

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

## **PUBLIC HEARING-ANNEXATION**

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

**September 30, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.**

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

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Archie Walker at 6:00 p.m.
2. Commissioners Present: Chairman Archie Walker, Commissioner Jim McGann (electronically)
3. Staff Present: Chief TJ Brewer, Administrator Cathy Bonde, Battalion Chief Brandon McGuffee
4. Commissioner Absent: Commissioner Charlie Harrison

### **B. PUBLIC HEARING-ANNEXATION:**

1. Commission Chairman Archie Walker opened the public hearing on annexation at 6:00 p.m. He thanked audience members for attending. He stated that the purpose of the public hearing is to receive public comment on Moab Valley Fire Protection District's proposed annexation, and he provided background on Grand County's request for Moab Valley Fire Protection District to annex some areas of Grand County into its district.

Commissioner Walker informed the public that protests to the annexation must be in writing, and he encouraged anyone who planned to protest at the public hearing to follow up with the protest in writing.

Commissioner Walker directed those wishing to speak to fill out a public comment card and bring the card to the front of the room.

2. Gene Ciarus addressed his concerns with annexation. He stated he has property in Willow Basin, and he said Moab Valley Fire Protection District is unable to service his property. He stated that until his property can be properly serviced, he should not be charged a fire tax. He had concerns about an engine being able to access property in Willow Basin as well as the time it would take services to get to his property.

Mr. Ciarus asked how the rate on the mailing was calculated. Cathy Bonde stated those numbers come from the county treasurer, Chris Kauffman, in the same way that figures would be provided for a tax increase. Mr. Ciarus said he inquired with the office and was told the numbers did not come from them. Cathy again stated the numbers came from the treasurer's office, and she offered to share the email she received from the county treasurer containing the information with Mr. Ciarus.

Commissioner Walker thanked Mr. Ciarus for his comments.

3. Craig Lechleiter spoke on behalf of himself and his wife, Wendy. He stated they live in Green River. He asked how much revenue would be provided to the district if the annexation goes through. Commissioner McGann stated at one time it was estimated to be \$220,000.00. Cathy Bonde clarified that with the anticipation of our tax rate falling next year as it has the last several years, the revenue will be closer to \$185,000.00.

Mr. Lechleiter asked how many of the dwellings were occupied as the tax amounts are different based on primary and secondary dwellings. Cathy Bonde stated when tax bills are received by citizen, if the property is their primary residence, being where they actually reside and vote, the taxing value of the property is discounted. If the property is a secondary property, meaning not where the owner actually resides, the property is taxed at its full value.

Mr. Lechleiter said their property is on Hasting Road on the edge of the county. Fortunately they have not had any fire issues. Mr. Lechleiter and Chief Brewer had a conversation on how emergency dispatch would work with annexation. Discussion was also had on the possibility of a future MOU with Green River Fire Department. Commissioner Walker added that Green River Fire Department is not required to respond to fires in Grand County, and an MOU would clearly define expectations of both departments.

Commissioner Walker and Chief Brewer thanked Mr. Lechleiter for his comments.

3. Petenia Pfnister addressed the commission. She stated she has property on the north end of the mountains, Castleton, and along Highway 128. She said she would like to have some questions answered in order to complete her written submittal.

She said that if something happens on most of the annexation map, state or federal resources would take care of those incidents. Her question was how annexation impacts the response to these areas and if constituents are being double taxed. Commissioner Walker stated that we will be required to respond to structure fires. The state and federal agencies do not respond to structure fires. Ms. Pfnister asked for clarification on response to land fires. Chief Brewer stated Moab Fire currently has a contract with the state to help them on non-structure fires.

Ms. Pfnister asked if Moab Fire had the apparatus to respond to remote areas. Commissioner Walker replied that we do.

Ms. Pfnister asked why Moab Fire was looking for more work and stated she had heard concerns about weekend coverage. Chief Brewer said there is a need to cover Grand County with emergency services and this is a step in the right direction. He added that at the moment our personnel are out on a rescue call on BLM property. Commissioner Walker shared that Moab Fire responds to vehicle accidents and extrication along with residential fire, and we assist in suppression of land fires.

Ms. Pfnister asked if a campfire gets out of control on the mountain, who does she call. Chief Brewer stated she would call 911 and if it was on private property, we would go. He added we have engines that can make it up there. Ms. Pfnister asked what State Forestry and Fire is responsible for. Commissioner Walker said they are responsible for public lands and we are responsible for private.



