

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
MESCAL-J6 FIRE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD
HELD WEDNESDAY, June 14th, 2023, AT 6:30 PM**

The meeting was called to order at 1832 hours by Board Chair Phyllis Ellis. Present at roll call were Board Members: Phyllis Ellis, Dana Law, Debi Wise, JoAnne Ellsworth and Bob Murray. A quorum existed.

Item 1: **Review of the FY2024 Five-Year Plan:** Review and discussion regarding the Draft FY2023/2024 Five-Year Plan.

No Board action taken.

Fire Chief John Moran said it would be nice to move the drone purchase up to this fiscal year but we can do that anyway without having to change the Five-Year Plan. Phyllis Ellis said she thinks we are a little light for items listed in year four and five and next year she would like to be more proactive in reviewing the Five-Year Plan in the Fall, to be ready for Spring. JoAnne Ellsworth asked what came of the discussion around a contracted service for the inventory of old files. Ellis replied it is in 2025 under staffing. Ellsworth added, record management services, thank you. Debi Wise inquired if we were able to move the grant writer up from 2025 to sooner since we know a lady now that writes for Fire Department Grants and we don't have to search for one. Chief Moran said he has no issues with that. Ellis asked if anyone had a problem moving that to next year. Dana Law said he would like to see it done as soon as possible. Chief Moran responded that it can be changed to fiscal year 2024 with a motion but if it can be done sooner, there is certainly nothing wrong with doing that.

Item 2: **Review of the FY2024 Budget Package:** Review and discussion regarding the Draft 2023/2024 Operations & Maintenance Budget and the Draft 2023/2024 Reserve Budget.

No Board action taken.

Ellis noted that there has been some concern regarding the use of a spreadsheet versus the AG provided form. Ellis went on to explain that there are some working issues with the AG form not recognizing anomalies properly and in turn showing numbers skewed. The form will be presented on August 1st when it's presented to the County. Ellis went on to say feedback was received from Cochise County Treasurer, Cathy Traywick, who admitted we should have received forms from them months ago with instruction on what to fill out but there was an issue in their office, and they dropped the ball. They are trying to rectify that and get the forms to us within the next day or two. Ellis added, hopefully that will give more clarification and help. Ellis said we are a five member Board but personally, she doesn't see any line items on this proposed budget that cause her concern and the only reason she would see to not vote on this tonight and wait for the

form is if there was something on the budget of concern that she would want backup on. Chief Moran added that we aren't approving a form, we are approving a budget so we can submit this. Until we fill out the paperwork and send it to the State, that's when we will need to have that issue corrected. Natalie Galgano-Pinkley of Municipal Accounts & Consulting added, pertaining to the AG spreadsheet, you guys are not alone, this is not as easy a tool as she thinks they intended it to be and she is seeing this process consistent with other Fire District's as well, using their own spreadsheets and forms for budgeting and then they will be putting that information in the AG form to be compliant. Galgano-Pinkley said she is happy to work on the form for us and then send the form back to us, before submission, for review. Bob Murray expressed concern that the numbers seem to reflect doing more in cost compared to the money we have coming in. Ellis replied that's why the Chief made changes into the next budget year. Murray said this is with those changes. Ellis asked what line item Murray has an issue with. Murray replied, it's not so much the line items it's when the numbers are put in. Ellis said you're back to the AG form and we are talking about our form. Murray went on to reiterate his concern. Ellis asked again for a line item Murray is referencing. Murray responded he doesn't have a specific one, he is talking about all together. Chief Moran added that is a genuine estimate of expense for next year. Ellis replied to Murray that if he doesn't give an exact line item, she can't follow him. Murray asked how it can be a specific line item when they are talking about anomalies. Chief Moran said you're talking about the AG form and we aren't talking about the AG form, we are talking about our budget for the next fiscal year. Ellis asked Chief Moran what the reasoning was behind increasing travel for as much as it was. Chief Moran replied, we went overboard this year, travel for the St. Louise trip, mileage, and training. Ellsworth asked about the steep decline in training. Chief Moran replied most of the training we do is inhouse and the trainings usually offered are varied costs; \$35.00 - \$200.00 per person. For fire school we get a scholarship every year. It's based on real numbers. Chief Moran said he has inflated it every year for several years and Natalie lowered it because the money hasn't been spent on training. Ellis said we have spent almost \$2,056.00 for training, which falls really close in line for what he is estimating for next year. Dana Law asked if we hire fire fighters if we will have to send them to the academy. Chief Moran replied we only hire certified fire fighters, it's to our advantage and he would be hesitant to try anything else. Murray asked if there is an expectation for the Workman's Comp to come down that much. Chief Moran replied yes. Murray further asked if Chief Moran expects the numbers to change with the full-time firefighters. Chief said absolutely, that would be part of the budget money from the Grant, its included. Murray said but you are looking to hire one without the Grant and asked if that would raise it too. Chief Moran replied, yes but one fire fighter should be fairly inexpensive because we are injury free here for several years. Murray asked about employee benefits. Chief Moran replied we don't give benefits of any kind. Ellis added hopefully that's something in the future we might be able to get to but right now it is not. Law said it would definitely be a hiring incentive. Murray spoke to building repair and maintenance, asking if the \$20,000.00 was in anticipation of the new roof that may be needed. Chief Moran replied, new roof, roofing issues at Station 1 and the back half of the building is separating from the forward half because it's an addition and needs to be repaired somehow. Law asked why we don't start using the other station instead of dumping more money into a building that's (inaudible). Chief Moran replied because we have storage, turn out storage, showers, cooking facilities. Chief Moran added they

