

**Minutes to the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District**  
**Board of Directors**  
**Monday, 22 March 2021**  
**0900**

**Call to Order**

**Roll Call** – all Board members present

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Call to the Public** – (due to Covid & length of meetings, there was no verbal call to the public. The Public is welcome to submit a written letter to the Board.)

**Approval of Minutes –**

**Meeting of January 29, 2021** – Motion to approve as corrected by Webber made by Dorney second by Garber, motion carried unanimously.

**Meeting of 23 Feb 2021** – motion to approve as presented by Webber, seconded by Dorney, seconded by Garber, motion carried unanimously.

**Fire Chief's Report** – *During the meeting many of us heard feedback; this feedback affected the recording and appeared to be coming from the mic on the lectern. It faded in and out and had bad sound.* A couple points stated by the Chief - we're having problems with the two older ambulances and need to seriously look into replacement options. The grant for extrication equipment – we've ordered the spreader and the cutter.

Ops Chief Meredith discussed new hires, departures and promotional changes within the department. The information is on a separate page at the end of the minutes.

**Financial Report** – Rutter presented financial information for the month of February 2021 to the Board, including the Balance Sheet, the Profit & Loss Statement and the Cashflow Forecast. There was a motion by Dorney to approve the Financials as presented, seconded by Weber, motion carried unanimously. Mic feedback was evident throughout MS Rutter's presentation. MS Rutter then presented some information on the total of expenses to the district that are directly related to the investigation:

Chief salary, taxes & benefits \$44,502

Acting Chief salary - \$13,878

Sink salary & benefits \$28,371

Attorney \$22,046

Investigation \$26,749

HR Specialist (paid this year for previous investigation \$4,830

PSPRS Attorney \$805

Auditor \$5,400 (more coming)

Total costs to the District relating to the investigation – \$146,581

**Garber** – How long will this continue? **Rutter** – your question is for the Board. Johnson – the investigation is over. We'll see how much more we have to do with Donna (Attorney), we do have one more bill with the accounting, expect it to be \$2,100-2,500. Garber – So, we're close to wrapping it up. Johnson – we're tying up loose ends, trying to recover some of the overpayments. The biggest chunk is salaries and we really had no choice. Garber – I'm glad we have categories, otherwise the image is we're spending a huge amount of money to recover a small amount of

money. Whether we had the investigation or not, we would have been paying salaries. In reality the only extra expense is \_\_\_(not understandable)\_\_\_ . Reba questioned the conversation as she couldn't hear what Johnson and Garber were saying, Garber clarified... the public perception is not good as you know and I think if we have a little more clarification to remove any gray areas it will help. (Garber's voice is soft, so after a query from the public, he restated his comment.) I think the public perception on the amount of money being spent is... there's not a clear answer until today on what exactly went towards investigation or towards salaries. I think the perception was it was all one big lump sum, and if you take that lump sum and you look at what we're trying to recover, it doesn't make sense financially. Now that we have a breakdown, I think that it makes a little more sense. Thank you everyone for providing that.

1. **Survey** – Dorney tabled to further agenda
2. **Replacement of the Fire Chief** – Johnson is pursuing a short-term solution with Palominas. Even if we hire a Chief, we still need a relationship with Jon. It will be months before we hire a chief.
3. **SEFD Financial Hardship** – Internal policy – operational decision made on a case-by-case basis – gives us a basis for conversation; to point to a specific policy within the District. We have a starting point for conversation.
4. **SEFD Gratuitous Services** – Internal policy – again a basis for conversation. These are services we do that we can provide for the community without the fear of being billed full ambulance charges.
5. **Treat and Refer Agency Application** – SEFD will be submitting an application to become a Treat and Refer Agency with AZ Dept. of Health Services; this will give us the authorization to assess a patient and refer them to an alternative solution other than transporting them to a hospital. There will be a reduced fee for
6. **Chain of Command** – revised to reflect recent changes in staffing – motion to approve as presented by Dorney, seconded by Webber; motion carried unanimously.
7. **Board Vacancy Timeline** – Webber would like to extend the timeframe for applications to the end of April, 2021, the remaining Board members agreed. Applications would be accepted up to April 30, 2021.
8. **Draft Budget Presentation** – Acting Chief Buonaccorsi presented a DRAFT budget for conversation to the Board. He briefly discussed most of the line items for the Board's edification. Buonaccorsi asked for a study session to be held soon so there could be more discussion about proposed changes. The date of April 7, 2021, at noon, was agreed upon.
9. **Executive session for Legal Advice** – the Board closed the open session to go into executive session for legal advice with the attorney for the District regarding the audit of PFD IGA payments and compensation paid to Chief De Wolf. Motion by Webber, seconded by Dorney; interrupted by a comment from a community member (hard to hear). No final call for the vote; open session ended – time not noted.

Back in open session – 1205 – Confidentiality notice given to all Board members.

**10. Action related to Executive session** – we don't have any motion; what we're going to do is continue to work with our Attorney with insurance, we may consider referring it to the [Santa Cruz] County Attorney, but before we do that we're going to put that on a Board agenda item in an upcoming meeting for full board consideration and discussion once we know more. Webber – is that the next meeting, April 7, 2021? Johnson – Yes.

**11. Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn by Webber, seconded by Dorney, motion carried unanimously.

Minutes approved on April 7, 2021 by \_\_\_\_\_, Board Clerk.  
Reba Webber

DRAFT



# SONOITA-ELGIN FIRE DISTRICT

"PROUD PAST STRONG FUTURE"

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Fire District Board Meeting  
March 2021  
Member Update

## **New Volunteers**

Since the February meeting, we have had two new recruits start the process. Last week we had three potential recruits pick up applications. We also had a recruit who had stepped away return to the process and she should be done this month.

## **Departures**

One of our volunteer members has resigned citing conflicting priorities. One of the real challenges of being a volunteer is balancing the needs we have of them versus those of their family and other work obligations.

**Anthony Zepke** has been hired by the USFS as a seasonal member and will be away from the department until the fall. We wish him great success this fire season and look forward to having him back when it is over.

## **Returning Member**

**Jen Huss** has returned as a volunteer member. Jen was a long-time career member at SEFD, rising to the rank of captain before leaving. She has extensive fire and EMS experience and we look forward to welcoming her back a few times a month.

## **Firefighter Certification**

**Austin Dale** and **Karina Hilliard** received news that they both passed their state examinations and they are now certified FF I/II.

## **Promotion**

**Emma Laird** has been promoted to Captain on A shift after an internal search. Captain Laird joined the department as a volunteer in 2017 and also worked on our fuels crew. She has a BS from the University of Arizona in Psychology with a Minor in Public Health and a second Bachelors degree in Emergency Medical Services. She completed her FF I/II academy at Pima Community College. In addition to her duties here, serves as an instructor at Pima in the paramedic program of which is a graduate. She lives in Tucson.

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