

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
ALVA FIRE CONTROL & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
2660 STYLES ROAD, ALVA, FLORIDA 33920
DATE: JUNE 10, 2024

Call to Order

Chairman Crittenden convened the regular monthly meeting of the Alva Fire Control & Rescue Service District at 6:31 PM, June 10, 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
4-District Firefighters
Dist. Legal Counsel-Richard Pringle,PA
1-District Volunteer
1-District Citizen
Union DVP/Firefighter, Joe Randall
Local 1826 Vice President-Tim Jones

Pledge of Allegiance / Moment of Silence / Prayer

Prayer Performed by Commissioner Fichter

Presentation of Awards & Acknowledgments

- Chief Etcheverry wished Firefighter/EMT, Richard Johnson, a Happy Birthday.

Approval of the May 13, 2024 Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Fichter moved to approve the minutes of the, May 13, 2024, regular monthly meeting. Commissioner Spence seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Approval of the Financial Data from April 2024

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

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

Public Input on Business

- Firefighter/Paramedic, Joe Randall, presented an envelope to Chairman Crittenden.
- Richard Pringle, PA, inquired if the envelope’s inclusion was related to any business item listed on the current Agenda?
- Firefighter/EMT, Travis Wright, thanked Commissioners for their visits and discussions related to Chief Etcheverry’s Performance Review. He stated that he believed his comments were confidential and one Commissioner had relayed his sentiments to the Chief.
- Commissioner Crittenden tabled the envelope submission. Commissioners agreed to have legal counsel review the document prior to discussion.
- Mr. Pringle agreed to review the submission and encouraged the Board to only proceed with discussions according to District policy.

New Business

➤ Chief's Report

Chief Etcheverry reported the following:

- ✓ Thanked Volunteer Chris Meo for his work on T-600 and presented a description and photos of his progress. Stated that expected completion is within approximately 1-month.
- ✓ Performed sprinkler and commercial inspections during the month.
- ✓ There were 43-total monthly calls.
- ✓ Continuing with East Lee County Coop Training and planning a mitigation oil spill training class during late August.
- ✓ He is heading to the FASD Conference this evening that relates to his CDM accreditation that will take place in October 2024.
- ✓ M-121 is at the repair facility for service. While in their possession, the t-top released from the fiberglass frame. RYCO Marine's owner will submit the repairs to their insurance company and keep Chief Etcheverry aware of any developments.

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

- Chief Etcheverry informed the Board that the Assistant County Attorney, Joseph A. Adams, approved the use of Impact Funds for Rescue-121 and related lighting and radio costs (letter attached hereto).
 - ✓ Stated that his original letter of request is attached.
 - ✓ He chose to use local vendors due to ease of future repairs.
 - ✓ Stated that R-121 would not be placed into service for approximately 4-months due to build-out lead times.
 - ✓ He is working on an SOG for the operations of this apparatus.
 - ✓ Commissioner Watkins inquired if this particular apparatus was previously approved by Board members?
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence and Chief Etcheverry stated, yes. They stated that the submission of the letter of request, for use of Impact Fee funds for this vehicle and related equipment, was approved at the March Board meeting.
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence stated that this particular vehicle, its accessories and the dealership was also discussed at last month's Commission meeting.
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence, Commissioner Fichter and Chief Etcheverry all stated their understanding that this purchase was approved.
 - ✓ Commissioner's Watkins and Crittenden relayed their confusion on the process.
 - ✓ Commissioner Fichter asked Watkins and Crittenden if they would like to inquire on a return policy?
 - ✓ Commissioner Watkins stated that he just wanted to check on the process.
 - ✓ Richard Pringle, PA, stated that the purchase could be formally approved at this evening's meeting.
 - ✓ Finance Manager, Sunny Sipes, reminded the Board that District Impact Funds have not been expended in over 15-years. She stated that this apparatus will improve services provided to the District.

