



## **Minutes**

### **Central Yavapai Fire District and Chino Valley Fire District**

Tuesday, July 29, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Central Arizona Fire and Medical Authority, Administration, 8603 E. Eastridge Drive, Prescott Valley

#### **Present:**

Jodie Denike, Cyndy Dicus, Dave Dobbs, Nick Plancich, Lorette Stewart, Toby Ebarb, Gayle Pickett, Andy Reinhardt, Andrea Sansone, Troy Skipper, Lee Barnes, Nicolas Cornelius, Susanne Dixon, Denise Krizo, and Cody Rose

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

##### **A. Chino Valley Fire District**

Chair Pickett called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Director Denike conducted roll call for Chino Valley Fire District.

Clerk Dobbs and Director Stewart attended via Teams.

##### **B. Central Yavapai Fire District**

Clerk Reinhardt conducted roll call for Central Yavapai Fire District.

#### **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Pickett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **3. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

There were no public comments.

#### **4. VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion to go into Executive Session at 1:06 p.m.

*Moved by:* Toby Ebarb

*Seconded by:* Andy Reinhardt

**Yes** Jodie Denike, Cyndy Dicus, Dave Dobbs,  
Lorette Stewart, Nick Plancich, Toby Ebarb,  
Gayle Pickett, Andy Reinhardt, Andrea  
Sansone, and Troy Skipper

**Passed 10-0**

#### **5. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Attorney Cornelius admonished the Board and those in attendance that matters discussed in Executive Session are to be maintained as confidential and should not be discussed outside of Executive Session. Executive Session is an opportunity for the Board to consult with legal counsel regarding legal matters related to the function of the Agency and to request legal advice. Executive Session is not an opportunity to poll the Board or to hold a vote. He added that board members and staff should refrain from the use of their cell phones during executive session.

Chief Barnes, Interim Human Resources Manager Sims, and Mr. Jon Lewis from Bob Murray & Associates were in attendance.

- A. Legal Advice Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(1) Regarding Interview of Candidates for Fire Chief Position

#### **6. NEW BUSINESS**

Public session reconvened at 5:12 p.m.

- A. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Selection of the New Fire Chief  
Chair Pickett invited Union Vice President Butler to speak.  
Union Vice President Butler expressed that he is a captain and the Chapter Vice President, he is the same person with different roles representing the collective voice of the organization's members. He watched the previous

administration's downfall and the department's struggle; he decided he wanted to make a positive impact. While he supports a strong union, he stressed that it must be built on the foundation of a strong organization. Vice President Butler is advocating for collaboration between leadership, union members, and all stakeholders, from employees to taxpayers, to ensure the best service to the public and a unified organization.

Our members wanted to get to know some of the candidates, so the Local gave them the opportunity to speak. They were asked the same questions.

Feedback he received:

1. Genuine
2. Passionate, enthusiastic, easy to talk to
3. Someone new or who represents change
4. Servant leader
5. Progressive
6. Team-oriented
7. Budget savvy
8. Knowledge of capital

One that wasn't listed but is obvious, someone who is willing to work as a team. Our job is to get back to the lead and say, whoever is selected, we are here to make this place work and deliver good service. We have an opportunity to look beyond the next few years and pick a leader willing to work with others, make changes and work on the same path for a common goal.

Director Sansone asked if he had any concerns about any of the candidates being able to work with labor. Butler answered in the negative.

Director Ebarb asked if there has been a failure bringing up good leadership. Vice President Butler answered that there have been problems in growth and doing things the same way. In order to have good recruitment and retention we have to go find the smartest person in the room, listen to them, absorb it, and use those things to push ourselves forward.

Vice President Butler provided the ranking from the floor.

1. Smith
2. Feddema

### 3. Brewster

Director Denike asked Vice President Butler if the Union would be able to support a decision, regardless of which candidate is selected. Vice President Butler answered in the affirmative. Director Denike added that the board is making this decision to make sure there is a good labor-management relationship, both ways. Vice President Butler replied that whoever is selected will be his new team member.

Director Reinhardt stated he felt it would be good for the agency if we promoted from within.

Director Sansone concurred.

Director Reinhardt added that he believes having a good labor-management relationship is important and noted that he did not see the board working with the fire chief when things were happening last year. Hopefully going forward the Union will feel they can communicate any issue to the board.

Director Dobbs stated he doesn't have any problems with Candidate Feddema, but he doesn't know if we would move forward with him. He knows we would move forward with Candidate Smith.

