

## MINUTES

### *Regular Board Meeting*

*August 11, 2020*

*5:30 p.m.*

*Location: Remote Via Zoom*

### **Board of Directors**

*Nicole Johnson (Division 2) - President, Randy Mendosa (Division 3) - Vice-President,*

*Rene Campbell (Division 1) - Director, Elena David (Division 4) - Director*

*David Rosen (Division 5) - Director*

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The regular session of the Board of Directors for the Arcata Fire District was called to order by President Nicole Johnson at 5:34 pm.

### 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

There was no pledge of allegiance.

### 3. ATTENDANCE AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

The meeting continued with a quorum and the following were present remotely via zoom: President Nicole Johnson, Vice President Randy Mendosa, Director Rene Campbell and Director David Rosen. Director Elena David was having technical difficulties with her phone and joined the meeting at 5:40 pm.

Additional District administrative staff included Fire Chief Justin McDonald, Battalion Chief Sean Campbell and Board Secretary Becky Schuette.

### 4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There were no Director or public comments at this time.

It was moved to approve the agenda.

Prior to the vote, Board Secretary Schuette pointed out that the Consent Calendar item 6.2 should have read July Finance Report instead of June.

The motion was restated by Director Mendosa.

It was moved to approve the agenda with the noted correction by the Clerk to Item 6.2.

**Motion:** Mendosa; Second: Campbell

**Roll Call:** Ayes; Campbell, Mendosa, Rosen and Johnson. Absent; David

Motion Carries

### 5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public member Roy Willis commented at this time. He queried the Board if there would be Town Hall Meetings similar to those that occurred for Measure R. President Johnson

deferred to the Chief who advised that he planned to discuss it later under 9.1, but there are plans to get what are likely going to have to be Zoom meetings to involve the public. Director David joined the meeting at this time, 5:40 pm.

## **6. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**6.1** Approval of Minutes from July 14, 2020 Regular Meeting

**6.2** ~~June~~ July 2020 Finance Report

Director Rosen questioned if there were July revenue accruals posted to our County Treasury and the Chief explained that we were waiting on the County to finish the fiscal year end postings.

There were no further comments from the Board and no public comments.

It was moved to approve the consent calendar.

**Motion:** Rosen; Second: Campbell

**Roll Call:** Ayes; Campbell, David, Mendosa, Rosen and Johnson

Motion Carries

## **7. PUBLIC HEARING**

There was no public hearing.

## **8. OLD BUSINESS**

**8.1 2020 Biennial Review of the Conflict of Interest Code:** Clerk/Secretary Schuette advised the Board that there had been no requests for updates or changes prior to the meeting.

There were no further comments from the Board or the public.

It was moved to authorize the Fire Chief to sign the 2020 Local Agency Biennial Notice indicating no amendments required, for submission to the Elections Office by the Board Clerk/Secretary.

**Motion:** Mendosa; Second: Campbell

**Roll Call:** Ayes; Campbell, David, Mendosa, Rosen and Johnson

Motion Carries

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

**9.1 Measure F Pass/Fail 5 Year Plan Overview 2020 Biennial Notice of Conflict of Interest Code:** Chief McDonald reviewed his staff report aloud indicating this is the “what if” in the event of pass or fail of Measure F. He finished asking if there were any questions for him.

Roy Willis, AVFA member and Chair of the Friends of Arcata Fire Committee, spoke at this time on the Arcata downtown station, the loan and commented on what might happen to the building and AFVA if the measure fails.

President Johnson asked if there were any Director comments at this time and Director Mendosa commented on the special relationship between the AVFA and the District.

President Johnson read aloud a Public comment received via Zoom chat from:  
Grayson (no last name)

Verbal public comments were received from:  
Barbara Georgianna  
Paul Nicholson

These comments were followed by a lengthy discussion about the closure of stations, the loss effects to the AVFA, and what the District plans to do in the interim time between passing of the Measure F and 2022, when the tax dollars are actually received. Other discussion regarding public information and media release of the “what if” information of pass or fail and clarification on the cost of the Special Tax to property tax assessments. The tax is based on property use, not on the value of the property.

Chief McDonald added information about queries from the community regarding pay cuts and changes in insurance for staff and retirees in order to save money. He explained that the District is bound by labor laws and contracts with employee and retirees. The District cannot unilaterally decrease or change benefits and pay without going through the negotiations process, as well as meet and confer. It is not as simple as just cutting benefits and pay.

Director Mendosa commented regarding public comments he has received regarding the District dropping to just one station. One station would be safer for staff, however, it would also mean larger fires because of the effect on response times. Further discussion on the particular topic was followed by a question from Director Mendosa regarding existing policies for entry (two in, two out) during fires and more discussion on the safety of two firefighters on an engine.

President Johnson read aloud another chat comment from Grayson.

