

INTER-CANYON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MINUTES OF STRATEGIC MEETING
Virtual Meeting via Zoom/MS Teams
September 23, 2020

1. Call to Order:

The ICFPD Board meeting was called to order by Mike Swenson at 08:06 hours.

2. Changes to Agenda

3. Approval of Absences

Board Members Present:

Mike Swenson, President

Karl Firor, Treasurer

Kerry Prielipp, Secretary

Bob Scott, Director

Dmitiry Pantyukhin, Director

4. Guests Present

Chief Skip Shirlaw

Chief Dan Hatlestad

Capt John Mandl

Capt Suzannah Epperson

5. Budget

Karl indicated based on an assessed value of \$1.5M coming in and spending \$1.3M in operating expenses, we will have \$200k left over. Karl reviewed anticipated capital items. First, the communications issue must be resolved on our own as the UASI grant was not approved. Communications is a \$1M problem. We will be paying \$500k to F&D. There is a new proposed item, #10 on the Agenda, the chipper program with a proposed cost of \$175k go get going. \$75k of the \$175k is operating costs that we may be able to cut down. We are looking at \$50k for an independent consultant on the proposed consolidation to determine the good and the bad. The bottom line is we are looking at \$1.8M in proposed capital spending for discussion. These are the big numbers to address. The budget does not reflect borrowing of funds. We will need to look for a loan for the communications project and building of stations. Normal operations are included in the budget. Karl advised this is the budget he will bring to the October meeting for preliminary approval.

Bob asked for clarification on \$200k in discretionary money? Karl confirmed the \$200k and added basically we have no additional discretionary revenue coming in. Likely there would be \$150k going toward payment on the building loan. Karl stated he is hoping to qualify for a loan for the communication project. Discretionary funding is very minimal, the capital outlay of \$100k for equipment for the chipper program will not be in the 2022 budget, some numbers will free up.

6. Station Building Improvements

Chief Shirlaw, Bob Scott, Capt Mandl and Chief Hatlestad met with F&D and realized the ideal place for administration is at Station 3. Station 1 will be bays and quarters only. Station 3 will have a first floor for administration and a second floor for training. There is some savings by building vertical. We are meeting again October 5 or 6 when we will have revised drawings. Mike noted if you build vertical at 3 then the requirement for an ADA elevator is dual purpose there. Chief Shirlaw confirmed and added an elevator is not a big cost. Mike asked what the sense is of F&D without Todd. Chief Shirlaw acknowledged it is a big hit, but he does feel very comfortable with the experience and leadership of the team at F&D. All of them worked with Todd and gained a lot of experience. We lost Todd's grant experience however Barbara Davis and a DOLA representative have been and will be assisting the district. Bob agreed he feels comfortable with Adam and Addison at F&D and stated we will get a well-designed product through F&D. Mike asked when we will see drawings. Chief Shirlaw confirmed at the meeting in October we will see updated drawings. We will have a very good idea of what stations will look like. 30 to 40 days later the drawings will be close to complete. Bob added we will get close to final conceptual and once we agree on the basic design, they will move into the construction documentation process that includes plumbing, HVAC, etc. Bob is estimating final conceptual drawings to be available in early October.

Mike suggested looking at the time frame of bringing our people in the district into the process. We should communicate the process. When can we share the plan with constituents? We need to inform constituents and we are obligated to inform them. People are going to ask how much it will cost and how we will finance the project. We need to be thinking about this. Bob responded after the meeting in October we can brainstorm a timeline, however we do not know at this time. Karl reconfirmed talking with banks on financial end will also be forthcoming. We may have some people attending our board meetings. Bob cautioned against delay in rolling this out to our public when we are too deep into process where we have already spent money. That would not be a good place to end up with negative feedback as it could drive costs up. Better to be early than late. Mike stated he agrees and would like to invite people to attend meetings.

Bob advised he met with a general contractor and found some things we need to prepare for. There is high demand for raw material, as far as steel, most comes from China and the cost of steel is driven through the roof. Supply of lumber is down, prices are skyrocketing. Once you have materials manpower resources are difficult to find. Numbers are likely to continue to climb. Bob noted a couple of contractors were surprised at the \$350 per square foot number. However, we are building in the mountains and we are state funded. Must be diligent when we go to bid and dive into value engineering to understand exactly what they are proposing.

