

## MINUTES

**Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority Board of Directors  
Regular Meeting  
Monday, February 27, 2023, 5:00 pm  
Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority, Administration  
8603 E. Eastridge Drive, Prescott Valley**

### In-Person Attendance

Dave Dobbs; Dave Tharp; Gayle Pickett; Lorette Stewart; Matt Zurcher; Rick Anderson; Scott A Freitag; Susanne Dixson

### Remote Attendance

Nicolas Cornelius

## 1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS

Chair Zurcher called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

## 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Zurcher led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## 3. CORRESPONDENCE AND PRESENTATIONS

### A. Letters from the Public and Board Recognition

Chief Freitag repeated a note to one of our Fire Pals that said our firefighters are cooler than ghostbusters and police.

## 4. REPORTS

### A. Board Member Reports

Chair Zurcher stated that he and directors Pickett and Reinhardt attended the Recruit Academy graduation. He thanked all those who worked to put on the academy. Director Pickett said she feels the same.

### B. Division Reports

Chief Freitag reported that he and the rest of Senior Staff attended the Chief Executive Officer Program last week. Chief Tharp added that it was a good training opportunity and he's looking forward to the next session in October.

## 5. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public comments.

## 6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approve Regular Session Minutes - January 23, 2023

B. Approve General Fund Financial Statements

C. Approve Fire Protection Agreements: Kelly and Rodriquez

D. Approve Policy Amendments: 203.1 DUI Second Chance Policy, 190 Public Records Access, 208 Support Volunteer Program, 243 Demotions, 407 Retirement and Deferred Compensation Benefits, 608 Tobacco Policy, 610 Performance Evaluations, 970 Safety - Health Maintenance

E. Approve Affiliation Agreement for Field Internship Training Experience with Granite Mountain Training

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Move: Rick Anderson Second: Dave Dobbs Status: Passed

Yes: Dave Dobbs, Matt Zurcher, Lorette Stewart, Rick Anderson, Gayle Pickett

## 7. VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Executive Session was waived.

A. Legal Advice Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(3) Regarding Selection of Third Party Legal Counsel

B. Legal Advice Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(4) Regarding Staffing Agreement with Priority Ambulance

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Discussion and Possible Approval of CAFMA Staffing Plan

Chief Freitag advised the Board that Union VP Shaun Jones and Chief Feddema are in attendance and available to answer questions.

He reported that staff has put together a 3-year plan for staffing, and reminded the Board that our ISO rating has taken a hit, in part due to not enough equipment and staffing. He added that when you increase the Operations side, it has an effect on non-Ops as well. He stated that we are looking at hiring 9 people in the first year (7-Ops, 2-Tech Services), 11 new personnel in the second year (8-Ops, 1-Facilities, 1-Warehouse, 1-Finance), and 11 in the third year (7-Ops, 1-Training, 1-HR, 1-Community Relations, 1-Admin). He commented that the difficulty is that adding staff equals adding cost; looking at a plan like this, we're looking at increased rates, more than likely, to meet the needs.

He pointed out that there are several things they've looked at on the Operations side, including targeting select stations to run 4-person minimum staffing, and using alternative response units. We are working with Prescott Fire on creating a true emergency medical dispatch system which would send only the resources needed; our current dispatch system is considerably behind. We're also working with Prescott Fire on a move-up module, which would use historical data to determine move-ups. Even with these things, considering the significant growth in the area, we will have to look at putting another engine in place in the next three years, and in fact, we really need one now.

The staffing plan is a structured approach to getting the resources we need. It will take 3-years to resolve today's issues, but there is a plan to get there without putting too many new employees on the tax rate at one time.

For this fiscal year, we're asking for 7 new firefighters and 2 tech services positions; that will cost approximately 1.5 million. Staff is asking the Board if they're comfortable with us putting them in the budget this year for their consideration. He also asked if the Board would support submitting a SAFER grant this year, which would allow for incremental tax increases. He reminded the Board that they don't have to accept the grant, if awarded, and asked for direction from the Board to submit the SAFER grant.

Chair Zurcher inquired as to how many operations personnel the SAFER grant would provide; Chief Freitag indicated 7 or 8 personnel; it would essentially take care of the ask for next year. We hope that over the next 3-years we can better handle the increase in call demand and growth, while reducing the stress on our personnel; he suggested that we need to do something to alleviate burn-out and injuries caused by mandatory overtime.

Chief Freitag added that fixing our paramedic pay also needs to be in our plan, and compared our starting wages with those of another first responder agency in the area, showing our paramedic pay is far behind. He stated that the Union has been working on a plan to change the scale, but we do not have those numbers yet.

Chair Zurcher inquired about the timing of the SAFER grant notifications. Chief Freitag answered that we typically hear those results in the Fall.

Director Dobbs asked how long the SAFER grant was; Chief Tharp answered that it is now a 3-year window, and it is a percentage for those 3-years. Chief Freitag added that we hope for a late-fall notification in order to not overlap this fiscal year by more than 3-months.

Chief Freitag further advised that we would also like to increase the number of students we can support for paramedic school; we typically fund two per year, and he's asked Chief Niemynski to request an increase to support up to six students.

Chair Zurcher asked Chief Niemynski to comment; Chief Niemynski stated that we've had a hard time getting people interested in becoming a paramedic, and he doesn't know that we'll get the interest we're looking for without changes.

Chief Feddema stated that we are trying to add units and value to the response system, as adding personnel alone won't change the ISO rating.

Chief Freitag commented that we will need to have discussions with the Board and go out to the community in the near future because we'll have to go out to bond to build needed infrastructure.

