

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
**ALVA FIRE CONTROL & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT**  
2660 STYLES ROAD, ALVA, FLORIDA 33920  
DATE: APRIL 08, 2024

**Call to Order**

Chairman Crittenden convened the regular monthly meeting of the Alva Fire Control & Rescue Service District at 6:30 PM, April 08, 2024. 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**

Jean P. Etcheverry, Chief  
Sunny Sipes, Finance Manager  
3-District Firefighters  
FMSFD Chief Bobby Rewis  
Brady Christensen & Spouse  
Union DVP/Firefighter, Joe Randall

**Pledge of Allegiance / Moment of Silence / Prayer**

Prayer Performed by Commissioner Fichter

**Presentation of Awards & Acknowledgments**

None

**Approval of the March 11, 2024 Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Spence moved to approve the minutes of the, March 11, 2024, regular monthly meeting. Commissioner Fichter seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

**Approval of the Financial Data from March 2024**

Finance Manager, Sunny Sipes, detailed District income and expenditures.

Commissioner Watkins moved to approve the financial data from March 2024. Commissioner Spence seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

**Public Input on Business**

None

**New Business**

➤ **Chief’s Report**

Chief Etcheverry reported the following:

- ✓ Thanked Engineer Wright and staff for their participation in the Charleston Park Community Easter celebration.
- ✓ Thanked all who helped with the Volunteer Barbecue and stated that it was a success.
- ✓ District Firefighters completed live fire training during the previous month.
- ✓ Vector Scheduling program is in progress of being set-up.
- ✓ Class-A uniforms have been ordered for all Firefighters. The only remaining items are hats, coats and gloves.
- ✓ The appliances ordered for the new tender have arrived.

- ✓ Kuhn and Wright “pulled out” of attendance to the FDIC Conference in Indiana. One individual has been replaced. The registration fees for the remaining opening are non-refundable.
- ✓ Chief completed Live Fire Instructor training and is awaiting the test date.
- ✓ Fire pit repairs are still underway.
- ✓ Chief has spoken with a new hose vendor and they have performed hose tests on site as well as allowing Firefighters to use the product during live fire training.
- ✓ New Fouts tender is expected to arrive at the end of April.
- ✓ The Alva School Spring Fling is approaching.
- ✓ Chief is exploring the costs of a gear dryer. This may be purchased this fiscal year, upon approval, or budgeted for during the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- ✓ Applicant interviews, for the open Firefighter position, are scheduled for April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.
- ✓ Engineers from the proposed school development at Joel and Tuckahoe Roads, reached out to Chief Etcheverry. He stated that they had a virtual conference and discussed the following; three story building, Chief relayed his desired locations for hydrants and shut-off valves, project engineers are considering ponds, lakes, etc., for water sources, Chief relayed the Departments concern with building height and the daily increased district population.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter asked if they provided drawings? Etcheverry replied, “Yes, only a few”.
- ✓ Chief informed the Board that there will be a scheduled Union meeting tomorrow afternoon. The following items will be discussed: (1) Recent Firefighter termination, (2) Qualification guidelines for the Volunteer/Support Coordinator, (3) Qualification guidelines for the Training Coordinator and (4) Staff overtime availability.
- ✓ Union DVP, Joe Randall, inquired if Union Representatives were aware of the above topics? Etcheverry stated, “Yes”.

Commissioner Fichter moved to accept Chief Etcheverry’s Chief’s Report. Commissioner Meloy seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

- Administrative Specialist, Sunny Sipes, presented the Board with Resolution #24.04.01 concerning Budget Amendment #1 for FY end 09/30/24. She detailed all modifications for the Board (copy attached hereto).

Commissioner Crittenden made a motion to approve Resolution #24.04.01 concerning Budget Amendment #1 for FY end 09/30/24. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Watkins. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

- Finance Manager/Administrative Specialist, Sunny Sipes, informed the Board that District Legal Counsel is still working on the job description for the Finance Manager position. Mr. Pringle stated that he is consolidating the positions above. However, he also wants to reflect that the Finance Manager is more of a management position rather than an administrative position. He believes this is important to clarify in preparing for the additional hiring of future administrative staff.
- A call was made to open discussions with Local 1826 Union Representatives in regards to the following:
  - (1) Recent Firefighter termination
  - (2) Qualification guidelines for the Volunteer/Support Coordinator position
  - (3) Qualification guidelines for the Training Coordinator position
  - (4) Staff overtime availability

- ✓ Chief Etcheverry explained that this meeting was strictly to “clear-up details and language” of the above topics.
- ✓ He also stated that Mr. Christensen and his spouse have been invited to attend this meeting in regards to his recent termination.

