mr. Kusama mocked it on the internet and said it warmed his heart to see her turn into a koala bear. She provided screen shots to the Board, and comments it was not funny,

she was rushed to the hospital and had a panic attack, she ripped her shirt off and for some reason she claims he thought it was hilarious. She States he is just not a good person to have around. She states she respects firemen that firemen saved her life and she feels the Board needs to know who they are dealing with before they let him on because she feels like he will be a liability. Chairman Hasson thanks Layce for her comments and asks if she has any paperwork she would like to provide and she states they do have some paperwork in regards to what he (the other public party) is going to speak about. The Board thanks her and she thanks the Board for having her. Layce commented that they do joke about calling her Limpy Layce quite often and that is in not a mystery that she walks funny, she comments she is lucky to even walk at all.

- Daniel Webster was invited by the Chairman to take a seat at the table and to provide his name for the record. He introduced himself as Daniel Webster, her husband and informs that they have been involved quite extensively with the slander and the lies and the typical personal attacks but up and beyond that Mr. Kusama recently ran for Constable Position here in Cochise County that required 263 signatures, Mr. Kusama obtained 261 signatures. He informed the Board could make copies of the paperwork provided by David Stevens, the County Recorder who had forwarded this to the AG, of those 261 only 10 signatures were accepted, 174 were denied. He informs there is a list of the signatures and why they were denied, charges will be pending, I am not even sure if he is aware of this yet but I have this and also the lawsuit from Worthlan with his name on it for the invalid signatures. He informs you can go through the list and see that 1 through 10 was invalid, 1 through 10, 1 through 10 on each sheet so it is kinda fishy, where there is smoke there is fire. He states the Board is going to open themselves up to liabilities, the Arizona Rangers kicked him, he sued them, the Military Order of the Purple Heart kicked his inspector, he sued them. He states there other charges waiting on him, he is destroying property on his neighbors place, CCSO has that footage, just ongoing one after another, he states the dude is a coward, he is liar, so we just wanted to educate you guys on the kind of man he is before they made a decision to approve him or not to, we drove up from Hereford, they felt it was worth their time and states they are both happy for questions and that they could go on for hours with details and he proceeds to show a screen shot that his wife had referred to and passed it around for all to see and offered for Mr. Kusama to look at if he forgets what it is; stating the image was of the lady being bear mace, showing his account and his comment saying it warms his heart, so talk about wanting to take care of public, continues to offer for anyone else who would like to view the screen shot. He states so that is basically what we have in a nutshell, we could go on for days about the lack of integrity this man has but we get three minutes so there we go. The Board thanks Mr. Webster for his comments and he in turn thanks the Board for his time and for everything they do.

- Chairman Hasson asks if there was anyone else who would like to provide to this. No additional comments were made. Hasson closes the Public Comment period and states he would like to thank everyone for their indulgent and courtesy.

6. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDANCE:

A. CHIEF'S REPORT: Chief Jarvis comments that since reports were submitted last week that he nothing to report. The Chairman stated that he might like for him to provide an update if any on Fort Huachuca and of his efforts. Chief Jarvis informs that after the last meeting the packet was forwarded to Fort Huachuca and they do not have a time line for when they plan to respond back. Chairman Hasson asks CFO Dyer for confirmation that we have a

Budget hearing scheduled on the 8th. CFO Dyer responds yes it is correct. Chairman Hasson questions if member Weichelt will be absent on the 8th of June. Weichelt confirms he should be there. Hasson responds, okay. Chairman Hasson reconfirms that we have a meeting on the 15th and another on the 29th.

B. FIRE BOARD CHAIRMAN REPORT: Chairman Hasson states he has no Chairman report.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Review, Discussion and Possible Action Regarding; Not Applicable

MOTION:	No motion made at this time
MOVED BY:	
SECONDED BY:	
RESULT:	

8. New BUSINESS:

A. Review, Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Candidate Appointments to the Fire Board:

- Chairman Hasson states that he would accept a motion to entertain the appointment of the candidates to the board providing they have supplied all of their paperwork required. Hasson confirms with CFO Dyer that we have received all of the paperwork; she confirmed everything has been received. The candidate Wm. Michael Estrada was discussed and it was determined that the Board would like to appoint Mike Estrada to the Fire Board. After the the recent developments and concerns provided to the Fire Board regarding Candidate Brent Kusama it was the Board's decision to table the appointment of Mr. Kusama for further time to review potential liabilities to the Fire District with a another date to be determined.

