

27 Feb 2017

Call to Order

Roll Call – all board members present; special guest Donna Aversa, SEFD Attorney

Pledge of Allegiance.

Venos: I want to thank you all for attending tonight, for coming out in the wind and getting a little colder. I really don't have too much stuff on the agenda tonight, but I did want to start...we've got some cards I'm going to pass around to the board, two or three cards that we got in during the course of the last month for our response. Do you want to take a look at it? Also, I wanted to call your attention real quick, board members and people who have the agenda with them, there is a small correction on item 4A. The date states, "December 2016," please make it to, "January 2017."

And on a very, very extremely sad side note, I want to give my condolences and all my thoughts and prayers to board member Reba Weber on the passing of her mother. Please accept the...everyone in this room, I'm sure, and every...and all your friends and family in the community, all our thoughts and prayers be with you, Reba.

Weber: Thank you.

Venos: Okay, item number one in the agenda. Aversa Versa [SP], the fire district board attorney, is down to visit with us tonight.

Aversa: Thanks for inviting me down today. So I'm here today to talk to you about open meeting laws, emails or communications to the public and the board and the chief's role and dialogue and all that good stuff that is on your agenda. And this is, of course, a follow-up to all the education you got at the after-conference, where you had to sit through 90 minutes of me talking about this, right? And so, this is a good opportunity to answer any questions that you have, anything that you have come across in running the meetings, anything like that.

I'm here for you. I'm your resource. But I do have a few comments prepared and I'm happy to go over that. And because I'm an attorney, I can pretty much fill however much time you gave me, so feel free to give me the time-out thing, right? And please, stop me if you have any questions. And so, if you like, I could just start with my remarks.

Venos: Yeah. Please, go ahead.

Aversa: Okay, great. And if you want me to focus or follow up on something, again, I'm here for you. So whatever you need. So I want to start out by talking a little bit about the open meeting law. And the whole goal about the open meeting law is transparency in government.

And with fire districts, in my personal opinion, fire districts are the best model of local government, because you've got open meeting laws that you have to comply with, you've got public records you have to comply with, you have monthly meetings where all these people from your community get to come and actually see what you do. And so, I think fire districts are the model of how government should run.

And because you run the way that you do, you don't have the need for...like the Sarbanes Oxley and all that other kind of stuff that the federal government is trying to make people be transparent, because you already are. And so...and that is right in our statutes. The corollary to that is, at the heart of the issue is the public's confidence in government.

And if people can see what you do and see how you do it and see why you do it, then that builds the confidence in the public that has basically entrusted you to take care of their community and their tax dollars. And so, that's all the underlying stuff with the open meeting law. We know that the stated purpose of the open meeting law is to conduct the business of government out in the open, open it up to the scrutiny of the public and to ban decisions made in secret.

And that is the very first statute that's listed in the open meeting laws, we're presumed to be open. The next part is who must comply with the open meeting law and that is everyone. And that is not just the five of you, but it's also

the fire chief and the administration. And it's also these good folks here and they didn't have to take the class.

But because you're not allowed to make decisions outside of this meeting, we need the public to understand that and to understand why the agenda works the way it does and how open meeting law is not meant to be efficient or to expedite things, it's meant to force you to maybe even slow down a little bit and conduct your business in the open. And so, one of the questions I get all the time--well, not all the time, but it's probably one of the most common questions I get--is, "Well, why can't we just do it?"

I mean, it's clear that it needs to be done and the community wants us to do it, so why can't we just do it?" And I said, "Well, you have to go through the steps. You have to put it on the agenda, it has to be properly on the agenda. You have to be able to make a decision in an open session, you need to discuss it." And so, if all those I's haven't been dotted and T's crossed, you can't do it. And so, sometimes it's a nuisance because you're ready to go, you have all the information you need, but you have to slow down and take a step back.

And so, that's just part of the function and the reality of the open meeting law that we have to deal with. Another issue with the open meeting law that is helpful for the public to be aware of is when you have an executive session. An executive sessions don't happen very often in most districts and they shouldn't happen very often in your district, either. But there are seven reasons under the statute why a district can go into an executive session. The most common reason is for a personnel matter.

And in your case, you basically have one employee and that's the fire chief. Everybody else is the fire chief's employee, right? So if you want to give him his personnel evaluation, you can do that in an executive session. The statute allows it. And you have to have it on the agenda and then the chief would have to have 24 hours advance notice of that. Another example of an executive session might be, if you were to enter into some kind of agreement where you need to buy some land or rent some land.

I don't know that that's going to happen any time in your near future, but again, you can go into an executive session for that because that's one of the seven reasons listed. And other reasons might be to enter into agreements with tribal governments, right? A lot of these things don't come up so much with fire districts, but they're the same statutes that apply to the board supervisors and other governmental entities. So of all the seven, you might not ever come into contact with those.