President Johnson, Directors Campbell and Mendosa had a few final comments on the topic.

This item was for information only and will be returned to the next Regular meeting agenda.

## **10. CORRESPONDENCE**

President Johnson reviewed the correspondence and read the letter from Mr. Mackinney aloud.

There were no comments or questions from the Board and no public comments.

## **11. MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORTS**

**11.1 Chiefs Report** - Chief McDonald reviewed his staff report aloud.

**11.2 Committee Reports** - There were no committee reports.

**11.3 Director Matters** - There were no comments from the Directors. President Johnson congratulated Anthony Benelisha for being back to full duty and healthy.

### **11.4 Bargaining Group & Association Reports**

Local 4981 - Vice President Scott Gordinier addressed the Board and read a prepared document he wrote on effects that the new dispatch model is having on firefighters wellbeing and sleep cycle and the potential risk to firefighter and public safety. Following discussion he advised the Board that he would be emailing the information to the Directors. This emailed information will be an attachment to these minutes.



Director Mendosa queried that if the topic were to be made a future agenda item, what type of recommendation would the Local have for the Board to consider in order to improve the situation. Firefighter Gordinier responded to the query by advising that the conversation would be meet and confer and the Local could not discuss it on advice of counsel.

Senior Management Group - Battalion Chief BC Campbell SMG commented in agreement to the concerns by the Local regarding safety.

Arcata Volunteer Firefighters Association (AVFA) - Rob Cannon reviewed his report indicating they are still waiting to hear back from the Simpson Foundation. Walmart did not fund the grant application. They are still waiting for a response from California Fire Foundation as well. The only other addition to the report was that Redwood News would be interviewing him regarding the reopening of the CPR program.

## 12. CLOSED SESSION

There was no closed session scheduled.

## 13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Campbell; Second: Mendosa

Meeting adjourned by President Johnson at 6:54 pm.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for **September 8, 2020 at 5:30 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,



Becky Schuette  
Clerk of the Board

## 08/11/20 – AFD Board Meeting – Local 4981 Report

- Recently District has changed its Dispatch model and we would like to tell you how it is going.
- First, a recap of the system that we had for years prior:
  - We have been dispatched by Cal Fire 's Emergency Command Center. When a call would come in an alert tone would sound at the station and the dispatcher would notify us of the type of incident, incident location, and the unit or units that are assigned to the incident. There were five commonly used alerting tones that were specific to the duty chief, Arcata station, Mad River station, McKinleyville station and the All-Call tone. For example, if there was a medical call at night in downtown Arcata, the dispatcher would select the Arcata station tone which would activate the Arcata station alerting system. The crews wake up to the sound of the tone and the lights automatically turn on, the crew hear the dispatcher speak through the speakers about the call, and the Arcata crew respond to that incident. The Mad river station and the McKinleyville station would be quite – they would not be notified since the call did not involve them. Another example would be if there was a structure fire or some other larger incident that required all crews plus the duty chief to respond, then the dispatcher would select the All-Call tone. This would activate all the station alerting systems and the dispatcher would verbally announce each and every unit that was assigned to the incident. All crews would be alerted because they are all needed. This is a common dispatch model that is used by most career fire departments in the state.
- Within the last several weeks, the district approved reducing our dispatch service.
  - There are no longer 5 different alerting tones but rather just one, the old All-Call tone. It is now used for all incidents big and small. Now with every call, the duty chief, all three stations, and volunteers are alerted of every call. The lights turn on at every station. And every station hears the radio traffic – which at a minimum includes the dispatch, crew leaving, crew on scene, and crew returning. The crews at every station hear this, regardless of whether that station is being dispatched to the call or not. This model that is intended to be used all volunteer fire departments. This model does not work well for career fire departments such as ours with multiple stations. We are regressing.
  - This has been partially acknowledged by admin and two changes are in the works. First, there is talk of creating a second tone that doesn't alert volunteers. Unfortunately, however, this doesn't change the alerting system at the stations with on duty crews. Second, chief has made it so lights don't come on at Mad River station when a call comes in. This is helpful because unlike the other two stations where the lights are soft and red, MR station lights are florescent white lights which are brutal to wake up to.
  - We appreciate those challenges are being addressed or discussed, however this dispatch model still produces some big changes for the crews that we want to share with you.
    - 1) The dispatcher no longer announces the names of the units assigned to the incident.

