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**BIG BEAR FIRE AUTHORITY  
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF  
May 17, 2023**

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A Special Board Workshop of the Big Bear Fire Authority was called to order by Board Chair Mote at 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 17, 2023, at 41090 Big Bear Boulevard, Big Bear Lake, California.

**OPEN SESSION**

Board Members Present:                      Board Chair Bynette Mote  
                                                            Vice Chair Bob Rowe  
                                                            Director John Green  
                                                            Director Perri Melnick  
                                                            Director Randall Putz  
                                                            Director John Russo  
                                                            Director Kendi Segovia  
                                                            Director Larry Walsh  
                                                            Director Al Ziegler

Board Members Absent:                      Director Rick Herrick

Others Present:                                  Jeff Willis, Fire Chief  
                                                            Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Mike Maltby  
                                                            Director of Business Services Kristin Mandolini  
                                                            Interim Board Secretary Chardelle Smith

**CALL TO ORDER**

Moment of Silence:                              Observed

Pledge of Allegiance:                            Led by Director Russo

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENTATIONS**

Fire Inspector Craig presented a PowerPoint regarding the hazard abatement inspection process.

Discussion was held regarding the City of Big Bear Lake as well as the County of San Bernardino Land Use Services producing notice of violations to short term rentals during the short-term rental

permit inspection. Chief stated he would look into their noticing process and report back to the Board in August.

**Bob Ybarra, Big Bear City:** addressed the Board regarding San Bernardino County handling inspection until this year. He noticed a lot of properties that never received a citation because the suits didn't know what they were doing and believes the citation level decreased because of it. He mentioned in Baldwin Lake, where it is really bad, those residents knew that they were getting away with needing to be cleaned up. He stated he was scared Big Bear Valley would have a fire similar to the Paradise Fire. He is thankful the department is going to get the valley back to where it should be.

### **PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**Patrice Duncan, Sugarloaf Properties Owners Association and as a Sugarloaf resident:** addressed the Board supporting bringing the defensible space education, collecting revenue from violators, and keeping moneys local. She stated she does have concerns about the execution of the program and lack of notice to the change from San Bernardino County to Big Bear Fire to the community. She mentioned it was her understanding the program will be in effect now, but it was only first mentioned from the department via Facebook on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Duncan stated this post had graphics from other fire agencies with no explanation. She mentioned the link to the website needs to be updated. You can adopt a fire hydrant easier than finding the requirements. She mentioned Chief Willis accepted an invitation to speak at the Sugarloaf Property Owners Association on May 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, but there has been no other communication except for a Facebook post today regarding a meeting next Tuesday. There has been no other communication with the grizzly or website. She stated you cannot make changes to this vital program without making every effort to notify the public. She said strictly enforcing the defensible space requirements listed on the website will be a big burden to our residents. Especially since there have been conflicting requirements with homeowners' insurance, San Bernardino County and now Big Bear Fire Department. She asked what programs have been put into place for financial help with these new programs. She mentioned the Firewise council with Rim Fire has grant opportunities, however that needs to be clearly communicated with the community. She stated if you do not take time to roll this out, it will be a public relations nightmare on your hands. The department is still reeling in from the failure of Measure I. Sugarloaf was told the fire station was closing. The station did not close and the station received a new engine. The general public believes the additional tax revenue was a lie. The department has a major public relations problem. She stated if you proceed with the current timeline, your suppression staff will receive the brunt end of criticism and negative department perception. She asked the department to consider the execution of this program and effectively communicate it to the community.

Chief Willis provided comment.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**1. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Revised Preliminary Draft Budget Discussion**

- 1a. Fleet Replacement**
- 1b. Tax Revenue Anticipation Note**
- 1c. Board Compensation**

Speaker: Chief Jeff Willis and Kristin Mandolini, Director of Business Services

Chief Willis mentioned this is the second pass of the budget discussion. Staff was asked to bring back certain items for further discussion. Director of Business Services Mandolini noted there was a document that was incorrect in this agenda. She provided the updated document to the Board members. Mandolini stated that in this budget, each department is separated by a page break, \$2,400 has been added to the Board stipend budget for possible increase next year, the fire prevention budget has been separated from the operating budget for easier viewing, and a reduction was made in the Battalion Chief vehicle estimated cost in the amount of \$22,500.

Board Chair Mote provided a handout regarding the fund balance and net position.

Director Putz motioned to form an Ad Hoc Committee called the Financial Sustainability Committee to review the Authority's long-term financial picture and discuss how to address it correctly. Director Segovia motioned to form an Ad Hoc Committee to immediately address the proposed budget in detail, a new budget template, and come up with specific recommendations to the Board to cut expenses prior to the June 13, 2023, regular Board meeting. Director Ziegler seconded Director Segovia's motion, but later retracted his second. There was no second to Director Segovia's motion.

Staff responded to questions from board members. Board members provided comment.

**Action:** Motion by Director Putz; seconded by Director Green to approve the formation of a Financial Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee, made up of two Board members from the Fire Protection District Board and two Directors from the Big Bear City Community Services District Board, to review the department's financial sustainability and to address the issues with the current budget.

AYES: Green, Melnick, Putz, Rowe, Russo, Segovia, Walsh, Ziegler, and Mote  
NOES: None  
ABSENT: Herrick  
ABSTAIN: None

A recess was taken at 7:10 p.m., returning to regular session at 7:20 p.m.