But when you do meet in an executive session, those sessions are confidential. And so, you actually leave...you would vote to go into an executive session, close out this meeting or at least recess it and then convene in an executive session. And the public's excluded from that, right? In an executive session though, you don't make any decisions. You may get legal advice, you may direct the attorney if it's some kind of direction in an ongoing litigation or maybe to purchase some property, right?

You could do that in an executive session. You can give a fire chief his or her evaluation in an executive session. Then you close that executive session and you come out into public. If there's any decision that needs to be made, it needs to be made in the public session. But because executive sessions are confidential, you can't talk about the executive session outside of the executive session. And so, the public--and hopefully you'll be aware of this--if you ask, "So what went on in that executive session that lasted 90 minutes," or 17 minutes, whatever it is, you're just not going to be able to say, right?

And so on the agenda, if you do have a need for an executive session, there should be a note on there that executive sessions are confidential pursuant to statute and you're not allowed to talk about what happened in the executive session. But decisions have to be made in the public, right? So even if you were to direct your attorney or your real estate broker on the purchase of a piece of land and you were to say, "Well, based on our budget, we can only go up to--" I'm just going to make something up "--\$210,000," and then, you could direct your attorney or your broker to go out and negotiate, but not beyond \$210,000.

If the broker or attorney struck that deal, it would be a preliminary deal. It would have to be brought back from the fire board and then you would make that decision in public sessions. And obviously, the reason for that is because if you said, "We'll only go \$210,000," the willing sellers are going to say then, "I want to \$210,000," right? So it would impact the situation. And likewise, the attorney giving legal advice will need to protect the attorney-client

privilege, so that's done in an executive session as well. So that's why I say everybody, including the members of your community, need to be aware of that.

Archibald: Question.

Aversa: Yes.

Archibald: When we talked about this issue in the meeting in Laughlin one of the things that I found interesting is when you go into an executive session, you call your attorney to participate, right?

Aversa: Yes. And if you're going to get legal advice from an attorney, the attorney actually has to be there or...either in person or on the phone. And I had...I answered this question for somebody just earlier today. They were talking...the board was considering setting up a subcommittee to look at a particular issue. I don't even remember what the issue is. And the question was, to me as the attorney for the district, "Could I just meet with that subcommittee and then advise that subcommittee and then have the board members relay my legal advice to the board?"

I was like, "No. No, that might be efficient, but that's not going to work at all. We need to follow the formula." And so, the attorney's legal advice is for the district. I answer...I work for the district and I answer to the board, okay? So that's how you would have to have that. Did I answer your question?

Archibald: Yes, thank you.

Aversa: Okay, fantastic. And anytime...because you're a five-person board, anytime there's three of you, you have a quorum. So even if two of you were not able to make the meeting tonight, you could still conduct business and a majority of the quorum--two out of three--would carry the vote. But that also means you have to be conscientious when you go out in public and if there's...three of you happen to be together, not to discuss business--not discuss district business--and to be very cautious about that.

At one point in time, I used a very apparently poor example and I said to my fire board...I said, "Now, when I get married and I invite you all to my wedding--and you won't know anybody else there except for me--you can't sit together." And they said, "You're getting married?" And I said, "Well, no, I'm not," but that was just my example, right? So...because there's a perception issue there, as well. I've since gotten married and my husband was very kind to join me tonight, so...and none of you were invited to the wedding. It also helps that we ran away and eloped, but yeah.

The penalties for violation of the open meeting law can be anything from education and a slap on the wrist from the Attorney General's office to monetary fines of \ \$500 per violation, not per meeting, but per violation. And that could be...one, two, three, four, five times 27 violations and...right. So luckily, the Attorney General's office historically has not had a punitive streak, they just want things to be done right. And they've been pretty generous to date in working with fire districts in particular.

Although we lost our head OMELET lawyer...and OMELET is the Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team of the Attorney General's office. And we lost the head lawyer but luckily, we lost her to the Forestry Department. She is the assistant forester or deputy forester over there now, so she still gets to work with fire districts. And so, we just need to be cautious and aware of that. So open meeting laws can be enforced by the Attorney General's office, by the county attorney and...or actually, if push comes to shove, by a member of the public.

If a member of the public is aggrieved and thinks that there is a violation, somebody could file a lawsuit. So we just need to be careful on that. And I don't anticipate any problems from you folks, because you conduct all your...you're a fresh start. You conduct all your business in the open and you're doing everything right here. I had a couple of examples, one of my favorite examples about things that could go wrong at a fire board. I have...I found a video of a...I think it was...I don't know what county it was, in it. I know it wasn't an Arizona.

And it was either a city council or board supervisors' meeting and it was during the call to the public, which you have on your agenda. You're not required to, but you do because you want to hear what your constituents have to

say, so it's a best practice. So somebody came up with a call for the public, read their statement, walked back and then popped some person on the side of the head with their material. And then, you could see from the video delay--or from the video--that this person had like a five-second delay and then basically fell out of the chair. That stopped the meeting.

