

# **Moab Valley Fire Protection District Commission Meeting Budget Workshop**

**45 South 100 East, Moab Utah 84532**

**November 9th, 2023 - 4:00 p.m.**

## **A. Call to Order:**

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Archie Walker at 4:00 p.m.
2. Commissioners Present: Chairman Archie Walker, Commissioner Jim McGann, Commissioner Charlie Harrison
3. Staff Present: Chief TJ Brewer, Administrator Cathy Bonde, Administrative Battalion Chief/Inspector Brandon McGuffee

## **B. 2023 Draft Amended Budget:**

1. Cathy presented changes to the draft amended 2023 budget as made since the last meeting.

Changes to income include an increase for the State of Utah (Wildland) line item. It is anticipated this income will increase further for 2023 due to the contract negotiated by Clark Maughn with the State for reimbursement for fuels mitigation now that our PC is met. Discussion was had on the project currently associated with the State agreement, as well as the wildland program and the income it currently generates as well as the potential for further income.

There is a small increase in the interest income line item.

Several changes have been made to expense line items. There is a small increase in the seasonal firefighter line item as the position is extended through November. Other increases include fire prevention for restocking items used for school fire prevention as well as acquiring items for other outreach which are more adult oriented, PPE for needed turn out gear, building repairs and maintenance to repair/replace heating and cooling systems which have been a concern for years, and an increase in small tools & minor equipment for both the mechanic and outfitting trucks. Discussion was had on the need for these adjustments to the budget.

The proposed adjustments in the draft 2023 amended budget leave a net income of just under \$49,000.00 which can be contributed to our fund balance or moved to our Capital Projects fund. It is currently attributed to the fund balance.

Commissioners discussed Cancer screening which is associated with the nonwage compensation line item.

Commissioner McGann asked about the specialty rescue line item, and Cathy stated that an adjustment was made because struts received this year were actual costed to the 2022 budget last, so she removed them from the 2023 budget.

Chief Brewer informed Commissioners that we did not receive a grant we had applied for to purchase extrication equipment, so we may see that purchase as an added expense.

### **C. 2024 Draft Budget:**

1. Cathy presented changes to the draft 2024 budget made since the last meeting.

Income for State of Utah (Wildland) was decreased to \$276,000.00. There were several reasons for the decrease, one being the concern of sending firefighters out of District. The decrease is \$15,000.00. Counter to this, the fee schedule income line item increased by \$15,000.00 based on feedback from Inspector McGuffee as to development projections for 2024. Discussion was had on 2023 developments leading to a large increase in fee schedule income for 2023.

The interest income line item has increased by \$1000.00 based on current trends.

Expenses for personnel have a decrease in the new full time employee line item due to the fact that hiring for the position would not happen until the spring. This is also reflected in the employee benefit line item.

Discussion was had on the wildland positions and what constitutes the overtime/part time expense line item.

An expense line item has been added under Professional and Technical Services for dispatch services for a total of \$15,677.63 as calculated by Grand County. Chief Brewer presented the reasoning for this new line item to Commissioners. He stated he is not against paying for dispatch, but one of his concerns is that we bill the County to provide fire protection services outside of our District, and Grand County is in turn billing us for those dispatch calls. If Moab Fire goes to I-70 for a Grand County call, we will be charged for the dispatch of that call. Chair Walker said it appears as double taxation for a property owner who will pay tax to multiple agencies for dispatch service as opposed to the service being covered by Grand County and a single taxing entity. Chief Brewer stated that if we start to pay for dispatch, we should have a seat at the table in how it operates. He also stated some agencies are creating a communications taxing entity to address these kinds of issues. Radios and communications were further discussed.

Cathy next addressed the dues and subscriptions line item. As discussed at the last meeting, subscriptions to software needed to perform firefighting and inspection duties were moved to this single line item. Increases for ESO software in 2024 account for most of the increase.

Fire prevention was decreased based on the decision to do the bulk of purchasing this year.

Wildland travel was decreased.

Office expense is somewhat higher than normal because we will need to purchase 3 new PCs as our equipment will be too old to host some of the software needed to function. The

one subscription remaining in this line item is QuickBooks, and the cost of that subscription is going up.

