

**CORTEZ FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
WORKSHOP MEETING  
June 28, 2014**

*(The workshop meeting was scheduled by the Board of Directors at the May 14, 2014 Board of Directors meeting, and was noticed in the Legal Section of the Cortez Journal, the paper of record, on Friday, June 13, 2014.)*

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Lucero called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. in the meeting room at Station #1. Roll call followed and the board members present were Lori Johnson, Orly Lucero, Kent Lindsay, Diane Fox and Sherri Wright. Administrative Assistant Wendy Mimiaga, Asst. Chief Charles Balke, Chief Jeff Vandevoorde and Tami Graham were present for the meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**REVIEW OF BOARD MANUAL**

A Board Manual containing the Cortez Fire Protection District Personnel Policy and Procedures, the Strategic Plan, the budget, the By-Laws and the Service Plan was given to each member of the Board of Directors.

Ms. Johnson commented that the Personnel Policy Manual did not need to be reviewed as it has already been reviewed and voted on.

Chief Vandevoorde asked if the new Board members had any questions. Ms. Wright and Ms. Fox both asked about job descriptions. Ms. Johnson asked that copies of the job descriptions for the Chief, Asst. Chief and Administrative Assistant be made for the Board. Ms. Wright pointed out that the Board only has one employee, the Chief. Ms. Fox commented that she would like to see all three job descriptions.

Ms. Wright inquired about the SAFER grant that pays the salaries for several of our firefighters, and what is planned when the grant comes to an end. Chief Vandevoorde explained that a retention grant for two additional years was applied for, but was not awarded. When the full time firefighters were hired, their salaries and benefits were planned for in the budget. President Lucero further explained that during the budget meetings last year, two separate budgets were prepared based on the outcome of the election and the 2.5 mill levy increase, which was passed last November, 2013.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that a contingency plan was discussed, that if the mill levy did not pass we would drop back to a crew of four personnel on duty, two full time and two part time position.

Ms. Mimiaga stated that before the SAFER Grant was accepted multiple salary projections were done, going out about eight years, with and without SAFER, to determine how hiring fulltime firefighters would affect the budget, and if we could continue to pay the salaries, with or without the mill levy increase. We will do another set of salary projections prior to the Fiscal Affairs Committee meeting.

Ms. Wright inquired if the District had someone come in to do an audit. Ms. Mimiaga replied that all government entities are required to have a governmental audit each year. Heidi Trainor handles the audits for the District. Ms. Trainor is currently working on the audit. It is due to the State Auditor's office by July 31, 2014. Ms. Johnson asked about a June 30, 2014 deadline. *(we will look into what this might be, it could be having the letter of intent signed by this date)*

President Lucero confirmed for the new Board members, with the Chief, that we currently have nine full time fire fighters, and about 32 part time. Chief Vandevoorde explained that he tries to only schedule the part time firefighters no more than 36 hours in a two week pay period. They cannot go over 212 hours in a 28 day period.

Ms. Johnson asked if there were any questions on the by-laws, and explained that they are standard by-laws. Ms. Fox noted that they are right from the state statues.

Ms. Johnson continued onto the Strategic Plan, and commented that Asst. Chief Balke wrote most of the plan, but also put out the effort to include a SWOT, Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats, analysis. Ms. Johnson commented that some board members did not want the weaknesses included, however it was decided that if it was worth writing down, then we needed to acknowledge that someone felt it was a weakness. Ms. Fox pointed out that we can then address the weaknesses if we know what they are. Asst. Chief Balke said that being transparent is important. In the past five to six years, each year we have had significant positive progressive change. Chief Vandevoorde added that the positive change for us is not always positive for other people. Change can be hard, and some individuals do not want to see change. Ms. Johnson noted that Asst. Chief Balke has proven to be a very successful grant writer, and having a Strategic Plan enhances the grant writing ability, it makes the District look better. Ms. Johnson pointed out that even though Asst. Chief Balke wrote most of the goals to start with, the Board discussed, reviewed and reworded what was in the Plan so that it reflected the Board's view. The same was true of the Mission and the Vision statements. Over all it was a very successful retreat (*January 26, 2014*).

Ms. Wright inquired about the three, five and ten year improvement plans under Administration and Finance objectives, and if we are tying them into our budget. Chief Vandevoorde explained that we had a five year plan, and were able to accomplish many of the goals of the plan early on. Mostly due to being awarded the SAFER grant, \$550,000, and thus being able to free up money in the budget, now not needed for salaries, to purchase much needed equipment, i.e. hose, nozzles. We are currently only at about 35% of spending in our budget, so we will be able to start purchasing additional equipment that is needed. The SAFER grant will end (*September, 2014*), so next year will salaries will start being a higher percentage of the budget. We will then need to scale back on equipment purchases.