Now, I don't anticipate anything like that happening here in...at some of the other fire districts, but you never know what's going to happen. So you just have to remain in control of your meeting at all times. And nobody has thrown a spitball at me, so I've got...I'm pretty...feeling pretty confident here today. Let me move on for a minute and talk about emails and text messaging and mail, as well. So you all have fire district email addresses and it's important that you use those, because if there's any...ever any question about your communications, then the chief can access that or the district can access that directly.

And so, you avoid the danger of using your personal email address and then having somebody subpoena your hard drive and physically removing your computer from your house. It's very rare, but it has happened before. And so, it's very important to you to use your district email address. Likewise, it's important that you use this as your mailing address, right? Any official mail should either...you know, should come to or come from this address, right?

Any mail that the district...that the Fire Board sends out is likely to go out over the chairman's signature and go out through the office here. But anything that...any correspondence that's official with the district, you should use this address as well. Text messaging so far has not been much of a problem with fire districts. There was one district that had kind of an odd setup.

And their setup was such that they weren't particularly sitting at open tables like you have, where people see what you're doing and you're taking notes and you're reading the materials and so forth, but at the elevated tables where there's a little bit of a...where nobody knows what you're doing back there. And somebody to the side of the table saw that people were texting, that the board members were texting during a meeting. And that raised some collective eyebrows as to, are they texting each other? Because that's not very transparent.

And it turned out that they were texting outside sources about the topic of the meeting and that just went over like a lead balloon, right? So you know, you get to call for a break, you get to ask the chief to follow up, you can say, "How about if I text the assistant forester and see if she can answer that question?" But not anything on the sly like that.

Board communications to the public. You are each one of five. And so individually, you cannot comment on behalf of the Fire Board unless as a board, you've decided that somebody could be the spokesman, or you've decided that, "This is the message that we're going to take out to the community," because individually, you can't say anything on behalf of the board. You can talk to your constituents and say, "I feel very strongly about this issue and if you come to the meeting, we're going to discuss this issue. And I'm going to make my opinion known and I'd like some support from the public."

You can absolutely say that, but you can't bind...you can say...you cannot bind the fire district. You cannot bind the fire district to your opinion unless it's actually been through the action of the board, right? And then of course, once the board takes its action, even if it's by a three to two vote and if it's hotly contested, once that decision is made, it's the decision of the board. Even if it wasn't your first choice, even your last choice, it's still the decision of the board and it has to be abided by. All right, how are we doing so far? Any more questions?

So the next topic I want to touch upon is the chief's role and the board's role. And this you'll remember from Laughlin as well, is that...it's a very simple line...is, your job is policy and the chief's job is operations. But also there, you can imagine a kind of Venn diagram with the overlapping loops with the part in the middle that, "You know, maybe were not sure if this is the chief's part or our part."

And in some districts, that's a very, very narrow sliver and other districts, their hula hoops are almost overlapping each other because they just don't have very well-defined roles and responsibilities and practices and [inaudible 00:23:02]. And that's a mess. So the ideal is to have that overlap be as narrow as you possibly can. But the most important thing about it is to communicate and to communicate as to what your expectations are with each other--with the board and the fire chief--and to have that open dialogue which I'm very happy to observe that you do.

And so to maintain that, because that's probably the most important relationship that the board has, is with its fire chief and then...because that is the relationship that then affects everything else in the entire community and dialogues between the board and staff and the attorney. I work for the district, I answer to the board. Any of you can call me as a district attorney at any time and ask me a question, because I'm your resource, right? That is rarely a problem.

But I have to say when it is a problem, it's an expensive problem because there comes a...and it's a very interesting problem because you're bound by the open meeting law, right? You can't outside of the meeting to have a discussion offline that says, "Gee, I wonder if we should call Donna and ask Donna this question," or, "I've called Donna and I've asked her this question and this is what she said," and then end up being in violation of the open meeting law, okay?

So if you're to call me and asked me a question, I'm very happy to answer to the best that I can. But then, I'm also very likely to either let the chief know right away that we've had that conversation or to ask you to let the chief know. Or if it's something that needs to come through the board, we'll figure out how that works.

And then, if a second person calls me and asks me the same question, well then, maybe I'll call the chief and say, "You know, maybe we should put this on the agenda," "Maybe we need an executive session," "Maybe you need to address this issue," whatever it may be, because that...to me, that is a signal that you are in need of some information, whether it's legal advice or otherwise. And there is a way to address that and to address that without me having to bill for this phone call and that phone call. So we'll figure that out.

But like I said, it's really an issue but when it is an issue, it's expensive and it's not very pleasant. So if we see that coming, we'll just nip it in the bud. All right, let's see. Another thing I wanted to address with you is, just in summary, I think there's a couple of real simple rules for the fire board to remember and that is...so we had our annual training in Laughlin, right? But everybody knows the saying, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." What happens in executive sessions stays in executive sessions, right? So that one is important, statutorily important.

And then, the second one is one that I vaguely remember my grandmother saying a very long time ago, "There's no such thing as being a little bit pregnant." And that means you have to...it's corny, but you'll remember it, right? You have to comply with the open meeting law. You can't just partially comply with the open meeting law, you have to be in compliance with those things. And if there's ever a doubt, well, the statute tells us to err on the side of openness and to comply, even when it's not convenient to do so. So, questions?

