

**CORTEZ FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
July 18, 2012**

CALL TO ORDER

President Jim Bridgewater called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the meeting room at Station #1. Roll call followed and the board members present were Lori Johnson, Orly Lucero, Kent Lindsay Keenan Ertel and Jim Bridgewater. Administrative Assistant Wendy Mimiaga, Asst. Chief Charles Balke and Chief Jeff Vandevoorde were present for the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

SAFER Grant – Chief Vandevoorde started the presentation with a power point. He explained the SAFER, Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response, Grant was created to provide funding to fire departments to increase the number of trained firefighters and to better comply with the staffing, response and operational standards of NFPA and OSHA. Originally it was used to put firefighters on duty, but now is primarily used to employ firefighters that have been laid off and get staffing back to what it needs to be. We applied for the SAFER grant to hire fulltime firefighters as outlines in the Five Year Plan. The number of calls has increased each year, as well as the number of back to back calls, and it is getting harder to fill shifts with the reserves. It is not likely we will be able to fill four slots per shift with the reserves, as three is already difficult. Having full time personnel will also help with the continuity of information. Based on the Five Year Plan we were hoping to hire six full time career firefighters by 2014. With the SAFER grant we will be a year ahead of schedule. We have been awarded \$555,258 for September 29, 2012 through September 28, 2014.

If approval is granted, we will have to formally accept the grant. We would then post the job announcement, internally first, then start the testing process, a written test, physical agility and an oral interview with outside people. We will then offer the jobs to the top six people with a start date of October 7, 2012. If there are not enough qualified applicants internally, we will then post the job openings externally. The new hires, internally, will have to have FF I and first responder, since that is what is required of them already, but will have to acquire FF II and EMT-b to meet the grant stipulations.

The cons are increase in Human Resource requirements and additional documentation and filings. A long term financial commitment, increases in costs of wages and benefits. Less reserve shifts, however we will be hiring from within so there will be six less firefighters vying for the fewer reserve shifts. And there could be some hurt feelings and a loss of members.

The pros are \$555,258 in unmatched funding, improved community relations and more public education and prevention. This also adds six new jobs in the community. Compliance with NFPA for staffing and being able to have two in two out on a scene. Coverage of multiple calls, we will be able to split the crews, and use a smaller vehicle for EMS calls. Structure and fluidity within the organization and ownership within the organization. These will be the first six full time firefighters in Cortez. It is a big

step in this organization and something to be proud of. We will also be able to assign people to different agency improvement projects, which will allow us to get more done than with just two people working on them, i.e. mapping/preplans, training, communications, equipment/vehicle maintenance, facilities and public education. We would also have individuals for wildland deployments which can make money for the district, and officer development. The full time firefighters will start training to become officers in the two year period, and will then be in charge, it will add another level of accountability within the organization.

Chief Vandevoorde then went over the budget line by line. A preliminary budget has been projected for 2013, 2014 and 2015. Starting with fund revenue a figure of \$960K was used for the property tax income, the three year average is about \$970K. The delinquent taxes and interest was also under budgeted by \$5K. The specific ownership taxes was budgeted at \$50K, the three year average is \$84K. Interest was under budgeted at \$10K, \$16.9K was generated in 2011. Grants were also budgeted at \$800K for 2013, \$500K for 2014 and \$250K for 2015 which all three years include the SAFER grant. Asst. Chief Balke explained that since we have been awarded the grant and if we accept it, we can apply again in two years, and our probability of receiving the grant will be much higher since we will be in the category of retaining firefighters and avoiding layoffs. Chief Vandevoorde went on to explain that the revenue was budgeted low, with about a \$49K cushion.

The wages were broken down into administration, full time firefighters and reserves, FICA, and benefits that consist of retirement, FPPA and health insurance. The wages for the full time firefighters at \$220K has about a \$40K cushion built into it for additional overtime and unexpected occurrences. According to FSLA anything over 212 hours in a twenty-eight day period you have to pay overtime, we are looking at twelve hours per month, per firefighter, in overtime, or less than \$3,000 per year, per firefighter. We do also have to provide medical insurance based on federal guidelines. There is also a cushion built into that figure, and the FPPA, in the budget as well. For 2013 we are looking at \$783K for wages and benefits which is about 48% of the budget, which is low. Most departments average about 75 – 80% of their budget. For 2012 we are at about 51% of the budget, so we will still be about the same.