Karl inquired as to whether the size of stations is known. Chief Shirlaw responded Station 1 is at 9,100 square feet and Station 3 is at 10,500 square feet. Chief Shirlaw stated F&D came in with an initial \$350 per square foot, we are hoping to get that down somewhere between \$225 and \$275. Bob indicated contractors stated \$150 per square foot could be done. Bob noted we do not know what prices will do but he expects prices will increase. Karl agreed, and noted at \$250 per square foot we are talking \$5M for

stations and \$1M for communications. We will receive no help from UASI at this point. We will have to finance \$5M. And then we need to account for overruns bumping it up to \$5.5M. Mike asked what are the borrowing prospects? Karl indicated he has not done this before; it will be a learning process. Other districts we spoke with all financed their new stations. Karl indicated he will be going to First Bank to talk with them, we will need to find community banks who may be able to loan. We have no debt other than the pension. I would assume the bank would want a lien. We are required to spend \$1M on stations to get matching dollars from the State. We have \$1M in the communications project, maybe the bank would loan half. If you have business bankers, please talk to them. The Bank of the San Juans was mentioned previously. We need \$1M cash and at least \$500k in communications and we have \$2.2M in bank. At \$1.5M we are getting close to the safety number of \$500k. Karl will be learning and passing on information.

Kerry commented great assessment and summary. Kerry added it is prudent right now to be clear about our priorities and how much of station capital improvements are driven by must have or like to have. Kerry stated he puts communications ahead of station improvements noting we have a good number on communications costs. Building costs can be affected by outside factors. It might make sense to hold off on stations to find out what happens with elections. We as a district have already disconnected on a local level from Gallagher limitations. Kerry reiterated communications is a must have. As a citizen I would want to ask with current structures what items can we not do, what are we limited by. We need to do risk assessment. It would be nice to have training facility, etc., but it still comes down to risk and uncertainty. Karl agreed communications is a safety issue, we will continue to have fires, this will continue to get worse. We need to get communications done next year. Bob commented, well said, he agrees. Bob added stations are currently functional, communications is not. Mike suggested moving on with communications, next on the Agenda.

7. Communications

Chief Shirlaw indicated Mt. Morrison owner wants \$2000 per month plus electricity for use of the tower. Because the price is so high this eliminates Mt. Morrison as an option. Chief Shirlaw is working to negotiate to \$300 per month but has not heard back. We are refocusing the study to look at Mt. Lindo where we currently have equipment. We are not sure Mt Lindo is high enough to reach the proposed tower at Station 4, the tower may need to go higher. The cost is about \$8k per every 10 feet so we would be looking at \$40k to \$50k to the build tower. Another option is cable or hard line with Comcast. We are also looking at a tower somewhere else in the Mesa, down the line this would require use of someone's property. At this time, we are not at a place where we can proceed. The issue is the Mesa and Deer Creek Park, we are meeting next week to see what is next. Mt Lindo may be a good affordable option. We revisited Dancing Deer and found we would need a new tower and we would be required to bury power up to the site. This along with material and workers is an affordably large expense and homeowners would have to approve it.

Mike inquired as to a time frame. Chief Shirlaw responded Brian can complete within 30 days. The engineer would take probably 4 weeks to design. We would have to propose the tower to residents as

there will be a visual disturbance. In a total of 90 days we would be able to go out for bid. Brian indicated the work is about 6 months factoring in weather and access to sites. Actual work time is about 3 to 4 months. We could complete the project by July 1, 2021. Karl indicated that works well with financing and timing to visit with banks and to determine the amount to be financed. Chief Hatlestad added there will be an additional step in permits with Jeffco.

Bob asked what happened with the UASI grant. Chief Hatlestad stated grant funds disappeared due to COVID. We are having a grant meeting with Barbara Davis and Elk Creek Fire. There are 2 other grant opportunities through Assistance to Firefighters and Economic Development Grants. There is online training to prepare and we will be attending trainings in the next couple weeks. There is \$1.5B available. We will have a stronger case if we position the application together with Elk Creek Fire. EDG requires a shovel ready project and the communications tower qualifies. We can also show stations are shovel ready. We are working to create a strong story. Barbara does grant work for a living. AFG is very competitive. We are moving quickly on EDG as funds are granted until the money runs out. Chief Shirlaw noted we have had success with AFG grants. We are working with Elk Creek Fire and have spoken with them in relation to the planning process of Station 3. Elk Creek Fire has indicated they are willing to put in some financial backing for Station 3 as it will become administration for both districts as well as a training center.

Karl asked with the grant process and running out of money because of COVID, will there be money available? Chief Shirlaw acknowledged yes, grants have been drying up due to COVID. However, we are getting a better handle on implications to the fire service. There may be funds dialed in for first responders. There is a massive run on gloves, masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). It is a big unknown, we are settling into the lane and will have a better idea soon. Chief Shirlaw stated he is optimistic. Karl noted we will figure this out as we move forward. Will try to get a better idea from banks as well.

