

**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District  
Monday, October 23, 2020  
0900**

**Call to Order**

**Roll Call** – Dorney, Webber, Archibald by phone, Johnson. Bahti absent.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Approval of the Minutes:**

**28 Sept 2020** – Motion to approve by Dorney, second by Webber with correction, motion carried unanimously.

**9 Sept 2020** – Webber, we referenced the page number of the policy, do we want to put the policy number? No. Motion to approve by Dorney, seconded by Webber, motion carried unanimously. No voice heard for Archibald, so motion of 3 members.

**26 Oct 2020** –Dorney motion to approve the minutes, Archibald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**29 Oct 2020** – Motion to approve by Webber, seconded by Dorney; motion carried unanimously by 3 members (could not hear Archibald).

**Call to the Public –**

**Mike Wright** – Mike prayed over the district, then stated the following: It is with heavy heart that I share these things. I believe the board is guilty of the following: misappropriation of district funds, costing taxpayers untold thousands of dollars; conducting business outside open meeting laws, not only violating the law but the trust we have placed in them; treating district personnel with disdain and creating a hostile work environment they claim they are trying to address; they are working on behalf of disgruntled people instead of the fire district. They are choosing to believe people who are proven to lie and distort the truth. I know this because I've been a victim of one of their lies. She comes to you with allegation about a conversation and you take that as truth without talking to me. Dismissing me from the position of Chaplain, preventing me from coming onto the fire station property, all based on a distorted portrayal of truth. You say you're wanting to conduct an investigation about hostile work conditions and your treatment of me brings that into question. The length of the investigation brings that into question too, certainly doesn't take months to prove a hostile working environment. You are willing to spend unknown amounts of money to try to justify what you have already determined what you are going to do. I believe the parties behind these allegations are disgruntled people whose character are not worthy of trust. It pains me to make these allegations against you and those that have caused these problems, but I don't believe you are acting in the best interests of the district. You have proven that you will do with you want with no regard to anything outside of your viewpoint, so I also don't expect to change one thing by these comments other than letting you know how I feel. We the taxpayers of this district will be here to pay the price of your actions just like we have in the past. Thank you.

**Frances Garcia** – I decline.

**Ralph Garcia** – I also decline

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**Kathe Prentice** – Kathe Prentice, I am here for a couple comments. One is, when you are talking with somebody at the fire department or taking testimony regarding what may or may not be happening at the fire department, I encourage you to talk with that individual and ask them about how active they are in the fire department, approximately how many meetings and calls they attend. There are some people who are not around very often and really don't have much of an opinion on what's going on 'cause they are not here that often. There are others that are here weekly and attend all the calls that occur during their shift each week. Someone asked her to speak up as they couldn't hear her. Kathe Prentice – I am here to make a couple comments. When you are interfacing or talking to someone from the fire department to get insight as to what they have been experiencing or observing, I encourage you to ask how active they are within the fire department, how many meetings, how many possible calls they attend monthly just to get an idea of how active they are, we have a broad range of people that work here and that goes from attending a couple calls a year, maybe one call a year to attending numerous calls and meetings. Second point: my family has been here since the early 1900's and I grew up in this community and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for letting me serve you and this community. I have been employed, I've been a member of the fire department for 21 years; 4 volunteer, approximately 6 part-time, and 10 career, and had many opportunities to grow with the department. I thank them for that. We have had our challenges in the past, both in becoming transition from volunteer to a district, we've had to go through lawsuits and community upheaval. This upheaval or I should say change is not unusual for us to experience throughout the years. Also, another comment is I've been approached on duty by a non-partisan member and challenged as to my opinions regarding a couple individuals here, I can't go into detail because of an investigation so... but just to let you know that it caught me very off guard and uh I also with a heavy heart am having to try to deal with that. So thank you for listening to me and thank you for the board for doing what you do. I know it is very difficult especially when there is challenges to be judged as to what you're job is – I know you don't get paid for it. Johnson – Thank you for your service.

**Report from the Fire District** – Calls for the month: A shift had 20, B shift had 20 and C shift had 25. There are no events at this time. The CON is running like it is supposed to. Apparatus – we're doing some repairs, oil changes and such, everything is running pretty good. I am going to have the Ops Chief give a report on personnel; we do have one grant, an extrication grant from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, for \$30,000, we'll be getting things going with that shortly. (Extrication Tools) Marc Meredith, Acting Operations Chief – since our last meeting we've had 4 new volunteers start their orientation process, we've had 2 people who were in the process complete that and are full members of the department. One of the benefits and challenges of being the type of department that we are, is that often times we're the first place where somebody starts their career and they are able to continue that career. Three of our members, we're very happy, yet at the same time sad to see them go, they have been hired by Tucson Fire. They will start their academy in January. It's a really competitive process, so for us to have three selected is a real testament as to who this district is. Parker King, Anika Payton-Rodriguez, and Kerri Stewart. As you know, one of our firefighter positions has been filled for a

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period of time, we're going to go ahead and hire that position permanently, in January, and I'm very pleased to say we've already received 7 applications for that position. If you know anyone who is interested, please do encourage them to apply. Finally, another grant we just received from the Coyote Crisis Collaborative, a state-recognized resource that is charged with helping departments big and small obtain what they need for both daily and disaster operations. We received an approximately \$5,000 grant from them, and the grant is going to go towards purchasing special equipment from Stryker, that's the same company that makes our gurneys, so when we're dealing with cognitively-impaired patients we now have another resource available to us and to them, so they remain safe during transport, and we remain safe while we're transporting them. We should have that equipment in-house by the end of the year. It is a type of cover which allows somebody who is not able to follow our directions to remain safe during transport without having to use more intrusive restraint. It will be a very nice tool to have in our toolbox that we wouldn't have had without this grant.

