

**Palominas Fire District
Special Board Meeting of the Governing Board
Palominas, Arizona
Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 5, 2025
5:30 p.m.**

ACRONYMS EOP/AOP...Emergency Operation Procedures/Administration Operating Procedures
A.R.S.....Arizona Revised Statutes ALS/BLS...Advance Life Support/Basic Life Support
ISO Insurance Services Office COLA..... Cost of Living Adjustment
ALS/BLS...Advance Life Support/Basic Life Support SCBA..... Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus
IGA...Intergovernmental Agreement DOL..... Department of Labor
FLSA...Fair Labor Standards Act

1. Call to Order:

- a) **Roll Call/Confirmation of Quorum**
- b) **Moment of silence**
- c) **Pledge of allegiance**

Call to the Public Lloyd Trachtenberg stated he understood the meeting was called to raise taxes and requested an explanation for why the money is needed. He commented that when he was on the board, there were no issues like the district has now, noting there were funds from wildland fires. He observed that trucks are always buying fuel, and the district is always spending. Robert Montgomery replied that the board does not do a back-and-forth exchange and that questions should be put in writing. As it turns out, legislation was signed by Governor Katie Hobbs, due to the efforts of Representative Gail Griffin and Cathy Chouinard to get it approved to purchase Red Dye fuel. Tommy Stoner stated that a public body may respond to criticism. Steve Dirmeyer identified himself as a WTO (Water Tender Operator) and asked the board if they had looked to see what truck was being driven, stating it is a borrowed vehicle from Whetstone Fire, not one owned by the district. Robert Montgomery stated that this is the reason for the meeting. Sharon Moorehead stated she recently moved from Washington and is thrilled to be in the community. She stressed that there needs to be resources to fight fires and that first responders should not be working with subpar equipment. She said she pays taxes to ensure her home is protected and has no problem paying more to ensure public safety. Tim Savage reiterated his previous sentiment that the fire district provides a service he cannot do for himself. He noted that 25% of his taxes go to the district and said, "if we want more, take it." Michael Kean stated he is a former board member who started with Palominas Fire District in 2003. He said he is aware of how the district was initiated and now works for another department that provides mutual aid to PFD on fires. He believes the board is doing a disservice by trying to cut taxes when the price of the fleet has gone up. He suggested visiting the idea of combining organizations and stated the district finally has a chief who knows what he is talking about and should be utilized. Justin Wright, a Battalion Chief with Sierra Vista Fire, commented that the community demands adequate service. He noted a huge concern with fire districts and their available funding sources. He suggested the board consider a feasibility study for creative solutions, such as combining with other agencies, as an alternative to continually raising taxes. Robert Montgomery responded that the issues brought forward are what the new Chief, Mark Prince, has been investigating. Justin Wright added that he is very impressed with Chief Prince.

2) Discussion and possible action on the Draft Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Annual Budget Valerie Rice made a motion to change the tax rate from 3.30 to 3.35 per hundred dollars of assessed value. Valerie Rice explained that she voted against the raise last week because no one had made a decent

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argument for it, but the input from the community swayed her vote. She also cited the need to replace items like turnouts for cancer prevention as a factor. Kim Mauzy seconded the motion. Cathy Chouinard stated she had previously voted to keep the same rate to be conservative but learned of the urgency of the situation over the weekend. She asked Chief Prince for suggestions on how the board can work with him. Chief Prince responded that a strategic plan is needed. Tommy Stoner stated they have one, and Valerie Rice asked him to find it. Chief Prince questioned how old it is, noting that if it is outdated, the district is behind. Tommy Stoner argued against the tax increase. He stated the district has a new engine that is about two years old and that the other two engines were not being repaired, which he called "poor management, not a lack of money." He said turnouts have been purchased over the last 8 years and it was the former chief's responsibility to create a replacement plan. He stated the district should not have to raise taxes for something that should have been worked into the budget. He expressed concern for residents who are "scraping by" and can barely afford food. Valerie Rice responded that the district has not been lucky with past chiefs and is now stuck with having to raise taxes to provide a good service. Chief Prince stated that the 3.30 rate is not keeping pace with rising costs, noting that an average engine that used to cost \$400,000 is now over \$700,000. He outlined budgetary priorities: Personnel Safety: The likelihood of firefighters getting cancer is higher than the average person. Radios: Radios cost \$10,000 each installed. Only two of the district's radios are less than five years old, and the rest are much older, leading to lost communications on incidents. Apparatus: The tenders are 26 years old, and their structural components are failing. An off-the-shelf tender costs around \$350,000. Technology: Computer replacements are needed. He concluded that the most important thing is to take care of the people and the community, and that PFD has become a "revolving door." Robert Montgomery stated that the effort to keep taxes low is a good effort until it becomes dangerous. The motion to change the tax rate to 3.35 passed with a vote of 4-1. Valerie Rice: Aye, Kim Mauzy: Aye, Cathy Chouinard: Aye, Robert Montgomery: Aye, Tommy Stoner: Nay.

3) Discussion and possible action on the 2025-2026 pay scale – Valerie Rice stated that after the last meeting, she received a call from a member of the public who convinced her that the district does not pay its employees enough. After asking around in the community, she compared firefighter pay to local jobs, noting that a 3% raise would bring firefighter pay to \$16.15/hour, while a dishwasher at Olive Garden starts at \$16.75/hour. Valerie Rice made a motion to approve a 4.5% pay scale increase to bring the basic firefighter pay to \$16.72 per hour. Kim Mauzy seconded the motion. Tommy Stoner asked for clarification if this 4.5% raise was in addition to the 3% previously discussed. The answer was no; the 4.5% raise would replace the 3% proposal. Valerie Rice: Aye, Kim Mauzy: Aye, Cathy Chouinard: Aye, Tommy Stoner: Aye, Robert Montgomery: Aye.

4) Adjournment: Cathy Chouinard made a motion to adjourn. Tommy Stoner seconded the motion. Cathy Chouinard: Aye, Tommy Stoner: Aye, Valerie Rice: Aye. Kim Mauzy: Aye, Robert Montgomery: Aye. The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

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1 Minutes approved by the Palominas Fire Board:

Signature

Date