Mike recapped stating the consensus is that communications is the number one priority, buildings are number two. Out of our \$2.2M we are saying a portion of that depending on loans and grants is \$500k to \$1M set aside for comms, correct. Karl confirmed. If we put \$1M to comms and \$1M per DOLA we will be running on fumes. Mike concluded communications is going to impact Station 3. Karl indicated communications money is ear marked and added another expense to note is the chipper program, this will be a great offering to our residents. This would be another \$175k, \$100k would be a one-time payment out of reserve with the remaining \$75k as an ongoing program.

8. **Chipper Program** (change of sequence).

Mike asked Karl for thoughts on the chipper costs. Karl clarified the estimated cost for the first year is \$175k of which \$75k will pay for a 4-person chipper crew summer to fall. The program will be modeled after the Elk Creek Fire chipping program. \$100k is the for worst case capital outlay for equipment. Mike asked what happened with the Jeffco chipper? Chief Shirlaw responded ECFR recently improved equipment. We all live in this problem. We are working with Colorado State Forest Service CSFR and the Conservation Service yet it will take several years to get where we need to be. Bringing in the chipper program, we see real work and progress. Working at homes, using science we are taking fuels and displacing fuels around homes. Elk Creek Fire has had such success and support

from their district. The demand is high, and they are still catching up. Crews cannot come into ICFPD as they are too busy. Chief Hatlestad added, this is another step toward consolidation. ECFR has really developed the program. This is an opportunity to bring the visual effect of mitigation and a great way to communicate to residents we are using the mill to better our community and make the area safer. Chief Shirlaw advised we are still working with Jeffco. Jeffco purchased chipping equipment 11 years ago, the equipment has been sitting. We asked to put the equipment to use. Between March and now the Genesee Foundation reached out and got the contract with Jeffco first. We did follow thru and we do now have a contract to use the equipment in conjunction with the Genesee HOA. The chipper has been in the shop once already and the truck is having issues.

Capt Mandl stated he is working with CSFS as they have another chipper we may be able to use. Capt Mandl does not know the condition of the CSFS chipper. Currently we have part use of Jeffco and possibly CSFS. If we are using in conjunction with others and we have properties lined out, we cannot be delayed due to equipment or timing issues. Chief Shirlaw stated ECFR bought a used chipper at \$50k, cost new for the same chipper is \$64k. As far as equipment, we are also looking to replace our utility vehicles. Capt Mandl's vehicle has many issues. The 2 vehicles are at the end of life. The idea is to have a chase truck to use to bring people to seen. The truck would need a 450 to 550 chassis. This works well to take equipment off the brush truck and use for the chipper program as well as to take a crew through the chipping season. This crew would run April to fall. The cost is estimated at \$75k to run 4-person crew. An additional benefit is the chipping crew is also available for wildland starts. We plan to hire firefighters, perhaps some of our members at \$18 per hour, no benefits. We are working with ECFR on costs. Ben Yelland, John's counterpart at ECFR is looking at running the program together. We are putting out capital for chipper and truck and sharing costs for the crews. WE are erasing boundary lines and working together. As we look at consolidation, we will likely be going to the community for more money sometime in the future. This is a good step in working with the community to paint a picture for future needs. We want to merge. There are a lot of bits and pieces to this.

Mike noted he is a big supporter of mitigation. Mike asked how we respond to potential push back, i.e. the Swenson's who spent greater than \$10k on property mitigation before we were able to have a building permit or our neighbors who had to pay professionally to mitigate, and now ICFPD comes in and does the work at the expense of the whole district? Chief Shirlaw clarified the residents will still be required to cut trees but will put the wood out for chipping. We do not have resources to remove the trees. What this eliminates for residents is taking slash to paid sites. The program will also encourage people to mitigate. Mike stated he is wanting clarity for expectations to residents and the purpose of chipping. Capt Mandl suggested directors look at the program under ECFR website. Elk Creek Fire is expanding their existing program to include ICFPD. We will be adding equipment and personnel to the mix. The program has already been defined. Kerry asked given a defined window, can we contract with a commercial rental facility? Chief Shirlaw responded rental companies have substandard equipment, a rental chipper would not be robust. Kerry suggested more of a commercial provider, what about existing tree companies. Capt Mandl suggested there could be a lease option, we have not looked at that avenue. Our priorities for the program are personnel first. While crews are cutting the chipper sits idle. If we cannot get the chipper onsite right way the fuels crew is an asset. When we have means to have two chippers running, they can run simultaneously accomplishing more work. It is a big ask up front. We can make do and expand efficiency to cover all our boundaries. Kerry noted after having spent the last 2 weekends on slash he knows what an incentive it is not to have to load and haul. Conceptually the program makes sense with community engagement and momentum. We are helping residents to leverage work and looking for options to not have to lay out cash. Mike suggested a 5-minute break at 9:10.

