

Moab Valley Fire Protection District Commission Meeting

45 South 100 East, Moab Utah 84532

June 18, 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, Commissioner Charlie Harrison
3. Staff Present: Chief TJ Brewer, Administrator Cathy Bonde, Wildland Coordinator Clark Maughan. Battalion Chief Brandon McGuffee, Seasonal Firefighter Cole Smith. Joining later: Seasonal Firefighter Ben Ryan, Wildland Engine Boss Mark Marcum
4. Others Present: Mike Kelso

B. General Business:

1. Approval of Minutes – Commissioner McGann had a question in relation to Engine 466 being purchased with funds from the wildland program. It was confirmed and then clarified that Engine 446, the other heavy, was purchased prior and not with wildland program funds. Commissioner Harrison motioned to approve minutes from both the April 16 regular meeting and the May 31 special meeting. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
2. Introduction of Seasonal Firefighters – Clark Maughan introduced Cole Smith and Ben Ryan to the Commissioners. Both serve as seasonal firefighters to the wildland program. In addition to their wildland duties, training, and deployments, they are assisting with other tasks and maintenance at the Station. The regular schedule of the wildland crew when not deployed is Sunday through Wednesday. Commissioner McGann asked if there were currently any resources out. Chief Brewer stated not currently, but they did get back late last night from the Rabbit Valley Fire. Clark added that the Rabbit Valley Fire started right at the state line at the welcome near Utah sign and spread into Colorado. It is still undermined if it actually started in Utah or Colorado. Clark added that fire season is here. Discussion was had on other wildland fires in the area and Utah.
3. Citizens to be Heard – None wishing to speak.
4. Approval of Bills – Postponed until later in the meeting.

C. Chief's Report

1. Chief Brewer reported 69 calls to service since the last regular Commission meeting.
2. The Department currently has 32 members.

3. We have had 2 major incidents with fatalities where people in vehicles burned before we could get to them.
4. We have had an extremely high number of calls north of town in the I-70 area.
5. It is unusual to have 2 fatalities so close to each other, and Chief Brewer stated he appreciates the investment in mental health and the CORDICO app, and that firefighters are talking to each other in relation to the incidents. Commissioner McGann asked if it was the same people responding, and Chief Brewer stated for the most part they were the same volunteers.
6. Engine 466 is currently in Grand Junction with motor issues.
7. Engine 6-3 is in a spring shop in Oklahoma. We hope to have it back in the next week or two and will fly someone out to bring it back.
8. We took delivery of our new Type 1 engine. We have ordered equipment for both this engine and the Type-6. Delay in purchasing equipment for the new engine was due to waiting to find out if we are awarded a \$72,000.00 AIG grant. Grant award announcements have been delayed. If we receive the grant, we can still use the funds to purchase other equipment. We are underequipped on our other engines.
9. We were unsuccessful in the UTV grant we applied for. Grants we have received include:
 - CWDG fuels mitigation grant for \$1.2 million over 5 years for labor, supplies and a pickup truck.
 - WRI grant for just under \$14,000.00 which is also for fuels mitigation labor and supplies.

Commissioner McGann asked for more information on the WRI grant. Clark stated it is the Watershed Restorative Initiative from the State of Utah DNR for fuels mitigation. The CWDG is a federal grant. We should be able to meet both obligations. Cathy added that we anticipate the funds for WRI being available to us in July and the funds for CWDG not being available until fall. Chief Brewer added the WRI grant application was facilitated Clark, Kara Dohrenwend with Rim to Rim and Duncan Fuchise with the State. Clark and Kara were also instrumental in the CWDG grant.

- Cora Phillips with Grand County Emergency Management has received two hazmat grants. Through those grants we will be getting new hazmat suits and 10 meters. The grant was for 14 meters, but the sheriff's department wants to keep 4.

We are still waiting on an award decision for the UFDAG grant which is for \$10,000.00.

10. We are planning on selling Engines 10 and Engine 6-2.
11. Chief Brewer is promoting/lateralizing both Shea Walker and Ryan Burraston to Engine Captain positions. This will give us 7 day coverage with Shea being A Shift Sunday through Wednesday and Ryan being B Shift Wednesday through Saturday. Shea will take on the loose equipment and Ryan will continue to work on the fleet. We anticipate the need to eventually take some of the administrative duties off of both of them.
12. We completed our 2024 Junior Emergency Services Academy. We had 19 participants. We have had positive feedback from both kids and parents. We are teaching them important skills, and Chief Brewer stated he is thrilled to see this academy come to fruition as it is something he has wanted the Department to provide for many years.

D. Approval of Bills:

Commissioner Harrison motioned to approve bills. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

E. New Business:

1. Equipment Needs: Chief Brewer began the discussion of our current equipment situation and stated we need to make decisions on the direction we are going to go in.

