South Arkansas Fire Protection District

MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 24th, 2025

Time: 0900 Hours

Location: 611 Oak Street, Salida, CO 81201

Board Members Present

- Harold Starbuck
- Rich Edgington
- Art Hutchinson

Board Members Absent

- Fred Jackson (excused)
- Jeff Graf (excused)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Harold Starbuck at 0900 hours.

2. Approval of the Agenda

- Motion to accept the agenda as presented:
  - **Motion by:** Rich Edgington
  - **Second by:** Art Hutchinson

  Vote: Passed unanimously

3. Approval of February Board Meeting Minutes

- Motion to accept the February Board Meeting Minutes
  - **Motion By:** Art Hutchinson
  - **Second By:** Rich Edgington

  Vote: Passed unanimously

4. Open Session

Chief Jonke welcomed Sheldon Morgan and Phillip Gamache as new members of the South Arkansas Fire Protection District Board. Chief provided a brief overview of the board's operations and introduced the current board members. Sheldon and Phillip will begin their terms in May, replacing Jeff Graf and Fred Jackson.

5. Reports

Financial Report

- Sarah Marques of Walke and Associates reported that deposits have increased from $200,000 to $535,000 since the March 17th Pre-Plan Meeting. She also noted that no funds have been transferred into the Colorado Trust, as the first installment of the City's IGA payment, and a larger wildland payroll, are forthcoming.

- Laurie Todesco of South Arkansas Fire Protection reported that total funds received in the past 30 days have reached $203,000, bringing the District's total received to date to $1.9 million, with $2.1 million still outstanding.
- Captain Chris Bainbridge of South Arkansas Fire Protection also reported that the current deployments of both the Type 3 and Type 6 have generated approximately $70,000 to $75,000 in income, excluding the recently deployed 311.
- Motion to accept the monthly financials:
    - **Motion:** Rich Edgington
    - **Second:** Art Hutchinson

  Vote: Passed unanimously

Fire Chief's Report

Chief Aaron Jonke discussed several critical issues:

- Elections: All proper filings for the cancellation of the May 6th election have been made with Chaffee and Fremont Clerks as well as DOLA and the SDA.
- Radio replacement: The SCR Grant for radios, received last month, is currently on hold due to funding issues under the current administration. Emergency FCR staff remains funded in Colorado Springs. The Chief stated his commitment to monitoring the situation.
- Apparatus: E-311 was repaired at Freightliner in Fountain and was recently deployed to assist in Fredericksburg, Texas. Chief Jonke confirmed that all repairs will be covered under warranty.
    - Fleet management for the City of Salida needed to have their lifts recertified. Once recertified and back in service, Chief Jonke plans to implement regularly scheduled preventative maintenance.
    - Chief Jonke expressed the importance of integrating Engine Bosses into the First Due system, enabling crew members to complete rig inventories and checklists in the field. This will enhance rig maintenance and ensure they are ready for immediate action when required.
- Training: The Annual Refresher Course will be held on May 2nd, featuring hands-on training. Chief Jonke encouraged board attendance to meet the crew members. A new Volunteer Program will also be introduced by both Chief Jonke and Captain Bainbridge, requiring crew members to complete 32 hours of annual volunteer work, focused on either mitigation efforts or training personnel.
- Operational Planning: The new Pay Policy will take effect in May, encouraging personnel to work on trucks in an effort to balance overhead costs. Chief Jonke emphasized the importance of this initiative, not only for managing overhead but also for providing valuable experience to both younger and more experienced personnel.
    - The End of Season Appreciation Dinner was held at the 611 Oak Street Station to honor the NCCC and SCC crews, who completed approximately $170,000 worth of mitigation work in the community. Chief Jonke thanked Harold Starbuck and Art Hutchinson for attending the event. He also explained that these efforts were made possible through an arrangement involving housing at the old 124 E Street station, where South Ark covers utilities, in exchange for community-wide mitigation work.
    - Both Sheldon Morgan and Art Hutchinson communicated their appreciation of the mitigation work that both the NCCC and SCC crews have done on their property.
    - The Chief communicated that Kent Maxwell of Colorado Firecamp aims to donate $40,000 worth of secured grant money to better support the South Ark Wildland Program. This money would be directed towards the Wildland Chief position, which Chief Jonke expressed a continued need for. It would also help bolster mitigation efforts and increase the number of wildland firefighters to address incidents in the community.

    - Chief Jonke then communicated how the department aims to solidify housing at the 124 E Street station with the City of Salida for mitigation crews throughout the summer. This collaboration would not only continue mitigation efforts around the community but would also increase readily available personnel that are able to respond in the event of wildfire.
- Legislation: Chief Jonke communicated that he is continuing to monitor federal legislation and funding. He confirmed that he is not currently seeing any issues that will affect outstanding payments and that he will continue to monitor this.
- District Unification: Chief Jonke communicated that conversations around the creation of a single fire district have been received very well by the City of Salida, county commissioners, and neighboring cities. The Chief communicated that these efforts to unify the district will take a lot of work, but he is hopeful of the opportunities that it will create in the future.
- The District of Fire Prevention and Control: The Chief is investigating bill processing through the DFPC, communicating that 65% of bills received are flagged for errors, thus slowing down the billing process. He assured the board that while the billing process is slow, he is working closely with Laurie to ensure proper submissions are being made and that money is being paid back in a timely manner.

Assistant Fire Chief Report

Chief Rohrich reported on a few administrative items:

- Insurance: Chief Rohrich is currently in the process of obtaining insurance quotes from various companies through the SDA to ensure proper coverage for South Ark. She assured the Board that, while coverage has been secured, she will continue to research additional options to ensure the Board is receiving the most cost-effective solution.
- Grants: Chief Rohrich communicated that she is working on the Fire House Subs Grant to acquire a new rescue boat that will be better suited for two rescuers. The grant will be submitted on April 3rd and she will update the board on its progress.
- NERIS: Chief Rohrich reported that the state has adopted a new fire incident reporting system, NERIS. This system will assist in tracking submitted incidents and will be beneficial when submitting grants, as the state requires proper incident submissions when awarding grants.

Wild Land Coordinator

Captain Bainbridge reported the following:

- Equipment Deployments: Captain Bainbridge communicated that the Type 3 was deployed on March 23rd to Texas where it will likely be kept through May.
- Fire Conditions: Drought conditions for the south end of the country continue to remain the same for the foreseeable future.
- Mitigation: Captain Bainbridge confirmed that the Ranch Hand Mitigation program is going well, although drought conditions have been making it difficult to conduct controlled burns. He communicated that requests for controlled burns have been received from surrounding areas including Westcliffe, Gunnison, and the San Luis Valley and that he aims to conduct burns when weather conditions allow.
    - Bainbridge communicated that he is working closely with Kent Maxwell of Firecamp to assess areas in Poncha Springs to help with suppression in the event of wildfire.

6. New Business

- **Motion:** To Adopt Resolution No. 2025-05 Resolution to Amend 2025 Adopted Budget
    - **Motion By:** Rich Edgington
    - **Second:** Art Hutchinson

Vote: Passed Unanimously

7. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn the meeting at 0936
    - Motion to Adjourn: Rich Edgington
    - **Second:** Art Hutchinson

  Vote: Passed Unanimously

Submitted by: Art Hutchinson, Acting Secretary Treasurer

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