

# ORACLE FIRE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday April 1, 2014 - *Approved May 6, 2014*

Meeting was officially called to order at 6:02pm, Tuesday, April 1, 2014 at 1475 W. American Ave., Oracle, AZ.

## CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Chairman Navarro, Clerk Brown, OFDBMs Bristow, McMurry and Doran. Staff Present: Operations Fire Chief Southard, Admin. Chief Acosta, Battalion Chief (Asst. Chief) Jennings, on-duty crew.

### 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

### 2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES.

Chairman Navarro presented the minutes from the March 4, 2014 meeting and requested comments or questions. OFDBM Bristow stated that the amendment to the February minutes had not been sufficiently worded in the March minutes. The corrected wording is as follows:..., **to reflect that the Board authorized, by vote, the Chief to temporarily live out of district while looking for a rental, a home to purchase or building a house in the Oracle Fire District. This decision will be reviewed in 6 months. (wording amended in April 1, 2014 Board meeting, in item #2. TA).** OFDBM Doran made a motion to accept the amended wording in the March minutes. OFDBM Bristow seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

OFDBM Bristow made a motion to approve the March minutes, as modified. OFDBM Doran seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

CALL TO PUBLIC. No response.

## CHIEF'S REPORT - At end of this document

Also attached: March 2014 Financial Reports and Call Load Reports.

STAFF RECOGNITION: Battalion Chief Robert Jennings was officially recognized and promoted to Assistant Chief and presented with an Assistant Chiefs badge.

OFDBM Bristow requested a breakdown of EMS calls. Staff provided the following for March:

Fall Injury - 4 / Sick Person - 5 / Back Pain - 2 / Scorpion sting - 1 / Chest Pain - 4 / Possible Stroke - 1 / Ingestion (poisoning) - 1 / Psych. Problems - 4 / Traumatic Injury - 1 / Difficulty Breathing - 2 / Diabetic Problems - 1 / "Walk In" - 1 / Attempted Suicide - 1 / Dizziness - 1 / Total = 29

**6. Item 6 was moved ahead of Item 5 so that guest speaker, Rob Jones, could make his presentation and return to Glendale. INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION BY ROB JONES OF WAVELENGTH MANAGEMENT PROPOSING TO REPLACE THE EXISTING RADIO COMMUNICATIONS TOWER LOCATED AT 1475 W. AMERICAN AVE. AND TO ERECT A NEW VERIZON CELLULAR TOWER OF APPROXIMATELY THE SAME HEIGHT WITH SHARED SPACE FOR OFD RADIO COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT.**

Mr. Jones introduced himself as a consultant to Verizon, who locates viable facilities for areas of interest to Verizon. The Oracle Fire Station One falls within a 600' x 600' area of interest. There is another area of interest 2 miles east of the fire station, but the terrain does not work. The Oracle Fire Station was chosen for its location, "existing verticality", which helps with zoning through Pinal County (the existing radio tower would be removed and replaced, at no cost to the Fire Department, with a new one), and as a "public service", as the revenue from the monthly rent would go to an emergency services organization.

The design is "fluid now". They plan on placing the new tower on the NW corner of the building and do not know whether it will be a pole or a mono pole (?). They will work with the County on the building with 8' block walls, to be placed behind the Station.

The financial agreement will be for \$16,000.00 annually and will escalate approximately 10% per term. There will be an option on the property, \$1,350 per month the first year, then another the next year, with due diligence on the property. Nothing else could be placed (on the tower?) and would be put into the lease, which would be 5 years the first term, to auto renew for 4 additional 5 year terms, for a total of 25 years.

All due diligence will be taken care of by Verizon.

**1. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING MAKING CHANGES TO THE EMPLOYEE POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL TO ALLOW PART TIME RESERVE FIREFIGHTERS TO LIVE OUTSIDE OF DISTRICT BOUNDARIES DUE TO CURRENT STAFFING SHORTAGES.**

Chairman Navarro read the current policy wording and the proposed policy wording and asked Chief Southard to comment. Chief explained that hiring Reserves from out of district would open shift to more qualified people than what we currently have. The third person staffing sometimes goes unfilled due to a lack of available personnel. Priority will still go to Reserves who live in district for either shifts at the fire station or for going out on wildland assignments.

The 30 mile radius is from the Oracle Fire Station One. This plan also allows OFD to hire new graduates from Pima College, who have all of their certificates but are

not currently employed. We may never need to implement this new policy, but it's better to have it just in case.

OFD Clerk Brown asked how many staff currently live out of district, and Chief responded 5. A discussion ensued on what a "reasonable amount of time" was. Chief responded that an hour "isn't bad", which would be about the same response time as from one of our neighboring fire districts.

OFDBM Bristow made a motion to accept the recommendation from Chief Southard for the modification to the policies. OFDBM Doran seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed.

## **7. PRESENTATION BY CHIEF SOUTHARD REGARDING THE PROPOSED OPERATIONS BUDGET FOR 2014/2015**

Chief Southard presented a chart of taxing information for OFD, starting in 2003/2004, when he first started preparing the budget for the fire department. The tax rate started at \$1.35 and continued to increase, along with the property valuations. In 2009/2010, the property valuations started decreasing, but we kept the same \$2.61 tax rate. The proposed tax rate for 2014/2015 is \$3.14, which would bring the tax levy to \$602,963, higher than that of last fiscal year, but still less than levies dating back to fiscal year 2007/2008.

Chief explained that a common misconception is to compare the Oracle Fire District with the Oracle School district, which has a lower tax rate, however, the School district is much larger than the fire district, encompassing not only Oracle, but also Saddlebrooke and Saddlebrooke Ranch, as well as Eagle Crest. The levy for the fire district is paid by only those living in the main "populated" areas of Oracle.