Ms. Pfnister asked again why Moab Fire was trying to do more work. Chief Brewer stated there is a gap in coverage, and Moab Fire told the county we are responding to incidents out in the county a lot. The county asked us to look into annexation, and that is why we are going through the annexation process.

Ms. Pfnister stated she understands that the county has not been “ponying up” with the cost of Moab Fire’s responses in the county, and asked if they are now contributing the cost to Moab Fire. She said perhaps the beef is with the county and not the taxpayers. Commissioner Walker said part of this process is to clean that up.

Commissioner McGann stated that we bill the county each year for calls out of district, and those funds come out of the county’s general fund which causes taxpayers in our district to be taxed twice for fire services, once for the district, and once for areas out of the district. Ms. Pfnister asked if that would stop with annexation, and the reply from Commissioner Walker was yes; that is the goal.

Ms. Pfnister asked how Castle Valley Fire is affected by annexation as she said she already pays a tax to Castle Valley Fire. Chief Brewer stated if she is in Castle Valley Fire’s district, she will only pay a tax to them. Discussion was had on Ms. Pfnister’s parcels, and Cathy Bonde stated Castleton is not currently in Castle Valley’s fire district. She added that there are 23 Castleton area parcels in the proposed annexation area. Chief Brewer stated he would like to follow up with Ms. Pfnister on the taxing district her properties fall into.

Ms. Pfnister asked what the bottom line was in relation to Moab Fire wanting to annex. Chief Brewer stated that every year we go into negotiation with the county to cover costs of responding outside our district and the process is tiresome. The easiest way for both entities to not have that fight or negotiation every year is to annex. Annexation has been explored for years. We have looked at pass through taxing districts, we suggested to the county they get quotes from Unified to see what the cost would be for another fire department to provide services, and the conclusion was annexation is the best option. Commissioner McGann stated the bottom line for him is taxpayers within our district not paying for responses outside of the district.

Commissioner Walker thanked Ms. Pfnister for her comments

4. Gayna Dunham Salinas stated she has property in the forgotten area of Grand County near Green River. She asked what Grand County fire currently covers. Chief Brewer referred to the annexation map showing the current district boundaries and stated Moab Fire currently has an agreement with Grand County to cover areas outside our district. Chief Brewer detailed additional aspects of the annexation map. Chief Brewer and Commissioner Walker clarified that Grand County does not have a fire department.

Ms. Dunham Salinas asked about any relationship with Arches National Park. Chief Brewer stated Moab Fire has an agreement with them. They have certain rules and regulations, and if they request our services, we go.

Ms. Dunham Salinas stated the Green River area is far from Moab Fire’s stations, and she would like to see an MOU with Green River’s fire department written before annexation. She would like the MOU to reimburse Green River for incidents they go to in Grand County.

Commissioner Walker thanked Ms. Dunham Salinas for her comments.

Commissioner Walker again encouraged people to provide comments and protests in writing.

5. From the audience, it was asked if Grand County reimburses Moab Fire for calls outside the district. Commissioner Walker stated that partially they currently do. Commissioner McGann added that the reimbursement has increased over the last 5 years.

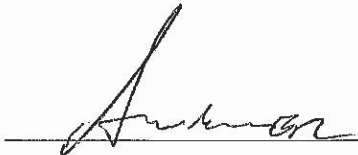
Cathy Bonde added that for 2024 Moab Fire billed Grand County \$200,000.00 for fires outside of our district, and Grand County paid the district \$150,000.00. She said Moab Fire's fee schedule is used to determine cost, and the cost is actually closer to \$290,000.00.

Cathy Bonde reiterated that Moab Fire encourages people to provide written protests. If protests equate to a certain amount, legally Moab Fire cannot annex. She added Moab Fire has received 3 written protests to date.


6. There was a general comment from the audience that the mailing could have been clearer. She stated people get lost in the legalese, and it becomes difficult to figure out what it means. Cathy Bonde stated Moab Fire did what was legally required, but the point is well taken and understood.

**G. Adjourn:**

1. With no further comment, Chairman Walker adjourned the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

 \_\_\_\_\_ Date 4 November 2024

**Archie Walker, Chair**

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

**Cathy Bonde, Clerk**