Chair Zurcher asked Union VP Jones to comment. VP Jones stated that from the Labor standpoint, they are not going to vote down adding more staff, as any additions will get us closer to a 4-person minimum

staffing and improve our effective fire-fighting force. Regarding paramedics, he hopes we'll have a significant increase and complete change to the pay scale, and believes those changes would help address the threat we face regarding recruiting and retention for paramedics. He added that we received one paramedic application during our last hiring, and they took a job elsewhere before getting to the oral boards. He believes that our current paramedic stipend has affected our ability to hire new paramedics. He concluded his comments by advising the Board of future items that may be brought forward in the next few fiscal years, including PEHP increases.

Chair Zurcher opened the floor for questions or comments from sitting CYFD Board members Gordon and Reinhardt, who were in the audience. Director Gordon asked if the staffing plan is available for review, specifically, some of the operational ideas. Chief Freitag answered that they will send the 3-year staffing plan, and they are working on having a bullet-pointed approach to the rest of the plan. He is setting up meetings with community stake-holders to let them know the challenges we're facing today, what we think works as a solution, and how that gets funded. Director Reinhardt asked if the numbers presented related to the SAFER grant included PSPRS; Chief Freitag answered in the affirmative. He asked if it was a better idea to ask for more than we needed through the SAFER grant; Chief Freitag answered that the SAFER grant either gives you what you ask for or they give you nothing. He requested final numbers related to the 7 Operations personnel; Chair Zurcher stated that we would be going over those numbers during the budget workshop.

Chair Zurcher stated he would like to see these things in the draft budget, and encouraged Staff to move forward with the SAFER grant submission.

Director Anderson confirmed the paramedic stipend would be included in the budget, and asked if we had an idea of what Paramedic pay would increase to; Chief Freitag indicated we don't have numbers yet, but suggested that \$11,500 would be a good base. VP Jones stated that the Union voted on a pay plan that is subject to COLAs and merit increases. He added that one issue we're facing is that members further in their career are dropping their paramedic certification, so we're hoping to create a pay plan that starts high and can continue to grow will be an incentive to maintain that certification. Chief Freitag stated that we would have two wage scales for each position, i.e. Firefighter EMT and Firefighter CEP.

Chair Zurcher reminded the board of additional items that will need to

be addressed in the budget, specifically PSPRS unfunded liability and Capital Reserve; these are other issues on top of staffing and paramedic pay. Chief Freitag commented that it is better for us to have a Capital Reserve and budget funds for it than to have to budget to pay interest on warrants because we have to borrow from the County to make payroll.

B. Discussion and Possible Selection of Third Party Legal Counsel

Attorney Cornelius stated that he has received information from Burch & Cracchiolo, but has not received firm information from the two other attorneys. He would like to hear from them before a selection decision has been made.

He suggested the item be tabled.

C. Discussion and Possible Approval of Staffing Agreement with Priority Ambulance

Chief Niemynski stated this is a 1-year agreement that we can change at any time or cancel if needed. At this point, it would get those rigs staffed with a minimum of an EMT, and they would be able to respond to the calls where we're waiting long periods for an ambulance. He added that they guys on the floor want this as well, as it would reduce the number of times they have to ride in.

Chair Zurcher asked if this would help our CON process; Chief Freitag answered no, in fact they might try to use it against us; however, this solution is only bridging a gap between Priority getting all of their equipment and stations in place and the 911 needs today. He referenced a motor vehicle crash this morning that called for 4 ambulances; we ended up using 2, and used our rescue to transport the other 2 patients because calls were kicking out in Prescott and our one car crash was going to use all of the units available.

Attorney Cornelius stated this agreement is ready to go, and stated that he believes we need something like this in place.

Motion to approve the Staffing Agreement with Priority Ambulance.

Move: Gayle Pickett Second: Dave Dobbs Status: Passed

Yes: Dave Dobbs, Matt Zurcher, Lorette Stewart, Rick Anderson, Gayle Pickett

D. Discussion Regarding Ambulance Certificate of Necessity (CON)

Chief Freitag reported that we had to resubmit all of our response times, as our application used urbanicity standards, which is statutory, but historically has not been used by DHS. Chief Freitag added that Kathy Steadman will be here for a meeting on Wednesday, and we will meet the new litigator at that time. She expects we'll be in litigation in the next few months.

Chief Freitag commented that he has been questioned in the community regarding the CON application. The bottom line is, we have two private companies here who are owned by venture capital firms. We see what happens when these companies are not making money, and noted that we are very rarely getting getting ALS paramedic rigs. We've billed a significant amount, almost \$500,000 in 4-months, for ride-ins. That's a lot of ride-ins, taking our equipment out of the system. Having a second company up here doesn't solve the short-term problem, nor does it solve the long-term challenges or concerns that we're going to face with all the growth. We're not looking to inundate or take over from the private company, but we do think we need a backstop so we do not have to face what we've been dealing with over the last eight years. Having an overlapping CON will only benefit the system. He stated that as part of the system, we need to have a CON; right now, we're doing all these transports and providing the paramedic for these calls, and the taxpayers are not getting a dime of that in return.

Attorney Cornelius stated that this item ties in with item B regarding the number of transports and what we've billed, and reiterated the number of transports is over 3,000.

Chief Freitag added that other areas are facing the same issues, and mentioned that Kingman and Mohave Valley are also not getting any ALS ambulances. He concluded by stating it would not be responsible as the Fire Chief to recommend we stop pursuing the CON knowing the challenges we've had, the challenges we're still facing, and seeing the how the EMS systems around the state continue to collapse in the areas where they don't have some sort of public and private ambulance transport.

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 5:44 p.m.

Move: Rick Anderson Second: Gayle Pickett Status: Passed

Yes: Dave Dobbs, Matt Zurcher, Lorette Stewart, Rick Anderson, Gayle Pickett

DRAFT