Commissioner Fichter made a motion to approve the purchase of Rescue-121, with Impact Funds, from Sam Galloway Ford in the amount of \$75,682.50, radios from Motorola in the amount of \$6,615.71 and lighting from Lightning Radio in the amount of \$13,995.00 totaling \$96,293.21. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Meloy. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

- Chief Etcheverry presented the Board with Water Tender Response (T-121) SOG #200.60.01.

Commissioner Spence made a motion to approve SOG #200.60.01 concerning Water Tender Response (T-121) (copy attached hereto). This motion was seconded by Commissioner Fichter and unanimously approved.

- Chief Etcheverry presented the Board with the projected ad valorem proceed for FY end 09/30/25.
 - ✓ Voiced a projected 11.18% increase in the amount of \$190,252.
 - ✓ Stated that final numbers will be received in July.
- Commissioner Crittenden stated to table the previously presented envelope matter. He inquired with Mr. Pringle as to his thoughts on the topic of the contents?
 - ✓ Mr. Pringle stated that the topic was concerning a shift trade, overtime and payment thereof. He stated that this is regulated by the Union Bargaining Agreement and was generally addressed through the grievance process. Stated that there is also reference to how Chief Etcheverry handled the process. He stated that this is typically handled through the Collective Bargaining Agreement and inquired with Local 1826's Vice President, Tim Jones, as to his thoughts.
 - ✓ Mr. Jones stated that this topic has been addressed, however, he was not aware of the letter that was presented to the Board.
 - ✓ Mr. Pringle is not aware of a prohibition of the individual speaking during Public Comments but felt that this concern should be addressed through the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence stated that he believes he is aware of the enclosed issue and feels that some of the employee concerns are "ridiculous". His questioning to District Firefighters was related to the 6-month Performance Review of the Chief and the majority of the relevant concerns were in regards to communication. He relayed these anonymous concerns to the Chief which he felt was the purpose of the review. He is aware that the Chief has went out to the station to speak with employees.
 - ✓ Firefighter Wright voiced his confusion with who would be the designated drivers of the new tender. He stated that this was not included in the SOG. Also, voiced that Probationary employees are concerned with retaliation.
 - ✓ Commissioner Fichter stated that the need for this tender has been discussed for years and has now come to fruition. He continued that the District has encouraged the development of SOG's in previous years and he is happy to see that the Chief has accomplished this matter. He feels certain that the Water Tender Response SOG has been vetted and is appropriate for its operation. He brought the discussions back to the presented envelope.
 - ✓ Mr. Pringle stated that the SOG strictly relates to the maintenance and operation of the tender and not directly related to who can drive the T-121.
 - ✓ Mr. Pringle stated the discussion of the letter is up to the Board Chairman, and the individual who submitted the letter, as to discussion during Public Comments. He reminded the Chairman that this particular matter is typically handled through the Union's Grievance process.
 - ✓ Firefighter Randall stated that an error occurred in regards to overtime permitted and/or paid. Chief Etcheverry did not pay the overtime in his check but did offer to give him cash for the time worked. He felt this set a precedent and was an issue.
 - ✓ Chief Etcheverry responded that the error occurred on both parts of the individuals. Chief was uninformed that the requested day was a trade day and

Mr. Randall put in for the overtime pay for that particular time. Chief presented a copy of an email from Union Representatives that confirmed his process was accurate and has been resolved. He stated that he was not attempting to “pay him off” but rather a personal gesture to be sure he was not depending on this money for his family. He clarified that this was not payment for the overtime but merely to be sure he had money for food and/or gas.

- ✓ Tim Jones, Local 1826, confirmed validity of the email that was sent earlier in the day and they have no comment on the funds that were offered.
- ✓ Attorney Pringle confirmed that the topic was resolved and a grievance will not be forthcoming concerning this matter.

