



SAN SIMON FIRE DISTRICT

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Dedicated to:
Calming Fears
Easing Minds
Saving Lives

San Simon Fire District
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, September 19, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm, at the San Simon Fire Station, 2249 W. Firehouse Lane, San Simon, AZ 85632.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Pledge of Allegiance lead by Pati Fickett.

3. ROLL CALL OF OFFICERS:

Governing Board: Chairperson Pati Fickett – Present
Clerk Savanna Valdez – Present
Board Member Fernando Guzman - Present

Administration: Chief John Novak – Present
Captain Heather Lentz – Present

Firefighters: Rose Rothpletz

Support: Michelle Larned

Guests: Becky Phifer
Chuck Fickett
Jane Onken
Keven Wilstead
Amy Wilstead and son Nathan
Marcos Garcia
Elisia Guzman
Beth DeSpain

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM AUGUST MEETING:

Mr. Guzman questioned not receiving Board Meeting Packets sooner. Mrs. Fickett stated she would attempt to finish financials sooner for review.

Mr. Guzman made the motion to approve the Board Minutes from August 16, 2023, as presented.

Mrs. Fickett seconded the motion.

Ms. Valdez abstained as she was absent from the August 16, 2023 meeting.

Motion Passed

Voting	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett	X			
Ms. Valdez			X	
Mr. Guzman	X			

5. APPROVE FINANCIAL REPORT:

Ms. Valdez made the motion to Table the Financial Report.

Mr. Guzman seconded the motion.

Motion Passed

Voting	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett		X		
Ms. Valdez	X			
Mr. Guzman	X			

6. ACCEPT CHECKS:

A) Southwest Gas Account Refund - \$ 0.04

B) Semi-Truck Fire - \$ 24,950.00

C) Sale of Surplus Vehicles EFT - \$ 40,433.22

Ms. Valdez made the motion to accept items A through C on the checks.

Mr. Guzman seconded the motion.

Motion Passed

Voting	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett	X			
Ms. Valdez	X			
Mr. Guzman	X			

7. CORRESPONDENCE:

None

8. AUXILIARY REPORT: Michelle Larned

Ms. Larned was called out and Chief Novak presented her report.

Current Balance for the Auxiliary Account is \$6,938.43.

9. CHIEF'S REPORT:

Ran 17 calls for the Month of August: 4 ALS, 4 BLS, 1 MVC, 2 Wildland Fires, 2 cancelled calls, 1 Public Assist, 1 Smoke Investigation, 1 Railroad Fire, and 1 Semi Truck Fire

Have submitted documents for ISO survey.

Auxiliary President Michelle Larned and Chief Novak attended the Legacy Foundation grant presentation and luncheon on September 12th. The San Simon Fire Auxiliary was presented with a check in the amount of \$ 3,890.43 for the purchase of fire prevention and education supplies.

The Chief has begun typing out policies, based on the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District's policy manual.

Chief attended the Junior High volleyball game last Friday (9/15/23), at the request of the school district.

Rece Lentz and Blayne Sloan cut the station's grass this past weekend. *(Students are offered the opportunity to volunteer at the fire station, under the guidance of Captain Lentz, to acquire volunteer hours needed for academic and scholarship applications and receive no monetary compensation.)*

The Fire District is proud to announce a 100% pass rate for the EMR students who took the National Registry test. *(We welcome new EMR's Michelle Larned and Rose Rothpletz. This brings the Fire District's certified medical responders to 1-Paramedic, 1-EMT and 2 EMRs.)*

10. OLD BUSINESS:

A) Fire Chief Contract.

Mr. Guzman made the motion to table this item pending further review.

Ms. Valdes seconded the motion.

Motion Passed

Voting	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett	X			
Ms. Valdez	X			
Mr. Guzman	X			

B) Discuss Call to Public.

Ms. Valdez made the motion to limit Call to Public Speakers to 3 minutes, without having to sign a subject form.

Mr. Guzman seconded the motion.

Motion Passed

Voting	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett	X			
Ms. Valdez	X			
Mr. Guzman	X			

C) Executive Session on personnel matter.

Moved to after item 12.

11. CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Keven Wilstead commented on perceived infractions committed by Ms. Valdez during his term as a Board Member of the San Simon Fire District.

Jane Onken questioned, "Why H'EPI's Harvest can't be held in San Simon instead of Bowie." Mrs. Phifer addressed the issue of not having enough volunteers to cover both distribution locations the past few months. (The Fire District has no affiliation with H'EPI's Harvest other than a location for distribution. Dragonfly Community Alliance oversees this food distribution program.)