Chino Valley Fire District Director Dobbs made a motion to make a conditional offer of employment to Eddie Smith. Director Plancich seconded.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Director Dobbs    | Yes |
| Director Stewart  | Yes |
| Director Plancich | Yes |
| Director Denike   | No  |
| Director Dicus    | No  |

Motion passed.

Central Yavapai Fire District vote.

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Director Skipper | No |
| Director Ebarb   | No |

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Director Sansone   | No  |
| Director Reinhardt | No  |
| Director Pickett   | Yes |

Motion failed.

Central Yavapai Fire District Director Reinhardt made a motion to make a conditional offer of employment to John Feddema. Director Ebarb seconded.

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Director Skipper   | Yes |
| Director Ebarb     | Yes |
| Director Sansone   | Yes |
| Director Reinhardt | Yes |
| Director Pickett   | No  |

Motion passed.

Chino Valley Fire District vote.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Director Dobbs    | No  |
| Director Plancich | No  |
| Director Stewart  | No  |
| Director Denike   | Yes |
| Director Dicus    | Yes |

Motion failed.

The boards had a discussion see if they could come to a consensus.

Director Sansone commented that she voted for Candidate Feddema because he has been in the position as an interim and demonstrated he can do the job despite the discipline and messiness that he inherited. He has institutional knowledge; the other resumes are impressive; however, they knew about the former chief but nothing operational about our department. Candidate Feddema has relationships within

the community; when someone is tagged to be an interim chief, it's not someone with a bad record.

Director Ebarb stated he was not on the board when Candidate Feddema was named interim fire chief, but he was here when we had to vote on extending the appointment and believes it was unanimous. He asked the dissenting votes on the Chino Valley Fire District Board to say why Candidate Feddema hasn't met their expectations. Director Dobbs answered that Candidate Feddema has been in the interim position for nine (9) months, and didn't sell it to the line; the line still has hesitation and that concerns him. Director Ebarb asked if he felt that was solely Candidate Feddema's fault, or if there is a larger group of people that need to carry some of that. Director Dobbs said the boards have to support the line.

Director Denike stated that she recognizes it's enticing to look outside; Labor and Candidate Feddema are willing to work together. The boards can't look at the last ten-months as what is going to happen in the future; relationships are a grueling process. Candidate Feddema is willing to implement change and make things better, and she believes that's something that should be considered.

Director Reinhardt noted that even Candidate Smith commented that Candidate Feddema had done a good job so far. He wondered if we were going to completely disregard our community members.

Director Ebarb reiterated that one of his top priorities is ensuring collaboration between labor and management. He hopes that labor will provide the board with regular feedback on how things are progressing.

Director Pickett stated that fire chiefs are not in the position for longevity, and Candidate Feddema stated he wants to be here for a long time. It's nothing against him, she didn't just go from the community panel, she reached out to multiple people to find out about these candidates. She thinks Candidate Feddema is an amazing leader, but believes it is too soon in his career to be fire chief. Ten years is a long time to be a fire chief.

Director Ebarb replied that it is our role to hire and fire the fire chief, we set the time on the contract, could be three years or more. We, as board members also give reviews, but only a few

participated in that. It is important for us as board members to share that communication.

Director Plancich stated that in the research he's done, who he's talked to, he believes Candidate Smith is a stronger candidate for the Labor force.

Director Denike asked Director Plancich his why for selecting Candidate Smith; his response is from speaking to others and what was said here. He concludes that Candidate Smith would be a stronger leader.

Director Skipper stated he's grateful for all three candidates. As a business owner, he hires from within if possible. The other candidates didn't out-do Candidate Feddema therefore we should hire from within. That's loyalty to the department.

Director Sansone stated that Candidate Feddema has been here for 23 years, past behavior predicts future performance. He wouldn't be where he is if he had behaved badly. He should be given the benefit of the doubt and not be guilty by association. She has concerns that both other candidates were encouraged by the union so she had a feeling that both would fall heavier in that direction, the tail wagging the dog. There should be balance. She suggested a three-year contract and then go from there.

Director Reinhardt commented that it seems an internal candidate is being punished because of the previous fire chief. The best person for the job should be hired.

Director Denike encouraged everyone to not separate the candidates based on if they are internal or external.

Director Stewart said Candidate Feddema has done a great job; it may be that he hasn't had time to make some of the changes she had hoped for. A big problem is that she hasn't met the other two candidates in person, only what was said over the Teams interview today. It is hard to decide based on what is heard in an interview, with no talking one-on-one or seeing gestures. She is torn between two candidates.

