

Moab Valley Fire Protection District Commission Meeting

45 South 100 East, Moab Utah 84532

September 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, Commissioner Charlie Harrison
3. Staff Present: Chief TJ Brewer, Battalion Chief Brandon McGuffee, Administrator Cathy Bonde
4. Others Present: Members of Grand County Fire Protection Committee-Kevin Walker, Trish Hedin, Bill Winfield; Cristin Hofine, Grand County Attorney's Office; Quinn Hall, Acting Grand County Administrator; Thompson Spring Fire Chief Mark Marcum; Mike Kelso

B. Annexation:

Annexation discussion was temporarily postponed until all members of Grand County's Fire Protection committee were present.

C. General Business:

1. Approval of Minutes – Commissioner McGann had a question in the minutes relating to statements of needs the department was unable to afford. Commissioners postponed voting on the minutes until the reference could be located in the minutes.
2. Citizens to be Heard – None wishing to speak.

D. Chief's Report

1. Chief Brewer reported 32 calls to service since the last regular Commission meeting.
2. Time has been consumed with annexation.

E. New Business:

1. Annexation Public Hearing Presentation – Cathy said she wanted to take some time to ensure commissioners and staff were on the same page as to how the public hearing would be handled including limiting the time each person could speak and whether or not we should have them fill out cards before they speak. Cathy added with cards we could have them state where their property is so we know if they are in the proposed annexation area or in our current district. Commissioner Harrison suggested having the proposed annexation map on the screen during the hearing. Cathy added that according to law, protests need to be in writing, so we will want to be sure to inform people of that. It was agreed to use cards, and Brandon will be the timekeeper.

2. Equipment Loan – Cathy stated she was hoping to have further information on loan options for the BME engine by the time of this meeting, but there is no further information to share yet. She spoke with Zions Bank a while back about a loan for this engine and was advised to check back in September since we didn't have a firm date on when the engine would be available. We continue to be told by the manufacturer that it will be November or December. The Fed is meeting this week, and there is a chance the interest rate will go down. At the time of the original inquiry with Zions Bank, 4% was given as an estimate for interest.

Chief Brewer stated that part of the conversation with the new engine includes putting our current heavy out at Thompson. That would give Thompson a wild land truck, a rescue truck and a Type 1 engine.

F. Annexation:

1. Cristin Hofine with the County attorney's office stated she has drafted a document in relation to transfer of assets. Title 11 of Utah code allows the transfer of assets. The agreement includes how personnel will be handled. An escrow fund has been written in to cover a transition period. Cristin stated the timing of transfer of assets would be up to the Grand County commission, but it would be unusual to transfer them prior to annexation as was eluded in the fire department's letter to the county. Cathy clarified that it was our intent to have a guarantee that the assets would transfer if we annexed prior to our final vote to approve annexation. Cristin stated the document contains sections for cash, assets, and dissolution of Thompson Springs Special Service Fire District. The document is still under legal review by the county.

Grand County Commissioner Bill Winfield asked about the list of assets. Cristin Hofine stated they would be part of exhibit A. Exhibit B would be the amount of money associated with the assets and terms for how the escrow account would be set up. A brief discussion was had on the physical assets involved.

Cathy mentioned the right of first refusal on the building currently housing the sheriff's and attorney's offices. Cristin said she is still working through how to best represent that aspect as there is no guarantee that option will become available to Moab Fire since it is dependent on whether or not Grand County decides to dispose of that asset in the future. The current draft document is contingent on annexation, but the right of first refusal doesn't fit into that category.

2. Moab Fire Commissioner Archie Walker stated the annexation issue has been going on for far too long, and we need to make it happen. He asked the Grand County committee members how they see us moving forward.

Referring to the letter Moab Fire sent Grand County, Moab Fire Commissioner Jim McGann said when fire commissioners went to look at the Thompson station, they estimated costs at between \$150,000.00 and \$200,000.00. The letter requested \$450,000.00 for the investment in Thompson Fire. He asked for clarification on the final number. Discussion was had on items discussed during the station visit and items in the letter.

Grand County Commissioner Trisha Hedin asked about county representation at the Thompson station visit, and it was clarified they were at an earlier visit.

Grand County Commissioner Kevin Walker asked about the options laid out in the letter, and Cathy stated there are three options. They are 1) the County does all of the work required to fix the building and property as well as provide equipment needed for Thompson Fire to function along with Moab Fire, 2) the county provides work for the grading and drainage needed, and provide Moab Fire with \$350,000.00 for the other items and issues that need to be addressed, and 3) Grand County provide Moab Fire with \$450,000.00 and Moab Fire takes care of everything. The letter included a list of items that were code violations, security issues, use issues and equipment needs.

