

CENTRAL YAVAPAI FIRE DISTRICT

FIRE BOARD

SPECIAL SESSION

February 01, 2011

**MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Board Chairman John Range called the Fire Board Special Meeting to order on Tuesday, February 01, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. at the Central Yavapai Fire Training Academy, 9601 E. Valley Road, Prescott Valley, Arizona.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Board Chairman John Range, Board Clerk Bob Gardiner, Board Members Tony Reiter and Bob Page

Members Absent: None

Staff: Chief Michael Parrish, Assistant Chief Mary Dalton and Administrative Manager Judy Wright.

**3. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

Engineer Zach Fields addressed the Board and said that he was attending this meeting in support of Chief Parrish.

Captain Brad Davis addressed the Board stating that he was an employee of the District for 19 years and was there to support his Chief.

**4. VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A. Tony Reiter made a motion to go into Executive Session pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431-431.03(A)(1) re: Performance Issues with Fire Chief. Bob Page seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

AYES: Range, Gardiner, Reiter, Page

NAYS: None

At this time, Chief Parrish asked that this issue be discussed in public session. The Chairman stated that is was the Chief's privilege to do so.

The Board then adjourned out of Executive Session and back into Public Session.

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Possible Discussion and Action Re: Performance Issues with Fire Chief**

Chairman Range stated that he had called Chief Parrish and told him that several phone calls had been received by one of the directors from the rank and file that Chief Parrish was visiting the stations and criticizing the Board of Directors for how it was handling the Fire Chief Selection Process. He stated that he had mentioned at that time that Chief Parrish may be giving the impression that he was criticizing the Board and also that discussing the process while it was still ongoing may be giving the appearance of interference in the process and also told him that this may be causing dissention among the rank and file and casting a shadow on the Board to the rank and file and asked him to stop these visits. Mr. Range said that he told Chief Parrish that if he had any questions about the process he should address the Board. He stated that Chief Parrish agreed to stop the meetings and this is why this Board Meeting was called. He said that this is just one of the reasons and he would like the Chief to let the Board know what his concerns were with the Fire Chief process and what exactly he discussed with the rank and file.

Chief Parrish then addressed the Board and said that he did not recall the exact words of his conversation with Mr. Range but he did agree to stop meeting with the crews. He said that he had met with three engine crews and was scheduled to meet with the A-Shift crews the same day that he received Mr. Range's phone call and therefore cancelled those meetings.

He advised the Board that in his discussion with the crews, as he had previously stated, he told them that he did not agree with interviewing the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> candidates, that the plan was to interview the top 3.

He told the Board that at no time did he tell the crews of the strong perception that the Board and some others wanted to hire a different candidate or that a candidate who had failed the assessment center was to be interviewed by the Board, when one of our employees was not even allowed to test. He also stated that he never told them that the Board was willing to disregard input from the Fire Chief Selection Committee which comprised CYFD members, Union reps, Board Members and Town of Prescott Valley officials.

He continued by saying there is an obvious breach in the Chain of Command – that employees should not be going to the Fire Board unless agreed to by the Fire Chief and that those employees who are doing this will be disciplined. He further stated that it was obvious that this was how the Board Members found out about his meeting with the crews, that certain employees are going to the Board with a personal agenda and certain Board Member(s) are supporting this.

He then went on to say that he started off by saying that he was pleased with the process and he wanted to thank Mr. Page for his involvement in the process, how engaged he was and some of the really good questions that he asked showed that he was interested and concerned that we choose the best person for this position. He said that he really does not know Bob Gardiner very well as he is new, but he does know that Bob can make a decision on his own and usually backs it up and gives us justification as to why he made his decisions and that is appreciated. As for our Chairman, he was very impressed with his patience as the Chairman had a lot more patience than he (Chief Parrish) would have in this situation. He gives everyone the opportunity to say what's on their minds and listens to what everyone has to say. He then said that there is someone

out there (and it is not our union chapter) that is a poison to this District. He said that he has a very good working relationship with our chapter and this could be verified with Mr. Tharp or Mr. Brown. He said that when he refers to the union he is not referring to our chapter. He stated that he asked the crews to make sure that the information that they receive should come from either Mr. Tharp, Mr. Brown, one of the three trustees, the Chief or anyone he has delegated to disperse information. If this information is not from one of these, then they need to be careful. He said that we have something out there that is a detriment to this organization and that he asked everyone to be patient and said that there would be a good outcome, there always is. He said that any of the top three candidates we have will do a good job for us.