Oracle Fire District residents paid less last year, but if the tax rate increase passes, they will still be paying less than what they had, dating back to 2007/2008.

An extra column was added to the proposed budget to compare last fiscal year's budget, with this fiscal year's estimated actual income/expenses, with the proposed budget for fiscal year 2014/2015.

Chief requested that the Board raise the tax rate for the Oracle Fire District from \$2.65 to \$3.14. The estimated tax levy amount of \$602,963 would still be under the maximum \$623,281 allowed by Pinal County.

Chief showed slides of his own 2012 property tax bill, to show that the full cash value and the limited cash value were the same. He also showed the property valuations of Oracle Ford, one of the largest commercial businesses in the Oracle Fire District. The full cash and limited cash values for Oracle Ford were

also the same. Therefore, the implementation of Proposition 117, next fiscal year, should not impact our budget.

Slides of Chief's proposed wage/salary scale for 2014/2015 were shown next. The annual Step increases are now based upon annual evaluations, and max out at Step 5. There would be nothing beyond this, unless the Board decides to implement a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) next year, or, firefighters can take classes, increase certifications and promote to the next rank. This new budget with the tax rate increase allows monies for promotions from Engineers to Captains, if the tests are successfully completed. Our current Engineers have been working very hard at obtaining the necessary certifications to be able to promote to Captains. In order to mitigate the expense of promotions, the vacation accrual will remain the same as this year.

A date needs to be determined for our public budget meeting, hopefully sometime in May, so that we can advertise the proposed budget the mandatory 30 days in advance of the meeting. This will be a separate meeting from the regular board meeting. The Board will take action at this public meeting to adopt the budget, or if it decides not to adopt it, this allows enough time to re-work the budget, advertise and meet again before the end of June. OFDBM Bristow commented that the proposed budget can be advertised and then reviewed at the public budget meeting.

The Board determined that there will be one more budget committee meeting before advertising. It will be held at the fire station on Saturday 4/05 at 8am.

The proposed date for the public budget meeting is May 8th (Thursday, no time stated?).

## **8. ADJOURNMENT.**

OFDBM Doran made a motion for the meeting to adjourn. This was seconded by OFDB M McMurry. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned 7:26pm. **Next regular board meeting: Tuesday, May 6, 2014 at 6pm.**

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Tina Acosta - Administrative Chief  
Reviewed by OFD Board Clerk Ellie Brown: \_

**Footnote:** The recorder is malfunctioning. Consequently, there is not a recording of this meeting.

## **Chiefs Report – April 1st, 2014**

Recognition: Battalion Chief Jennings will be promoted to Assistant Fire Chief.

Financial, Budget & Account Balances Report: Documents and a presentation by Chief Acosta.

Staff Report: Staffing levels are low and we are still having a difficult time of filling Reserve Firefighter shifts. Chief Southard is working on modifying the organizational chart for firefighter qualifications to better fit our current staffing situation and to better identify who is eligible for paid shifts.

Chief Southard will be on vacation beginning April 3rd. Chief Jennings will be in charge of Operations and Chief Acosta will be in charge of Administration while Southard is gone.

Vehicle Report: All vehicles are currently in service. The Chevy S-10 had the clutch replaced and Rescue 691 has had the front tires replaced.

Fire Station & Equip Report: The SCBA Fill Station is back in service. The manufacturer has replaced the hydraulic cylinder safety door with a mechanical door. All repair work was done under warranty.

Events: The National Firewise Day event scheduled for March 1st was rained out, so the Oracle Firewise Board provided an all-day Free Brush Dumping event on March 22nd. Seventy loads of brush were received and ten people signed up for Firewise Evaluations.

The Oracle Oaks Festival will be held on April 26th. Several OFD fire engines and other apparatus will be in the parade. Fire Board members are welcome to ride along.

Current Fire Conditions: Fire conditions are currently at HIGH. The agencies we work with continue to inform us, we will likely have an early fire season and we may even have a second fire season after the Monsoon subsides.

Pinal County Air Quality Control has put Oracle's Back Yard Burn Ban into effect beginning on March 1st.

Wildland Fire Report: A statewide wildfire training exercise was held in Oracle on March 19th. Approximately 200 firefighters from about 12 agencies attended the all-day event. TV News stations 4, 9 and 13 filmed the event and the Miner News is planning on writing an article.

Grant Report: We are continuing to progress well on the WFHF 2013 Grant. Several major hazardous areas have already been treated by the Florence DOC crews and more properties have been scheduled for treatment. Priority is being

given to hazardous properties located directly adjacent to Coronado National Forest and along our 18 mile long Community Fuel Break.

CERT/Firewise Report: The Firewise Board has paid for the installation of a second flag pole at Station One. This new flag pole will fly a red flag on days that are forecast to meet the criteria for Red Flag Warnings. The red flag was flown for the first time on March 15th.

CERT's were a valuable resource during the statewide Wildland Training exercise. About 16 CERT's participated and a number of them helped out all day long.

Training Report: The annual Pinal County Special Districts meeting was held in Casa Grande on March 18th. Larry and Tina along with three board members attended the conference.

All EMT's are being required to attend a mandatory training session on Saturday, March 29th per our Base Hospital.

Tina and Larry met with the Training Chief and the Training Captain of Golder Ranch FD and we looked at some free on-line training opportunities for our firefighters.

Brush Dump Report: Weather conditions have not been favorable for burning brush and with the Burn Ban now in effect, we'll have to stockpile brush until during or after the Monsoon.

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