- For example, if there was a medical aid in the Arcata response area, where the dispatcher used to say “for engine 8215 and Arcata ambulance, medical aid at 123 Main St.” the dispatcher will now say “for Arcata fire and Arcata ambulance medical aid at 123 Main St.”
    - This requires crews at the two staffed stations to figure out whether or not they have to respond to the incident. If they are not sure if they should respond, admin has advised the crews to just head to the call. That is not a very strategic use of resources.
  - 2) We are experiencing an increase in radio traffic from other departments.
    - We have always operated on our own radio channel, known as Arcata fire main or Arcata fire net. Arcata fire exclusively operated on this channel. It was only used by other fire departments if they were assisting us at one of our incidents. Now Arcata fire operates on a radio channel known as Humboldt county fire net, which is used by every fire agency in Humboldt county other than HBF, Fortuna, and Cal Fire, which is over 30 departments. Also note, these are volunteer fire departments using this channel– using a dispatch system appropriate for them – not for a career department.
  - 3) Lastly, As mentioned earlier, the lights will come on at Arcata and McKinleyville and radio traffic is heard at all stations, which at night will wake up crews that are uninvolved further disrupting crew sleep cycles and fatiguing staff. Staff that are already operating at bear bones.
  - This is a significant negative change for our crews. And has with out doubt negatively impacted our working conditions, and ability to serve the public.
- We have two main concerns with this new model: Public Safety and Firefighter Safety.
  - Concern 1 - Public safety
    - As I described, we are not actually dispatched, we are just notified that there is an incident and notified of the location of the incident. The engine captains at both stations make decisions independently on which apparatus goes and how many apparatuses go.
      - This is even more confusing because we are constantly rotating stations due to low staff and station closures. Since we are constantly changing stations the response boundaries for each station is also constantly changing. It can be unclear who is responsible for calls, especially in places toward Blue Lake or Manila. Our district is 64 square miles and some captains don’t know areas as well as others because they don’t work there as often. Add both of those to the fact that captains are making these decisions as they wake up. Because we only have two staffed engines now, our crews are busier.
      - We are now also woken up for a call we don’t need to go to and kept awake by radio traffic as the other crew attends the call. We are now making decisions about calls that 1) we never had to make and 2) we’re

making these decisions while we are more tired than usual. This dispatch model and the confusion it brings has and will contribute to delayed response times which can obviously be detrimental to the public. The fatigue can also cause mistakes – and we cannot afford to make these types of mistakes when it comes to the safety of our public. That is unacceptable.

- Sharing our channel with many departments also makes it much easier to miss radio traffic or have a different department talking over our communications. This does not only hurt our operations – it hurts theirs as well.
- Concern 2 – Firefighter safety
  - This dispatch model significantly impacts firefighter safety. Already our safety is impacted by being low staffed – we are staffed at 50% of the national standard, a standard which is there to keep us and the public safe. When we all chose to become FF we knew we would be woken up at night to serve the public – I’m not complaining about doing our job, it’s something we all love to do – but advances in behavioral and health science have shown the impact of sleep deprivation and other job stressors on the first responder staff.
  - There are so many research studies that show mental and physical illness in firefighters are linked to sleep deprivation. Current research indicates that sleep deprivation is associated with decreased vigilance, cognitive speed, alertness, mental performance; impaired memory; increased sleepiness; fatigue, and depression; poor quality of life; substance abuse; and increased risk for cardiovascular events, digestive disorders, obesity, diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea, and altered immune response. You can easily find more information with a quick google scholar search on these issues. We do not talk enough about the mental and physical illnesses that befall firefighters – they are real and have impacted our community. People in our own union have been and are currently dealing with some of these issues – and we would like you to take this seriously.
  - The District has listened to this science in the past and made improvements – for examples: In 2013 we changed to 48/96 from a Kelly schedule. In 2016 we installed silent stations which reduces the times crews are woken up because they are not listening to other stations at night. These are positive steps the district has taken to take care of its crew...but now, as mentioned, we are recessing, and our union is concerned.
  - The changed dispatch system is subjecting our crews to reduced sleep. It is imperative that we avoid our crews from being awoken at night for no reason in order to help decrease this job stressor. We kindly ask that you please consider and prioritize our safety... including our mental and physical health...because the mental and physical health of our union members is directly tied to the District’s ability to serve our community.
- I’ll conclude this by saying
  - Our union is entering a meet and confer process with the District to discuss these concerns and potential solutions.
  - Thank you for listening to our update on the new dispatch system.

### **Research:**

#### **The effects of sleep deprivation on firefighter and EMS responders (2007)**

<file:///C:/Users/Kristen/Downloads/progssleep-sleepdeprivationreport.pdf>

Final Report from the International Association of Fire Chiefs

#### **Mental health conditions, individual and job characteristics and sleep disturbances among firefighters (2012)**

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1359105312443402>

This study aimed to assess the associations between mental health conditions, individual and job characteristics and sleep disturbances among firefighters. Of 303 participants, 51.2% reported sleep disturbances. Psychological distress and psychosomatic disturbances were significantly associated with sleep disturbances. Suicidal ideation, unhealthy alcohol use and time as a firefighter were also associated with sleep disturbances but at a borderline level of significance ( $0.05 < p < .085$ ). These findings may be related to the psychological and physical hazards of firefighting and indicate the importance of research on associated professions.

