



Yucca Fire District

12349 Frontage Rd., PO Box 327

Yucca, Arizona 86438

(928) 766-2300

www.yuccafire.com

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE YUCCA FIRE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

The Governing Board of the Yucca Fire District met in regular session on **Monday, May 20, 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 7:30 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.

- Chairman Knowles called the meeting to order at approximately 8:01 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS.

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

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ Consent Agenda

A. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 18, 2024

B. Special Meeting Minutes of May 6, 2024

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

5. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

A. March and April 2024 Operational Report. (Chief Cunningham)

- Chief Cunningham reported the call summary for March and April was 19 calls. During the days the district was not staffed we had 14 calls; 2 EMS calls, 6 fire calls, 5 motor vehicle accident calls and 1 service call. Golden Valley Fire responded to all 14 calls and Desert Hills Fire assisted with 6 calls. During our staffed days we had 5 calls; 2 EMS calls, 2 service calls and 1 canceled enroute.

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
 - No updates to report
- District Properties
 - All in working order.
- Equipment
 - We made a request to Supervisor Ron Gould for ARPA funds to purchase a new SCBA compressor. The compressor we have is very old, if anything breaks on it, we cannot get parts. We cannot get air samples on it anymore. Supervisor Gould was kind enough to accept the request and it was approved by the Board of Supervisors meeting on May 6th. I would like to

thank Supervisor Gould for accepting our request. We are in the paperwork process of getting it ordered. The value is approximately \$72,000.

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED CONSOLIDATION OF THE YUCCA FIRE DISTRICT AND THE GOLDEN VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT.

A. Presentation regarding the proposed consolidation.

- Chairman Knowles stated that this fire district was fraught with problems for many years, and when things came to a head, I decided to become a board member. Shortly thereafter we brought in Golden Valley Fire District under a management agreement, and they provide us personnel and guidance, training, they basically run this fire district for the last 3 ½ years. They have kept us within our budget. We don't have a lot of money, but we are better than we ever were before. Things are done legit, nothing is being stolen, nothing is being pilfered. For the first time in my tenure with Yucca Fire this fire district is completely what it is supposed to be as far as being operated, and that is thanks to Golden Valley Fire District. The fact that they have been here this long, they have proven themselves to be able to do what this community needs. This consolidation has been talked about since we brought them in, I wanted to do this back then, but we couldn't because Yucca Fire was such a mess. Thanks to Golden Valley Fire we are no longer a mess. This consolidation will better the community. You heard how many of the calls are run by Golden Valley Fire currently. Nothing is going to change for the worse, I fully believe that it will all be for the betterment of the public good and the community itself.

B. Consideration of comments of the Mohave County Board of Supervisors in reference to the proposed consolidation.

- Chief Cunningham stated that by law we must notify the Board of Supervisors, they are not required to give a response and they did not. At the Board of Supervisors meeting the county attorney explained to the Board of Supervisors the feasibility study, all the paperwork we provided to the public and they had no feedback. Chairman Knowles added that our Supervisor Ron Gould was in support of this consolidation.

C. Public Hearing/Comments: The Governing Board will hear those persons who appear for or against the proposed consolidation and to determine if the consolidation will promote the public safety, health, comfort, convenience, necessity, or welfare of Yucca Fire District.

- Chairman Knowles opened the floor for public comment. Each citizen will have a limit of 3 minutes to speak, please state your name for the minutes.
- ❖ **Richard Dombkowski:** I moved here 9 years ago. With the consolidation will firefighters come from Golden Valley to Yucca to fight a fire? There was a railroad fire and by the time Havasu responded it spread into a second boxcar. There was a fire out in the desert where it took Havasu a good hour to respond and by that time, they just put out what was smoldering. When I first moved here Yucca had a full-time fire department. The main cost of my taxes is the Fire District, I would like to see people here full-time. I was under the understanding that when the gas station opened, we would have enough money to be open all the time. So, if your house catches on fire, the fire department will get there in a responsible amount of time, not in an hour.

