

CHRISTOPHER KOHL'S FIRE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
JUNE 08, 2009
STATION 51

Meeting called to order at 7:01pm, 8 June, 2009. Pledge of Allegiance.

In Attendance: Deborah Dawson, Chairman
 Margot Holmes-Fish, Vice Chairman
James Oliver, Clerk/Treasurer
 Electra VanEckhoutte, Fire Chief
 Dionne May, Administrative Assistant
Department members attending were identified.

Agenda Item 3.

- A. The Minutes from the 11 May, 2009, Board Meeting was approved unanimously by the Board after a motion by Mrs. Holmes-Fish and a second by Mr. Oliver.

- B. The status of the District Bank accounts for May, 2009, was given by Mr. Oliver. The first payment on the new Fire Truck has been made out of the Capital account. Mr. Oliver said if there were no objections, he was going to move \$65,000 from General account into Capital account. The Budget showed \$83,500 to be put into Capital, but tax collections were running about \$22,000 short. Mrs. Dawson asked why the Capital Account was lower than normal. Mr. Oliver explained the Capital purchases. Late collections by the County was discussed by the Board. Mrs. Dawson accepted the Treasurer report as read.

- C. Chief VanEckhoutte gave the Chief's report and discussed the status of the Department and activities of the members of the Department. Chief VanEckhoutte discussed the new Forest Service Informational Board posted at the Fire Station.

Agenda Item 4. Public hearing on Fiscal year 2010 (2009-2010) budget. The Budget has been posted and published as required. Public comments will be taken. Mrs. Dawson discussed a presentation that Mr. Zehring gave at the last meeting. Mr. Oliver said that Mr. Zehring gave a presentation on how 3 paramedics could be hired cheaper than the District budget proposed. Mr. Oliver said that much of the information on how Forest Lakes Fire Department hired personnel was incorrectly cited by Mr. Zehring. The personnel in question were employees, not contract personnel as Mr. Zehring said, and some benefits were in fact paid to the employees. Mr. Oliver said that Mr. Zehring's discussion was on how to hire 3 paramedics, not dealing with the question of the increased service level and tax increase. Mr. Oliver said that Forest Lakes had increased their tax rate by 51 cents to hire additional personnel. Mr. Oliver said their ability to recruit personnel was enhanced by the Chief and Mr. Zehring both working for fire departments in the Valley. Mr. Oliver also said that Mr. Zehring talked about being able to hire trained, educated personnel. Mr. Oliver said that he felt that rural firefighters had to show more initiative, are more resourceful, and show earlier leadership abilities than city firefighters as they did not have the large command structures and unlimited backup that was found in major cities. Mr. Oliver said he would prefer to shop local for firefighters. Mrs. Dawson discussed what local meant. Mrs. Dawson asked Chief VanEckhoutte about volunteers from surrounding areas. Chief VanEckhoutte and the Board discussed the issue. Mrs. Dawson discussed mapping and access issues. Mrs. Dawson asked for public comments. Mr. Jacobs commented that taxes in Gila County were too high, the Fire District taxes are too high, wages are too high, said the wildland truck was not needed; Paramedic service was not needed, and wants to eliminate the Fire Board. Mrs. Dawson commented on Gila County taxes. Several unidentified persons commented on high taxes. Mrs. Dawson asked Mrs. Holmes-Fish to explain why she voted for the budget at the last meeting. Mrs. Holmes-Fish said she wanted the District to provide the increased level of service, and said that the Chief was improving the Fire District. The number of properties and voters was discussed by Mrs. Holmes-Fish and Mrs. Dawson. Mr. Jacobs made more comments that taxes were too high. Mrs. Dawson