Venos: I have more of a statement than I'd like to confirm than a question.

Aversa: Yes. Yeah, absolutely.

Venos: During the election, our personal emails went out and the public has access to our personal emails. We need to also be careful with a reply action or an action taken off of a public comment to all of...where they may put us all on the same...within a group of a whole bunch of email addresses. And if we do a Reply All or do something that would violate the...

Aversa: Yes.

Archibald: Yes.

Aversa: Yes, yes.

Venos: Right?

Aversa: Yes. So...yes. And so, you can very...so are their email addresses on the website...

Bahti: No.

Aversa: ...district...? Okay. So if somebody...a very easy fix to that is, if somebody emails you at your personal email address, you can reply to that person and copy it to your district email address. So then, it removes it from your personal email and all that information then is sent over to your district account, right? Reply To All is a very dangerous thing. And I know my personal practice is, if I'm emailing board members information, if I say, "I've got this memorandum and I want you to read it before I come to the meeting," so that way, you're not rushed...so we don't have to sit here and then you feel rushed while you're reading the memorandum and then I give legal advice. If I send it out ahead of time to all of you, it's a one-way communication to each of you, so I'm not in violation of the open meeting law there.

But I send it to myself and I blind copy each of you as board members on it and then I'd usually also add kind of a belt and suspenders, "Please do not reply to all. Just any response or any question, either email me directly or forward your question to the fire chief." And that way, it gets funneled without also having the potential to spray outside and violate the open meeting law. Because the danger is if I send out something to each of you and then...it's so easy to just hit Reply All.

It's just...I don't know how many times I've done it accidentally, just...you know, where you're doing something totally benign...you're going to a potluck and you're just supposed to tell the host what you're going to bring. And then you reply to all and everybody's like, "Well, I could care less that you're bringing that," right? And like, "Why are you sending...why are you clogging up my email address," right? But you can see easily where if it's something a little bit more sensitive than egg salad, that you want to be protective there of that. So, yeah. So just be careful of that.

Venos: Let me take that just one step farther and just say, what if I get one and I see that everybody's on the same email, or I see that everybody is not on the same email. By one-waying it--in other words, if I forward that to the other board members--is that a violation?

Aversa: It can possibly.

Venos: Possibly? Okay.

Aversa: It depends on the content. Yeah. Just a one-way dissemination of information is typically going to be okay. So in my example, I'm sending a memo out so you could review it in advance of the board meeting. That is a very clear example of a one-way communication. Now, if I didn't blind copy you and then one of you has a question and sends it to me but replies to all, then that question goes out to everybody and now we start having two-way communication that is outside of a board meeting, then that sends up the red flag.

Venos: Okay. That answered my question.

Aversa: Did that help?

Venos: Thank you. Any other questions? Very good. Thank you, Donna.

Review and approval of the governing board minutes, meeting minutes of January 23, 2017. We've all had this to look at. Does anyone want to make a motion to approve the minutes? Motion to approve by Bahti, seconded by Archibald, motion carried

Chief's Report: In January, we ran 42 calls, A shift did 15, B did 14 and C did 13. We did six simultaneous calls in January and we did six helicopter transports with 13 district...in-district ambulance transports and eight out-of-district. I want to make the board and everybody that's here aware that there are going to be some prescribed burns; we'll be doing 4,400 acres or a little over that, one in the Huachuca Mountains, one along the San Pedro River area; so if you see smoke over the next couple of months here, that is what it is about.

On Tuesday evenings following each board meeting I talk to are volunteers and staff about what we talk about this evening. And then we will trainings throughout the month. We did an active shooter drill with border patrol and SO and schools this past month, what our roles would be if we actually have an active shooter at our local school.

I met with the Arizona State Forestry of Green Valley Fire, we talked about the upcoming fire season, resources that they're going to have available for us. And then all our guys...the three guys that went back to North Carolina to help fight the fires--got a letter from the governor in North Carolina in their State Forestry Department. So I thought that was kind of neat that they took the time to recognize our guys.

Throughout the month, we went to a few motor vehicle accidents. We had a semi rollover that shut the highway down for a little while, then we had a 50-acre fire in the Rain Valley area that was started by welding. So these are some of the activities that we did throughout the month. We also finished off our LZ training. We do LZ training every year. Some of you...this was during the breakfast Saturday, so some of you were around doing this. They bring in the helicopters, they give us classroom work. They also show us the helicopter and where their shutoffs are, in case they have to crash and we have to shut the bird down for them and get them out, how to open their doors. We did a propane prop training throughout this past month. And we have our appreciation evening over at the Fairgrounds, which the majority of our board attended this as well. And our attorney left, but it was hosted, so we were fine there. The nice thing about this, we used to do it here at the firehouse. We have moved over to the Fairgrounds due to the turnout that we have. We had just shy of 100 volunteer and career personnel there that evening, so it was pretty neat for us. And it was a Hawaiian theme.