Chairman Hasson comments that just because the Board has denied your participation, you can certainly run for this office and if that is your desire, I encourage you to do so.

MOTION:	Motion was made to appoint Michael Estrada to the Board
MOVED BY:	Bruce Harris
SECONDED BY:	Rodney Weichelt
RESULT:	Moved all in favor
MOTION:	Motion was made to table the appoint of Brent Kusama until further review
MOVED BY:	Rodney Weichelt
SECONDED BY:	Bruce Harris
RESULT:	Moved all in favor

B. Review, Discussion and Possible Action of the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget Proposals Presented

- Chief Jarvis informs the Board that there are four (4) budgets presented to them. Chief Jarvis begins going over the receivables reported on the income page of the Budget, he informs of the pending legislature and pending ARPA funds. He informs the TPT collection

will not know until it goes to election in November if we will collect it, if we do it will be disbursed throughout the budget so it can be spent. FDAT is estimated to be at \$130,000 that is the amount received last year, Chief Jarvis states he has not received an update from the county on if it is going to change and that we are going by last year's numbers as a best educated guess, and he does not expect it to be updated until after July 1st. Enterprise funds/ ambulance billing have been projected at \$390, 000 last year's projections were at \$350,000 and we are within \$27,000 collected. Chairman Hasson, asks if between Chief Jarvis and Cathy's number crunching, do we have some sort of numbers? Chief Jarvis informs the Chair that the numbers presented are the best numbers we have to date, Hasson asks if the number will change a lot, Chief Jarvis states they will not. Chief Jarvis informs that he and Cathy were calculating expenses for the last month and that he will give a good estimate of what carry over funds are expected to be and any shortages we might have. He states we are predicting new year because of the increase in our base rate that we should be at about \$390,000 in ambulance Billing and feels that with the collections for next month will be coming close to the original budgeted amount from last year. Chief continues down the line on the expected revenues, to include the Safe Fund, he states legislation approved some changes and he expects an increase. Wildland funds are considered a placeholder, as the amount to receive is undetermined. Carry over fund is at Zero, he states we are confident with \$20,000 carry over but possibly \$40,000, he mentions there is some flexibility on carry over due to remaining expenses. More budget line breakdown is provided on the listed items. Chief informs the total income line is monies we may or may not receive. Chief Jarvis asks for additional questions. Chairman Hasson what happens on June 29th. Chief Jarvis informs that that is the day the budget has been adopted so it can be forwarded to the County. It is clarified that a budget has to be approved on the 8th of June. Chairman Hasson comments that he feels the question that is on everyone's mind is we have a certain amount of employees and employees represent about 75% of our budget, are we going to be able to keep everybody? Chief Jarvis describes the breakdown of the employee breakdowns presented on the budgets provided, he states we have 3 options, the first option is to apply a 7% pay cut to all employees and eliminate the Fire Chief but preserves everyone; 3 Captains, 3 Lieutenants, 3 Firefighters and 3 part time employees. The second option is a 10% pay cut to all employees with the removal of the Assistant Chief position, with 3 Captains, 3 Lieutenants, 3 Firefighters, 3 Part time and the Chief Financial Officer. Assistant Chief Foster comments that this option would require demotions. The 3rd option is a 10% Reduction in officer pay and 2.5 % reduction to the Firefighters. The staffing for this option would be 3 Captains, 2 Lieutenants and 2 Firefighters with 5 Part time staff also included in this option is the Fire Chief, Finance Chief and Assistant Chief. Hasson asks if we have lost staff already, Chief Jarvis confirms we have one leaving to Houston, and two have stepped down to part time, one took a fulltime with Bisbee and the other went to Fry. Brief discussion takes place on the scheduling for the budgets. The 4th option presented was a work in progress that Chief had presented which included all the staff, removed the Assistant Chief position applied a 8% percent across the board cut. Hasson asks if the board has a roll in the decision in who stays, who goes and who is in what position? Chairman Hasson asks, isn't that an operational decision? Hasson asks if the Chief is responsible for operational matters, would you consider who works here and how many they work as an operational obligation. Chief Jarvis responds yes and no. That he feels it is an important discussion because it changes the service to the community, this discussion is taking place because the staffing model affects service delivery. Hasson asks the Chief if he has a budget he would offer up to the Board. Chief Jarvis comments that several other

