



Yucca Fire District

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MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE YUCCA FIRE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

The Governing Board of the Yucca Fire District met in regular session on **Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 8:00 a.m.** The meeting was held at the Yucca Fire Station #1 located at 12349 Frontage Road, Yucca, AZ 96438. The public will have physical access to the meeting place at 7:45 a.m. The Board may vote to go into executive session on any agenda item, pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A) (3) for legal advice with the District's attorney on matters as set forth in the agenda item. Board members or other participants may attend by telephonic conference. The following topics and any variables thereto, will be subject to Board consideration, discussion, approval, or other action. All items are set for possible action.

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER.

- Chair Pro-tem Carr called the meeting to order at approximately 8:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS.

- Clerk Kayla Carr and Director Jim Fox were present. Chairman Richard Knowles was absent.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ Consent Agenda

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2023

B. Executive Meeting Minutes of November 20, 2023

- Director Fox motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Chair Pro-tem Carr 2nd. All in favor, motion carried.

5. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

A. November and December 2023 Operational Report. (Chief Cunningham)

- Chief Cunningham reported the call summary for November and December was 11 calls. During the days the district was not staffed we had 4 motor vehicle accident calls. Golden Valley Fire responded to 1 call and Desert Hills Fire responded to 3 calls. During our staffed days we had 7 calls; 2 EMS call, 1 fire call, 1 motor vehicle accident, 3 service calls.

B. Fire Chief's Report. *The governing body may not propose, discuss, deliberate or take legal action on this matter unless the specific matter is described in detail. Therefore, action taken as a result of the Chief's report will be limited to directing staff to study the matter or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date. (A.R.S. 38-431.02. K)*

- Volunteer Report
 - Volunteers have been training on the equipment at station two.
 - Driver training is scheduled for next month.
- District Properties
 - Replaced the outside lights with LED.
 - Added a filter to the ice machine, back in service.
- Equipment
 - Attack unit 1326 has brake issues, mechanic has ordered the parts.
 - Water Tender 1328 replaced two batteries.

- 6. BUSINESS.** *Public wishing to speak on agenda items must complete a speaker card and present to the Board Clerk prior to the start of the meeting.*
- A. Discussion and possible action regarding: Election of board officers. (Administration)
- Chair Pro-tem Carr recommended taking no action until our next meeting due to a member being absent.
 - No Action
- B. Discussion and possible action regarding: Approval of the November and December 2023 financial reports. (Administration)
- Comptroller Kindelberger stated the November and December income was \$101,558.91, expenses \$24,500.54. Bank balances ending October 31, 2023, warrant account \$329,483.49; payroll account \$13,179.49; retirement and pension account \$3,030.85. Total cash on hand was \$345,593.83.
 - Director Fox motioned the Board approve the financial reports as presented. Chair Pro-tem Carr 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- C. Discussion and possible action regarding: Revise the pay scale to be effective January 30, 2024. (Cunningham)
- Chief Cunningham stated that this increase is an effort to keep up with the surrounding districts. Kingman Fire and Northern Arizona Fire are paying between \$17 and \$20 per hour for EMT and Paramedic part time personnel. Currently we are paying \$14.50 for EMT and \$16.50 for Paramedics. It is hard to get employees to come out to Yucca for a lower rate than then can make closer to home. We are adding back for a one certification position, either just FF or just EMT. I don't feel it is fair to pay the same as someone with both certifications. The new rates would be Firefighter or EMT only at \$16.00, Firefighter/EMT at \$17.50, Firefighter/Paramedic at \$21.00. Comptroller Kindelberger added that we have enough in the budget to make this change mid-year.
 - Director Fox motioned the governing board to revise the pay scale effective January 30, 2024. Chair Pro-tem Carr 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- D. Discussion only: Update on consolidation with Golden Valley Fire. (Cunningham)
- Chief Cunningham stated that he has just started to hear some feedback regarding the consolidation. I'm glad that the public is here today. We started this process almost a year ago in April 2023. We were calling it a merger but upon research we don't fit into the definition of a merger, so we are proceeding with a consolidation. I want to clarify the difference. The three things that departments can do when they come together are a Joint Powers of Authority (JPA), merger or consolidation. A JPA is for departments that have three main assets: vehicles, buildings, and personnel. If a department is missing any of these three, it is likely that no other department will want to enter a JPA with them. GVFD is currently involved in a JPA study with 7 other districts. In a merger the departments need to be alike, like personnel, like response model, like tax revenue. In a consolidation a larger department takes over a smaller fire department. At the legislature level, this is what they want. Larger fire departments join with smaller fire departments. When you look at Mohave County there are a lot of fire districts, and they are not that far apart. There are a lot of steps involved in consolidation. We are at the very beginning stages. YFD has requested a consolidation with GVFD, that request has been approved. Now the staff is putting the data together for the public notice and public hearing. These hearings will be held separately, one for Yucca and one for Golden Valley. The boards can come together and have a hearing jointly but typically they are separate. This is the time for the public to come and voice their opinion. As we start this process of consolidation there are some things that the people from Yucca need to think about. GVFD has now been managing YFD going on 4 years. I think we have been extremely transparent in everything that we have done. We bring the financials to every board meeting; you can see the cash account increasing year after year. One thing I told the taxpayers when we started here was that this district is hemorrhaging money. This district should never have been run the way it was run. When we came out here in 2020 there was \$60k left in the bank. Back in 2013 when the district went to full time staffing there was over \$2 million in the bank. In seven years, they spent \$2 million dollars. I have been told that some days there would be 6 or 7 personnel at the station, all of them getting paid, many of them were not qualified to be here. And this is not just