For our wildland fires in 2016, we were paid in full until this past week. We did a fire out in San Rafael Valley that we'll be billing for this upcoming week. So we've got a total of \$95,140 for fire suppressions. And again, a lot of this is due to the fact that we did pass that legislation last year that gave the state forester a chunk of money so that districts didn't have to fund wildland fires. We could wait up to two years for some of our payments in the past. But the legislation that recently passed, we get paid within 30 days now, so this is a good thing for districts.

Last week, I talked about apparatus and I said, you know, we're going to continue on. Like Aversa, we're bringing her in to talk to the board and then refresh it the next month. Brenda Tranchina will be here--she's our HR specialist--just to talk to the board a little bit. We also wanted to talk about our apparatus and what each piece of apparatus does, so the board and the community could be a little more familiar with our pieces. And we talked about our structure truck last week and the new one we bought, the difference, which paid off.

This past month, the fire that I showed you that was a wildland fire started out by a gentleman welding was paged out to us in Santa Cruz County as a structural fire. So when our crews respond from here to Rain Valley, before we got the arrival of this truck, they would have taken this truck because we're going to fight a structural fire. Once we got on the scene, the problem would have been that it was a wildfire. And this truck would have a hard time fighting the wildfire because it is not what we call pump and roll. So we can't drive it and pump water at the same time.

So we would either have to come back to the station and grab other apparatus or pulled out a lot of hose off of this. What this truck gives us the capability is just that if we showed up and thought it was a wildland fire, all they need is switch over to the pump that sits up top here and this truck started rolling and suppressing the fire. So right there, the truck came in handy for our community.

This month, we're going to talk about our ambulances. We have three ambulances, two type threes and then a type one which we just purchased. These type-3 ambulances are 2006 - they have roughly 80,000...this one has 79,000 and this one has 80,000 miles on it. So they're pretty close in mileage, they're two-wheel drive and what makes them a type three is the van type of chassis. That's the way they classify a type three ambulance. They all do BLS and ALS services.

The new ambulance we've received is a four-wheel drive and it has dual wheels under it and it has a pick-up cab in front of it, which classifies it as a type one. So really, the major difference is having the capability of a four-wheel drive on this as well as the dual axles. One of the things that we have found over the past 10 years that we've been doing transports with our single axle is going down these dirt roads--and hopefully, nobody's had the privilege of riding in one of them, because they bounce. And it's really hard on the patient, depending on what kind of injury they have, to feel that.

With the dual axle, that eliminates a lot of it. And it also helps the paramedic EMTs in the back by being able to put someone in the ambulance and start moving and get an IV versus having to say, "Stop," and give an IV so we

could...the ambulance doesn't rock as much. So that's the major difference between the boxes. Any questions on our ambulances?

Bahti: That's roughly 7500 miles a year, the 80,000?

De Wolf: Yes.

Bahti: That's a lot of miles.

Venos: I noticed where you're running the red ones a lot more than the other two.

De Wolf: Actually, what we did for years was, these altered...every shift, they've dropped back and forth. And you see, keeping mileage pretty close to them. So now, what we're doing is, this is run for 48 hours, this one's run for 48 and then this one's run for 96. So we're still staggering them to try to keep the mileage down and not just take our new ambulance and beat up the roads and run the mileage up on it.

Archibald: The ambulance is...the new one's a four-wheel drive. Did you say that?

De Wolf: Yes, it is four-wheel drive. What we'll do is, if it happens to be raining and the roads are muddy or snowing and there's a lot of snow down the road, we will move this one up to the front line out. So if this is front line, we'll put this to second and move this one up, to be able to utilize the four-wheel drive and keep the patients and our crews a lot safer. Anything else?

Weber: Could we go back to the drawing...

De Wolf: The burn?

Weber: the burn that you're doing? Does the rancher pay for that?

De Wolf - No, it's training opportunities. You can get task books signed off. It depends on whether you're firefighter one or you need a lookout signed off or anything like that. That's what we do through these trainings. It's a way to get our people qualified. And we run a lot of new, fresh firefighters, so it gives them experience. And we can see... do they know how to operate our apparatus in a semi-controlled environment? Are they afraid of fire? You can get somebody out the first time to suppress a fire, only to come to find out they're afraid of fire. So those are things we achieve through doing these controlled burns.

Venos: Just out of curiosity on the burn that's on the Babocomari. There was no north or south on that, I assumed it was up. Is that the Sacaton that's being burned?

De Wolf - No, that's a cattle pasture, it's a lot of Lehmann's lovegrass. And they did spiking on it about 11 years ago, where they were trying to...they came down with an aircraft and spiked it to try to kill the]. So that's...what has been killed by that is what we're trying to burn through now, so that they can reproduce more grass. And that's all I have.

Venos: Thank you, Chief. Chief, have you got the call from the public?

De Wolf - yes

Venos: Thank you. Here, we have two folks that signed in. Gary?

Gary: Yes, sir. And if you don't mind, I'll like to face the audience, please.

