



Copper Canyon Fire & Medical District

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REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Station 81 – 494 S. Main Street, Camp Verde
Tuesday, March 15, 2022 / 9:00 am
~ MINUTES ~

1. **Call to Order:** Pursuant to notice, a Regular Meeting of the Copper Canyon Fire & Medical District was called to order by Chairperson Linda Welsch at 9:03 am on Tuesday, March 15, 2022. Payroll/Benefits Assistant Kerrie Tarver recorded the minutes. A quorum was present, and the meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.

2. **Roll Call of Board Members:** Linda Welsch – Chairperson; Brandi Bateman – Clerk; Carol Keeton - Member; **Not Present** – Justin Largent; Steve Darby – Members.

Staff Present: Fire Chief Terry Keller; Battalion Chiefs Eric Strauss & Daniel Elliott; Captains Charles Miller, Mike Loza & Tyler Rezzonico; Administrative Manager Robyn Cook; Fire Marshal Ken Krebbs; Firefighters Taylor Hammond, Travis Adcock; Jacqueline Pickering & Tanner Rezzonico; Payroll/Benefits Assistant Kerrie Tarver – Recorder.

3. **Salute to the flag of the United States of America and Moment of Silence to Honor all American Men and Women in service to our Country, Firefighters, and Police Officers.**
Chairperson Welsch led the pledge of allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

4. **Call to the Public** – There were no requests to speak.

5. **Approval of Minutes**

A. **Executive Session Minutes for January 18, 2022.**
Tabled

B. **Regular Meeting Minutes for February 15, 2022.**
Tabled

6. **Reports:**

A. **Fire Chief**

B. **Operations**

C. **Fire Marshal**

D. **Financial/Administrative**

Chief Keller presented the fire chief report. He reported on the upcoming closure of the fleet repair service out of Northern Arizona. An offer of employment was extended to a mechanic. The change would consist of redirected funds, ensure quality of fleet, and potential revenue stream by offering services to other agencies. The discussion included the amount of work, location, and other options for fleet service repair.

Chief Strauss delivered the operations report and call data. He noted the ISO audit has been completed and the results are pending.

Fire Marshal Krebbs provided the fire marshal report, discussed inspections, new growth, plan reviews, and added solar reviews for residential properties.

Administrative Manager Cook provided the Financial Report. The ambulance revenue is trending over budget and is expected to continue. Ms. Cook anticipates that sick and vacation time will continue to be over budget, but that this will be offset by discretionary overtime and reserve budgets. Expenses are trending in line with budget, and it is expected that there will be enough left over to pay the county's \$750,000 credit.

There has been consistent fraud activity on Copper Canyon's general fund account. To add security, the district is participating in "Positive Pay" to preauthorize paying warrants.

Ms. Cook provided an overview of a financing bundle opportunity and the ability to accrue interest on the public safety capital reserve fund. There was a discussion on some advantages to the program. Additional information will be provided at the next board meeting.

Chief Keller and Administrative Manager Cook met with an organization regarding a web-based onboarding process for hiring firefighters and attracting candidates. They discussed the costs compared to historical onboarding costs, advantages, and disadvantages.

7. **Discussion and possible action on the approval of the financials for February 2022.**

Board Member Keeton made a motion to approve the financials for February 2022. Clerk Bateman seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

8. **Budget Workshop – Revenue and Expenses**

Ms. Cook stated the worker's compensation insurance increased 156% to \$368,000. She went over the sales tax initiative and stated that it will not be known whether it will be on the ballot until August, at which point the budget will be set. Based on that, she recommends raising the mil rate to 3.37 which will generate \$150,000 in revenue. If the sales tax initiative is passed, the mil rate can be dropped the following year. There was a discussion on rising fuel prices, increased assessed value, and inability to rely on the sales tax initiative. Ms. Cook stated the average increase in taxes would be approximately \$11.00 per parcel. The Board requested the cost per \$100,000 of assessed value instead of the average increase. It was noted that the rate on commercial properties was reduced, causing a reduction in revenue, and shifting the burden to residential. Ms. Cook stated the district could consider reinstating balance billing on ambulance transports. There was a discussion on hardship, write offs, and losing revenue. Ms. Cook stated the budget for code enforcement revenue was adjusted from last month to reflect a more accurate budget.