one fire chief, it started from the beginning. I'm hearing that of late there is a lot of chatter on social media. Don't believe everything you see on social media. If you have questions call my office, my staff will answer questions. If you want to meet with me personally, I will be happy to come out to Yucca and meet with anybody. People ask, what is in it for GVFD? Usually for the larger department there is not any benefit. It is about trying to supply a better service for the smaller community. Golden Valley Fire didn't need to come out here, we did it because we saw a need. We saw that YFD was getting ripped off. If you're going to run a full-time fire department you need all the players. You need more than a fire chief. The fire chief can't be the bookkeeper and should never be the check signer. The board wasn't doing their job, the chief wasn't doing their job, and nobody said anything. So, 2 million dollars later GVFD comes in to try to save this district. GVFD wouldn't come out here if we thought this was going to be a failure, and we're not going to make it a failure. We are going to do everything in our power to make it better. We will be having hearings as we move forward, so questions can be asked, concerns can be raised. One of the reasons I want this consolidation is so that YFD is not left out if a JPA happens. If GVFD enters a JPA before consolidation with Yucca Fire it won't happen after. If GVFD was to enter a JPA now or years from now we would become part of a larger picture, we are no longer be in charge of our assets. The JPA is in control of the assets. Look at Oatman Fire, no one wants to take on Oatman Fire. There is very little money. Mohave Valley Fire District has the CON and runs their medical calls, but they are not interested in bringing them into their fire district because they don't generate enough money. They are going to be left out. We don't want that to happen to Yucca. I ask the people to think about is that things will not change right away after the consolidation, but it is not going to get worse. It will continue to get better. If YFD chooses not to consolidate there is a good chance, you're going back to 2005. Everything that happened during those 7 years could happen again. You're going to have to find a fire chief. If GVFD pulled out now, you would be left with three board members and two volunteers. We are here to make it better not worse.

Chair Pro-tem Carr gave the floor to Bruce Tennant. Bruce asked the chief if Yucca was to be on their own would mutual aid continue. Chief Cunningham explained how mutual aid works. If a fire district needs help on a scene or they are on a call and a structure fire broke out. They would call for mutual aid. If another district has the equipment and personnel available, they will send it. Mutual aid is not when districts are unstaffed. When a district responds to an unstaffed district that is running their calls for them and they can be billed for that service. That bill would go to Yucca Fire not the homeowner. These mutual aid agreements are only good if other districts continue to sign them. If you're not staffed there is a good chance that no one is coming. Currently GVFD and DHFD are responding and not billing YFD. AMR/River Medical has the CON for the Yucca area and they respond to all medical calls and sometimes to motor vehicle accidents. Another issue is providing services outside of the fire district, we can't use our limited resources for properties not paying taxes to the fire district. A lot of people don't even know they live outside of the fire district. I'm letting those people know that there is a good chance that we will not respond to your emergency. Bruce Tennant asked if we know how many calls YFD ran last year in the district and would YFD have enough revenue to pay other agencies to run all our calls. Chief Cunningham stated that I can't answer that without some research, but our call count is about 250 calls less the AMR/River Medical calls.