Venos: Face however you want to, Gary.

De Wolf: Gary, do me a favor and just speak into the mic and tell us your name and what you're going to talk about and then you can walk away.

Gary Solier, about the emergency medical transportation and the helicopters. Last month, Suzanne Jenkins and Venos brought up about the emergency medical helicopters and I was quite surprised. For years, I have this PHI Carriers and I always thought, "You know, what if I'm going to be air ambulated out, these people are going to take care of me" Well, come to find out there's two other helicopters besides PHI carriers. There's Air Methods out of Tubac and Lifeline out of Nogales. PHI out of Sierra Vista does about 86% of the calls. Now, if they're busy with somebody else or their helicopter's down--maintenance or something--people like Air Methods or Lifeline Nogales will be called. Since I wasn't a member of Lifeline and Air Methods, my insurance company would pay whatever they're going to pay. And I'm going to use a fictitious figure. Say a helicopter ride's \$10,000, my insurance company pays \$5000. If I'm not a member of whoever transported me, I'm liable for the other \$5000. What I did was, I did some research and I joined Lifeline out of Nogales and Air Methods out of Tubac. These are the three companies that fire stations use. For all three, it's a total of--for myself--\$115 a year. And my luck would be, you know, PHI, they're down and they call somebody else in where my insurance--which is Medicare--will pay a certain amount and I am liable for the rest. What I'm suggesting, that I do have phone numbers after this meeting, I'll give you the phone numbers of these air ambulances and do your own research. But I would highly suggest to get all three, because you never know what's going to happen. Thank you.

Venos: Thank you, Gary, Karla.

Karla Cafarelli - Sonoita. And that's Karla with a K for the minutes. I just want to thank the staff and the chief and Katie and Vicki for putting together the P&L meeting last Tuesday. It was excellent. It was two hours, it was for hard-core folks, stayed all the way through it. Good discussion with the board, really enjoyed it, a lot of learning, a lot of give-and-take with the board. Very good meeting for folks who like numbers. Thank you.

Venos: Item number four, monthly financial reports and consideration of district financial matters pursuant to ARS48-807. 4A is a review and approval of the monthly financial reports for the corrected January of 2017. Are you going to give a report, Miss Rutter?

Rutter: Yeah. Before I give the report, I just had a few comments about each of the financial reports that you'll look at. I kind of assumed that you know all this, but maybe you don't, so I just want to mention a few things. The balance sheet is the first one that we review and it's also referred to as a statement of financial position, which is more common in the non-profit world and reflects the financial health of a company on a specific day, usually the last day of the month.

The balance sheet accounts do not start over at zero at the beginning of the new fiscal year. If the checking account has \$100 at the end of the fiscal year, that account starts the new fiscal year with \$100. Okay. The other common report for a company is known as the income statement, also known as the profit and loss statement, also known as the financial report. This report shows the revenues and expenditures of a company for a set time period. These accounts start over at zero at the beginning of each fiscal year. These accounts should be considered "use it or lose it."

We operate on the modified cash basis of accounting, which is the industry standard for small fire districts. We report cash in as revenue and cash out as expenses with one exception, the property taxes we receive in the following month are shown as revenue in the current month. For instance, on the balance sheet, we showed \$35,174 from Santa Cruz County and \$4,605 from Pima County along with the cash account. This represents taxes we received in February that were actually collected in January by each county, but not sent to us until February.

The revenues on the profit and loss statement are also increased by the accrued taxes each month. This is the only accrual the auditors make at the end of the fiscal year. We record the accrual every month so our books are represented the same all year long. So I don't know if you all knew all that or not, but anyway...

Jenkins: Thank you.

Rutter: Okay. So the first report is the balance sheet and this is as of January 31, 2017. The total checking and savings, including the accrued taxes which I just mentioned of \$39,780, is \$595,060. We have no liabilities on the balance sheet. The total equity as of January 31 is \$595,060. So that's pretty simple. Are there any questions on the

balance sheet? Okay. The next report is the profit and loss statement for the seven months into January 31, 2017.

Archibald: I have a question. Where is...? I assume... this is an assumption, so tell me if I'm wrong. For our trip to Laughlin that we all took, is that under training or is that a special...another area that's just part of the training?

Rutter: It'll be under training, yeah.

Archibald: I assume it's always under training.

Venos: I really am appreciative of your work and Katie's work and everybody in admin there that put this P&L together. I've found this one much, much easier to understand and reconcile in my mind in the amount of time that we have to do these. And I just really appreciate what you guys did. I think it's a good improvement, I hope the rest of the board found it equally as informative.

Rutter: Well, thank you.

Jenkins: I do have a question. We get as part of our packet the cash flow forecast, but we really don't ever talk about it. Is there a place in the agenda for us to talk about this in the future, or do you want to hold off until we actually have our budget discussion?

Rutter: I have it here.