Grand County Commissioner Trisha Hedin asked how the issues were compiled. Moab Fire Commissioner Archie Walker stated the list was compiled by the fire department, and Cathy added the code violations were also compiled by the fire department. Grand County Commissioner Hedin also asked where the cost figures came from. Chief Brewer stated that both Brandon McGuffee and Shea Walker did research to come up with estimates of cost.

Grand County Commissioner Trisha Hedin asked about the possibility of both Moab Fire and Grand County getting bids on the work. Fire Commissioners Walker and Harrison both stated there is no longer enough time between now and the approval of annexation. Commissioner Hedin added she wants to be discerning with taxpayer money.

Fire Commissioner Jim McGann returned to the previous conversation of cost being \$150,000.00 and \$200,000.00. Moab Fire Commissioner Archie Walker stated that was for some of the items on the list. Moab Fire Commissioner McGann said there was an agreement that some of the items on the original list weren't a necessity.

Brandon McGuffee and Chief Brewer stated that with annexation, Moab Fire is donating a fire truck to Thompson Fire that we would otherwise sell for much needed income. Chief Brewer stated extrication equipment in order for Thompson Fire's to match ours will cost over \$100,000.00. Thompson's SCBAs do not match up with ours, and that issue also needs to be addressed.

Grand County Commissioner Bill Winfield stated they would like to know clearly what Moab Fire wants, and then the county committee needs to go discuss that. He said a hard number is needed. He added that he has been to the building in Thompson and is aware of the grading issues. He felt estimates from either his or Moab Fire Commissioner Archie Walker's companies would not vary much.

Chief Brewer stated the number is \$450,000.00. He said the letter does not put everything in. The financial proposal made by the county in the MOU primarily addressed response to calls. The operating costs of Thompson were not included. There is a shortfall in addressing Thompson needs. The list in the letter is to make sure we are operationally ready. Cathy added that the 2023 cost of operating Thompson Fire as about \$70,000.00. Grand County Commissioner Bill Winfield asked how much of that was wages, and Cathy stated it was around \$27,000.00. Grand County Commissioner Winfield suggested that theoretically approximately \$100,000.00 of the \$450,000.00 would cover 3 years of wages for the Thompson Fire chief.

Chief Brewer stated if we were to not annex and bill the county for fire response at the \$290,000.00 the county proposed, two years of billing would equate to \$580,000.00 and

Moab Fire is asking for \$450,000.00. It is more cost effective to the county than us not annexing.

Cristin Hofine asked for clarification that the \$450,000.00 is in addition to the \$290,000.00 in the MOU. Chief Brewer confirmed that it is.

Grand County Commissioner Kevin Walker asked how much of the \$450,000.00 was for equipment. Chief Brewer said \$100,000.00 or more. Moab Fire Commissioners Walker and Harrison added that the extrication equipment at Thompson is different from the equipment Moab Fire has and is trained on, and the concern is a safety issue.

Grand County Commissioner Kevin Walker asked if there were other issues that needed to be addressed. Chief Brewer stated the assets and issues with Thompson Fire are the last issues needing to be addressed. Moab Fire Commissioner Archie Walker stated there will need to be MOUs with neighboring fire entities, but Moab Fire will be the one needing to work those out. Chief Brewer stated that in the haste to move the annexation along, in our meetings with Quinn and Mallory we put a lot of issues off to the side that we have been very concerned about. There still are some other concerns, but the assets and Thompson are the last ones that need to be addressed prior to annexation. Grand County Commissioner Kevin Walker asked when these issues need to be nailed down. Cathy stated we are scheduling a meeting for our final vote on annexation on November 4th and we would want everything finalized by then.

Chief Brewer added our public hearing on annexation is September 30th, and he invited Grand County Commissioners to attend. Grand County Commissioner Bill Winfield asked if protests were anticipated. Cathy stated she has been fielding many inquiries and has received 2 written protests so far. Concerns include distance and time it would take to respond as well as citizens closer to Green River Fire. Grand County Commissioner Winfield proposed that by putting MOUs in place and providing improvements to the Thompson facility we are improving service.

Chief Brewer stated that with the required response annexation brings, his intent is to ensure citizens in our current district do not suffer reduced service. That equates to a need for more equipment and personnel.

Grand County Commissioner Trisha Hedin suggested the county subcommittee meet to discuss this final annexation issue. She stated she wants the annexation to take place, and that her job is to be discerning about how taxpayer funds are spent.

