

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
ALVA FIRE CONTROL & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
2660 STYLES ROAD, ALVA, FLORIDA 33920
DATE: OCTOBER 09, 2023

Call to Order

Chairman Crittenden convened the regular monthly meeting of the Alva Fire Control & Rescue Service District at 6:31 PM, October 09, 2023. There were sufficient Board members present to establish a quorum.

Commissioners in Attendance

Adam Crittenden
Henry Grant Fichter
Richard “Dick” Spence
Darren Watkins
Paul F. Meloy, Jr.

Also in Attendance

Brandon Kuhn, Chief
Sunny Sipes, Administrative Specialist
District Firefighters
Union DVP - Jean Etcheverry
EMS Personnel
Pastor Paul Cords

Pledge of Allegiance / Moment of Silence / Prayer

Prayer Performed by Pastor Paul Cords

Presentation of Awards & Acknowledgments

Administration wished Chief Kuhn, “Happy Birthday”.

Approval of the September 12, 2023 Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Fichter moved to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2023, regular monthly meeting. Commissioner Spence seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Approval of the September 12, 2023 Tentative Budget Hearing Minutes for FY end 09/30/24

Commissioner Watkins moved to approve the minutes from the September 12, 2023, Tentative Hearing for FY end 09/30/24. Commissioner Spence seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Approval of the September 25, 2023 Final Budget Hearing Minutes for FY end 09/30/24

Commissioner Spence moved to approve the minutes from the September 25, 2023, Final Hearing for FY end 09/30/24. Commissioner Meloy seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Approval of the Financial Data from September 2023

Administrative Specialist, Sunny Sipes, detailed District income and expenditures.

Commissioner Watkins moved to approve the financial data from September 2023. Commissioner Fichter seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Public Input on Business

None

New Business

- Chief’s Report
Chief Kuhn reported the following:

- ✓ Stated during the previous month: Total calls 38, EMS calls -, fire calls -.
- ✓ Kuhn stated that the District's new Cascade system has been ordered and is due to arrive in approximately 4-weeks. This will require Station electrical modifications.
- ✓ Stated that the District's new thermal imager has arrived.
- ✓ Informed the Board that T-121 is out of service due to extensive required repairs.
- ✓ Informed the Board that B-123 is out of service due to extensive required repairs.
- ✓ EMS personnel, John Rochelle, stated that he feels one Firefighter on each shift should have their Class-A CDL in order to operate T-121. He informed the Board of guidelines and class offerings through a driver's training location in LaBelle, Florida.
- ✓ Discussion ensued on using Educational Funds for this training.
- ✓ Commissioner Meloy suggested collecting a repair estimate for T-121.

Commissioner Spence moved to accept Chief Kuhn's Chief's Report. Commissioner Watkins seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

- Sunny Sipes inquired with the Board on modifying the November meeting date due to observance of the Veteran's Day holiday.
 - ✓ A decision was made to observe Veteran's Day on Friday, November 10th.

Old Business

- Discussion ensued regarding District personnel and operational matters.
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence addressed the Board and reminded them that Engineer Jean Etcheverry had submitted his resume to the Board via email. He also stated that he contacted several fire districts within the State of Florida and discovered that the average Chief's salary is \$125,000 for larger departments and \$74,000-90,000 for smaller departments, annually. He also researched required duties and educational qualifications for the Chief's position. Spence stated that the Alva Fire District cannot afford to pay prospective applicants based on surrounding Chief salaries. He believes the job description should reflect a salary of \$80,000-90,000 annually.
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence stated the following: Develop a formal Job Description for the incoming Chief, propose the position with a 1-year Probationary Period, stressed the importance of annual performance reviews and felt that familiarity of the Alva District should be a requirement.
 - ✓ He stated his belief that Mr. Etcheverry's Resume was impeccable, he agreed to perform the Chief's duties at the current rate budgeted for FY end 09/30/24, he is an existing piece of the department and he has demonstrated his eagerness to support the Alva Community through public education.
 - ✓ Reminded staff that should Mr. Etcheverry be appointed to this position, it was important to quickly fill his vacant Engineer seat.
 - ✓ Spence voiced his approval of offering this vacant position to Chief Kuhn.
 - ✓ Commissioner Meloy voiced approval of the Probationary Period and stated that he would like to see resume's.
 - ✓ Commissioner Fichter stated that he was impressed with Mr. Etcheverry's cover letter and resume and agreed with Commissioner Spence's sentiments.
 - ✓ Commissioner Crittenden stated that he felt Kuhn faced difficulties in developing within this roll, thanked him for his job performance and stressed the importance of establishing Administrative continuing educational requirements.