Ms. Johnson mentioned that with the thought of building a new station, it has been mentioned that we start a new line item, or another reserve fund, building fund, for the new station. It was pointed out that in the reserve funds, the Board has allocated certain amounts of money to operational contingency, facilities, equipment and PPE, and apparatus replacement. Currently \$300,000 is appropriated for facilities. These amounts are not set in stone, and can be changed, by motion, by the Board. President Lucero pointed out that we will have a work session on the 2015 budget before the September 10, 2014 Board meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the Board manuals, and everyone stated that they will continue to go through the information presented in them.

### **BOARD TRAINING – Tami Graham**

*(Tami Graham has her Master's Degree in Transpersonal Psychology, and Graduate Certificates in both Organizational Leadership and Conflict Resolution. Ms. Graham has worked with numerous local and regional businesses, government agencies and non-profit organizations doing board/staff training, organizational development consulting and strategic planning.)*

Ms. Graham opened by thanking the Board for taking the time to do Board training, and having the conversation on some of the bigger picture issues. During the Board meetings you have District business to tend to, but it is also important to take time as a Board to work on bigger issues, i.e. the Strategic Plan, talk about how to function together as a team, and what are the Boards responsibilities versus the staff's responsibilities. Ms. Graham also thanked the District for inviting her to the SDA training on June 9, 2014. She commented on how useful it was in learning the differences between the different types of boards. Many of the members of the Cortez Fire Protection District Board, serve or have served on other boards. It is an important distinction to talk about what sets apart your role as a Board member on this board, how is it different and how is it the same from other boards you have served on.

Ms. Graham asked the Board what sets apart your role as a Board member on this Board, how is it different and how is it the same from other boards you have served on. This is an important distinction. Ms. Graham also asked the Board if there were any questions about difference between the roles of the Board versus the staff, in terms of a Special District board.

President Lucero stated that on a governmental board, you are working with tax dollars, where as a non-profit runs primarily on grant funding. Working with tax dollars, the communities money, holds more of a responsibility. There is more accountability to the public. The distinction between the School Board and the District Board were discussed, pointing out that the District Board works out of the one general fund, and our primary source of income is property tax, grants are supplemental.

Ms. Graham pointed out that the budget is much simpler in regards to a non-profit, with many different funding sources with different uses, but with the tax revenue there is much more accountability.

Ms. Fox pointed out that in regards to public input, the District is very straight forward, there is not a lot of conflict. An incident with a past fire inspector and his interaction with the School District was brought up, and it was discussed how the Board is responsible for their employees and accountable to the public for their actions.

President Lucero pointed out that the Chief is the only employee who reports to the Board.

Ms. Wright reiterated that the Board only has one employee. Mr. Lindsay continued that the Chief does not have five bosses, but one collectively, and most interaction should be between the Chief and the Board President, as the spokesman for the Board, and then it is the responsibility of the Board President to communicate with each Board member.

Ms. Fox commented that communication within the Board is important so that the Board members are not blindsided if something comes up. Ms. Graham reiterated that communication between the Chief and the Board President, and then the Board President and the Directors is very important. President Lucero stated that he prefers calling as opposed to e-mail.

Chief Vandevoorde stated that he prefers face to face communication, which will be primarily with the Board President. President Lucero commented that he believes there is better communication within the Board now than when he was elected to the Board.

Ms. Graham continued that with two of the Board members being new, this is an opportune time to work on the relations with one another, and how do you want to communicate with each other. Communication is very important for how you work together on the Board and with staff.

Chief Vandevoorde added that there is a lot he does not have to go to the Board with, but prefers to keep them more informed. A lot goes on within the District and it is better for the Board to know, especially if someone from the community approaches them. It was also pointed out that when we have the Fiscal Affairs committee meeting to go over the budget, Asst. Chief Balke supplies a justification list with everything that is planned for purchase, cost, and why it is needed, is included for each line item.

Ms. Johnson added that even if it is in the budget, if it is over a certain amount, it should come before the Board for pre-approval. This is what Ms. Johnson would like for this Board to do. Just because there is a line item and there is plenty of money, it should still come before the Board. In the City of Cortez, if an item is over \$10,000 it has to be approved by the Board.

Asst. Chief Balke commented that Chief Vandevoorde is on top of the budget and know where every dollar is spent. He regularly reviews the budget and the P&L. Ms. Johnson commented that the Board should sign all contracts and grants. Ms. Fox stated that she did not think the Board should be signing the actual grants, but should approve them by motion. Ms. Graham pointed out that the Board is in control of overall fiscal policy and oversight, but not the daily functions.

Ms. Graham continued with meeting etiquette and rules of conduct. A list from the SDA Board Manual was handed out and discussed.

1. Agree to disagree. This is a sign of a mature and high functioning board. There could be a strong difference of opinion, but once the Board makes a decision on an issue, that is final. Ms. Fox added that regardless of how you feel as an individual, once the decision is made you need to stand with your Board, especially in public.
2. Arrive on time.
3. Arrive prepared. Look over the information distributed prior to the meeting.
4. Cell phones. This should be decided on as different individuals have different needs. It is good to require that they at least be silent and set to vibrate, and to possibly inform the rest of the Board if you will need to take a call prior to the meeting, emergencies and responsibilities happen.
5. Participation. Chief Vandevoorde commented that he would like the Board to be more vocal, if they have an opinion, comment or idea to let him know. It is always better to say something than not to. Mr. Lindsay added that if someone has a question to ask it rather than be uninformed.
6. Stay on topic. Follow the meeting structure. It can be very frustrating when additional conversations ensue without proper information.