Chief Brewer proposed selling Engine 6-2, the old Chief's truck, and Engine 10. When we discussed purchasing the new engine we just acquired, we considered selling a water tender, Engine 6-2 and Engine 10. A shortcoming of 6-2 is that it is not a 4-door, so we cannot send a crew out in it.

The heavy is in the shop in Grand Junction with a repair cost of \$23,000.00 or a minimum of \$80,000.00 if we choose to put a new Cummins motor in. Chief Brewer suggested we do the lower cost repair, look at purchasing a new engine, and sell this heavy as soon as we receive a new engine.

Chief Brewer presented a Type 1-3 demo model that is available from Siddons-Martin at a cost between \$550,000.00 and \$600,000.00. The engine is available in August as opposed to a 2-3 year wait for a new build.

Chief Brewer shared specs on the engine with Commissioners, and he and Clark Maughan answered a variety of questions.

Further discussion was had on the costs of repairs to our aging equipment and selling some of the older equipment.

Commissioner McGann asked how we would pay for a new engine and whether the engine would stay in District or not. Chief Brewer stated the engine would be used both in and out of District. He stated that with the current District boundaries, most of our calls have taken our engines out of District due to the high volume of incidents on I-70. Chief Brewer added that sending an engine out of District on wildland deployments is a way for us to make money. Commissioner Harrison stated deployments can help pay for the truck.

Chief Brewer presented an engine quote as of today. He said that the price of engines has gone up significantly in the last few years, and prices are expected to continue to rise. Brandon McGuffee added a similar demo engine was \$475,000.00 at the last winter fire school. Chief Brewer stated this is the only demo model Siddons-Martin has available now.

Commissioner Walker said with annexation and the District's needs, we should move forward as soon as possible with this purchase.

Discussion was had on the CWDG grant and how it supplements the cost of payroll for any employee working directly on the fuels mitigation project in the District as defined by the grant. Ideally, seasonal employees will also be firefighters in District and for the wildland program.

A decision was made to put an in frame, along with a murphy switch and alarm, in the heavy currently sitting in Grand Junction.

Chief Brewer stated the Type 1-3 engine presented for purchase is on a first come basis and there are other departments looking at it. If we are interested, we need to move forward.

Commissioner McGann said he would like to know how we would pay for it. Cathy stated we would need to take out a loan. If the terms are 6% for 15 years, we would be paying about \$37,000.00 annually. Commissioner Harrison suggested we use funds from the sale of some equipment as a down payment. Cathy added that every year we set aside \$100,000.00 for capital equipment, and we could choose to take the loan payment from that annual set-aside.

Commissioner Harrison made a motion to move forward with the acquisition.

Commissioner Walker seconded. Chief Brewer stated we would move forward with looking into financing and cost and keep Commissioners apprised as we go along.

Commissioners Harrison and Walker voted in favor of the motion. Commissioner McGann voted against. Motion carried. Cathy asked Commissioner McGann what it would take for him to be in favor. He stated he would like a better idea of where the money is going to come from. Commissioner Harrison said in selling 3 trucks, those funds would come back to the purchase of this engine. Commissioner McGann stated this leads to another concern which is replacing engines that are normally in District for an engine that will be going out of District. He added that he feels the increase in repairs comes from sending engines out of District. Chief Brewer stated that with repair costs, you also have to take into consideration the comparison of different styles of mechanics. He stated that Cody was a very expensive mechanic in the way he operated.

2. Station 2 – Commissioner Walker stated that Station 2 is an eyesore, and we need to address it. Chief Brewer said there have been issues with leaks, mostly plumbing. Discussion was also had on replacing the roof, which is not warranted. Brandon McGuffee added the bay doors are too small for most of our apparatus. Chief Brewer stated addressing Station 2 is dependent on how much we want to invest in the current building. He suggested we don't invest too deeply in the building and suggested we apply a fresh coat of paint and clean it up. He reminded Commissioners that the property is not ours, and that each time he seems to make headway with the City in relation to the property, the City manager leaves. Chief Brewer suggested we go to CIB if we choose to replace Station 2. This project is not currently on the CIB list, but we may be able to get this project on the list next year. As the property is not ours, we may want to consider a different piece of property if the City won't deed this parcel to us.

Commissioner McGann said we may want to consider a parcel to better serve northern San Juan County if we annex there. Chief Brewer stated San Juan County has set aside an acre at the health clinic location. Discussion was had on boundaries if we annex northern San Juan County. Station 3 was discussed in terms of the land donation made to the District restricting its use for a fire station. Thompson Fire Station was also discussed.

Commissioner Walker referred to State Trust Lands as a potential option in acquiring land for a station. Chief Brewer said he would inquire further.

F. Old Business:

1. URS Tier 2 Contribution Changes – Cathy presented changes being made to URS contributions beginning July 1, 2024 as well as the history of the pickup and the financial impact based on options available to the District.