Chief Cunningham: Our goal is to continue to staff in Yucca. We are not going to take staffing away from Yucca, we are going to staff as much as we can. I can't promise that there will be staffing here 365 days a year, because we are still going to be relying on our part-time firefighters. Our plan is to hopefully staff two shifts out of three. So, two full time firefighters paired with a part time firefighter. If no one is staffed out here Golden Valley Fire and Desert Hills Fire will continue to respond. The revenue that this fire district brings in, it is impossible to staff full time. We want the taxpayers to know that their money is being spent where it should be spent. We have been very transparent in the 3 ½ years that we have been here. We have done the best we can to keep the doors open. The alternative is we don't do the consolidation and this fire district could fail. If the Golden Valley Fire Board or the Yucca Fire Board decides to cancel the IGA for management, it could go back to the way it was before and maybe have a rouge Fire Chief or you could just shut the fire district down altogether. This district should never have been run 365 days a year. In 2013 there was 3.2 million dollars in the bank, when Golden Valley Fire entered into the IGA agreement in 2019, Yucca had 63k

left. In seven years, they spent 3.2 million dollars. I feel bad for the taxpayers, what happened out here should have never happened. That will never happen again under Golden Valley Fire.

Chairman Knowles: The railroad is not in our district and does not pay taxes to Yucca Fire District.

- ❖ **John Lindstedt:** Is my taxes going to go up? Forty-Five percent of my taxes go to the fire district. Are my taxes going to go to this fire department or is it going to go to Golden Valley Fire? So, will Golden Valley Fire be using my money?

Chief Cunningham: The tax levy currently is 3.50. This consolidation would have nothing to do with a tax levy increase. If the board decides to increase the tax levy that is a separate issue. When the state approves an increase in tax levy for the fire district, they are basically saying that we know it will take this much money to operate your fire district. You can look at it that you are paying more for nothing or if we don't increase the tax levy is that this is money that was left on the table that we could have brought better services to the taxpayers. After the consolidation the taxes will be combined.

Chairman Knowles: Yucca Fire annual revenue is about 250k, Golden Valley Fire is about 4 million. Our money is not a profit for them, they are here to help us.

- ❖ **Karon Lampin:** Is the projection of income on the feasibility study include the 100k lots that are going to be coming in on the new project. And, we have tentative new homes out by station two. There is another small community that is projected to be out here very soon. In 2010 we brought in over 300k. Then in 2011 the 2008 market crash hit us, and we brought in 150k. I also wanted to state that Yucca Fire responded to my son-in-law for a medical call, he did not survive, but Yucca Fire was there within 10 minutes, which makes a difference. AMR arrived 10 minutes later.

Chairman Knowles: We don't know what those properties will bring in until the Assessor's office does an assessment. We don't have any control over the real estate market, anything that comes in new will increase the tax base. When the tax base increases the revenues increase. I right know those properties down near Lake Havasu that are similar to the ones being built by the dirt bike track are selling for 300k each. But we don't know how long it will be until it's done and what those values will be when they sell. The market could turn down and be 50k, or it could go up.

Chief Cunningham: Regardless of if Golden Valley Fire is involved or not the fire district only makes so much money. We are trying to be financially responsible, and we have done that in the last three years. Every year we have increased the days covered per month. We rely on part time firefighters, and they are all certified EMTs, Paramedics, and Firefighters. They can take care of any problems that arise. But because we are using part time firefighters we are at their beck and call. As the revenue increases, we will staff more with full-time firefighters.

Chairman Knowles: Three years ago, I did an estimate of what it will take to put staffing here 24/7, it was like 600k a year. We take in 250k a year. Where are we going to find the money to staff full time?

Clerk Carr: Asked Chief Cunningham to explain what will happen to Yucca Fire if Golden Valley Fire enters an JPA.

