

# **Moab Valley Fire Protection District**

## **Commission Meeting**

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

**April 16, 2024 - 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
3. Commissioner Absent: Charlie Harrison
4. Staff Present: Chief TJ Brewer, Administrator Cathy Bonde, Wildland Coordinator Clark Maughan. Joining later: Wildland Engine Boss Mark Marcum, Battalion Chief Brandon McGuffee

**B. General Business:**

1. Approval of Minutes – Commissioner Walker requested a correction changing the word “the” to “they”. Commissioner Walker motioned to approve minutes from the March 19, 2024 Commission meeting with the correction. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
2. Citizens to be Heard – None present.
3. Approval of Bills - Commissioner Walker motioned to approve bills. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**C. Chief's Report**

1. Chief Brewer reported seasonal employees have been hired and will be introduced to the Commission at the next meeting. They are off today due to a training this weekend.
2. Ryan Burraston is doing a great job filling in as the maintenance manager.
3. Mark Marcum and Cody Thurlo returned safely from deployment to Oklahoma. There were some mechanical issues with Engine 6-3, and the report back from the mechanic in Oklahoma was the 6-3 was poorly maintained. The engine will be finished in the next few weeks, and Mark Marcum will go out to retrieve it. It appears the State will pick up some of cost of repairs. Commissioner Walker asked how we could do better in the future with maintenance. Chief Brewer stated that many departments are associated with a municipality that takes care of their trucks and equipment, but they still may bring in someone once a year or every other year to run through their fleet. Bringing in someone to inspect the fleet can be expensive, but something we could consider. The feedback from other departments has been to get rid of the aging fleet. A lot of our fleet is 20-30 years old. We are going to price out some heavies to see what a new one would cost. Demos would be more cost effective. We've had issues with engines on each deployment.
4. Our new engine will be done the first week of May. Ryan Burraston, Brandon McGuffee and Chief Brewer will go out to do final inspection on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

5. We have received all our new radios and are waiting on some programing from UCA.
6. The FEPP Truck is in service. Ryan is making some minor adjustments.
7. We have had 34 calls to service since the last Commission meeting.

**D. Wildland Report – Clark Maughan:**

Clark has been in wildland for 30 years and in his position with Moab Fire as Wildland Coordinator for almost a year. He stated Moab Fire has made some great strides with the wildland program. He presented duties and accomplishments of the program. An SOP has been developed which covers a full range of aspects of the program, and it was made available to our new hires this year. Mark Marcum has been very diligent in training and working with the seasonals.

Time has been spent getting rid of and replacing outdated equipment in order to slowly build the cache up. This is a benefit to the entire department.

Last year we had 19 people red carded. We anticipate a similar number this year. Chief Brewer stated that through this program, more of our firefighters are becoming interested in wildland firefighting.

Last year Moab Fire had two wildland assignments in California and sent firefighters on two hand crew assignments. Hand crew assignments are the first step in moving toward engine boss qualification. We also responded to 21 wildland fires locally last year. Commissioner McGann asked if the 21 fires were in our District. Clark responded that they were primarily in Grand County. Mark added that one was just across the Utah/Colorado border. Clark stated that so far this year we have had one deployment to Oklahoma.

We applied this year for the rural fire readiness grant. Only one engine is available in the State, so it is competitive. The grant is also for some additional portable radios. Commissioner Walker asked about federal agencies running different radio frequencies and radios. Chief Brewer confirmed they will always run on different frequencies and are sticking with VHF. The federal agencies are not interested in changing at this time. Clark said wildland has adapted to that by carrying two radios.

Clark stated we have been streamlining administrative procedures such as billing.

Mark Marcum said when on assignment he has felt very well supported by staff here at the Station.

Clark spoke to the qualifications that he and Mark bring to the department as well as the improvement in communication and relationships with agency partners. He said our federal agency partners have stated that they need us and our support. Moab Fire has been well recognized by our partners. Chief Brewer reiterated that communication with our federal partners has only gotten better. He said since instituting the program, the networking and communication has been amazing. Clark said a big part of wildland is that coordination. He also stated with his and Mark's qualifications, Moab Fire can now host a number of trainings in house as opposed to going outside the Department for qualified instructors.

Clark stated that in addition to his duties is as representative to MIFC and our partners, he also sits on the Creek Stewardship Committee on the fuels side. He put in a

nomination for the Forestry Fire Statewide Wildland Training Committee and is waiting to hear back. Clark gave further detail on what the Creek Stewardship Committee entails and how it brings together all the players in the valley that have a stake in creek management to ensure a coordinated effort.

Administratively, Clark coordinates with the state on billing IQS, training, fire policy, our PC and fuels work. Last year we submitted 22 billing documents for just under \$200,000.00. With the FRA for 2024, we are working on adding several pieces of equipment that weren't included in the past; allowing us to bill for use of that equipment.

We entered into an agreement last fall with Forestry Fire & State Lands for fuels work specifically in Mill and Pack Creeks and for prescribed fire. After we meet our PC obligation for the year, we can tap into the funds in the agreement to recoup our costs.

An update in billing for this year allows for a 10% personnel rate increase to cover administrative costs.

Moab Fire has been heavily involved in fuels work. Last year we had 205 hours of fuels work with the fire department which encompassed fuels reduction in six different areas of the valley. This has resulted in a lot of positive public interaction and good PR for the Department. We are at 111 hours so far this year.

We still do not have any word on the CWDG grant which was submitted in collaboration with several members of the Creek Stewardship Committee. If awarded, the grant would bring in a huge influx of money to the department for fuels mitigation.

This year we are included in the Interagency Watershed Restoration Initiative with the State of Utah for \$11,000.00 to cover labor and equipment.