Director Denike asked Director Stewart if given the time, she felt Candidate Feddema could make the changes she was looking to see.

Director Stewart answered in the affirmative but there are two great candidates.

Chino Valley Fire District Director Denike made a motion to make a conditional offer of employment to John Feddema. Director Dicus seconded.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Director Plancich | No  |
| Director Stewart  | No  |
| Director Dobbs    | No  |
| Director Denike   | Yes |
| Director Dicus    | Yes |

Motion failed.

Attorney Cornelius addressed the boards, asking if there was anything that would assist them further, such as additional information.

Director Stewart answered that she would like to meet them in-person.

Director Ebarb responded by advising Director Stewart that none of them any interaction with the candidates, today was the first most of them had met as well; only three of the board members were on the interview panels yesterday. Most members had the same information she had.

Director Sansone stated Director Stewart mentioned she hadn't seen the changes she would have liked to see, but maybe Candidate Feddema is doing things that you are not aware of; what changes would she like to see?

Director Stewart declined to name the changes, saying she felt uncomfortable and targeted. She clarified that she does like Candidate Feddema but was uncomfortable making a decision without having seen the other candidates in person, emphasizing the importance of reading non-verbal cues.

Director Denike noted that she did not abstain from voting.

Director Stewart explained why she had voted the way she did.



Chief Rose provided an update on their current situation, noting that two candidates had been voted on contrary to board recommendations. One more person remains eligible for a vote, or they can restart the process entirely. Chief Rose recommended deciding based on the current information, as all three candidates are present and can be asked additional questions if needed. However, to avoid further delays and to allow the organization to move forward, they urged the group to have discussions and choose one of the three candidates. This sentiment is supported by both senior staff and the broader organization.

Director Reinhardt repeated that Directors Dobbs and Stewart both commented that Feddema had nine (9) months to get some things done, the board should be responsible for that, that should have been addressed if there were issues. He continued that since Director Plancich only heard 10% of the first two (2) interviews that maybe he should have abstained.

Director Plancich specified that he heard all of Candidate Smith's interview and about 10% of the other two, along with his research prior to the meeting; that is what he voted on.

Chair Dicus asked Attorney Cornelius for clarification on if the votes could be combined or if it had to be each agency separately. Attorney Cornelius answered that it had to be each agency. He then asked Director Plancich if he would state what research he did besides what was presented by Bob Murray and Associates. Director Plancich replied that he talked with labor and employees from different ranks.

Chair Pickett asked Attorney Cornelius if candidates were asked more questions, would it have to be in Executive Session; Attorney Cornelius responded yes.

Director Sansone asked Director Stewart if she felt comfortable sharing her concerns regarding the lack of changes made to Candidate Feddema. Director Stewart responded yes.

Candidate Feddema stated that he appreciates the feedback but doesn't know if he could provide answers those concerns. He can serve for anybody; he would hate to try to flip a vote to overcome a lack of majority. This process has been a lot of

work and effort, he would not withdraw to make it easy but believes going into executive session will satisfy that concern.

Director Ebarb voiced that he had an additional question to all three candidates, it is the same question. He is just looking for clarity, not to flip a vote.

Director Reinhardt made a motion to recess at 6:18 p.m.

Seconded by Director Sansone.

Director Ebarb made a motion to go back to Executive session at 6:24 p.m.

Seconded by Director Sansone.

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Public Session reconvened at 7:24 p.m.

Central Yavapai Fire District Director Reinhardt made a motion to make a conditional offer of employment to John Feddema.

Director Sansone seconded.

Director Skipper      Yes

Director Ebarb        Yes

Director Sansone      Yes

Director Reinhardt    Yes

Director Pickett       No

Motion passed.

Chino Valley Fire District Director Denike made a motion to make a conditional offer of employment to John Feddema. Director Dicus seconded.

Director Dobbs        No

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Director Plancich | No  |
| Director Stewart  | Yes |
| Director Denike   | Yes |
| Director Dicus    | Yes |

Motion passed.

## 7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

*Moved by:* Dave Dobbs

*Seconded by:* Cyndy Dicus

**Yes** Jodie Denike, Cyndy Dicus, Dave Dobbs, Nick Plancich, Lorette Stewart, Toby Ebarb, Gayle Pickett, Andy Reinhardt, Andrea Sansone, and Troy Skipper

**Passed 10-0**

Approved on: 09/22/2025 11:05PM UTC

*Andy Reinhardt*

Clerk CEY

*Dave Dobbs*

Clerk CHV

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