Motor fuels was decreased by \$5,000.00 but retains room for additional wildland deployments.

Auto & Truck Repairs and Maintenance was decreased by \$4,659.04 to balance the budget.

Wildland supplies were mostly stocked in 2023, so that line item is less for 2024.

PPE reflects our earlier discussion with the 2023 proposed amended budget.

Building repairs and maintenance is similar to current 2023 expenditures as large repairs are planned for the end of 2023.

Insurance has increased due to the new engine, and worker's comp may see a small increase.

Returning to income, the budget retains the \$200,000.00 request of the County in exchange for providing services outside of our District. Cathy stated that the County currently has that amount in their draft 2024 budget. Our justification for the request is based on percentage of calls to budget which came in at approximately \$271,000.00. Grand County has also requested a breakdown based on applying our fee schedule to out of District Grand County calls. Although the fee schedule calculations are not yet finished, at this point they come to about \$250,000.00. A possible proposal from the County would be to pay us \$100,000.00 up front and once calls reach \$100,000.00 per our fee schedule, we would bill them per call capping at \$200,000.00. This is just the County looking at options and thinking outside of the box. Commissioner Harrison stated it would be a lot more work on our end. The general consensus from Commissioners is that if we went the route of billing, there would be no cap. Chief Brewer stated that our request of \$200,000.00 is less than the actual cost and a show of good faith on our part. We have been asked to provide documentation of our request, and actual cost is more than the County has been providing.

Commissioner McGann asked about the State of Utah (Wildland) income line item and if we could count on those funds coming in. Chief Brewer stated it is an educated calculation based on this year and plans for next year. Chair Walker stated that expenses of \$173,000.00 and income of \$182,000.00 this year make it a wash. Chief Brewer said with these personnel we have been able to address fuel mitigation in the creeks, we have been able to do more community outreach, our response time to incidents has gone down, and our level of service has gone up. He stated that we need to take the "wildland" verbiage out and say we have firefighters who go out on resource orders. The benefits far outweigh any cost. Commissioner McGann stated his concern is sending these personnel out of District; why not keep them here and do mitigation? Brandon McGuffee stated the taxpayer would then need to foot the bill because they would not be bringing any income in. Cathy stated the wildland crew was only out of District for two deployments. Out of eight months, they were only out of District for one month, yet revenue from the wildland program has paid their salaries and benefits for the full eight months, including the majority of their time which was spent in District. Chief Brewer stated that every position he has hired since becoming Chief has generated income for the District, relieving some of the burden to the taxpayers. Discussion was had on the potential for additional income from the wildland program as it grows. Chief Brewer stated that Enterprise, Utah invested in their wildland

program, and by mid-summer of this year they had already generated half a million dollars in revenue from it.

Cathy stated that we should know if we are awarded the \$5.1 million grant in February which is prior to the projected hire dates of the proposed new employees.

Chief Brewer said he felt the fuels mitigation work is worth its weight in gold, and we have found a way to keep these firefighters employed through the wildland program.

Brandon McGuffee suggested that instead of looking at the revenue beyond cost, we should look at the benefit to the Department. He said he cannot stress enough the value these personnel bring to the Department.

Chair Walker stated the fuels mitigation that can be accomplished with revenue from the wildland program is a great benefit. Chief Brewer stated citizens have voiced concerns about fuels along the creeks, and that both the City and the County have equipment to do fuels mitigation but have said they don't have the time. It is our small agency is in the creeks doing it.

Commissioner McGann asked if the new engine boss position was benefited. Cathy stated that it is and that cost is reflected in the employee benefit line item. She added that health insurance has increased for 2024 by 10% which is also reflected. There is also room in the employee benefit line item in the event there is an unemployment claim.

**D. Closed Session:**

1. Chair Walker motioned to move to closed session to discuss character, professional competence or physical or mental health of an individual at 5:45 p.m. Commissioner Harrison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
2. Chair Walker motioned to leave closed session at 6:05 p.m. Commissioner McGann seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**E. Adjourn:**

1. Chair Walker adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Archie Walker, Chair**

**Attest:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cathy Bonde, Clerk**