Our PC last year was approximately \$8,500.00 and we contributed \$21,000.00 worth of work towards it. This year our commitment is just under \$6,000.00, and we have already contributed over \$8,000.00. Chief Brewer stated that before we had the wildland program, we were in probation each year with the state in trying to accomplish our PC requirement.

Clark stated additional advantages of having the crew here include reduced response times on both the structure and wildland sides. A crew that works together and trains together every day builds a cohesion that translates to a high performing crew. It also provides added capacity for training for the rest of the Department as well as added support for other work that goes on at the Department, from maintenance and upkeep to daily engine checks and other necessities of keeping the Department running. There is increased capacity to do fuels work and assist homeowners in the valley. We provided some great work simply removing tumbleweeds for homeowners that can't take care of fuels concerns on their own property. The crew is able to take some of the workload off of other staff so they can focus on their other duties. Brandon McGuffee stated Clark's experience and ability with navigating and understanding wildland billing far outweighs what he was able to do when the task was his. The Department is more efficient and effective.

In relation to the future of the program, Clark stated that due to aging equipment we ultimately need to look at acquiring a new or newer fire engine. The mechanical issues

with 466 and 6-3 on each assignment are directly related to the age of the equipment. Chief Brewer stated the amount we've spent on repairs and the lost time being out on assignment would most likely equate to a payment a year. Mark Marcum added that on every assignment he has been on for Moab Fire, we have been asked us to stay on longer. Clark informed the Commission that a lot of times a forest or area will pick up a resource and keep it there for the whole season with crew swaps. These kinds of resource orders can generate a lot of revenue for us. An additional engine boss and seasonal would make it easy for the Department to accomplish this. Chief Brewer added that Enterprise, a department much smaller than ours, does this and last year in June they were already at a half million dollars in revenue from their program.

The future of the program includes continued fuels work. We are mitigating a lot of risk in the valley. Chief Brewer stated there is huge support in the community for the fuels work we are doing. Brandon McGuffee supported that statement by sharing how often people walking in the areas where fuels mitigation is taking place will stop to thank the workers for what they are doing.

Clark presented an outlook for the year as far as snow pack, precipitation, soil moisture, drought, and fuels. Circumstances point to high likelihood of having an active wildland fire season.

Commissioner McGann stated the two things he will be looking at with the program are the financial benefit to the District and taxpayers as well as any concerns or issues with sending resources out of District as we look at expanding our District. Both Chief Brewer and Commissioner McGann agreed the fuels reduction aspect of the Wildland program has great value.

#### **E. Old Business:**

1. Annexation – Chief Brewer stated a meeting with representatives from Grand County has been set for April 25<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner McGann asked about the map with San Juan County. Chief Brewer said the details are mostly worked out; it's just a matter of fine tuning the mapping of it.
2. Job Descriptions – Nothing new to report
3. Salary Survey – Commissioners discussed the salary survey proposal presented at the last Commission meeting. Commissioner Walker said he we should move forward with the survey. He said it would help the Department in multiple ways. He did state concerns that the survey may indicate we are underpaying some of our employees. Commissioner McGann stated that would be a good thing to know. Commissioner Walker made a motion to accept the salary survey proposal. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
4. Procurement Policy – Commissioner McGann said he contacted Gabe Woytek at the County with some questions on the procurement policy flow chart presented at the previous meeting. A concern was the approval process by the Commission. After the discussion, he felt comfortable with the process. Cathy added that the flow chart will ultimately be accompanied by a written policy. Commissioner Walker motioned to move forward with the written policy based on the flow chart. Commissioner McGann seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

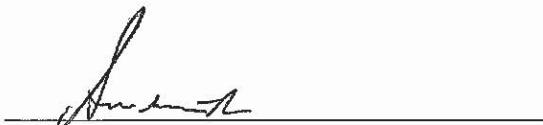
**F. New Business:**

1. Privacy Policy – Cathy informed Commissioners that the state legislature passed a requirement that all governmental websites must include a privacy policy informing the public how information gathered on the website is used. Websites were scanned for inclusion of the policy, and those without were informed sites would be scanned again on April 1. As the Department did not have a policy, Cathy created one based on the template provided by the state and posted it on the website prior to April 1. The policy needs to be approved by the Commission. She stated the Department does not currently track website visitors nor collect information or payment via the website. GRAMA requests and fuels mitigation forms are ultimately received by email and not through the website. Commissioner Walker motioned to approve the privacy policy. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
2. URS Tier 2 Contribution Changes – Cathy presented changes being made to URS contributions beginning July 1, 2024. The Commission needs to make decisions on tier 2 firefighter and tier 2 public employee contributions by the June Commission meeting. Chief Brewer asked Cathy to present a cost analysis at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner McGann asked Chief Brewer what he thought would be needed in additional employees in relation to annexation. Chief Brewer stated at least a couple more that would put us on 7 day coverage. In addition, he said we are bursting at the seams administratively, and a deputy chief would be valuable in that capacity. Cathy stated we currently have 9 paid staff, some of whom are seasonal or part-time. Chief Brewer added that the volunteer aspect has changed over time in that many have multiple jobs and commitments that prevent them from being available on a regular basis. This impacts the level of response. Volunteers are appreciative of paid staff, knowing there are people to respond. Commissioner McGann said he was also curious about staffing needs in relation to the salary survey. Chief Brewer informed Commissioners that administrative staff has been working on job duties and titles each staff member is responsible for, and it should be ready for presentation to the Commission soon.

**H. Adjourn:**

1. Chair Walker adjourned the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

 Date 18 Jun 2024

Archie Walker, Chair

Attest: 

Cathy Bonde, Clerk