

# CENTRAL ORCHARD MESA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Board Meeting – November 5, 2020

## **PENSION BOARD MEETING:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Randy Patterson. In attendance were Tim Bevan, Dave Larsen, Murray Theissen and Dave Gitchell. A quorum was established. Randy Zellner and John Sigle were absent with an excused absence. Others in attendance were EMS Coordinator Dave Fetherston and Administrative Assistant Linda Weber.

Minutes of the September 2020 Board Meeting was read. **MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Dave Larson to accept the September 2020 minutes as written. Minutes approved 5 to 0.

## **OLD PENSION BUSINESS:**

None

## **NEW PENSION BUSINESS:**

None.

Being no other pension board business Randy Patterson closed the meeting at 7:02 PM.

## **FIRE BOARD MEETING:**

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM by President Randy Patterson with board members Dave Larsen and Tim Bevan in attendance. A Quorum was established. Others present were Chief Dave Gitchell, Assistant Chief Murray Theissen, EMS Coordinator Dave Fetherston and Administrative Assistant Linda Weber. Randy Patterson and John Sigle were absent with an excused absence.

Minutes for September 2020 were read. **MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Dave Larsen to accept the September 2020 minutes. Motion carried 3 to 0.

## **Special Report from Chief Gitchell**

Chief Gitchell read his letter of resignation as chief, effective November 5, 2020 and his resignation from the department as of December 31, 2020 at 2400 hours. See letter attached.

Chief Gitchell also read a letter from Kim Gitchell serving notice as to her resignation effective January 1, 2021. See letter attached.

The Board expressed their deep appreciation for all both Dave and Kim had done for the department. Tim said from his heart he felt that both Dave and Kim have done the best job to their best ability and the department has prospered under their care. Randy Patterson and Dave Larsen agreed. Dave Larsen said he understands their feelings and has had the same experience they have in dealing with volunteers. Dave Larsen said he considers it a loss to the

district that both of you are going to be gone. Both Murray Theissen and Dave Fetherston expressed their appreciation for all their hard work.

**MOTION** by Dave Larsen and seconded by Tim Bevan to accept these letters into the record. Motion carried 3 to 0.

At this point Dave Gitchell left the meeting.

Randy Patterson said we will need to acknowledge Chief Gitchell sometime in the future for all of his service as well as Kim and all she has done.

### **TREASURERS REPORT:**

Linda Weber gave the treasurers report. Two months of bills paid and income from tax revenue and transport revenue.

Bills are fairly normal. Spent additional monies on the awards banquet held at Rick and Linda Weber's house. It was a really great time.

**MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Randy Patterson to approve the Treasurer's Report. Motion carried 3 to 0.

### **2021 Final Budget**

Linda Weber presented the final budget for 2021.

Several changes were made based on Grand Junction Fire announcing they would no longer be able to continue contract negotiations until sometime in late 2022.

Tim Bevan explained that he and Linda Weber met with Chief Balke of Clifton Fire and Chief Lurvey of Lands End to discuss coverage options until the department moved forward with another plan.

Tim and Linda also met with Murray Theissen and Dave Fetherston to ask what the members wanted to see in the future. Several ideas came from this meeting and the 2021 budget reflected these changes. Further discussion on this topic is in new business.

**MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Randy Patterson to accept the 2021 Final Budget. Motion approved 3 to 0.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

Tim Bevan explained in more detail that the City of Grand Junction Fire didn't feel they could continue to negotiate in good faith for a contract for services. Chief Watkins, from City of Grand Junction Fire, felt the Grand Junction City Council would not approve the plan until the three new Grand Junction Fire stations were built. The council was also worried about the effects of the Gallagher Amendment on our tax revenue collecting abilities.

Since this decision, the Gallagher Amendment has been voted revoked and is no longer a factor in revenue tax rates. As it stands now, our current rate will remain the same and will no longer decrease every two years as projected. Our projected revenue should stabilize in the next few years as long as property values remain the same or increase.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

**MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Randy Patterson to appoint Murray Theissen as interim fire chief. Motion passed 3 to 0.

The board thanked Murray for taking on this position. Dave Larsen asked if he would be using the Command vehicle. Murray said he would be parking it at his house for now to plug it in and then would make some changes in usage later. They would like to add a light bar to the vehicle so that it could help with scene conditions.

Dave Larsen asked if they thought they would restructure with captains. Dave explained that in 1959 they had an east and west half of the district and then a chief over the entire district with Captains in charge of each half. Dave Fetherston said he didn't want people to have to meet the qualifications of a captain. That it was easier to be a lieutenant and the job seems to be getting done as a lieutenant.

Dave Larsen explained that they used to have an A team who made entry and a B team who was geared up and ready. It was important to maintain incident command and follow protocol as that saves lives. Murray and Dave Fetherston said that process won't change. We retain command until we release to another department or person with more experience or rank.

