

**ROCKVILLE/SPRINGDALE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
SPECIAL MEETING
P.O. Box 159
Springdale, UT 84767
October 15, 2013
Firehouse**

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL** – Chair Bob Orton called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. with the following members of the Rockville/Springdale Fire Protection District Board present: Michael Plyler, Nancy Sanchez and Barry Rhodes. Linda Brinkley was excused. Also present were Captains Barker and Wood. District Clerk Elaine Harris recording.
2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – This agenda item was not addressed.
3. **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE FIRE CHIEF’S RESIGNATION AND WHERE THE DISTRICT SHOULD GO FROM HERE** – Chair Orton expressed his appreciation for the service of Ryan Ballard as the Fire Chief of the District. His dedication to the District and the personnel has been incredible.

Most of our firefighters have moved from the area because they cannot afford to live here. We have full coverage during the day but not the nighttime. We have four firefighters that live locally and four that live down the hill.

Captain Barker has given a proposal regarding what he would be able to do in the capacity of Chief taking into consideration he resides in Hurricane.

Chair Orton stated that we need to pay standby firefighters at least between the hours of 5 pm and 8 am on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24 hours/day for 7 days a week is 168 hours. If 40 hours is deducted (when the firefighters are in the canyon), that leaves 128 hours of standby coverage needed for at least two people. That would provide two people that could respond quickly – within five to fifteen minutes and determine if more people are needed and where they can be obtained. Some of the EMS personnel are firefighters. Incorporating them may afford some rotation of the on call shifts. We can have two on call during the day as well as the nights and weekends. At \$7.50/hr. that equates to \$1,920/wk. It is time we gave the public what they deserve and what is needed, as well as the firefighters themselves. This situation has existed for over 15 years.

It is time the Board started thinking about more housing and better equipment. Some of our equipment is 20 years old. The above total calculations is \$99,840 for wages, which does not include whatever percent there will be in employment taxes, increased unemployment costs, liability insurance and worker’s compensation. There is a possibility the increase in employees and wages may affect our requirement for participation in the Affordable Care Act.

Our Chief would be part time but would live in Hurricane. With that additional cost of \$30,000, the total would now be \$129,840. Chair Orton also proposed our annual donation to the fire truck replacement fund be increased to \$50,000. That makes the increase \$179,840.

Presently, our projected Standby Fee income is \$165,000 and during the first budget work meeting, before adding anything for equipment, taxes and audit, we were already over what our income was.

We do have to cover the expenses for the rest of this year and it appears as though we will have less expenditures for this year’s budget than was originally projected. This is due to the prudent

spending of Chief Ballard and Captain Barker. That figure could possibly be as much as \$20,000. We may have to utilize some of our reserve funds to make up the difference in having standby firefighters for November and December.

Michael Plyler stated that if the District takes the position that they don't want to put the funding on the residents, the biggest burden for a catastrophic fire would be in a commercial structure. There isn't enough difference between the basic standby fee for a motel than there is for a residence except for the addition of a per room rate. The initial assessment should be increased relevant to the extra demand. Our inability to keep up with the development demands is not due to residential; it is due to commercial.

Chair Orton emphasized that more income is going to have to be generated for the next year's budget, but we also need to fund from now until those funds come in. The Standby Fee doesn't come in until July and August and property taxes not until December.

We can levy a total of \$110,000 in property taxes without a ballot vote, but with multiple public hearings with ¼ page publications in the Spectrum. We already receive approximately \$48,000, so the property tax could be raised to make up the difference of \$62,000. Whether it is taxes or Standby Fees, it will come from the same property owners. An increase in the Standby Fee would require a public hearing. These are things that will need to be discussed in the budget work meetings. The Town of Springdale can still raise the TRT tax by ¼%, and that could be a possibility. If they really want to assist the District in protection, that would be a way for the tourists to pay.

Chair Orton's opinion is that we will need a minimum of \$250,000 more per year. Somewhere we are going to have to increase the \$7.50/hr. we are paying now. Every increase in the hourly wage increases other things like payroll taxes, etc. There has to be a way for growth and improvement, which is what we hoped the TRT tax was going to do.