12. NEW BUSINESS:

- A) Consider retaining a new Fire District attorney.

Chairperson Fickett's recommendation was to retain Jeff Matura as the San Simon Fire District's attorney considering his familiarity with former and present events regarding the district.

- B) Send Fire District attorney Jeff Matura \$4,000 for retainer.

Mr. Guzman made the motion to retain Jeffrey C. Matura with Barrett & Matura, P.C. as the San Simon Fire District Attorney and send a warrant for \$ 4,000 as a retainer for future services.

Ms. Valdez seconded the motion.

Motion Passed

Voting		Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett			X		
Ms. Valdez		X			
Mr. Guzman		X			

10. C. EXECUTIVE SESSION on a personnel matter:

Personnel in question, Chief John Novak, requested discussion be held in an open meeting. *(If the public body proposes to discuss a personnel matter in an executive session, and the affected officer, appointee, or employee requests the discussion occur in a public meeting instead, then the discussion must be conducted in a public meeting and not in an executive session. A.R.S § 38-431.03(A)(1))*

Chief Novak responded to a complaint filed by Savana Valdez, San Simon Fire District Board Clerk, with the Cochise County Board of Supervisors, regarding Chief Novak's failure to complete his mandatory open meeting law training in a timely manner as is stated in A.R.S. § 48-803 and is no longer qualified to serve.

Chief Novak was advised of the complaint on September 11, 2023 by the Cochise County Supervisor Tom Crosby advising Chief Novak of the complaint and of it being an item on the agenda of the Board of Supervisors meeting the next day, September 12, 2023.

As Chief Novak had actually completed the training with the Arizona Fire Districts Association (AFDA), but not received his certificate he immediately contacted AFDA and

the following morning received his certificate of completion via email dated August 4, 2023. The mandatory training must be completed within one year of a new Fire Chief being hired. His hire date was August 18, 2023.

Ms. Valdes indicated she had contacted the AFDA twice, once speaking to Kelly Flin and then speaking with John Flin, in August and was told Chief Novak had not completed his training, so she felt it necessary to file the complaint with the Cochise Board of Supervisors as is indicated in the A.R.S. § 48-803.

Ms. Valdez never contacted Chief Novak or any other SSFD Board Member to inquire if he had completed his mandatory training, before filing the complaint.

Mr. Guzman indicated there is a serious lack of communication among the administration and board members and needs to improve immediately.

Chairperson Fickett issued a response to the filing of the complaint. (Attachment A)

13. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

None

14. FIRE CHIEF AND CAPTAINS COMMENTS:

Captain Lentz: "On a sour note, it has come to my attention there is an individual attempting to drive a wedge between members of the fire department." "The deliberate attempt is a complete fabrication on this individual's part and knowledge of such is extremely displeasing." She encourages the board members or anyone else who wishes to talk with her regarding the events and operations of the fire department to please do so. Communication is of the up most importance and gossip, rumors and outright lies have no place in consequential communication.

Captain Lentz expressed her tremendous pride in Rose and Michelle for the 100's hours of their own time they put in to attain their EMR certifications. This is a rigorous training, made up of various components and in the end, you must pass the national test to achieve your EMR Certification. She thanked James Fickett for his willingness to be the surrogate patient during the training. They can all attest to his good health and patience. This is a milestone in the fire department and community as it doubles the number of personnel certified for emergency medical response. At a later date, the fire department will be holding an event to honor Rose and Michelle for this great achievement.

In addition to the medical training, the volunteers have been actively involved in pack attack and shuttle training and have extrication training planned for the near future.

Rose Rothpletz expressed her appreciation to Captain Lentz and Chief Novak for the many hours they spent assisting she and Michelle with the EMR class.

Chief Novak expresses his dedication to improving communications with the board. He is continuing to work with the agency that provides ISO ratings. He would like to hold a workshop with the board and the public to explain how an ISO rating is established and the agency's recommendation for improving the rating for the community. We are beginning the flu season and covid is becoming more active and the department is experiencing medial calls.

15. SET TIME AND DATE FOR NEXT MEETING: Tuesday October 17, 2023, at 6:00 pm

Ms. Valdez indicated she will possibly be out of town on October 17, 2023, and requests to attend by telecommunications if necessary.

Ms. Valdes made a motion to schedule the next meeting for October 17, 2023, at 6:00 pm.

Mr. Guzman seconded the motion.

Motion Passed

Voting	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Mrs. Fickett	X			
Ms. Valdez	X			
Mr. Guzman	X			

16. ADJOURN:

Chairperson Fickett adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

Submitted Respectfully By:

Pati Fickett

Patricia Fickett, Chairperson

Date