Chief Cunningham: Recently there were eight fire districts entered into a feasibility study to join together with a Joint Powers of Authority (JPA). We included Yucca Fire in that plan based on a consolidation with Golden Valley Fire. Yucca Fire would have been left out like Oatman Fire. No one wanted to pick up Oatman Fire. This consolidation is a huge benefit to Yucca Fire. If another JPA comes up in the future, and it will, Yucca Fire will not be left out. Each Fire District has to have assets to enter into a JPA, Yucca Fire doesn't have employees and not enough assets, Yucca would not have a seat at the table. This JPA with the 8-fire district didn't work out because we are all different sizes and have different debt amounts. It could work regionally; Golden Valley Fire and Northern Arizona Fire have partnered together in an IGA for shared services. I'm currently the Fire Chief for NAFD. We are using the JPA model with these two districts. Maybe someday they will consolidate.

Attorney Bill Whittington: Around the state all small districts are trying to consolidate or merge in order to survive. I do these all the time around the state. Twenty years ago, no one consolidated or merged. Now, everyone is doing it to get the best bang for their buck. Combine their resources, staff, health benefits, etc. One of the reasons is to set themselves up so their debt ratio is appropriate so

they can get together with other districts. When you're a smaller district you're just a debt, you're just a problem.

- ❖ **Paul Ferguson:** Most of what has been stated is pretty accurate, but you did not mention that 2/3 of our tax money got taken away when everything dropped. When I was on the Board, we had one truck that ran half the time. So, the money that you are saying was spent was to get new vehicles. It wasn't all theft. The fire district took a loan out on me personally, the chief that went to jail for 47k, it took me almost two months to square away off my account. So don't make it look like everyone was a crook. I personally got screwed out of this department. I had to resign and move back east. When I came back half the trucks were gone. Most of the staff was gone, and the volunteers were getting bigger. That is all in the past, there were a lot of screw ups. My question is why we don't go 100% volunteer. There are young men in this town, two that I know of that were firefighters. Why aren't we trying to get more volunteers. We only have 2 volunteers.

Chief Cunningham: We did get 21 volunteer applications, after contacting all the applicants we ended up with 3 volunteers, and since 2 have resigned. It is not as easy to get volunteers as you may think. The west coast has never been big on volunteer help like the east coast. Golden Valley Fire has 5 volunteers on our roster and only one shows up. We are not just looking for volunteer firefighters, we need volunteers to drive trucks, or just give water to firefighters. If the citizens want to volunteer, we are open to that. There was grant money that was awarded for vehicles and turnouts. One vehicle was repossessed because the district did not make their payment. The turnouts are stolen, they were gone before I got here.

Chairman Knowles: Volunteers are not free, uniform cost is about \$130, a set of turnouts are 6k.

Director Jim Fox: I want to add that Bruce Tennent, Paul Ferguson and I are enthusiastic about getting volunteers, if we can get citizens together, we have the full backing from the Chiefs. Both Chiefs did what they could to facilitate training. And, we now have trucks at station two.

- ❖ **Dorothy Castleberry:** I have heard that Chloride did not want to join this, and they are without a fire department now, is this true? Also, my friend in Chloride couldn't get insurance because they didn't have any fire protection.

Chief Cunningham: Chloride is in the Northern Arizona Fire District (NAFD), Golden Valley Fire response to Chloride under an IGA. That area was part of a land grab by a prior Fire Chief in 2008. I would have never done anything like that because I feel we could not provide service. NAFD has to drive through Kingman get on Hwy 93 to get to Chloride. NAFD is the butler area north of Kingman. Golden Valley Fire is about 20 minutes faster response time to Chloride than NAFD. They pay us a service fee to do that. I have heard that some residents in Chloride don't want to be a part of NAFD and would like to be part of GVFD. Chloride is a small community with less revenue than Yucca. Chloride is at about 55k, Yucca is about 250k. They can't afford to staff fulltime. As the Chief of NAFD, the best thing I can do for Chloride is trying to put part time firefighters out there. As for your friend, she should let her insurance company know she is in a fire district and does have fire protection.