Discussion took place regarding the need for Joe Barker to be home when his wife is at work and how his availability can be worked out for the night. We could pay Joe enough that she would be able to quit her job, but that means she would lose her seniority and income. Joe needs some assurance that we aren't going to let him go in six months or a year in order for her to be willing to do that. We presently have enough excess funds to fund this situation until the end of the year. The budget committee will try to put this together and bring it before the Board at their next regular meeting.

No action can be taken at the meeting, but the Board can convey to Joe their general feelings regarding his position. Nancy Sanchez asked what the comparative cost would be for Hurricane to provide the service at least until our budget is in place. The first problem would be at least a 30 min. response. Regarding utilization of the Park, they are only available if they have personnel available at the time of our need. Their structural fire crew are their rangers and basically do double duty.

Barry Rhodes stated for the record that Ryan Ballard was his nephew. Barry understands the need and acknowledges that it has been that way for 15 years. However, when he and others have been the chief, standard operating procedures were that the captains would take over in rotating shifts and be the first responder. He realizes that may not be viable now due to the lack of numbers. Is there a possibility we could use the paid standby people as the eyes and ears for the chief during the hours when he wasn't in town to possibly mitigate some of the cost to the District.

Barry's concern was that this proposal seems to be a short-term solution and it may not be the long-term solution and he doesn't want to put Joe's wife in jeopardy under that situation. Barry asked what the minimum size fire department would the State Fire Marshal's Office recommend taking into consideration what we have in commercial structures. Joe stated we have danced around that issue ever since there has been a department. Even with 20 volunteer firefighters, you may only get a response of ten – whoever is available at the time. Maybe it is time to let the public decide whether they want to pay for a better department. Barry pointed out that we are a retirement community; we don't have 150 20-year olds running around wanting to be firefighters. He felt we should be planning for more than our current numbers. Some cross-trained EMS personnel would be a plus to utilize when they are not on EMS duty. Barry felt we need to have at least a six-member crew to mobilize a team for a commercial structure.

Joe does not feel comfortable putting the crew or district in jeopardy for that one time in a year that there may be a major call and he is in Hurricane. Barry saw all the need, but questioned where the money was going to come from to accomplish the coverage and equipment we need. We need to get the public behind the need for an increase in revenues.

Chair Orton suggested having two firefighters being paid on call per night. In the meantime, the Board will get busy coming up with the funds for the upcoming years. Joe will organize, administrate and be available when he can for the rest of this year. This will give the Board time to put all the finances together.

Barry asked Joe if a viable option could be to have Joe assume the duties of the Chief for the remainder of the year and have the two on-call paid people available after the regular working hours, unless we had a fire and needed more resources.

Joe didn't want to be accepting the Chief's salary and then not show up for a major incident. That makes him nervous.

Chair Orton asked for any input from the firefighters present. Dillon Tomky felt it would be good to have designated people on call since it is difficult for everyone to be on call 24/7 all the time and never knowing who is, or isn't, going to show up. That way you know of at least one other person that will definitely be responding. It also allows everyone to have a break. The others agreed.

The budget committee will develop a plan and present it to the Board at the next Board meeting. The board will have to make a decision at that meeting to institute the plan for the rest of the year. A budget meeting for the next night, Wednesday, October 16 would work for everyone on the committee.

It was clarified that Joe Barker will assume the Chief's duties for November and December and there will be two, paid on-call firefighters on duty during the hours of 5 pm to 7-8 am and weekends for those months. There will be a seasoned firefighter paired with one from out of the area. At this time, there will be no compensation for on-call during the daytime hours.

6. **ADJOURN** – Barry Rhodes moved the meeting be adjourned. Nancy Sanchez seconded the motion. A roll call vote indicated all those present voted in favor of the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

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Minutes typed by:

Elaine M. Harris
District Clerk

APPROVED:

Robert W. Orton
Robert W. Orton, Chairman