Cathy stated that the Thompson issue has been part of the discussion for over two years. The property was evaluated by county personnel, and yet nothing has been done to address the problems. That is the frustration that has led us to this point as we are coming up to a deadline to make a final decision

Grand County Commissioner Kevin Walker stated the county has been aware of the issue and that some funds should be used to address problems, but the number in mind was somewhat lower.

Chief Brewer said he would be willing to meet with the subcommittee to further discuss the Thompson needs.

County representatives left the meeting at 4:42 p.m.

Moab Fire Commissioners discussed annexation assets as well as the annexation MOU already approved by both commissions.

G. Return to General Business:

1. Cathy provided Commissioners with a list of bills from the previous meeting. They were not approved then, so they need to be approved at this meeting along with the current bills. Commissioner McGann asked about wildland expenses as the department has had deployments, but he didn't see expenses. Cathy explained that deployment expenses are charged to the credit card which is processed once per month and that wildland travel expenses are reflected in this month's billing transaction spreadsheet.

2. Commissioner McGann asked for clarification in relation to the statement in the minutes referring to removing needs from the budget. Chief Brewer stated that every year he and Cathy put together a budget reflecting needs that may include items like repairs to Station 2, more fire prevention, another piece of equipment, and every year we have to trim items out because we don't have the money. Commissioner McGann asked if we would have a list of those needs, and Cathy stated we have already gotten budget requests from employees and we will not be able to meet all those requests. Chief Brewer added some items that we keep putting off have a safety impact such as having an engineer assess our tower and replacing tires within their 7 year window. We chop training opportunities every year. Cathy said that she and Chief do a lot of cutting in the budget before it even comes to Commissioners.

Commissioner Harrison moved to approve the minutes from August 20, 2024. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Commissioner McGann asked about new tires purchased for the new engine. Chief Brewer said it was a safety issue as the engine would slide when it was taken out. Brandon McGuffee added that the engine came with street tires that were inadequate for emergency response, and they should never have been on that truck.

4. Commissioner McGann motioned to approve the bills from July 11 through August 13. Commissioner Harrison seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

5. Commissioner Harrison motioned to approve the bills from August 14 through September 12. Commissioner McGann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

H. Old Business:

1. Salary Survey – Chief Brewer stated we are still working on it but it has been put on the back burner due to annexation. Commissioner Walker asked if we are looking at big increases, and Cathy stated we have to stay within budget which doesn't allow for big increases. Chief Brewer stated the budget is nowhere near what the survey is proposing.

Commissioner McGann said he did talk to Mike Swallow about where the salary comparisons came from. He stated they were places like Cedar City, Kanab, Lehi, Murray that are paid departments. Chief Brewer stated that Cedar City and Kanab are not full paid departments and Cedar City is structured a lot like us. Commissioner McGann conveyed that Mike Swallow stated that as we move to a paid department then wages go up. Commissioner McGann said we are not there quite yet, but we are starting to move in that direction. Chief Brewer added that the cost of living also needs to be taken into consideration when looking at compensation. Commissioner McGann said he asked Mike

Swallow about that comparing places like Price and Toole, and Mike Swallow said it is a wash. Commissioners and staff were surprised by that statement, and some research will be done. Chief Brewer stated we are receiving good guidelines and information from the salary survey, but we also need to use our judgement.

2. Procurement Policy – No further update.

I. New Business:

1. Annexation Public Hearing Preparation-Previously Discussed

2. Equipment Loan-Previously Discussed

3. 2025 Draft Budget Discussion – Cathy provided Commissioners with a working draft of the 2025 budget and 2024 draft amended budget. Chief Brewer suggested providing Commissioners with an overview of the draft and follow up with a budget workshop. Commissioner McGann said it would be valuable to talk about the list of needs in order to get an idea of where we should focus budget wise.

Cathy took Commissioners through the draft 2025 budget including highlighting some changes in the budget format that further delineate some expenses and income. A COLA of 2.4% is reflected in wages, and there is the addition of a deputy chief to staff. The current 2025 draft budget is short approximately \$15,000.00.

Cathy stated that the current draft 2024 amended budget comes out in the black at around \$41,000.00. Those funds can be rolled into our fund balance that we can draw on in the future if necessary or transferred to our capital projects fund. Cathy went over some highlighted amended budget line items with Commissioners.

J. Adjourn:

1. Chair Walker adjourned the meeting at 5:26 p.m.

Date

Archie Walker, Chair

Attest: _____

Cathy Bonde, Clerk