Commissioner Harrison motioned to pick up the full 4.73% for Tier 2 Firefighters. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Walker motioned to contribute .7% to a 401(K) for Tier 2 Public Employees to offset the .7% these employees will be required to contribute to their retirement. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Salary Survey – Cathy updated Commissioners on the salary survey process. Employees have participated in a jobs values survey and are now in the process of doing individual interviews in order to draft job descriptions as well as skills, experience and training needed to perform each role.

3. Procurement Policy – Cathy informed Commissioners that she is looking at both the County's written procurement policy and a procurement policy template from UASD. She has not yet had the time to draft a policy for consideration, but the approved flow chart gives us guidance.

4. Annexation – Commissioner Walker stated that the County has been discussing annexation, and they are not going to support us to the extent we had hoped. Chief Brewer said if a decision is not made by July of this year, the conversation on annexation is done. It has consumed incredible amounts of time on the part of the District.

Chief Brewer went over the majority of what is being offered through the County's subcommittee and as presented by Mallory Nassau and Quinn Hall. He clarified that the offer has not been approved by the full County Commission.

Discussion was had on funding, dispatch, the Lower Valley contract, and the airport.

Chief Brewer stated that tax revenue from annexation would be around \$216,000.00 taking out the portion of Grand County that Castle Valley Fire would like to annex. Chief Brewer said he does not look at this tax revenue as extra income in that we can easily swallow it up. Cathy stated the expenses for Thompson in 2023 were \$63,809.00 and we would be absorbing all costs for Thompson Fire. We are looking at additional employees to help with coverage for annexation will also be an added expense.

Cathy informed Commissioners that our tax rate has fallen again this year. The decrease in tax rate amounts to a loss of \$100,000.00 in tax revenue we would be receiving annually if annexation had been completed last year. We will need to go for a tax increase. Cathy stated that if we froze our tax rate when we last did an increase in the end of 2021, we would be receiving an additional \$400,000.00 annually in tax revenue. Discussion was had on a tax increase and options with freezing the tax rate.

Commissioners discussed the financial contribution the County is offering. Chief Brewer stated it amounts to \$90,000.00 in addition to the \$200,000.00 we requested this year for a total of \$290,000.00 in 2024. In 2025 the County would contribute \$100,000.00, and that would be the end of the County's financial contribution. Cathy informed Commissioners

that the \$290,000.00 figure comes from data she has supplied to the County in the last couple of years that calculate the cost of responding to calls out of our current District but in the area of Grand County we would be annexing. Chief Brewer stated that between the costs we will absorb with Thompson, and the new costs for dispatch and election, a lot is being chiseled out of the additional tax revenue we will receive with annexation.

Cathy provided data on our tax rate. It has fallen to .000398 for 2024, and when we did our tax rate increase for 2022, our tax rate was .000543. Discussion was had on revenue from our tax rate increase and increased income. Cathy and Chief Brewer will look at the 2022 audit which included our tax increase and provide Commissioners with an assessment of revenue.

Commissioner Walker asked if we need to vote on the supplemental annexation agreement with Grand County. Chief Brewer stated at this point he just needs a nod to move forward as the MOU still needs to go to legal and then be approved by the County Commission. If our Commission is good with the terms laid out, it will go to legal to draft the MOU. Commissioner Harrison stated he feels the financial contribution is on the cheap side. Commissioner Walker said he feels the same, but doesn't think the County is going to meet us where we feel the agreement needs to be to meet operation obligations.

Commissioner McGann asked what we would get from annexation of northern San Juan County. Cathy said that when calculating based on the same tax base in northern San Juan County that pays tax into Grand County schools it comes to about the same amount as we received right now with our MOU with San Juan County. That amount is \$46,000.00. This was using last year's tax rate. Our rate has since fallen. We don't have exact numbers yet for property value in the portion of San Juan County being considered for annexation, so looking at San Juan properties paying tax into Grand County for schools is the closest way to calculate at this time. Discussion was had on how tax revenue would come to us through San Juan County and how our set tax rate will apply to all properties annexed.

Chief Brewer stated he has not come across a fire department, whether service district, city or county that would cover the area we are considering with annexation.

Cathy stated that our current budget has a contribution of \$200,000.00 from Grand County, so the increase in tax revenue is ultimately a wash budget-wise and does not take into consideration the additional ongoing costs associated with annexation.

Chief Brewer stated that we made our last SCBA payment which was approximately \$34,000.00, so if we move forward with the Type 1-3 engine we could simply roll that budgeted payment to the new piece of equipment. Cathy added that is the way she looks at loans. Once one piece of equipment is paid off, we roll that payment to a new needed piece of equipment.

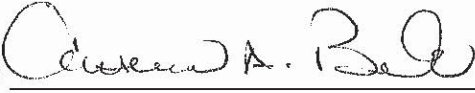
The general consensus from Commissioners was to move the Grand County annexation process forward with the MOU going to legal for drafting.

H. Adjourn:

1. Chair Walker adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

 Date 07/10/24

Archie Walker, Chair

Attest: 

Cathy Bonde, Clerk