Old Business

- Commissioner Crittenden called for the discussion of Chief Etcheverry’s 6-Month Performance Review
 - ✓ Mr. Pringle informed the Board of their previously approved process for the said Performance Review. He was contacted several months ago, by Commissioner Crittenden, to modify the existing questionnaire to reflect the current Chief’s name and information. Stated that as of the response deadline, June 03, 2024, he had received 8-completed forms as well as correspondence from Commissioner Spence. Mr. Pringle developed a ranking schedule for Board members. Stated that it was on the Agenda for this evening’s meeting and it was up to the Board as to how to handle the review, discussions and evaluation conclusion. He stated that discussion of this review between Board members can only take place within this public meeting.
 - ✓ Commissioner Spence stated that he submitted a letter of his understanding and beliefs as it relates to the Performance Review. He stated that he spoke with Firefighters, other local Chief’s, Union Representatives, as well as Finance Manager, Sunny Sipes, in order to gain knowledge on Chief Etcheverry’s performance. He stated that, based on Mr. Etcheverry’s Employment Contract, he believes that he has over accomplished all listed responsibilities (Pages 2 & 3). He does not feel that the Performance Review should be used to hire or fire an individual but rather to give guidance to their performance. Based on the knowledge he gained, he gives Chief Etcheverry high marks on his performance.
 - ✓ Firefighter Travis Wright inquired if Board members had an opportunity to read the actual written reviews related to the created ranking schedule?
 - ✓ Mr. Pringle stated that they are available to Board members.
 - ✓ Commissioner Fichter reminded all that they did approve this process and believed that the employee comments should be addressed when developing their decisions as to how to move forward. Stated that he didn’t feel he could make a fully informed decision as this point. He could speak to all of Chief Etcheverry’s progress in “moving the ball forward” for the District but believed he should review the employee comments.
 - ✓ Mr. Wright stated that they (Firefighters) wanted to “make things better”.
 - ✓ Chief Etcheverry inquired, with Mr. Wright, if he believed the District was in the same position they were in November of the previous year? Chief reminded him of his efforts to reduce the ISO Rating, increase communication and the increased training. He stated that he is attempting to be as transparent as he possibly can and move the Alva District in the right direction.
 - ✓ Mr. Wright stated that employee moral is low.
 - ✓ Chief Etcheverry inquired with Mr. Wright what he believed the right direction was and how he would suggest to accomplish that?

- ✓ Commissioner Watkins stated that he could see the low employee moral of members and wanted these individuals to “be happy”. He stated that he originally wanted to open-up the Chief’s position to “everyone” and not offer it to the first person that became available. He commented that “this is the way he was on this” (topic).
- ✓ Finance Manager, Sunny Sipes, inquired with Mr. Watkins if he believed her opinion would “play a part in his thought process”? She stated that she works with Mr. Etcheverry “day-in and day-out” in an administrative setting and only three Commissioners spoke with her and Chief Etcheverry himself. As a citizen of Alva, she feels that in order to create a knowledgeable decision on this matter, Mr. Watkins should have spoken with her as well.
- ✓ Commissioner Meloy stated that Chief Etcheverry should be sure to challenge Firefighters but also keep in continued communication with these individuals. Stated that he could slow down a bit in order to be sure that he is making informed decisions. He understands that not everybody likes their boss and not everybody likes changes. He spoke to Firefighters at other Lee County Districts who “don’t like their boss” and do not have the opportunity to evaluate that individual. Their feedback stated that after they got used to their Department modifications, they got used to the change. Stated that communication is key.
- ✓ Commissioner Crittenden stated that Chief Etcheverry’s “accreditation’s are amazing” but did agree with Commissioner Watkins that they should have opened up the hiring process for this position. He encouraged Etcheverry to have “one-on-one” meetings with District Engineers. Stated that, “he comes here a lot to make sure the guys are happy”. He feels that the evaluation comments should be distributed to Commissioners.
- ✓ Commissioner Fichter stated that he wants Board members to stay on track of the topic at hand, is not opposed to the distribution of the comments and believes that the closure of this subject is time sensitive.
- ✓ Engineer Wright stated that he believes Chief Etcheverry should also receive copies of the written evaluations in order to view the concerns. He hopes that all can reach “common ground”.
- ✓ Mr. Pringle reminded the Board that the next decision is up to their discretion. He had not circulated the written comments at this point but reminded that Board that he made them aware that they could contact him to discuss the writings. If they choose to take action for the evaluations to be distributed, he will distribute those items, after relevant redactions, as well as provide a copy of Chief Etcheverry’s Employment Agreement.
- ✓ Chairman Crittenden believes that the evaluations should be distributed to Commissioner.
- ✓ Mr. Pringle reminded the Board that these reviews are public record.
- ✓ Commissioner Spence stated that he had met with all employees and that the written reviews will not provide him with any additional information in regards to his decision. He did not want the documents distributed.
- ✓ Mr. Wright and Chief Etcheverry agreed to sit down together, on the upcoming Friday, in order to discuss topics of concern.