asked Mr. Oliver to comment. Mr. Oliver told Mr. Jacobs that the Firefighters were not contract personnel, the Fire Board could not be eliminated unless the District was dissolved; the Board could be recalled, and suggested that Mr. Jacobs speak to Mr. Seay, who is familiar with the procedures for recall, and that elections were a way to replace the Board. Mr. Oliver detailed the study he did of the budget; felt the Chief was getting the most from the budget and personnel that could be obtained, and that he felt that the public wanted an increased level of service. Mr. Oliver commented on personnel costs as a percentage of total budgets, and how the percentage will rise. Mr. Oliver said delaying the increased level of service may not be possible in the future due to pending State legislation. Mr. Jacobs and Mrs. Dawson had a discussion on number of parcels in the District. Mr. Oliver said he had given his reasons for the increased level of service, and he hoped there would be 10 to 20 people running for his seat, commenting on the lack of interest in running for the Board, and generally attending Board meetings. Mrs. Dawson commented on NFPA standards, and Mr. Oliver's objections to tax increases in the past. Mrs. Dawson said she objected to "what ifs" in the budget, and that the issue of three paramedics should not be based on them. Mr. Oliver said he thought that was proper planning for the future. Mrs. Dawson said that it was paranoia, and planning should be based on the laws we now have. Mrs. Dawson commented on contracts that Hellsgate has with Payson, and Mr. Oliver said our District had contracts for service also. Mrs. Fletcher said she wanted the increased level of service, and asked about response time. Mrs. Fletcher and Chief VanEckhoutte discussed response times to various areas. Mr. Oliver said the out the door time was greatly reduced, but location determined the rest of the response time. Mrs. Fletcher asked about Hellsgate response time, and Chief VanEckhoutte responded. Mr. Oliver said that geographical location largely determined their response time. Mrs. Fletcher said that if she paid more taxes, she wanted to see better service. Mr. Oliver said the issue was not so much as response time, but increased level of service with ALS and paramedics being provided. Greg Bownds spoke to the need for ALS service and discussed the difference in BLS and ALS. Mrs. Dawson said the issue was adding 3 more personnel and giving raises. Mr. Daniels asked if the Department was ever audited. Mr. Oliver said it had been audited the last two years and would be again. Mr. Gourdoux said that the amount of private property in Gila County was an excuse to raise taxes, did not want the tax increase, and commented that this was Christopher Kohl's District, not Hellsgate and he was tired of comparisons. Mr. Britain said the increase was needed, and asked for people who supported the increased level of service to stand up. Mrs. Armenta asked about helicopters and who could request one. Chief VanEckhoutte discussed the issue with unidentified audience members and Mrs. Dawson. Chief VanEckhoutte said that hospital protocol required that a Paramedic order a helo. Mrs. Grotegood said that people should get off their behinds and volunteer for the Department and support the Fire Department. She said the increased level of service was needed and spoke of a personal experience. Mr. Bownds spoke of what ALS service could offer the residents. Ms. Thornton gave her thanks to the Board for their concern and work on this issue. Mrs. Dawson spoke to her vote against the budget, and her concern over salaries and raises. Mrs. Dawson said this was a second job for most personnel, and was just an added benefit. Mrs. Dawson discussed the engine at Kohl's and said it was a piece of crap and needed replacement to serve the people at Kohl's and not be sent out to earn money. She said the Chief could have hired Paramedics when she started hiring. Mr. Oliver said that statement was not true because money for Paramedics was not in the Budget. Mrs. Dawson said other nonbudget items had been purchased by the Administrator, who was Mr. Oliver. Mrs. Dawson said she ran for the office to watch the tax rate, and asked Mr. Oliver to reduce the budget, and spoke to Mr. Zehring's presentation on reducing costs. Mr. Oliver said Mr. Zehring had used incorrect information in his presentation. Mr. Oliver said that hiring Paramedics would have used money that was not available to the District, Capital funds had been used to purchase an engine from Payson that came available, but that Capital money could not be used for personnel costs. Mrs. Dawson asked how 3 people could be hired without being in the budget, and Mr. Oliver replied it was in the Budget as adopted. Mr. Oliver said that former Chief Larsen had the same amount of money for personnel, but did nothing useful with it. Mrs. Dawson said that money was left over, and Mr. Oliver said it was not "left over", but was committed to personnel costs. Mr. Oliver said there would be no money left over at the end of the fiscal year. Mrs. Dawson asked if it was wise to spend everything just because we had it. Mrs. Dawson said that she supported the paramedics, supported the new engine, but did not support the raises. Mr. Oliver said that the District did not spend every cent that the District got, operated on a fiscal year, and money that was not carried over into the next year went into the Capital fund. Mrs. Dawson asked Mr. Oliver if he thought tax collections were going to get worse, and when he said he did, Mrs. Dawson asked how the District could afford everything in the Budget. Mr. Oliver said that he had contingency plans for budget shortfall as did the Chief. Mrs. Dawson asked Mrs.

Holmes-Fish if she had been in on a conversation to discuss budget shortfalls, because Mrs. Dawson had not been at any meetings. Mr. Oliver said he did not need Mrs. Dawson to develop his budget plans, but would present them to the Board when the need or issue arose. Mrs. Dawson discussed her involvement with the Fire Department. Mrs. Marazza asked how much the raises added to the budget. Mrs. Dawson passed the issue to Mr. Oliver who said that about every one cent of tax increase brought in about \$2800, with increases in FDAT and contracts to be included. Mr. Oliver indicated that the raise for the Chief would be about 1 1/2 to two cents tax increase. Mrs. Dawson asked about overtime, and Mr. Oliver said the Chief does not get overtime. Mrs. Dawson said everyone else got enormous overtime. Mr. Oliver said they got what the law required and what hours they worked. Mrs. Horner said that the Chief was on call 24 hours a day and very few people would do her job for 62,000 a year. Mrs. Dawson discussed her experiences as a volunteer. Mr. Tanner asked if we were going to bring people from the valley, as Forest Lakes was doing that, paying them a lot of money, and it wasn't working very well. Mrs. Dawson said the plan was to hire three personnel full time, and discussed volunteers and paid personnel. Mrs. Dawson said that the paid personnel would leave on calls before the volunteers showed up, and that increased response time. Mr. Oliver discussed Mr. Zehrings presentation at the last meeting. Mr. Tanner asked about the flames on the truck, and Mrs. Dawson said that there are a lot of little items that could have been cut, but the Chief was a good shopper. Mrs. Dawson discussed training. The Public Hearing was closed.

Agenda Item 5. Information/Discussion/Action on approval and adoption of Resolution #102. This resolution adopts the Fiscal Year 2010 (2009-2010) budget for the Fire District. Mrs. Dawson asked for a motion. Mrs. Holmes-Fish made a motion to adopt Resolution #102. Mr. Oliver said he seconded the motion, with the advertised and published Budget, including the detailed budget, to be adopted. Mrs. Holmes-Fish and Mr. Oliver voted aye, Mrs. Dawson voted no, the motion to adopt Resolution #102 passed and is adopted.

Agenda item 6. Future agenda items. Mr. Oliver said he would like to discuss agendas, how they are prepared, posted, inclusion on the web site, increased use of the web site, possible e-mail addresses for Board members, and equipment for that, and training approval by the Board for the Fire Department.

Agenda item 7. Call to the public. Mrs. Tolle informed the public of upcoming Firebelle's events.

Mr. Oliver made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Holmes-Fish second, the vote to adjourn was unanimous

Mrs. Dawson adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm, 08 June, 2009

Submitted : 15 June, 2009, by James Oliver

Approved: _____ Chairman _____, 2009