budgets were discussed and discarded. He States he likes the model that offers the variable staffing, he feels it does the least harm to all employees. Hasson asks for the Chief to recite the option he prefers, comment comes from the staff in the room that had not seen the budget he was referring to. Chairman Hasson tells the staff to "Well listen, I am running this show so shut up and let me ask the questions, please". The room is silent and Chief Jarvis describes the varying budget, stating is a takeoff of the budget that is 10% across the board for officers, and with adjusting some of the M&O lines and varying cuts from the staff and chief officers, keeps all of the current employees in place aside from the two staff members that dropped down to part time leaving two openings that we would try to fill with part time staff. Chief Jarvis explains more on possible revenues. Chairman Hasson clarifies that this is the Chief's preferred budget; he asks that this budget be provided to staff so they can understand it and if things change financially, that another course of action can be followed if those monies come available. Chief Jarvis explains that this budget will have one, three man crew and two, two man crews and trying to supplement it with part time staff to have the three on staff, cannot be guaranteed all the time so if the Board feels the best model for service deliver is to have three at all times, then it comes down to the removal of one of the two Chief positions, because that is the only way to be able to keep staffing with three people on duty at all times. Hasson asks isn't that an operational decision? Chief Jarvis states that this is a service delivery model too that is why he is presenting them to the board for their opinion to decide what service model the citizens deserve. Hasson comments he just wants us to live within our means. Chief Jarvis states he feel that he feels all of the budgets are conservative, that we have budgeted very tight, and used conservative numbers for revenue, we refrained from inflating revenues and we are willing to accept that things are going to be tight. Member Weichelt asks of the four budgets he was looking at which retains the most amount of coverage for the community? Chief Jarvis states the removal of one of the two chiefs because that keeps three fulltime on staff every day. Chief States, with the 7% reduction and removal of me, moves Sam down and he would take a large financial hit. Hasson comments we all got a horrid hit with the loss of the Huachuca City, losing 23% of our income was a hard hit all the way across. Hasson states he doesn't want to be unforgiving or a jerk but everybody needs to know tonight where they stand, because a budget will be chosen next week. Chief Jarvis states he still prefers the varying budget retaining all the current staff. Member Weichelt states we have fiduciary responsibility to the community to keep all of the boots on the ground as possible to provide the service, Hasson agrees. Weichelt, comments, our main focus and goal is to provide service. He appreciates all the attention to detail that had been put into the budgets, and acknowledges we are at a huge turning point and he sticks with the fact that we as many boots on the ground as possible. Hasson asks the Chief if the variable proposal provides the most boots on the ground? Chief Jarvis states it keeps the same number of employees but the same boots on shift because he cannot guarantee that part time staff will be able to pick up a daytime shift. Member Harris comments, you realize that is a concern. Chief Jarvis informs that during the week he and Sam are here to assist with calls as well but he cannot guarantee that 100%. Hasson comments there are levels of uncertainty and he agrees with Member Weichelt that we should go with the best solution to keep as many boots as we can on the ground within reason and within the framework. Chief Jarvis comments there is not a lot of change within the remaining operational lines within the budgets. Member Harris comments a lot of the items are static within the budget and we need what we need to operate. Member Weichelt comments on the reduction of service lines on Admin and Training and wants to know if we will be suffering on training because of the cutbacks. CFO