- ❖ **Deborah Tripp:** With the consolidation will we still have board members and how many positions are available and when?

Chairman Knowles: Under this consolidation the Yucca Fire Board will cease to exist. However, citizens in the Yucca area within the boundaries of the fire district can run in November for the Golden Valley Fire Board. Yucca can still have representation on the board.

Comptroller Kindelberger: Golden Valley Fire has three positions open in November. It is possible that all three positions could be filled by Yucca citizens. I have election paperwork here today, see me after the meeting if you are interested.

- ❖ **Debra DeGrant:** I just want to say thank you for all the things that you guys have done. You took a total mess and tried to make it feasible for this community. Maybe in 10 years things will be different with the tax base but right now it is just not there. I know a lot of people are upset; they feel that this is being taken away. But actually you would be giving more to the community by being consolidated. Again, thank you very much for all your hard work, I know it was a mess.
- ❖ **Bob Mayo:** Who actually owns this building? Is it the Yucca community? Who is in charge of deciding to hold community events at the fire station?

Attorney Whittington: The district itself is an entity and owns all of the assets and liabilities. The statute says upon consolidation all of the liabilities and assets go to the newly consolidated district and it will be the owner.

Chief Cunningham: Regarding the events at the fire station, it is up to the board. In Golden Valley we have a training center that we rent out and the board makes that decision. That facility has no vehicles or equipment that would be exposed. Here in Yucca everything is exposed, all the things that were purchased with taxpayer money are in this building, and I am responsible for. If we have the public in and out of this building and the fire personnel are on a call and something comes up missing, it comes back on me. I don't see community events happening here in Yucca at the fire station. None of the Golden Valley Fire Stations are open to the public for events.

- ❖ **Dorothy Castleberry:** The RV in the parking lot, why can't it be removed? We have several houses that are fire hazards, why hasn't the board done anything?

Chairman Knowles: Kathy Jenkins let that RV be dumped here. We can't just haul it away; we are working on getting the proper paperwork for an abandoned vehicle to have someone come and remove it.

Fire Marshal Martin: Condemning structures is up to the county code enforcement. As a fire marshal I can suggest certain buildings. I suggest properties to keep a 30-foot clear area around their buildings to give a defensible spot. The fire marshal does not have purview over residential buildings. Commercial buildings fall under the purview of the Fire Marshal.

- ❖ **Carol Price:** Will Desert Hills Fire still respond? If this consolidation doesn't go through, will we no longer have a fire district? How will that affect our insurance? Is there an opportunity for volunteers for medical help?

Chairman Knowles: Desert Hill will still respond on mutual aid. Without Golden Valley providing us with the staff to run it, it is just a matter of time. We pay Golden Valley less per year than we have paid a single Fire Chief. And we get a Fire Chief, Fire Marshal, Comptroller, and her assistant. The value here is unprecedented. They can't continue to do this forever, that is why we need to consolidate. With Golden Valley gone I don't know how we can find someone to manage this place with the amount of money we have. If we have no fire district, you will have to ask your insurance agency what would happen.

Chief Cunningham: Regarding the medical volunteers, if they are certified EMT by the state, those are the volunteers we need. I want to add that what happened to this fire district before GVFD came here is worse than most people understand. Before the Pride gas station was open our trucks were driving to Hwy 95 to get fuel. We asked Rebel Oil to put a fuel tank at the fire station. They said no, because they were stiffed too many times by Yucca Fire. Rebel Oil said if the billing is under GVFD then they would do it. We can't get YFD a credit card because they defaulted on their debt. YFD can't get a federal grant because of the default on the vehicle that was awarded on a federal grant. YFD didn't pay their share and the truck was repossessed. GVFD was awarded a grant and gave it to YFD to get a cardiac monitor. GVFD has had to purchase a lot of things for YFD and bill them, because they have no credit. If the public is against this consolidation and the board decides to vote against this; I see a long road for this district, it may not survive.