De Wolf - each month we have to show that we are on track or not on track with our budget. And then, it is the chairman of the board...either the chair or the clerk of the board...that has to notify the county if we're going outside of our budget. Then they have a timeframe that they...so that's what the cash flow forecast is for. We can talk about it at our meeting, or if you want to chat some time

Susan: Well, because I'm just bringing this up. But I think I'd like it to be part...

Bahti: The study session?

Jenkins: ...for the study session. I think that'd be the best place to handle that. And I would also like to say thank you very much for the P&L. I know there was a lot of work that went into that and I thank you.

Venos: Thank you. Okay, we've all had a chance to review it on our own time and Vicki gives us a good summary and rundown of what's going on. Do I have a motion to accept the financial reports for January 2017? Motion by Archibald, seconded by Weber; motion carried.

Venos: Item number five, discussion and brief comments on scenarios in regards to employee compensation and employee benefits, Sue Archibald.

Archibald: This has been brought up for the last three meetings we've had. People have asked questions about taking a look at this whole issue of employee compensation, so I asked the chief and the staff to just develop some scenarios, nothing to make a decision, nothing...but just to start an open dialogue about our employees here and what or if or how or...looking forward to the budget for next year including some comments about some things we can do to increase either our benefits or our pay or some incentives or whatever, whatever. So Chief, did you prepare?

De Wolf: Okay. So when you all come to speak now, you're going to have to come up here. So when you look at our organization as a whole and we start talking about increases, it's not just increases for our career staff, we run a lot of volunteers. So when you're building a combination department like we have and you want to keep it working together, everybody, you have to look at everybody as a whole. If you take apart one group, you pull apart how they're working together. So that's all that we took and then started looking at this.

And then I look at organizations outside of our district and what other organizations pay. And we can all find

organizations that pay a tremendous more amount of money than we pay. So you look at how many stations they have, what's their call volume that they go to and respond to. All that has to come into consideration than just saying, "We're underpaid," because I think if you ask anybody that's in a job, we're all underpaid.

And if you take everybody on our department that's a career firefighter working on the floor, they have all had raises since 2006. Our staff would be myself, the EMS director Katie, Mark Bennett, our battalion chief. Our battalion chief had a raise in 2016. So the three is Katie, my EMS director and myself, have the longest span without a wage increase. Everybody else has had a wage switch in the last 18 months or so. So we looked at all that. What I looked at is fire departments around, their wage.

And their wage...I didn't do a wage comparison--we have it out there--for a chief or a battalion chief or an admin. I did just our basic firefighter 1 and 2 that responds out to the community. And Sonoita pays our entry-level firefighter \$33,000 a year. What was brought up last month and the month before are, Fairgrounds pays \$35,000 a year for a maintenance person. You know, we're paying people that save lives \$33,000 a year. Picture Rocks, which is in the southwest Tucson area, they run out of one station. They cover a small area, but their population is more than we run. They pay \$44,500 a year. We lose people to places like Golder Ranch, Rincon Valley, Drexel. Golder Ranch pays \$45,218, Rincon Valley pays \$40,497. They run 1000 calls a year and we run 500. So now, you can start to see the...Palominas, which is down south here, they pay their entry-level firefighter \$33,456 a year, right into what we pay.

Rio Rico Fire pays their entry-level firefighters \$39,953, so they're not that far above us. Where we find that we are really behind everybody else is, Sonoita Fire offers a benefit package of medical insurance and we pay \$300 a month. Most every other fire department pays 100% of their medical and 50% of their families' and the majority of them pay \$75 into a 457 retirement fund to each employee. So that's where you start to see a huge difference in what our compensation is.

And the biggest thing that we look at as well is, it's not just what we can afford to pay but it's, what can we afford as a community? Can our communities afford to pay? And that's just our career personnel. So what I did is, I took okay, if we gave our firefighters a 5% wage and I took this out as...that does not include myself, my BC or our CPA, that's just our firefighters and our admin staff.

If we give everybody a 5% raise--giving a 5% raise isn't just the 5%, it's the retirement and everything else that goes into this--that would cause the increase of the budget of \$22,290 per year. So we'd have to find a way to sustain \$23,000 a year for that 5% increase. If we were to say that we wanted to go from \$300 per month for health insurance and give everybody \$400 per month, that increase would cost \$14,400 a year. If we wanted to pay 100% of our personnel health insurance, it would cost the district an additional \$40,000 a year.

So looking at that...and again, what I talked about at the first, all that's doing is addressing one group of our organization. That's not addressing our volunteers and all that they put in. And you can take...we have a stipend person that makes \$80 a 12-hour shift--so they're a volunteer, really--on a daily basis. They're here 365 days a year. It's a bunch of different people, but that's how much they made, it's \$80. But they're doing the same job as her career personnel.

So what I looked at is...how could we do an increase or give some kind of benefit to everybody across the board? Well then, as you see, we have wildland income and we have ambulance income. Those are the two other steady incomes that we have that we could work off of. We budget on an annual basis \$30,000 for wildland, okay? This year, we earned right around \$94,000 this fiscal year, for us. What I would look at doing is building a merit system using those funds so they're a year-by-year.