The step scale reflected a 3% COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment), adjustments to the Fire Marshal and Administrative Manager positions, and increased stipends. Ms. Cook stated the step scale was reformatted based on hourly rates and reviewed the changes. The Union requested a 5% COLA, but it was not feasible due to the increase in the worker's compensation insurance. The quotes for dental and life insurance were not available.

There was a discussion regarding the need to increase the mil rate or make major cuts to the budget. Further discussion focused on worker's compensation. There are limited insurance companies, cancer claims continue to be denied but rates increase, and the difference in the funding letter rate and the budget due to the initial funding costs rolled into the total worker's compensation budget. There are two years remaining for the initial funding payments. The final costs will be available on March 31st.

Overall, the budget for salaries and wages increased \$227,000. The increase included a 3% COLA and step increases, stipend increase, reclassification of the Fire Marshal and Administrative Manager positions to the Division Chief scale, and addition of a Fire Inspector position. There was a discussion that the

reclassifications of the Administrative Manager and Fire Marshal positions were postponed until the budget cycle to avoid a mid-year change and the wages were based off advertisements from other agencies. Reclassification was requested based on the level of responsibility, workload, and liability is commiserate with the Battalion Chief level rather than a company officer level. There was a discussion how traditionally prevention, now Community Risk Reduction, is typically the first area to get cut but is important to preserve the property of the citizens.

The fire inspector position was added to the budget, but the mechanic position was excluded due to waiting to see if the offer would be accepted. There was a discussion regarding the justification for adding a fire inspector position and exploring shared services. Further discussion included low morale, inconsistencies of increasing wages for administration and operations, staffing issues, and ability to increase salaries sustainably. Chairperson Welsch stated she wished wages could be increased across the board, each member is valuable, and it is a juggling act.

The PSPRS (Public Safety Personnel Retirement System) calculation adjustments and the increase in benefit costs were discussed. The total increase to wages and benefits was \$388,000. There was a discussion on the cost comparison for COLA increases up to 5%.

Next budget workshop Ms. Cook will provide a 5% COLA budget and have more definitive requests from labor but may not have budget manager meetings completed. The Board mentioned possibly having a special meeting for a budget workshop if necessary.

9. **Discussion and possible action on ordering an ambulance to replace the 2007 Medtech not to exceed \$225,000.**

Due to the lead time for ambulance builds the item needed to be placed on the agenda to approve the build. Financing affects the budget in two cycles, will be approved later, and included in a future budget cycle. Quotes from three companies were obtained. Chief Elliott explained the differences between the quotes and recommended the Braun ambulance.

Chairperson Welsch made a motion to pursue with ordering an ambulance from Braun NorthWest not to exceed \$225,000 to replace the 2007 Medtech ambulance. Clerk Bateman seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

10. **Discussion and possible action on changing the time and day of Board Meetings.**

Following a discussion about the need to prioritize public needs over Board Member preferences, the Board Members agreed to set a time later in the day that would be more convenient for the public while also being less burdensome on staff and Board Members.

Chairperson Welsch made a motion to change the board meetings to 4:00pm on the third Tuesday of the month. Clerk Bateman seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

11. **Discussion and possible action on options, opportunities, and ideas on the Administrative Offices and Copper Canyon Family Dental.**

Chief Keller stated there was no new information to share, the item was prompted by the dentist's interest in purchasing the property where administration is located. The Town Council has an agenda item to approve zoning reclassification for a location for a public safety office and other commercial buildings. Chief Keller had not heard back from his inquiry regarding availability. There was a discussion regarding the administration property value and costs for erecting a metal building. The item will be placed on next month's agenda for further discussion and brainstorming.

12. **Future Agenda Items**

Executive Session Minutes for January 18, 2022.

Regular Meeting Minutes for February 15, 2022.

Budget Workshop – Debt Services

Discussion and possible action on options, opportunities, and ideas on the Administrative Offices and Copper Canyon Family Dental.

13. **Adjournment**

Chairperson Welsch made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Clerk Bateman seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50am.

Original signed by Brandi Bateman

Brandi Bateman, Clerk