- ✓ Spence voiced his belief to hire from “within” when someone shows interest and has the necessary qualifications. He stated that these actions are important to demonstrate to all District employees when it relates to promotion.
- ✓ Commissioner Watkins stated that he felt someone should be appointed as an Interim Chief and that the Board needed to post the Chief’s position and review submitted resumes. He felt that all possible applicants, including Mr. Etcheverry, should be interviewed.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter discussed this Interim position as it relates to Mr. Etcheverry’s Union membership. He stated that he believed the Board would be making a mistake if they passed-up the opportunity to allow Mr. Etcheverry to fulfill the Chief’s position but he did understand other Board members positions. He also dictated the importance of establishing a job description, employment time frame as well as the development of a Chief’s Employment Contract.
- ✓ Sunny Sipes addressed Board members stating the following: Mr. Etcheverry’s resume demonstrates his eagerness and willingness to educate himself, he’s familiar with the community and department needs which will create an efficient transition, the items that need immediate attention will be addressed first, the department must have day-to-day representation and authority so appointing Mr. Etcheverry to this position will fill this need and give the Board time to develop the relevant policies and requirements without feeling rushed, stated the the possibility of increasing the Chief’s salary but also reminded the Board of the importance to build reserves in order to update depleting infrastructure and equipment.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter stressed, should this appointment be approved, the importance of Chief Kuhn training this individual over the next 30-days. He stated that Mr. Etcheverry asked for an interview and he believes that should be granted.
- ✓ Commissioner Watkins felt as though Etcheverry should be appointed to the Chief’s position for an unspecified period. He stated to have the Chief’s job description and advertisement completed in 30-day, allow 30-45 days for collection of submitted applicants then begin the interview process. He did not believe in setting time-frames.
- ✓ Commissioner Spence stated the importance of being fair to Mr. Etcheverry as well as the importance of time-frames in order to streamline this process.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter stressed the importance of developing this detailed process as well as agreeing on a salary range.
- ✓ Discussion ensued on the hiring process should Mr. Etcheverry be appointed as an Interim or Probationary Chief.
- ✓ Discussion ensued on offering Chief Kuhn a vacant Firefighter position as well as the handling of his FRS benefits and Union participation.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter addressed Jean Etcheverry and asked his thoughts on the previous discussions?
- ✓ Engineer Etcheverry stated that he felt as though he would be a good fit for the Chief’s position, his resume reflects his educational qualifications, he desires to continue his education, there are new trends and rescue equipment that the department should be up-to-date with in order to reduce hazards, he has already began research on the process of lowering the District’s ISO rating, he is willing to step-in while Commissioners develop the hiring process, he wants the most qualified individual in the Chief’s position and he welcomes the interview process. Etcheverry relayed that he is planning a long term commitment and stressed the importance of the Alva Fire District continuing its move forward.

- ✓ Fichter stated that Etcheverry was more than qualified to hold this position, stated that the Board wanted to be sure that they addressed every need for the good of the District and inquired if Etcheverry would agree to a 1-year contract while this process was developed? He also inquired if Etcheverry felt the cohesiveness of the team would be jeopardized with his promotion?
- ✓ Etcheverry stated that he would agree to a 1-year contract with an evaluation to begin mid-term. He also believed that the entire team had the same goals and concepts for the future of the Alva Fire District and his promotion should not have any effect on those beliefs.
- ✓ Firefighter Richard Johnson inquired with Etcheverry on his thoughts of increasing the District's mutual aid training? Etcheverry stated, "of course" and that once a quarter was desirable. Discussions ensued on additional training and conference attendance.
- ✓ Paramedic John Rochelle stated that he has known Etcheverry for many years and was confident with his abilities. He also stated that during his extensive years of service, he has never seen a District advertise for a vacant position when there is someone within their department that was qualified and interested in said position.
- ✓ Firefighter Matthew Richards stated that the Chief's replacement discussion caught him "off guard". He informed the Board that "everyone here loves Jean (Etcheverry)" but he didn't want the Board to choose the "easy or quick option".
- ✓ Fichter informed Richards that the Board had individually received Etcheverry's interest many weeks prior to this meeting and reminded him that the only time the Board can discuss District business is during their monthly Board Meetings.
- ✓ Discussion ensued on finalizing the Chief's Job Description and approving this policy at the November Board Meeting.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter relayed the importance of having a contract in place at the November gathering should Etcheverry be promoted to the Chief's position.

Commissioner Fichter made a motion to propose a 1-year Interim Chief's position (November 07, 2023 - November 07, 2024) to, Engineer Jean P. Etcheverry. The motion also stated the inception of a Performance Evaluation to begin six months from the start date of said contract. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Spence and passed.

Commissioner Meloy - Yea
 Commissioner Watkins - Nay
 Commissioner Crittenden - Nay

- ✓ Commissioner Crittenden inquired with Engineer Etcheverry if there would be any issues with Kuhn re-entering the Union? Etcheverry stated that he didn't believe so. Commissioner Spence stated that he spoke with the previous Local 1826 President, JP Duncan, and he stated that this would not create a problem. The board asked Etcheverry to follow-up with Union Representatives on this topic.
- ✓ The Board inquired with Chief Kuhn if he would be interested in the vacant Firefighter position? Kuhn stated that he could not provide an answer at this time but would discuss the offer with his family.
- ✓ Commissioner Spence inquired on a waiting list for the Firefighter position? Kuhn stated that he wasn't sure if the individuals on this list had been hired with other districts.

Union Report

District Paramedic and Local 1826 DVP, Jean Etcheverry, presented the Union Report

- Engineer Etcheverry made the Board aware that District Firefighters will be performing a Fire Prevention Month public education event at the Alva School on Tuesday afternoon between 12:45-1:45 PM.

Volunteer / Public Comments

None

Commissioner Comments

- Commissioner Watkins stated that he was unaware of the preceding potential discussions and felt that a “quick” decision was made. His thoughts were to take more time to consider a replacement prior to appointing an individual to this position.
- Sipes relayed her approval of the Board's decision while reassuring them that they have secured a professional and competent individual to oversee the security of and represent the Alva Fire District. She stated that they have allowed themselves ample time to develop the advertising and interview process should they decide to go in that direction.
- Kuhn stated that he realized this is a difficult process for the Board but does believe someone needed to be appointed to oversee the District upon his departure. He felt that Etcheverry was qualified to take the “command role” and would create the “smoothest” transition.

Reminders

- The November Board Meeting will be held Monday, November 13, 2023, at 6:30 PM.

Adjournment

Commissioner Fichter moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 PM. This was seconded by Commissioner Spence, and the vote was unanimous. Chairman Crittenden closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Sunny Sipes, Administrative Specialist

Minutes Distributed Electronically to Board Members