Chief Parrish then informed the Board that it is his responsibility to keep all members of the District informed and since there were numerous items that were being said about the process he thought it would be in everyone's best interest to dispel the rumors which were:

- There was a conspiracy to keep a certain candidate out
- Chief Dalton was an evaluator with an impact on the outcome (actually she was a role player with no input or impact on the outcome)
- It appears that the Fire Board has a certain candidate in mind despite the outcome of testing
- There was a disregard for the process – selecting the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> candidate
- The process was tainted
- The Fire Board does not follow policy (I think it is a great idea to set a good example)
- Evaluators were picked to keep certain people out

At this point, Mr. Range asked if Chief Parrish had discussed these items with crews and he replied that he did not that this was what he was hearing and decided that he needed to talk to the crews.

He then asked the Board why they decided to use this venue to discuss his performance vs coming in to see him – was it to embarrass him or to damage his reputation? He said that he would never do this to any of the staff.

Mr. Range then advised Chief Parrish that the only way the Board can talk to him as a group is in a meeting and that this was fact finding, that they wanted to talk to him as a Board.

Chief Parrish said that Mr. Page was the only Board Member who asked for his input during the whole process. Mr. Range then said that Chief Parrish had been in all the meetings and could have spoken up. Chief Parrish said that he had commented on the fact that the Board wanted to interview the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> candidates and he did not think it was a good idea. At this time, Mr. Page asked for a moment to say that had he known that one of the candidates had failed the assessment center, he would not have asked to interview that candidate. However, he stated that he felt that this was not told to the Board. He said that he knew that there were some low scores, but did not realize that anyone had failed. He was concerned as to how the information that someone had failed got out to the troops when this was discussed in executive session. Chief Parrish said that he had the same concerns as he knew that this information did not come from himself, Brenda Tranchina or Judy Wright. Mr. Page then said that it did not come from the Board. Chief Parrish responded that he wondered the same thing and that he had his thoughts as to how the information got out but that he would hold those thoughts at this time.

Chief Parrish went on to say that when he talked to the crews he had no intention to discredit the Board, he just wanted to find out what was going on. We have a Board Member and someone or some group in the shadows that have damaged our reputation. He said that evaluators have been accused of being less than professional in the assessment center process. He feels that things are going on that he can't control. He said that he needs the support of the Board Members to control personnel going to the Board. We do have a chain of command in place and this should not be happening. He told the Board that we have contacted other Departments regarding their help for our upcoming Battalion Chief Testing process and one well respected chief has said that he would not be a part of our testing again. He said that we have definitely lost the respect of a lot of people in the Fire Service.

He then said that he has been disciplined once in 32 years in the Fire Service and that was about snow chains on one of the vehicles. He felt that he did not do anything wrong in meeting with the crews. He told the Board that he is not their poison but he felt that there was a Board Member who was and someone or something in rank and file that are contributing to this.

Mr. Range reiterated that this was in no way a disciplinary hearing, it was just a fact finding meeting since this is their only forum to meet.

Board Member Reiter then asked Chief Parrish why he thought this was a disciplinary procedure. Chief Parrish responded that it was because of the way he was approached to discuss his performance issues with regard to recent events surrounding the Fire Chief Selection process. Mr. Reiter then asked if Chief Parrish had picked the Chiefs as evaluators in the process or did Brenda. Chief Parrish responded that Brenda has taken care of the whole process.