- ❖ **Robin Marsten:** There are a lot of new people coming into the area, if we could pull together to get volunteers and train them. There are young people in Yucca.

Chairman Knowles: If you got 50 volunteers it would be useless if GVFD isn't here. Who is going to train them? We don't have the money to buy them uniforms and turnouts. We don't have the money to run this fire district. In the past we had volunteers that were stealing on the calls they responded to. Volunteers need to pass a background check.

- ❖ **Dorothy Castleberry:** Mohave Community College would help train people; they can take an EMT class.

Chairman Knowles: Those people are not going to come to Yucca, there is better money elsewhere and a shorter drive.

Chief Cunningham: Getting volunteers is one thing but over the last few years it has been extremely difficult to get firefighters. Phoenix Fire has started hiring off the street and putting people through

their own fire academy. They never had to do that; in the past they would get 2,000 to 3,000 applicants for one testing. When GVFD would put on a testing we used to get a dozen applicants, now we are lucky to get one. It is extremely hard to hire full time firefighters and that is statewide. The main thing driving it is money, when you're a small fire district and you don't generate that much money you can't pay what the larger departments are paying. Even if you get some firefighters to work here, they are going to leave as soon as they can to make more money. It is very hard to retain them.

- **Chairman Knowles:** Everyone has spoken but one person who declined so I am going to close the public discussion.

D. Discussion and possible action regarding: Possible approval of the proposed consolidation with the Golden Valley Fire District.

- Chairman Knowles asked Clerk Carr for her input. Clerk Carr stated that she agrees with everything that has been said. I don't see Yucca Fire surviving without the consolidation. The feasibility study says that it will possibility increase services and responses and combine everyone under one response system which will assist our firefighters in responding. It is sad to let it go; I have been involved now for four years. This would be in the best interest of the community, firefighters, and everybody else involved. Director Fox stated that he feels that this is best for our community and this path forward is our only path, there is nothing else. I'm for the work that we have previously gone through to try to go forward with some path into the future. I am for everything we are doing here.

- Chairman Knowles motioned to approve the consolidation of Yucca Fire District and Golden Valley Fire District. Clerk Carr 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

E. Possible approval of a Resolution approving the proposed consolidation with the Golden Valley Fire District.

- Chairman Knowles motioned to approve resolution #05-2024-02 approving by unanimous consent an consolidation with the Golden Valley Fire District in determining that the consolidation will promote the public safety, health, comfort, convenience, necessity, or welfare of the Yucca Fire District; and authorizing the transfer of the Yucca Fire District assets to the Golden Valley Fire District as mandated by statutes, and further authoring Chairman, Chief and staff to execute such further documents that may be necessary to complete said consolidation and to take such further and other actions that may be necessary to appropriate in conjunction therewith. Clerk Carr 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

7. **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: Approval of the March and April 2024 financial reports. (Administration)

- Comptroller Kindelberger stated the March and April income was \$54,116.76, expenses \$26,649.64. Bank balances ending April 30, 2024, warrant account \$328,962.36; payroll account \$24,678.38.
 - Clerk Carr motioned the Board approve the financial reports as presented. Director Fox 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

B. Discussion only: Update on restitution due to Yucca Fire from Matt Young. (Administration)

- Chairman Knowles stated that Matt young was the Fire Chief that was convicted of embezzlement. Comptroller Kindelberger stated that the district received a payment from Matt Young in the amount of \$31,810.00. The history of payments received from Matt Young since 2020 is as follows: 2020 \$2,075.00; 2021 \$3,475.00; 2022 \$2,040.00; 2023 \$550.00; 2024 \$31,910.00. Total paid is \$40,050.00. This completes the payments due to the district.
 - None

8. **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.

- None

9. ADJOURNMENT.

- Clerk Carr motioned to adjourn the meeting. Director Fox 2nd the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Chairman Knowles adjourned the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

MINUTES prepared by: Mindy Kindelberger

Date: 05/21/2024

By: 

Board Clerk, Kayla Carr

Approved: 06/03/2024