would just be hanging out there and there are no real places to sleep. Ellis added she doesn't think we will put a lot of money into it, just enough to keep going. Murray asked if Chief feels comfortable with the budget for fuel. Chief Moran replied yes, he actually spoke to Natalie who lowered it after he raised it this year thinking it was going to really go up but it did not. Murray said he's concerned if the price of gas goes up again. Wise asked if there is any padding for that. Chief Moran replied our budget is \$15,000.00 this year. Wise replied ok, so there is a buffer there. Ellis added that while we try to hit these categories as best as we can, there is a line item for contingencies just in case. Chief replied we have the ability to take from one line item to fund another, if needed. Ellis confirmed, we can't increase or decrease the budget but we can move money between line items.

Item 3: **Public Hearing:** The Board Chair will open the public hearing and accept comments regarding the FY2023/2024 Operations and Maintenance Budget, the FY2023/2024 Reserve Budget, and the FY2023/2024 Five-Year Plan.

Mary McCool, chair of J6/Mescal CDO, presented Board members with paperwork (included as an attachment in the District's official minutes) inclusive of specific considerations related to the Five-Year plan and local triggers, returning a version of Develop Hazard and Hazmat Plan to the plan, evacuation plans, District participation in the upcoming Wildland Regional Plan and review of law in relation to the Budget Spreadsheet used by Chief Moran and Natalie Galgano-Pinkley.

Ellis said as she mentioned earlier, they need to really work on this Five-Year Plan in the Fall to allow for more time. Ellis said she would be inclined to hang on to this to be part of the discussion at that point. Law added she has a lot of good stuff here even if the District isn't there money wise, some of this we can do.

Item 4: **Adoption of the FY2023/2024 Budget Package:** Review, discussion and possible action to adopt the FY 2023/2024 Operations & Maintenance Budget, the FY2023/2024 Reserve Budget and the FY2023/2024 Five-Year Plan.

Dana Law made a motion to accept the budget package, inclusive of Operation and Maintenance Budget, Reserve Budget and the Five-Year Plan with the change of moving the hiring of a Grant writer from Fiscal Year 2025 to Fiscal Year 2024. Debi Wise seconded the motion. Motion carries 4 - 1 with Phyllis Ellis – yes, Dana Law - yes, Debi Wise – yes, JoAnne Ellsworth – yes and Bob Murray - no.

Chief Moran said we show our Reserve budget at \$221,000.00. Last year the Board elected to adopt the entire Reserve budget as the new budget so it's there if we need to spend it. Other than what's in the Five-Year Plan now, we don't have any plans to spend that money next year and of course we need to take bids and get Board approval before

we do spend that money. Chief Moran explained we still have \$10,000.00 left over in Grant money that can be used for lighting and fencing this summer. Chief said after visiting facilities in St. David, he is confident we can do it below \$10,000.00. We will need to decide what to do with the excess money as we can't spend it as we want. Ellis said, it will be spent on something to do with the Heli pad. Chief Moran said yes.

Item 5: Adjourn:

Debi Wise made a motion to adjourn. Dana Law seconded the motion. Motion carries 5 - 0 with Phyllis Ellis – yes, Dana Law - yes, Debi Wise – yes, JoAnne Ellsworth – yes and Bob Murray – yes.

Phyllis Ellis adjourned the meeting at 1910 hours.

Minutes compiled and submitted by:
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Office Administrator