Commissioner Meloy made a motion to have the redacted written evaluations distributed to Commissioners and to delay the evaluation decisions to the, July 08, 2024, meeting. Commissioner Watkins seconded this motion and the motion was approved.

- ✓ Commissioner Spence inquired as to Board member’s opinions on the purpose of this evaluation?

- ✓ Commissioner Fichter stated that he believed the purpose was to get feedback on areas of concern and to provide improvement suggestions in the form of conversation. He would like to address the concerns, “hit the reset button” and all move in the same direction. Team work, communication and collaboration is key to success for Chief Etcheverry. He stated that Chief should relay to employees what he expects from them and seek feedback to aid in his success. Fichter complimented Etcheverry on his eagerness and energy to make a difference in the Alva Fire District. He reminded him that leadership includes finding a way to identify problems and then establish a way to correct them. He reminded him that there should be no retaliation to employees for making suggestions.
- ✓ Chief Etcheverry stated, “of course not”.
- ✓ Chief Etcheverry informed the Board that it has come to his attention that the Probationary Task Book is an operational resource and does not have to be implemented as policy due to its continuous evolution. He stated that this task book is coming to its completion and will be launched soon.

Union Report

District Paramedic Joe Randall, Local 1826 DVP

- Stated no grievance discussions.
- Stated that the Support/Volunteer Coordinator and the Training Coordinator incentives are still under review.
- Stated that one Firefighter is off the line (light duty) due to an injury.

Volunteer / Public Comments

- Chief Etcheverry read Firefighter James Barritt’s Volunteer Report.
 - ✓ District is now up to 8-Volunteers including one Lee County EMS medic and two tender drivers.
 - ✓ He is continuing to work towards setting-up Board composition so that the program can self sustain.
 - ✓ Over 100-Volunteer hours during the previous month.
 - ✓ Volunteers continue to help with Department tasks and projects.
- Sunny Sipes informed the Board that Tuscan & Company, PA has merged with Hughes, Snell & Co. Accounting Firm. She stated that Jeff Tuscan is keeping is current staff, clients and will honor the District’s existing contract.

Commissioner Comments

- Commissioner Watkins stated that Chief Etcheverry has 30-days to work on items of suggestion and that he will speak to employees during this time to see if anything has improved.
- Finance Manager, Sunny Sipes, reminded those in attendance that communication goes both ways. Chief Etcheverry and herself communicate daily with no problems. She stated that all at the Department should share the common goal of providing the best possible first responder services to the Alva community.

Reminders

- The July Board Meeting will be held Monday, July 08, 2024, at 6:30 PM.

Adjournment

Commissioner Fichter moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 PM. This was seconded by Commissioner Meloy, and the vote was unanimous. Chairman Crittenden closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Sunny Sipes, Finance Manager / Administrative Specialist

Minutes Distributed Electronically to Board Members