**Jon Bidwell, Big Bear City:** addressed the Board thanking them for the detailed discussion regarding the budget. He states the department is missing the point regarding the last four years and the booming economy. The last four years we have lost \$4 million from the savings account, but have gained \$3-4 million in the budget, therefore it's a negative net of \$8 million. He mentioned the department went to SBCERA because it was cheaper than CALPERS. He states SBCERA is 40.09% and CalPERS currently 50.03%, going to be just shy of 60% soon. Bidwell states in the end, we will be 10% different, or higher, under SBCERA.

**Patrice Duncan, Sugarloaf:** addressed the Board asking if the City of Big Bear Lake received the TOT monies and what is the status of receiving that money.

**Chris Segovia, Big Bear Lake:** addressed the Board stating we are kicking the can down the road, but bottom line you are going broke. He mentioned the longer we wait, the deeper it will get and we can't always go back to the citizens to pay more. He stated when someone calls, they don't care there is a secretary in Tennessee or how many admin staff the Chief has. What they care about is the truck and/or ambulance showing up at their front door. That's where the money should be going. He said the last place to cut is the firefighters. He mentioned if we were to ask the Battalion Chief if he would want his department vehicle or save a few firefighter jobs, he would say jobs. He mentioned there are grant writers to help get money. He suggested we put out a request for proposal to expand, not shrink. He stated the department is insurance to the citizens. The citizens don't want to pay for a fancy building downtown, they want to pay for the insurance.

Chief Willis provided comment.

### **1a. Fleet Replacement**

Captain Dykesten presented a PowerPoint regarding Battalion Chief Vehicles. This PowerPoint compared the difference between a Ram 1500 gasoline powered pick up vs the department's current Ram 2500 diesel truck.

Battalion Chief Rogers provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding 11 surrounding agencies and their department Battalion Chief assignments for those that have department take home vehicles vs the Battalion Chiefs that do not.

Staff responded to questions from board members. Board members provided comment.

**Action:** Motion by Director Putz; seconded by Director Green to receive the presentation and approve the fleet replacement schedule as presented.

AYES: Green, Melnick, Putz, Rowe, Russo, Segovia, Walsh, Ziegler  
NOES: Mote

ABSENT: Herrick  
ABSTAIN: None

### **1b. Tax Revenue Anticipation Note**

Director of Business Services Mandolini stated during the months of September through November the department experiences a cash flow shortage as we await the arrival of the property tax funds. This discussion item was to advise the Board that a Tax Anticipation Revenue Note will be forthcoming as part of the June 13, 2023, regular Board meeting.

Staff responded to questions from board members. Board members provided comment.

This discussion item was a receive and file, therefore no vote was taken.

### **1c. Board Compensation**

Chief Willis stated this came from Board direction from the previous Board meeting. This was to increase the Board compensation by \$20 with 10 meetings a year. A compensation analysis was completed regarding other local agency Board compensations and the \$20 increase seems to be the correct amount.

Staff responded to questions from board members. Board members provided comment.

The Board directed this discussion to the Financial Sustainability Ad Hoc committee for further discussion.

The Board authorized the public hearing for the final budget to be noticed in the newspaper. Board members would follow-up with staff if there were any questions remaining on the final budget.

**CLOSED SESSION PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS:** (Any member of the public is entitled to speak on Closed Session Agenda item. If you wish to address any other items listed on the Agenda, you must do so during Open Session.)

**Jon Bidwell, Big Bear Professional Firefighters Association President:** addressed the Board thanking their efforts in the draft budget discussion. He stated he takes his role seriously as union president. He mentioned his fellow firefighters are important to him and that he will stop at nothing to make sure they are provided for, are safe, to make sure they have a sustainable and long future with BBFD, along with good working conditions, benefits, and pay. He stated we are heading down a bad path and hopes it gets fixed. The community purchased our equipment to be used in time of need. They expect us to respond fast with great equipment and provide rescue, fire, and EMS as best as possible, with experienced personnel. They expect us to manage our finances responsibly for a sustained future of BBFD. He mentioned outside of the newly

financed apparatus, we have stations with issues, equipment that needs to be replaced, no goals for future growth of fire personnel, or retention of current ones. The department has a financial status that is failing. The department has no savings or budgeted line items for equipment for personnel purchases. Bidwell stated no longer are the days that you will make decisions without being questioned by the committee or the union. We are watching and becoming involved. As you enter the evaluation for Chief, we hope it's a true evaluation of performance and not just feelings. He stated we need to understand the old ways are no longer working and we need to reset and rebuild a new foundation works. We owe this to the community. This is nothing personal, but we need tough love to force the change.

A recess was taken at 8:40 p.m., returning at 8:55 p.m.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

#### **1. Public Employee Performance Evaluation (Government Code §54957)**

### **REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION**

At the hour of 8:55 p.m., Board Chair Mote adjourned to Closed Session.

At the hour of 10:20, p.m., Board Chair Mote adjourned Closed Session.

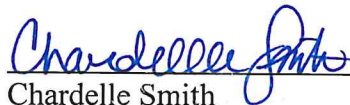
At the hour of 10:20, p.m., Board Chair Mote re-opened Regular Session

### **REPORT ON CLOSED SESSION**

No reportable action.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Fire Authority at this session, Board Chair Mote adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m.



Chardelle Smith  
Interim Board Secretary

APPROVED AT THE MEETING OF JUNE 13, 2023