If we don't do anything over the wildland income, then we don't give anything in a merit. If we do over, we'll give merits. And what this can consist of is, we send a truck out of state. And it's a burden for us, because when we send people out of state--one of our engine bosses is a career person, so he's gone for 14 days--we have to backfill these spots. Well, how do we backfill them? With volunteers. So by saying that we compensate the career people always, then you're going to get that, "Well, I'm a volunteer doing the same job, but they're not."

So I would recommend that we do some kind of a merit program that would allow us to use these extra funds to

help give bonuses, build a...when I talk about merit, it's...so a volunteer comes in and they spend 24 hours here above and beyond what they have to do on a regular monthly basis, we could give them something, whether it be a wildland pack or a pair of wildland pants. A pair of wildland pants costs almost \$200 and we have volunteers that are out there paying for their pants out of their own pockets. So we could give them an incentive to volunteer more.

It would also build morale for our career personnel that they will get stuff as well, but it's a team effort. So if we go out for a wildland assignment, yes, the engine that's out in that field is bringing us in \$20,000. But the people here now are realizing that they're getting a part of that, by me volunteering more, I'm going to get something back for it. So I'd look at moving into a merit system that we can do with all our personnel across the board, rather than one segment of the personnel.

Also is, when we look at purchasing some of our apparatus, we talk to our crews and said, "Okay, we only have so much money and stuff we can deal with. Do you all want raises or would you want to upgrade our equipment?" The majority of our crew said, "Let's upgrade our equipment. That's what needs to be done." So we could take this merit system, in the same way. We still have upgrades that need to be done, not as expensive as we just spent. But wildland pumps: we have...some of our wildland pumps are going on 15 or 20 years old, we're rebuilding them.

Well, we could say to the crews, "We want to replace this wildland pump." It gives them an incentive to go out and stay longer to help recoup that money, knowing that that money's going to be spent on something that's going to help them do their job more efficiently. So those are the types of things that I would work on: is, trying to figure out a way to do it without doing the initial tax increase. And when I talked about the other ones, if we're going to do something that's sustainable--like an hourly wage increase--the only way we're going to do that is through taxes.

You know, we can't count on we're going to have ambulance. We could give everybody a 5% raise and say, "Well, we're going to pay it out of the ambulance revenue." What happens next year when we don't get that revenue? So those are some of my right-off-the-cuff ideas of what we could do to enhance our whole program and not just one segment of our program.

Susan: Question. When you talk about a merit kind of system, are you talking about cash or stuff or both?

De Wolf - Both, a mixture of both. And I've looked at several different ones that were done through other corporations, not generally...fire departments don't generally do something like this, but there's a lot of other corporations. Some of you are familiar with the telephone corporation. Well, when they had their telephone stores out where you had to go out to the store to buy a telephone, they gave sales merits and you could get microwaves, you could get things like that.

Well, I'm just going to take that and reverse it and do it into the fire industry and get what we want. Gear bags. You know, if we bought gear bags...and we had a fire in the San Rafael Valley and we had a volunteer that got our Rip and Run. And he said, "I'll come in," and he drove all the way from Sierra Vista to come here and then go fight a fire in San Rafael Valley all night long. Well, at the end of it, if we had a gear bag or a pair of pants or something like that to hand to him and say, "Thank you."

We just had a bad wreck up on 83. And we had one of our volunteers there that got the job of patching this lady's foot with a splint that was 98% detached, but he did a tremendous job. Well, we have no way to thank him. We can say, "Thank you, appreciate that," but something EMS-wise or a gear bag or something like that, that would be a little more thankful to them. It would also be able to use for Tuesday nights. I spoke, we have Tuesday evening meetings. On an average, we have 20 to 25 volunteers on our Tuesday evening meetings.

That would be a time that myself and the BC could recognize these people in front of their peers. And again, what we're doing is picking morale up, we're bringing more people into or organization by doing this, actually.

Susan: Thank you. I think that conceptually, that's what we're looking for: ideas, thoughts. So many comments from the public have come in the last couple of months that hopefully as we work on our budget for next year, we can chew on some of these ideas and make some recommendations moving forward. And as we do that, I'm sure the community will come forward with some other ideas, as well. Thank you.

Resolution for National Bank signatories - De Wolf. What this is, we have three banks that we do business with. We have Hughes Federal Credit Union, Chase and National Bank. We were able to change all signers of the other two by state-by state statute. By board bylaws, the clerk of the board and the fire chief are the signers of the bank accounts. National Bank would not take our minutes from a meeting, they needed a resolution. So the only way to do a resolution is through the board which authorizes to follow district policy and put the fire chief remaining on the account, the board clerk Sue Archibald and removal of John Flint off the National Bank accounts. So that will be done hopefully by the end of the week, now. Board members signed the resolution and presented it to the Chief for the change in the signatories of the National Bank account.

Adjournment – Motion to adjourn by Bahti, seconded by Jenkins Motion carried.

Minutes approved on 27 March 2017  Board Clerk

Susan Archibald