Chair Pro-tem Carr gave the floor to AMR Operations Manager Brad Shelton. Brad Shelton wanted to commend the board and chief for taking on this consolidation. Just a little background on myself, I am a resident of Yucca, I moved here from Desert Hills and was a board member for Desert Hills Fire for over 8 years. I started my career at DHFD back in 1992. I understand fire districts and fire boards. I wanted to add that mutual aid is supposed to be mutual. With one department being smaller it is sometimes a one-way service. The larger department never gets that return of mutual aid. Brad asked the chief what he thinks YFD will look like in three years after the consolidation. Chief Cunningham stated that the two new truck stops will bring in about \$25k to \$28k each, and it will take up to two years to get on the tax rolls. There is hearsay that a trailer park and hotel is coming into the district. I've heard that for years and I don't count on it until it happens. GVFDs full staffing level is seven, three at station 11 and two at the outer stations. The plan is to bring one of

our full-time firefighters out to Yucca and pair them with a part time firefighter. We can't take two firefighters from Golden Valley because we are not going to close a station in Golden Valley. Yucca right now is staffed with part time employees. That makes it hard to have a standard because everybody comes from different agencies. We want to try to add days to the schedule. As you know we started with 8-10 days a month, we are up to 15 days. Every year that we can add to it we will. The goal is to get staffing out here as much as possible. We want to make it more standard to everywhere else. It is hard to do that on a \$250k budget. The whole goal is to provide a better service to the people in the Yucca Fire District. Another issue is YFD can't get grants; the reason is because the past administration defaulted on two grants. We included YFD in a regional grant, and we were concerned so I called, and they said if YFD isn't the department submitting the grant it should be okay. We can't get credit cards because past administrations ruined our credit. Rebel Oil wouldn't do business with YFD, the only way we could get a fuel tank here was Rebel Oil bill GVFD. We didn't know it was as bad as it is when we first came out here, we have worked extremely hard to get to the point we are today. The more people that move into this community the more 911 will be called. GVFD has had volunteers since its inception back in the 1970's. We currently have 5 volunteers and only 1 shows up regularly. When Jim Fox approached me about starting a volunteer program, I warned him that he would be lucky to get half of the applicants to show up. Out of the 20 applications that we received we now have two active volunteers. What we need are volunteers that can drive a water tender to a fire. That is a really big help. We are not asked for volunteer firefighters or EMTs. If GVFD is not part of YFD all you're going to have left is two volunteers that are not certified. The GVFD Board is all in favor of this consolidation, in fact some board members wanted to consolidate back when we were asked to manage YFD but I'm glad we waited. We will see how the hearings go and the feedback we receive from the taxpayers. The \$51k YFD pays GVFD really doesn't cover all we do for YFD. I didn't get paid any more, my staff didn't get raises when we took on YFD. So, again please don't listen to postings on Facebook, please reach out to me, call my office.

Director Fox asked if the volunteers would continue if we consolidated. Chief Cunningham stated that absolutely the volunteers will continue. We will not be taking anything away from this district, not your equipment, buildings, everything will be left in place, we just want to make it better.

○ No Action

7. CALL TO THE PUBLIC. *Consideration and discussion of comments and complaints from the public. Those wishing to address the Yucca Fire District Board need not request permission in advance. The Fire District Board is not permitted to discuss or take action on any item raised in the call to the public, unless the item is specifically noticed for discussion or legal action. However, individual Board members may be permitted to respond to criticism directed to them. Otherwise, the Board may direct that staff review the matter or that the matter be placed on a future agenda. The Fire District Board cannot discuss or take legal action on any issue raised during the Call to the Public that is not on the Agenda due to restrictions of the Open Meeting Law.*

- Bob Mayo asked if there is a map of the fire district boundaries. Chief Cunningham answered that there is a map on the back wall and everything in green is in the district boundaries. Also, look at your property tax bill, if you see Yucca Fire District that means you are in the district. Don't be confused by the Fire District Assistant Tax, everybody in Arizona pays that.

8. ADJOURNMENT.

- Director Fox motioned to adjourn the meeting. Chair Pro-tem Carr 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Chair Pro-tem Carr adjourned the meeting at 9:51 a.m.

MINUTES prepared by: Mindy Kindelberger

Date: 01/16/2024

By: _____
Board Clerk, Kayla Carr

Approved: