

**Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Verde Valley Fire District  
Meeting Held May 7, 2020**

A Special Meeting of the Verde Valley Fire District Board of Directors was held electronically on May 7, 2020 at 3:00p.m. due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Board of Directors (all attended via Zoom):

Ken Bishop, Chairman  
Donald Peck, Board Clerk  
Thomas Rhodes  
Coleen Gilboy (Absent)  
Gary Svider

Staff Present (all attended via Zoom):

Joe Moore, Fire Chief  
Dean Koropatnicki, Battalion Chief  
Matt Robertson, Captain  
Lisa Elliott, Administrative Manager  
Joyce Driscoll, Administrative Assistant

Others Present (all attended via Zoom): None.

**CALL TO ORDER** - The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Chairman Bishop.

**ROLL CALL** – Board Member Gilboy was absent. Board Member Svider joined the meeting at 4:21p.m.; a quorum was present. All members were present electronically or telephonically via Zoom.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG** – Those present stood and recited the pledge of allegiance to the American flag.

**ORDER OF THE AGENDA** – Discussion and consideration of changing the order of the agenda. No action.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC** – No public comment was given.

**FINANCIAL SOFTWARE** – Discussion and possible approval of a contract with Tyler Technologies (Incode) for the purchase of a new financial software system. Administrative Manager Elliott stated that the Board approved working on a contract with Tyler Technologies at the February Board Meeting. She explained that the District’s attorney negotiated the proposed contract. Board Member Rhodes made a motion to approve the contract with Tyler Technologies for a financial software system. Board Clerk Peck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**POLICIES** – Discussion and possible approval of Resolution 2020-03 adopting an Emergency Paid Sick Leave Policy (Coronavirus) and a FMLA Leave Expansion Policy (Coronavirus) in response to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Administrative

Manager Elliott stated that the two proposed policies are in response to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. She explained the provisions of the Act requiring an additional 80 hours of emergency sick leave related to the COVID-19 virus and allowing Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) time off. She noted that the policies are only in effect through December 31, 2020 and that the District's attorney has reviewed and approved both policies.

Board Clerk Peck made a motion to adopt Resolution #2020-03 adopting an Emergency Sick Leave Policy (Coronavirus) and a FMLA Leave Expansion Policy (Coronavirus). Board Member Rhodes seconded the motion.

Discussion followed regarding the number of sick hours employees currently receive.

Board Member Rhodes asked how the hours in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act applies to shift personnel. Chief Moore noted that the Act did not take into account work schedules that are different from the 40 hours per week schedule. Administrative Manager Elliott stated that the Act allows 80 hours off work, presumably to cover a 14 day quarantine period; however, firefighters work an average of 56 hours per week. She explained that should a suppression employee need to be quarantined for two weeks, the emergency sick leave would leave the employee short 32 hours which would have to come out of their normal accrued sick leave. She stated that she believes the Board has the ability to change the temporary policy to make the emergency sick leave two weeks long, regardless of the employee's work schedule. It was noted that the employees are aware of the proposed policies and there has not been any feedback about the hours covered not being equal between suppression and non-suppression employees.

Discussion followed regarding the Act including time off work for an employee to take care of a roommate and that there is not really any way to police this. Administrative Manager Elliott noted that if an employee's roommate has the Coronavirus, then the employee (having been exposed) would likely need to be quarantined 14 days anyway.

The motion passed unanimously.

**WAGES – Discussion and possible direction to Staff regarding possible wage increases for the FY2020-2021 Budget.** Chief Moore stated that in the last meeting, during the budget discussion, the Board expressed concern about the possible economic outlook and wanting to make sure that funds were available to maintain staffing and service levels. To this end, the Board discussed the possibility of deferring raises until it could be determined what the economic outcome will be. Board Member Rhodes asked that Labor be brought into the discussion. Chief Moore stated that he met with Labor representatives to discuss this issue. He explained to Labor the Board's position; Labor requested if it would be reasonable to take the raise on July 1<sup>st</sup> realizing that adjustments could be made later if needed.

Board Member Rhodes expressed concern about it being difficult to give raises and take them away later. Chief Moore stated that Labor is also looking at efficiencies to help reduce costs.

It was noted, that if a recession occurs, the District will not feel the impact for 18 to 24 months. Discussion followed regarding the concern of people not being able to pay their property taxes, a

possible drop in real estate values, the District having some time to address the issue before it impacts the District and looking at how to counter-balance proposed raises in the long term.

Chief Moore stated that if the District starts to see evidence of a downturn, Staff realizes that there will be no future raises and there will be delays in capital purchases.

Board Member Rhodes stated that he does not want to penalize employees for something that has not happened yet; however, personnel need to have a reasonable understanding that this cost may need to be made-up sometime down the road. Chairman Bishop agreed.

Board Member Rhodes stated that he wants there to be a long-term plan in case the bottom falls-out and how the Board and Staff could work together to address future financial issues. Captain Robertson stated that understands the Boards' views, adding that although he cannot speak for the employees, he thinks the employees would decrease their pay to save jobs.

Board Clerk Peck stated that it is difficult to do something now that may have to be taken away later. Chairman Bishop stated that he has faith in the District's employees. Board Member Svider stated that he want to make sure that personnel understand that down the road, if things do go "South", that the Board does not want to be in a situation where staffing needs to be reduced. He agreed with Board Member Rhodes, the raises should be given.

Board Member Rhodes made a motion to direct Staff to retain the wage increases in the budget for next fiscal year, effective July 1. Board Clerk Peck seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**PURCHASE ORDER – Discussion and possible approval of a purchase order to Spectrum Healthcare for unbudgeted mental health services in the amount of \$3,000.** Chief Moore stated that this is to contract with Spectrum Healthcare to be in compliance with the Craig Tiger Act. He noted that the service includes counseling for personnel and family members. He noted that the Act also requires the District to maintain records of traumatic events employees are exposed to and to send a report to the state of Arizona every September.

Board Member Svider stated that he thinks it is a fantastic idea; however, he stated that he has some concern about the cost increasing because the required counseling can last for up to six months. Chief Moore stated that both Sedona Fire District and Verde Valley Ambulance Company have participated in this program with success. He stated that Spectrum understands that this is a pilot program and the costs could become prohibitive; however, they wanted to start it and re-evaluate it after a year. They understand that if the cost exceeds the amount of funds they are requesting, they have committed to provide the service regardless.

Discussion followed regarding the funds going into a 'pool' with funds from other fire and EMS agencies and the possibility of one agency needing to use up all of the funds. Chief Moore reiterated that it is a pilot program and that Spectrum wants to be part of the solution. He stated he can ask them about the scenario given.

It was explained that the Act requires that up to 36 counseling visits per employee, per year, to be paid for by the District for certain traumatic on-the-job events. It was noted that the Act allows employees to choose who they want to receive this service from. Chief Moore explained

that if an employee did not want to use Spectrum, the District would have additional funds to cover the costs. Administrative Manager Elliott stated that funds could be carried-over to place in the fund, or the cost can be balanced-out with another category within the same division of the budget.

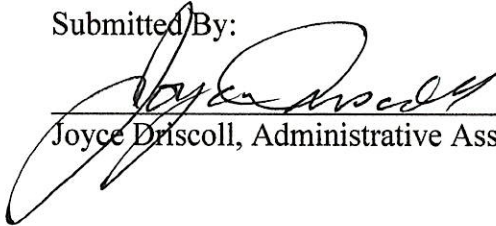
Board Clerk Peck made a motion to approve a purchase order to Spectrum Healthcare for unbudgeted mental health services in the amount of \$3,000. Board Member Svider seconded. Chairman Bishop, Board Clerk Peck, and Board Member Svider voted in favor of the motion; Board Member Rhodes abstained due to a possible conflict of interest. The motion passed.

**APS CONTRACT – Discussion and possible action regarding a proposed ingress/egress contract with APS to allow APS access across District-owned property to a future electrical substation to be located at 1591 State Route 89A (tax parcel #406-27-053B).** Chief Moore asked that this item be tabled to the next meeting as he is waiting for APS’ approval of the proposed contract. Board Member Rhodes made motion to table this item indefinitely. Board Clerk Peck seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

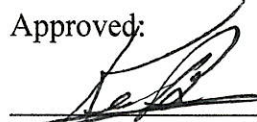
**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – A listing of items to be placed on a future agenda.** No items were listed.

**ADJOURNMENT.** With no further business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Submitted By:

  
Joyce Driscoll, Administrative Assistant

Approved:

  
Ken Bishop, Chairman

Attest:

  
Don Peck, Board Clerk