New Interim Chief Murray Theissen talked about his plan to backfill with an assistant and some additional command staff.

Dave Larsen said he was always very proud that we never got anyone hurt. First in importance is that no one ever gets hurt.

Dave Larsen asked about the East Valley Authority and where it stands. Dave Fetherston had talked briefly to Assistant Chief Joe White of Clifton about the possibilities. Tim Bevan thought we needed to give the process with East Valley a chance and see what it can do for the people of our district. Linda Weber said they like to see a board member and the fire chief at the meetings.

**MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Dave Larsen to allow Interim Chief Theissen to attend the East Valley meetings as representative of Central Orchard Mesa Fire. Motion passed 3 to 0.

Tim Bevan said we need to let go of some of the money we collect and use the money for different programs this next year.

Dave Larsen said to just let us know what you need. We want the district to be ready and dependable. Years ago, we never had enough money to do anything but now we do.

Interim Chief Theissen said he would like to start the \$30 per day pay program to have someone monitor the radio for calls and send a response either from our people or immediately call for mutual aid. This is a good short-term program and a more definite plan will be suggested at a later date. Interim Chief Theissen will be writing a policy for this program soon.

**MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Randy Patterson to implement and \$30 per day payment program to monitor the radio, acknowledge the call and assess for immediate response. Motion passed 3 to 0.

Tim Bevan brought up the idea of paying for a fire chief. Since the pension board will be discussing the closing of the pension plan to new members, the department will need to compensate a fire chief, and possibly the EMS coordinator, for this position. Lands End Fire started this program paying a fire chief \$1000 a month and it has worked out well. It is a great incentive for prospective new members (or current members) who want to have something like this on their resume. It will entice new members to join with the chance of future advancement. This plan has been implemented into the 2021 budget if it becomes part of the new fire chief's plan.

### **CHIEF'S REPORT:**

Interim Chief Theissen and Dave Fetherston briefly discussed some immediate needs for vehicle and equipment repair and replacement.

Both ambulances need new defibrillators. Within three months they will no longer be certified or serviceable. There will be some grant opportunities in 2021 but that takes a while. Tim Bevan said if we need one this year, we should buy one. One is already budgeted for next year just in case we don't get a grant in time.

Both Ambulance 51 and 52 need repair work. Airbags on 51 need fixed or replaced with springs. 52 needs a carburetor checkup. Both will be addressed and reported on next month.

Tim Bevan said to go and get whatever needs to be fixed done. Dave Larsen said they need to be dependable.

Interim Chief Thiessen and Dave Fetherston talked about Engine 51 and how it is not running. It may be that we need to see if it's even worth repairing or just replace it with something that carries more than two people.

Brush 52 and Tender 52 need welding. Possibly Bishop Welding can take care of this. Brush 52 is a good piece of equipment. It needs fixed.

Tim Bevan said on Tanker 51 we should look into possibly getting rid of it. We also need to get rid of the ambulance that was replaced that is still at Dave Gitchell's house.

Any vehicles and equipment we are not using or going to use needs to be given away to any other department than can use it or sell it but get rid of it.

Chief Theissen said we need a few more sets of bunker gear. Linda said she had allocated money in the 2021 budget for that. Tim Bevan said we shouldn't wait for a grant. If we have the money and need the equipment, we should buy it.

Dave Fetherston said there will be a big change going forward and they are going to take it up a notch and make it better.

### **OTHER COMMENTS:**

Tim Bevan suggested we try and sell any of our old stuff and give that money to the volunteers for their use for food and drinks after a call. Many times they go on a long call and are really hungry afterward and still have to come back to the station and do several hours of work to finish. It would be nice if they had a way to purchase food for his purpose. Dave Larsen wanted to know what is happening with the Volunteer Department account. Linda said she didn't think it had a lot of money in it but would check.

Interim Chief Theissen will look into a program for this and report back at a later date.

**MOTION** by Tim Bevan and seconded by Randy Patterson to give all the volunteers and Linda Weber \$100 as a thank you for this year before the Christmas holiday. Motion passed 3 to 0.

**MOTION** by Randy Patterson and seconded by Tim Bevan to pay Linda Weber \$1000 as reimbursement for venue space for the awards banquet celebration. Motion carried 3 to 0.

Randy Patterson said he wanted to thank everyone for everything they have been working on and on behalf of the board we are so glad you could pull this off.

**AJDOURMENT:**

Randy Patterson adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.  
Next meeting scheduled for December 3, 2020

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Weber: Administrative Assistant

CENTRAL ORCHARD MESA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Attest:

Dave Gitchell: Letter of Resignation: November 5, 2020

To the Board of Directors of the Central Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District,

This letter is to serve as a notice of my resignation as chief officer of, Central Orchard Mesa Volunteer Fire Department and subsequent retirement from the fire service.