The full time firefighter salary will be \$30K per year, which is broken down to about \$10.30 per hour (to calculate overtime pay). They will take home the \$30K plus the built in overtime, which will be up to \$33K per year. It will cost the department up to \$47K per year including the benefits and retirement. It will be about \$282K for six firefighters with benefits. The grant will cover all of it for the first two years. We will be cutting back one reserve spot and saving \$150K per year there.

Chief Vandevoorde then went through the rest of the budget line by line explaining each figure for administration, fire suppression, training, repair and maintenance, station operation and maintenance, treasurers fees, pension fund and capital outlay for 2013, 2014 and 2015. He explained that most line items have been a little over budgeted with a bit of a cushion calculated in them. We have under estimated the revenue and over estimated the expenses, and are still able to balance the budget. Chief Vandevoorde and Asst. Chief Balke also explained a little about the equipment that needed to be replaced and purchased and how that was worked into the budget. After going through the budget, and transferring \$72K to the pension, we end up with about \$10K over revenues. This does not account for the \$50K we have under estimated in revenue and the \$40K cushion built into the firefighter salaries, which is another \$90K, not to mention the many other cushions built into the expenditures.

Mr. Ertel commented that the numbers look good, but it is a gamble. We need to prepare ourselves that by 2015 we could run into trouble if we do not get another SAFER grant and or if the community does not support the mill levy increase. We need to have a plan as to how we will be able to sustain the six full time firefighters. The community has to understand that we are going to be a paid fire department. Chief Vandevoorde explained that there are several options they have been working on. If, after the two year grant, the funding drops off we can drop one reserve position, and cut \$150K out of the budget, and go back to a three person crew until we get the funding.

President Bridgewater asked how Chief Vandevoorde came up with six full time firefighters. The Chief explained that with six he can schedule two per shift, and then have two reserve members per shift to

give us the four people we need to meet OSHA and NFPA requirements and have two in two out, dual calls and split crew for EMS. It is already hard to fill the schedule with the reserves only having three people on shift, we would not be able to schedule four people only using reserves.

Mr. Ertel asked if there are any strings attached to the grant that the Chief had concerns about. Chief Vandevoorde said that the only concern he might have is if the department did not keep the six positions for the two years we would have to pay back the grant. The individuals can be changed, but we have to keep six positions filled, and have four people on duty. We could not drop back to three people on duty until after the two years for the grant are over.

Jeff Perry asked about being a volunteer if he were hired in a full time position. He is in his ninth year and close to the ten years required to qualify for the pension. Discussion ensued about being able to "buy out" a year to take a full time position with the district. The Board will need to review the by-laws and decide what to do. A special pension board meeting will be scheduled for August 8, 2012, prior to the regular Board of Directors meeting.

Chief Vandevoorde went on to explain that the grant will also free up some money in the budget giving us the opportunity to purchase equipment, i.e. hoses nozzles, we need to buy. With the money we are saving in salaries we can purchase the \$15K in hose we need to replace what is out of service, has failed and is too old.

President Bridgewater said there seem to be many benefits with the grant. No one really knows what will happen in the future, and it is uncomfortable for a board to make such a big decision, however this is a remarkable opportunity for this district, and one we may not see again.

Lori Johnson made a motion to approve the acceptance and move ahead with the SAFER Grant, Kent Lindsay seconded. The motion passed as follows:

Ertel	Lindsay	Lucero	Johnson	Bridgewater
yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business to come before the board, Kent Lindsay made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Keenan Ertel seconded. The motion passed as follows:

Ertel	Lindsay	Lucero	Johnson	Bridgewater
yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

The meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Jim Bridgewater – President

Attest:

Kent Lindsay – Secretary/Treasurer