Dyer there is a cut back in EMS Training removing the opportunity to send staff to paramedic schooling, Chief Jarvis agrees. Member Estrada comments that a lot of the numbers are the same and it based off the previous budget as a model, he asks if what is being projected is currently be based on the expenses as they were while still under contract with Huachuca City, are numbers based with that removal? Chief Jarvis informs that some costs are static and some have been adjusted that were known associated costs with that contract. Chief Jarvis informs the staffing was adjusted as well. Member Estrada clarifies, the aspect of what we are trying to do is to not lose jobs and coverage, and he doesn't want to see anyone lose their jobs. Estrada asks Chief if his salary was based on also having the contract, the response from Jarvis was yes. Estrada asked if his salary was based on those previous numbers. Chief Jarvis explains the previous budget numbers were based on the revenue including the contract. Estrada asks the Chief is he would entertain negotiations to his salary due to the loss of Huachuca City. Chief Jarvis comments that all the budgets reflect a reduction in his pay. He continues on to explain that former Chairman Trevor chewed him down to his current salary and now we are looking at reducing my pay even more, he comments with the reduction in his salary we are dropping below national average for even small fire district chiefs. Estrada asks if he would entertain the negotiation on reduction to pay on a temporary basis to keep all of the boots on the ground. Chief states that all budgets will require renegotiating of his salary and that the only way that he could negotiate down enough on his salary to keep all positions, is for him to go down to zero because that is the budget deficit we have for filling those two vacant positions. Which would be the budget option of the 7% reduction and removal of the Chief and if in the additional revenues do come in the reinstatement of the 7% reduction would be instituted back. Chief Jarvis states that by law, the board in turn would have to make Sam the Chief and that is the only way to make this work and keep 100% of the staffing. Estrada comments, it brings us back to the question that was brought up in the beginning, of how do you serve the community the same way you did before without a means to an end. Chief Jarvis Agrees. Chairman Hasson asks if there any other budgetary comments, there are none. Hasson confirms that Chief will provide a concrete proposal that the Board can endorse at the next meeting, Chief Confirms.

MOTION:	No motion was made at this time
MOVED BY:	
SECONDED BY:	
RESULT:	

C. Review, Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Presentation of a Letter to the Fire Board from Union and Staff

- The board breaks for a moment, Lt Michelle Speer thanks the Board for their time, presents and reads allowed a letter provided by the union addressing the shared thoughts with recent events and how things have been going. Attached as item C.1 Lt. Speer concludes the letter and thanks the Board and they respond with thanks. Chairman Hasson moves to the item.

MOTION:	No motion was made at this time
MOVED BY:	
SECONDED BY:	

RESULT:

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: A WFD Board Member may bring forth general topics for a future meeting agenda. The WFD Board may not discuss, deliberate or take any action on the topics presented, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.02 (H)

- Nothing additional added

10. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

- Member Weichelt comments that a budget has to be voted on by June 8th at the next meeting. Chief Agrees, Hasson comments that whatever is endorsed is broadcasted to the public for 20 days and on the 29th the Board adopts the budget. Clarification for public comment on the posted agenda was requested so the board knows how to address those concerns. CFO Dyer comments she will provide the board the requested information. The board invites Assistant Chief Foster to make a comment. He informs the Board he supports the Union's letter, he too doesn't want to see anyone lose their jobs but he would like to share some of his own concerns and observations of Chief Jarvis' He comments his concerns with his performance regarding office hours, communication, command presence and unnecessary spending and its effect on M&O. Chairman Hasson asks that the Assistant Chief Foster reduce his concerns to writing. He asks if there are any additional comments, Member Harris comments that he recalls the Board has an obligation to do a review of the Chief's performance and he would like to see that performed in the near future, after this current budget is addressed. Hasson agrees it was something the Board said they would do and they will do it. Chairman Hasson asks CFO Dyer if the Board has anything financially with the budget that needs to be reviewed right now, She responds no, but CFO Dyer asks for clarification on which budget has been chosen so she can focus her efforts where the Board desires, Hasson comments the Variable Budget, and confirms with the Chief. Member Weichelt asks the Board to focus on and fine tune two budgets; the variable budget and asks for a budget that keeps more boots on the ground, and would like to see an additional budget that includes the removal of the Fire Chief's position for the Board to review and consider. The board requests the time to review all options. Hasson comments that it took the Board a year to get a Chief and if we were to remove the Chief, he would want to go through the process of hiring a new Chief and not just giving the position to Sam as Chief, he feels that is unfair and equitable to the public. He is not suggesting the removal of the Chief, but if we do, he suggests the Board go through the Chief review process to get a new Chief. Assistant Chief Foster comments he is only asking for the Board to consider accountability and that he can live with either budget that is chosen as long as we keep all the boots on the ground, that's important. Chairman Hasson states having a Fire Chief is important too and that he had worked a year to get one so do not discount that, do not blow me off. Hasson asks if there is anything else. Nothing more commented.

12. Adjournment: Chairman Hasson entertains a motion for adjournment. Meeting was adjourned at 7:19pm

MOTION:	Motion to adjourn the meeting
MOVED BY:	Bruce Harris
SECONDED:	Rodney Weichelt
RESULT:	All were in favor

Steve Hasson, Chairperson

Cathy Dyer/ CFO

Approved: _____