My resignation will be effective immediately date November 5, 2020 at 19:00 hrs. at which time I will step down in the duties District Fire Chief, but will continued as a line fire fighter till 24:00 hrs. December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 at which time I will retire from the fire service.

I did not join the fire service for fortune or fame, I only wanted to make a difference and help those in their time of need. I have tried to fight the good fight and there have been a lot of battles! I have met a lot of people and made a lot of friends, but evidently, I have made a couple of enemies along the way!

I have worked diligently for 19 + years to improve our relationship and image with our constituents and fellow fire departments not only locally but through out the state and the nation. I have worked to insure we were an extremely progressive and professional volunteer fire department. At one point I thought we were looking very successful at achieving this goal!

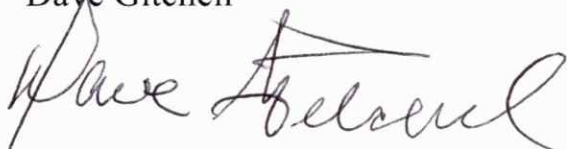
It is very sad to hear disparaging remarks and rumors about the district, the department, and on the personal level, Kim and I. These have been brought up to me, by my family members, by people who I have never met as well as people I have known since childhood.

This has been a slowly increasing developing problem over the last four to five years, and, I take ownership for letting it get to be the problem it is. The problem I believe is internal to the department, but I don't believe I have department support in dealing with it!

The fight has worn me out, and I am getting to old and tired don't want to fight no more. This has affected my health, and relationships with lifelong friends.

Thank you for the opportunity you gave me in life, it was a memorable experience.

Dave Gitchell

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Gitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

October 31, 2020

To the Board of Directors of the Central Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District,

This letter is to serve as a notice of my resignation, and my exit interview from the Central Orchard Mesa Volunteer Fire Department.

My resignation will be effective January 1, 2021.

My career in fire service has been served exclusively with Central Orchard Mesa Volunteer Fire Department and I had intended on serving for 20 years as opposed to the nearly 19 I am leaving with.

I take with me many great memories and experiences. Dave and I have spent the majority of our vacations, and in some cases anniversaries, at various trainings, conferences and leadership events. We have sat on committees, taken part in work groups, taught and proctored many classes and breakout sessions and fostered relationships with Fire Chiefs and Command Staff at agencies throughout the State and within the Division of Fire Prevention and Control. I personally have managed or co managed over 6 fire academies and trained agencies statewide on the methods and purpose of the 36 hour basic firefighting program, which I authored. All of this was done *willingly* by us to build relationships with, and promote the Central Orchard Mesa Volunteer Fire Department and the work of it's volunteers.

The Central Orchard Mesa Fire Department and Fire Protection District were known as progressive and determined, and we were respected for the work we did and the methods we used to do it. I would have been happy and satisfied to leave the fire service on that note.

But that has changed. Dave and I have weathered and overcome many challenges during our career, but I have never experienced the level of defamation and character assassination that is currently taking place against the Central Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District, the Department, as well as Dave and myself. The fact that it is originating from an internal source hurts deep and the resulting damage this has done to the reputation of our Fire Protection District and our Fire Department is devastating.

I do not have the ability to change this trajectory. Trust me, I have tried. And I do not have the desire to watch what this District and Department have so diligently and carefully built with so many years of hard work, tough decisions and dedication be so deliberately and systematically ruined. Nor do I have the desire to continue to watch people who know what is going on stand idly by and allow it to continue.

The lies that are being said about the Fire Protection District as well as the ensuing fallout, will be up to you to confront and deal with. Or not.

As for me, I am a tough girl and believe my actions should speak louder than others words. To hear that my reputation as a State Certified Fire and Emergency Services Instructor has been put to question is, to say the least, humbling. I would like to say that the lies that are being said about me don't matter, and in truth they don't as long as the people who know me, my work ethic and my integrity stand by and with me. Unfortunately that is not the case. I have always based my decisions as a fire instructor on what was best for the District, Department and the members I serve and train with. When I have to explain that to the people who know me best, my effectiveness as a fire instructor at this Department is done.

It is a sad note to leave on. I harbor no ill will toward the members I have shared so much with. However, these lies have placed an incredible amount of stress on Dave and myself and compromised long standing friendships. I don't feel satisfied with a "job well done". I have moved through the five stages of grief over the loss of a career I have been so passionate about for so long. It has been a long hard process. But in fire service we use the risk versus benefit model for decision making, and the benefit to my leaving outweighs the risk of my staying.

Thank you for the opportunities this District and Department have given me and thank you for your service. And thank you Chief Larson for taking a chance on me. I believe I have gotten back as much as I have given.

You will remain in my thoughts and prayers.

Kimberley Gitchell

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "K. Gitchell", written in black ink.