#### **Sleep Problems, Depression, Substance Use, Social Bonding, and Quality of Life in Professional Firefighters (2012)**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3486736/>

Small-to-medium correlations were identified between sleep deprivation, depression, physical/mental well-being, and drinking behaviors. High-risk behaviors that impact psychosomatic well-being are prevalent in professional firefighters, which require environmental and individual-based health promotion interventions. The inter-correlation relationships between such behaviors, therefore, need to be explored in further details.

#### **Sources of Occupational Stress Among Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics and Correlations with Job-related Outcomes (2012)**

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/prehospital-and-disaster-medicine/article/sources-of-occupational-stress-among-firefighter-emts-and-firefighter-paramedics-and-correlations-with-job-related-outcomes/2A31B4FB1BAE938A2F3F0884D219A6E8>

A factor analysis of replies yielded 14 statistically independent "Occupational Stressor" factors which together accounted for 66.3% of the instrument's variance. These Sources of Occupational Stress (SOOS) factor scale scores essentially did not correlate with a measure the social desirability test-taking bias. Final SOOS factors were identified that correlated with job satisfaction and work-related morale of the respondents. Conflict with administration was the job stressor factor that most strongly correlated with reports of low job satisfaction and poor work morale in both study groups.

#### **Exploring Occupational and Health Behavioral Causes of Firefighter Obesity: A Qualitative Study (2013)**

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ajim.22151>

Analysis revealed five main themes of central importance to firefighters: (1) fire station eating culture; (2) night calls and sleep interruption; (3) supervisor leadership and physical fitness; (4) sedentary work; and (5) age and generational influences. The results showed a strong interrelationship between occupational and health behavioral causes of obesity in firefighters. The relevance of these qualitative findings are discussed along with the implications for future obesity interventions with firefighters.

#### **An evaluation of firefighter sleep quality (2015)**

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Todd\\_Smith17/publication/283719893\\_An\\_evaluation\\_of\\_firefighter\\_sleep\\_quality/links/5644ae8608ae9f9c13e56822.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Todd_Smith17/publication/283719893_An_evaluation_of_firefighter_sleep_quality/links/5644ae8608ae9f9c13e56822.pdf)



Sleep patterns of firefighters are of great concern for the fire service, especially when compromised performance leads to life-threatening implications for safety and health. The combined effect of occupational stress and burnout has established that a specific sleep pattern (sleep quality) is at risk.

**Sound the alarm: Health and safety risks associated with alarm response for salaried and retained metropolitan firefighters (2016)**

<https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.humboldt.edu/science/article/pii/S0925753515002532>

The present study investigated the alarm response procedure for Australian metropolitan fire fighters, identifying common and divergent sources of risk for salaried and retained staff. There were significant differences in procedure between the two workgroups and this resulted in differences in risk profile between groups. Sleep and fatigue, actual response to the alarm stimulus, work-life balance and trauma emerged as sources of risk experienced differently by salaried and retained firefighters. Both groups reported light sleep, insufficient sleep or fragmented sleep as a result of alarm response. In the case of salaried firefighters, this was associated with being woken on station when other appliances are called. There were risks from physical and psychological responses to the alarm stimulus, and reports of sleep inertia when driving soon after waking.

**Firefighter Shift Schedules Affect Sleep Quality (2016)**

[https://journals.lww.com/joem/Abstract/2016/03000/Firefighter\\_Shift\\_Schedules\\_Affect\\_Sleep\\_Quality.12.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/joem/Abstract/2016/03000/Firefighter_Shift_Schedules_Affect_Sleep_Quality.12.aspx)

Seventy-three percent of firefighters report poor sleep quality. The 24on/48off shift schedule is associated with the best sleep quality and Kelly is associated with the worst sleep quality. Firefighters working second jobs report significantly poorer sleep quality than those who do not. Shift schedules that disrupt normal circadian rhythms more result in poorer sleep quality, which can lead to less effective emergency response and increased risk to firefighter health and safety.

**Sleep Deprivation and the Health of Firefighters (2018) – clinical research paper**

[https://ir.stthomas.edu/ssw\\_mstrp/848/](https://ir.stthomas.edu/ssw_mstrp/848/)

Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) Data was collected from several Midwestern, metropolitan fire departments via an online survey. Firefighters' ESS score groups were found to be significantly related to cardiovascular disease, obesity, and their company assignments. Older firefighters were found to have higher ESS scores than younger firefighters.

**Sleep Disturbance Among Firefighters: Understanding Associations with Alcohol Use and Distress Tolerance (2019)**

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10608-018-9955-0>

Results indicated that higher alcohol misuse and lower distress tolerance (perceived ability to withstand negative emotional states) were each significantly associated with greater sleep disturbance.