9. Consolidation

Mike advised he attended a meeting with other district directors and chiefs where a rough consolidation timeline was developed. Chief Shirlaw indicated the Chiefs group meets every 2 weeks and the directors and Chiefs group will continue to meet as well. Chief Shirlaw agreed it is a very rough timeline and advised we are advertising for the Training Chief position within the week. We plan to bring the position on by the end of October. Starting January 1, the first IGA will be in place. The chipping program would be the second IGA. We already began EMS training until stopped by COVID. We are currently running monthly Zoom trainings together. Ideally in Q1 of 2021 Q1 we will have joint fire academy. We work in person as much as possible. Chiefs will meet to look at budget concerns. We are hoping to hire a consultant shared with ECFR. Q2 we hope to be running on calls together. We are working with Jeffcom to create a zone around Aspen Park and radius up to Conifer Safeway as well as a Station 1 radius. We will be working together, training together on limited basis, all dependent on COVID. Summer next year we may be able to expand the response zone, maybe 6 am to 6pm. May of 2022 the plan is to run as one department 6 months prior. May of 2022 we will be going to vote for full merger.

Chief Hatlestad and PIOs at ECFR will be developing a message along with consultants to define the benefits of working together. Boards from 4 districts along with each chief recently met. All departments want to move forward. Indian Hills Fire and North Fork Fire are much further down the line as far as running calls but are on board with training. Board members and chiefs will be meeting again within the next couple weeks. Chiefs continue to meet every 2 weeks. We have been working to bring members along and keep them informed. There has not been any negative feedback. Mike asked how does the combined Training Chief role interact with Capt Mandl's responsibilities? The bulk of Capt Mandl's work has been around wildland, 80% of which is communications with the community. The Training Chief role will take much of the training work off Capt Mandl's plate. We are going to work with 4 districts to build up the volunteer base. Each district is good at something. We want to diversify training and keep people involved. Capt Mand and the new Training Chief will work on these together. Training will be consistent among districts along with the same procedures and practices.

Kerry noted another opportunity for expanded communication stating he has been here 17 years and has seen cultural disruptions with significant change. No one has been immune. Who in our command structure has the best pulse and is the person members feel most open coming too? There have been rumblings around the edges because volunteers do not feel comfortable coming to paid staff. How much of that the cultural questioning is going on right now with our membership? Chief Shirlaw stated this is the reason I specifically wanted the Deputy Chief to be a volunteer. Chief Shirlaw stated it appears people do not feel comfortable coming to him although he has encouraged people to do so. That pulse is Chief Araki. Kerry asked is Matt paid out of West Metro. Chief confirmed yes but historically people are talking to Chief Araki. People feel comfortable talking with Capt Wurts, although due to COVID he is stuck in Alaska. Chief Araki is a volunteer at heart and my harshest voice in how things are affecting volunteers. Please encourage people to talk to us. Kerry clarified he only wants to point out there is a cultural aspect we want to recognize. Chief Shirlaw agreed and indicated we really try to keep that in mind, and added we may need to increase our communications. Kerry noted this is parable in informing the public on capital issues. People do not like to be blind sighted and especially during current times when we are not comfortable with new uncertainty. Chief Shirlaw agreed it is a tough balance, but Chief Ware is also very aware of these issues. Mike noted we are nearing 10 am anything on COVID 19d?

10. COVID-19

Mike thanked officers for applying for the grants and acknowledged numbers of cases in Colorado are going up. Chief Shirlaw acknowledged and added numbers are going up and are expected to continue to go up through the fall. We will continue training with masks through spring 2021. We have obtained respirators with filters. We have

ordered PPE and are well stocked. We have brought in UVC lights. As far as expenses we are at a good place. We are expecting to deal with this through next year. First Responders are at the top of the list for vaccines. The estimate is to gain herd immunity in one year. We are looking at this becoming like the flu and part of our lives for the foreseeable future. Mike thanked Chief for working on everything. Any other topics? There were none.

11. **Public Input** (for matters not otherwise on the agenda/3-minute time limit/no disrupting, pursuant to Section 18 9 108, C.R.S.)

12. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 09:52 hours.

Minutes by Kelley D. Wood, District Administrator

Submitted by:



Kerry Prielipp

Secretary

ICFPD Board of Directors

Approved by:



Michael Swenson

President

ICFPD Board of Directors

Attachments:

1. Meeting Agenda