Chief Parrish then thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to say his peace. He said that he is proud of this organization and the hard working members that have contributed to the reputation that we have had for quite some time and that he hated to see the reputation of this District destroyed by a few who have selfish wants after most of us have worked very hard to gain the respect of our peers, brothers and sisters. He asked for the Board's help and support to keep that reputation and assured the Board that we support them.

Mr. Range then said that he had another issue that had come to light – that one of Chief Parrish's subordinates had contacted one of the candidates and told him that he should drop out of the process. At this point Mr. Whittington advised that the agenda item was to discuss the Chief's performance issues and that to discuss this new item, the Board would have to tie it to the performance issues. Mr. Range said that he believed that this issue was tied to the Chief's performance issues since this was something that he had asked the Chief to look into. He felt that it was inappropriate for one of the subordinates to go to one of the candidates and ask him to drop out.

Chief Parrish stated that he did speak to the person in question and was told that because the person in question felt that he had a good relationship with the candidate he told him "this is what I will have to do if this goes any further...I don't want to embarrass you but this is what I will have to do". There was no intent to intimidate the candidate or tell him what to do. He was just stating what he would have to do if this went any further. Chief Parrish further stated that this person in question is not an intimidating kind of guy.

Board Member Gardiner said that he had spoken with the candidate who said that he felt intimidated. Mr. Gardiner then stated that if anyone had received such a phone call that they would probably feel intimidated and would affect their decision. He said that the candidate had provided him with documentation via email about this phone call and also told Mr. Gardiner that he had been told that the other candidate had withdrawn, which was not true and that also affected his decision. Mr. Gardiner also said that unless Chief Parrish instructed his subordinate to make this call, then this person was going outside of the Chain of Command.

Mr. Whittington advised that unless the person who violated this was the Chief then the Board needed to be careful about the discussion.

Mr. Reiter said that they were trying to determine whether the subordinate was given direction by the Chief. Mr. Gardiner said that he believed Chief Parrish when he said that he had no involvement in this issue.

Chairman Range asked if Chief Parrish considered this issue closed. Chief Parrish responded that he did not give any direction for this phone call to be made. Mr. Gardiner then asked if there was any discipline given for this person going outside the Chain of Command and Chief Parrish replied that he had dealt with it. Mr. Reiter then asked what was done and Chief Parrish responded that he had counseled the individual that it was his option. He then asked Mr. Reiter what he would have liked him to do and Mr. Reiter responded that since he has been involved here for the last two years that Chief Parrish should have done what he has been doing, such as firing one person and giving another a day of without pay. He said that usually the Chief has a "swift hammer" and Chief Parrish responded by saying that this was Mr. Reiter's opinion and should be addressed at another time and that they should go back to the purpose of this meeting.

Mr. Gardiner stated that Chief Parrish says that he has an open door policy and that is what the Board was doing by having this fact finding meeting. He also asked if Chief Parrish did not feel that he had violated the Chain of Command by not going to the Board before he decided to meet with the crews. Chief Parrish responded that he did not feel that he needs to talk to the Board before he talks to the crews. It was not done to discredit the Board. He said that there were a lot of questions about the process and he wanted to set them straight. Mr. Range said that this is why they were there – to dispel rumors. He then advised that they did interview the top four candidates and that Human Resource Strategies were doing a background check on all the candidates and hopefully at the next regular meeting we would choose the next chief.

Chief Parrish then asked if the Executive Session was to discuss this further, that it be done in Public Session. However, Mr. Range said that the Executive Session was for legal advice.

At this time, Tony Reiter made a motion to go into Executive Session for legal advice pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431-431.03(A)(3). Bob Page seconded the motion. MOTION CARRIED.

AYES: Range, Gardiner, Reiter, Page  
NAYS: None

At approximately 10:40 a.m. the Board adjourned out of Public Session and into Executive Session.

At approximately 10:59 a.m. the Board reconvened into Public Session.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

  
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Bob Gardiner, Board Clerk