Commissioner Spence made a motion to approve the discussion of the above topics with Local 1826 Representatives. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Fichter and approved.

- ✓ A call was made to renew the Union Negotiating Team members as the Fire Chief, Finance Manager/Administrative Specialist, District Legal Counsel and District Labor Counsel.

Commissioner Spence made motion to approve the Alva Fire District’s Union Negotiating Team members as the Fire Chief, Finance Manager/Administrative Specialist, District Legal Counsel and District Labor Counsel. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Meloy and unanimously approved.

### **Old Business**

- Discussion of Chief Etcheverry’s Performance Review
  - ✓ Sunny Sipes explained to the Board her discussion with District Legal Counsel. She informed the Board that Mr. Pringle stated the following; he provided a modified and updated Performance Review form, the new form can be utilized by District employees and/or District citizens, the completion of the evaluation form is voluntary/optional, completed forms will be returned to legal counsel for review and submittal to Board members, based on Chief Etcheverry’s (6) months performance, the forms will be distributed on May 6, 2024 with a deadline submittal of June 3, 2024, he will review and redact any relevant information, forward completed forms to Board members on June 4, 2024 and the discussion of the results will be held at the, June 10, 2024, Board of Commissioner’s meeting.

Commissioner Fichter made a motion to approve the Performance Evaluation form and process/procedure, for Chief Jean P. Etcheverry, stated above. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Watkins and unanimously approved.

- Discussion of Impact Fund usage inquiry ensued.
  - ✓ Chief Etcheverry stated that he had drafted a letter to the Lee County Attorney requesting the usage of Impact Funds for the purchase of the Alva District’s Rescue 121 (R-121). He informed the Board that this letter had to be placed on Department letterhead and the amount requested included the purchase of a Ford F250 as well as additional “build-out” appliances. He stated that this purchase will exhaust the current Impact Funds and that additional build-out costs may be required during the FY 2024-25 fiscal year.
- Chief informed the Board that the Firehouse Subs Grant application has been submitted.
  - ✓ Stated that the District applied for approximately \$40,000 in extrication equipment.
  - ✓ Stated that the results will be announced on July 11, 2024.

### **Union Report**

District Paramedic Joe Randall, Local 1826 DVP

- Stated no grievance discussions.
- Stated 100% membership among current District Firefighters.
- Confirmed the meeting that will be held with District Administration the following day.

### **Volunteer / Public Comments**

- Chief Etcheverry read the Volunteer/Support Report stating the following:
  - ✓ Volunteer participation is at seven individuals and is expected to double in coming months.
  - ✓ Active Volunteers have put in approximately 200-hours since January 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - ✓ Current Volunteer training includes: forcible entry, victim rescue, downed firefighter rescue, truck operations, hose management, drafting, ropes training, ladder & VES training, live fire training and much more.
  - ✓ The Volunteer Barbecue profited \$1,468.97. The number of meals sold was down from previous years which enabled the District to donate approximately 50-meals to the St. Martin De Porres food pantry.
  - ✓ Volunteer/Support Coordinator, James Barritt, thanked all Volunteers and District staff who worked to make the barbecue run smoothly. He stated that the success of the barbecue was due to their hard work and commitment.
  