Ms. Johnson asked to readdress a comment that Chief Vandevoorde had made earlier in the meeting. The Chief stated that the firefighters should not come to the Board with problems, which is agreeable,

however the citizens have elected the Board, and if they choose to come to the Board members with questions or concerns, that is their right.

Mr. Lindsay added that it is a concern as a Board member, the members are not only firefighters, when they are off duty they are citizens, they pay taxes too.

Chief Vandevorde replied that the members are not addressing a Board member as a citizen, they are addressing them as a firefighter. Firefighters do not go to a Board member, they are to go to their supervisor.

Ms. Johnson stated she is not talking about firefighters, but citizens should be able to come to a Board member if they have a question. If there is a problem then it should be addressed to the Chief.

Ms. Fox reiterated that these are the people that elected us, they need to understand that we are going to hear them, however I am one of five people that serves on a board and cannot give you a definitive answer, but I can bring it to the Board, or suggest that they talk with the Chief, but you do listen to them.

Ms. Wright added that after speaking with a citizen, the Board member should then contact President Lucero and/or the Chief depending on the problem, so as not to blindside them.

Ms. Fox also added that if a firefighter approaches a Board member, they should listen to them, let them know you heard what they said, but then immediately send them to the Chief, as it is an organization problem, and say no more. We don't want them, or anyone else, to think the Board does not care.

Ms. Johnson just wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page regarding communication.

7. Recognize good ideas. Respect each other's ideas, even if they are different from your own, and come to the meeting with an open mind. A discussion ensued regarding having items or ideas put on the agenda. If a Board member would like to discuss something at the meeting, it should be put on the agenda for discussion. Decisions should not be made on items not on the agenda, the public should have a reasonable idea of what is going to be discussed and/or acted on at the meeting.

Ms. Johnson commented that if it a regular business meeting, the public should understand that there is business that could come up. Ms. Graham stated that it should be amended at the beginning of the meeting, and not brought up during the meeting as an afterthought.

8. Listen. Respect others by giving them the courtesy of hearing what they have to say. Hear each other out without jumping all over one another. The Board President should see over all conversations. Have a respectful environment where everyone feels heard.

9. Always have the best intent of the community in mind.

It was then reiterated that the Board should understand the difference between policy versus operation, and the Boards relationship with the Chief, or the District Manager, and the staff. The Chief is the Boards employee, and who they should go to.

How to deal with a problem Board member was addressed. If a Board member acts inappropriately in the community, or there is a personal issue, it should be discussed with the Board President. You can adopt Rules of Conduct, which could just be the general meeting etiquette that was previously reviewed. Ms. Graham continued with the fact that Board members should live with and support the Boards decision once it has been made, even if they do not agree. They should not criticize the staff or others in the organization in public, be discrete and offer comments in private, being sure to go through the chain of command. Board members actions and comments are a reflection on the District.

CPR, content process relationship, for working groups was discussed. This shows the importance of focusing on, negotiating and agreeing to the needs of the District before attempting to achieve any goals. The content would be the strategic plan, these are the goals, the process would be how you go about accomplishing the strategic plan, what is the Boards role, the Chiefs role, where does the public come in. The process of how you go about getting the business of the District done. Everyone has an important function, and it is important to be clear about what those jobs are, i.e. the boards role versus the Chiefs role. The relationship is more about how you want to engage with one another, communication. All three aspects are important. If one is neglected or faltering, it will cause stress on the others. You could have the greatest strategic plan, but if the relationships are off and the Board is at

odds with one another, you're not clear on what the Boards role is or the staffs role, you're not going to achieve your content. It is good for the Board to have this type of a discussion session.

A communication exercise, Social Styles in the Workplace, was executed. This exercise helps each individual identify their social style, and learn to identify others social styles. How you see yourself, and insights on how others see you. This helps with more effective communications and relationships, and to develop greater tolerance and understanding of others.

There are four categories, (Am) amiable, (D) driver, (E) expressive, (An) analytical. The following is the outcome of the exercise for the Board and staff:

Wendy – D-8, An-8, Am-5, E-3  
Diane – E-13, D-5, Am-4, An-2  
Kent – D-9, Am-7, E-5, An-3  
Orly – E-7, D-7, Am-6, An-5  
Sherri – D-12, An-7, E-3, Am-2  
Lori – Am-9, D-8, An-3, E-3  
Jeff – Am-9, An-7, E-5, D-3  
Chuck – E-8, An-7, D-5, Am-4

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business to discuss, Kent Lindsay made a motion to adjourn the workshop, Sherri Wright seconded. The motion passed as follows:

Fox	Lindsay	Wright	Johnson	Lucero
Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

The meeting adjourned at 7:35p.m.

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Orly Lucero– President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kent Lindsay – Secretary/Treasurer