**Monthly Financial Reports** were presented by V. Rutter: **Vicki Rutter:** MS Rutter presented the financial reports to the Board, including the Balance Sheet, Profit & Loss Statement and the Cash Flow Forecast as of October 31, 2020. Archibald, who was on telephone, made some statements but they were not understandable. MS Rutter did advise the Board for the second month in a row that we had a projected deficit. Motion to accept the financials as presented was made by Webber, seconded by Dorney, Motion carried unanimously.

**Report by the Board Clerk on the Hughes Federal Credit Union Account** – MS Webber advised the Board and community of the process she followed to obtain a pin number for accessing the bank account. During the conversation she advised that the Acting Chief Buonaccorsi and the Auditor felt there should be more signers on the account as there was no contingency plan for events such as the Chief being out of office. There is now a process [for Board members] where transfers can be completed. This item segued into item #3.

**Review, discussion and possible action: Check signing/Transfers between accounts:** Johnson – Because we had that problem, because we only have one signer on the Board [currently there are two signers on each account – Chief and Clerk] at Palominas, all signatories rest on the Board. That's a model, we have a different model. After discussion, there was a motion to add the Chair become a signer on all the bank accounts. There was also discussion on creating a treasurer position, an item that was not on the agenda. The Chair asked for opinions – Dorney, I am not a fan of this idea. I wouldn't want that responsibility. I think it is a good system the way we have it. I think there needs to be a second person that can sign checks and get statements and things. I suggest that the Chairman be that person. Webber – I'm not really sold on the treasurer; I hadn't thought about that at all. I am in support of what Palominas did – having all the Board members on the account. Archibald – by telephone – do we have a recommendation from the auditors? Webber – The auditors inform me they would like to see all Board members on there [as signers]. Archibald – I think that's a little excessive. I would recommend two Board members and the Chief. Johnson – I'm okay with that; echoed by Dorney and Webber. Motion to add the Chair [Chris Johnson] as a signer [for total of Chair, Clerk, Chief] and require two

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signatures per check was made by Archibald, seconded by Dorney, motion carried unanimously. Webber - We're going to need the minutes to show that we voted and passed it. I can contact the banks and to see how we can do the paperwork. Archibald – it will take a little bit of time.

**Review, discussion and possible direction to Acting Chief regarding minutes** – This was a holdover from the summer that had been tabled at prior meetings. After a long round and round discussion that really came down to semantics, there was no direction given to the Acting Chief. Johnson stated we'd postpone this to a future meeting and that what is posted to the website will be labeled as a transcription.

**Review, discussion and possible action regarding the Board Survey:** Motion to table the survey until we finish the investigation was made by Archibald, second by Webber, motion carried unanimously.

**Discussion and possible action on status of Chief De Wolf's FY 2019-2020 Annual Review** (from previous agenda): Johnson tabled this item.

**Review, discussion and possible action to appoint Archibald and Bahti to fill 4-year term of office and consider timeline/process to select successor board members should Bahti and/or Archibald decide not serve the entire term:** Johnson – I received an announcement from Kurt Bahti that he is withdrawing from the Board, he is completing his term but does not want to be appointed. Sue, at last I heard is willing to fulfill the term until the investigation is over and we can appoint someone to complete the term. Is that Correct? Archibald – That is correct. Chris, we are also looking at purchasing a home in Cochise County, so if I move to Cochise County I can no longer be on the Board. We do have a process, the same process we used to bring Dorney onto the Board. Admin - There is a formal process to go through for a new board member, there is a 90-day window for the Board to appoint a new board member, if nothing is done that time, the county can appoint a member to our board. Dorney – When we post the availability, is to include a very general guideline of what must be met resident (1 year) and also generally what is expected of a Board member, which I didn't get. Johnson – I believe we have the right to appoint Sue Archibald to extend her term, we know when it's going to end, but I'd rather not have two open vacancies on the Board. It makes it difficult because it makes it a 3-person Board. Archibald – I'm okay with that, I'll just resign. Dorney – I move that Sue Archibald be appointed to another term. Seconded by Webber; motion carried by Webber, Dorney, Johnson; Archibald abstaining from the vote. Sue is appointed to a 4-year term.

**Review, discussion and possible action for special organizational meeting in early December:** Election of officers and give oath of office to Archibald (Johnson will do his on Dec. 1) on Monday, Dec 7, 2020 at 0900.

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Archibald – did we give the public and update on the investigation? Johnson, no, not yet. I don't have that. Archibald – that needs to be on every agenda.

**Possible executive session for legal advice:** Motion by Archibald to go into executive session; second by Webber, motion carried unanimously. Adjourned open session at 1051.

Returned from executive session at 1144

Reminder that everything said in executive session is confidential.

**Review, discussion and possible action to authorize audit of PFD IGA payments and compensation paid to Chief De Wolf to be performed by the District's auditing firm Walker & Armstrong requested to be presented in conjunction with the District's annual audit.** Motion by Webber, second by Dorney, motion carried unanimously. Archibald was no longer in the meeting.

**Adjournment** – Motion by Webber, second by Dorney, motion carried unanimously.

Minutes approved on 28 December 2020, \_\_\_\_\_, Board Clerk.  
Reba Webber