- The Spouse of former District Firefighter, Brady Christensen, addressed the Board.
  - ✓ Inquired as to the frequency of Firefighter evaluations asking if they were performed daily, weekly or quarterly? She stated that she was a school teacher and was familiar with the School Board's required evaluation processes.
  - ✓ Chief responded that the District had no established evaluation guidelines when he took his position in November. He stated that he was initially planning to perform annual evaluations which were completed several weeks prior to this meeting.
  - ✓ Mrs. Christensen inquired as to whom he consults for his evaluation feedback?
  - ✓ Etcheverry responded that he is the direct supervisor for all District Firefighters. Therefore, he does not consult anyone additional.
  - ✓ Brady Christensen inquired as to, "How he could be terminated 8-weeks prior to the end of his probationary period?"
  - ✓ Chief Etcheverry explained that he had reached out to Christensen via phone call, text and email over a period of five days. His goal was to discuss his reasoning for terminating Mr. Christensen's employment. He stated that Mr. Christensen failed to respond to any of his correspondence and had used accumulated sick days for his two shifts during this time frame.
  - ✓ Christensen stated that he did not receive the email.
  - ✓ Chief stated that he was left with no other option but to terminate Mr. Christensen via email correspondence.
  - ✓ Mrs. Christensen inquired as to why Chief Etcheverry did not previously discuss the performance evaluation with Brady Christensen?
  - ✓ Chief stated that's exactly what was going to take place at the initial requested meeting. He also stated that he had verbally discussed Christensen's performance during a previous engagement several months prior.
  - ✓ Christensen stated that he did not remember this encounter. He informed the Board that he only remembered positive feedback.
  - ✓ Etcheverry discussed circumstances where Christensen would be instructed to perform, but did not complete the tasks. He also stated that he often questioned instruction.
  - ✓ Christensen stated that he felt he completed tasks to the fullest of his ability.

### **Commissioner Comments**

- Commissioner Watkins stated that the fire district has issues with keeping employees and did not agree with "firing" firefighters without disciplinary documentation.
- Fichter stated that he would like to be sure the disciplinary process is documented.
- Commissioner Spence reminded attendees that the District does not have a formal performance review process for employees. He stated that this is a new process that

Etcheverry is attempting to implement. He stated that the Chief is in charge of the daily operations and makes the decisions as to the hiring and/or firing of District employees, paying close attention those who are on Probation. He stated that he sees Etcheverry solving problems while “the previous Chief did not”.

- Commissioner Meloy agreed with several of Spence’s statements also stating that he believes Etcheverry, with his experience, has been in his position long enough to evaluate employee competence.
- Union DVP/Firefighter-Paramedic, Joe Randall, informed all that Probationary employees can be let go with no protection. He was concerned with bringing this discussion in front of Union Representatives because they had no bearing on decisions made in regards to Probationary Firefighters.
- Chief Etcheverry stated that he warranted this option to Christensen and the Union so that all could discuss the matter in full. Both agreed to the discussions.
- Commissioner Fichter inquired if the Board should give direction as to the frequency of these evaluations?
- Commissioner Spence stated that frequency was the Chief’s decision. However, he encouraged continuous communication between staff members.
- Commissioner Crittenden inquired with FMSFD Chief, Bobby Rewis, as to the frequency of their evaluations for Probationary Firefighters?
- Chief Rewis stated that they are tested every 3-months and are provided with at monthly written review by their respective Captains.
- Sipes reminded the Board that this responsibility falls solely on one individual, the Chief. The Alva District does not share administrative responsibility with other rankings.
- Chief reiterated that there was no prior framework for this process and he is moving forward with getting the frame work established.
- District Engineer, Matt Richards, stated that he agreed with Commissioner Spence and Sunny Sipes. He also stated that he understood that the Chief was “one guy”. However, he is an Engineer, has worked with Christensen and would like to have provided feedback on his performance.
- Commissioner Watkins inquired if Chief had discussed personal evaluations with the other District employees?
- Etcheverry stated that he had provided Mrs. Sipes with her evaluation and was scheduling the Firefighter discussions for the current week.
- Watkins asked if the evaluations could be provided to employees prior to their meeting?
- Mrs. Christensen relayed family concerns with job loss.
- Mr. Christensen stated that he was frustrated with no prior feedback for performance improvement.
- Chief Etcheverry stated that verbal feedback was previously provided.
- Commissioner Watkins asked employees to complete the Chief’s Performance Review next month.
- Commissioner Spence stated that communication is important to all.
- Commissioner Crittenden asked if Chief Etcheverry would provide Brady Christensen with his performance evaluation this evening?
- Etcheverry stated that he would.

### **Reminders**

- The May Board Meeting will be held Monday, May 13, 2024, at 6:30 PM.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Spence moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 PM. This was seconded by Commissioner Fichter, and the vote was unanimous. Chairman Crittenden closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Sunny Sipes, Finance Manager / Administrative Specialist

Minutes Distributed Electronically to Board Members