



SUNSTITES-PEARCE FIRE DISTRICT

SERVING RESIDENTS OF THE SUNSITES-PEARCE FIRE DISTRICT,
AND NEIGHBORING COCHISE COUNTY

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Sunsites-Pearce Fire District Special Meeting October 30, 2015

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chairman Robert Fino.

2. Roll Call

- A. Attendance and Confirmation of Quorum** - Chairman Robert Fino, Board Member Jessica Jones and Board Member Tom Whiteman were present. Chairman Fino confirmed that a quorum was met.
- B. Board Members Absent** - Board Member Brian Allen, Board Member Jason Simmons were absent.
- C. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest** - No Board Member declared a conflict of interest.

3. The Pledge of Allegiance

- Fire Chief Josh Steinberg led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Hearing on the "District Boundary Change Impact Statement and Proposed Annexation Process for the Sunsites-Pearce Fire District."

- Chairman Fino explained the process whereby the public could voice their comments and/or questions during the public forum session.

A. Public Comments:

Dan Evans:

- 1.) Asked to hear from someone in the audience who is in favor of the annexation, before offering his comments.

Robert Weston:

- 1.) Describe the annexation, both the proposal and the process for follow-up after this meeting. Chief Steinberg explained the entire process.

Board Member Whiteman:

- 1.) What is the average billing for an out of district fire? Chief Steinberg responded that billing for an out-of-district structure fire averages about \$5,000.

Dan Evans:

1.) Expressed concerns regarding fire suppression efforts in prior years. Chief Steinberg felt it was inappropriate to comment on fire suppression efforts in prior years, however, he explained the current fire fighting ability of the Department, including the employment of quality staff, i.e. certified EMS and fire fighting personnel, and the equipment which is maintained and tested periodically to verify good working condition.

Kurtis Donath:

1.) What is the (small) tax on his tax statement called the "Fire District Assistance Tax?" Chief Steinberg explained that the tax he is referring to is assessed to all citizens of the state. This District receives none of that money instead only receives the specific Sunsites-Pearce Fire District Tax itemized on the tax statements.

2.) Noted that the Richland Station is currently unmanned. Chief Steinberg replied that the Station could be brought to OSHA standards and manned within one and a half to two years if the annexation is approved.

Robert Weston:

1) Is there was a difference between grass and structure fire with regard to response and billing? Chief Steinberg explained the significant differences.

2.) Would the property owner be billed for a grass fire? Chief Steinberg responded that any fire outside of our District is regarded as State Land. Therefore, if the State deemed the fire to be malicious in origin, the State would issue a bill for suppression efforts.

3.) If we are annexed, explain the improvements of services and response times. Chief Steinberg explained that manning the Richland Station would definitely improve response times and the Station would be manned with certified EMT and fire fighting personnel. In addition, according to Insurance Offices, there are potential benefits regarding insurance rates.

4.) Commented that he lives in the middle of the proposed annexation area and it took 15 minutes to drive to the Richland Station. He added that he did subscribe to Protection Services at a cost of over \$800 per year. Therefore, he is opposed to the annexation at this point

Louise Lance:

1.).Because water level is dropping, how would that impact the insurance rating? Chief Steinberg explained that wells and water table is not considered in the rating – only hydrants and the department's ability to provide water as needed,

by pumping a prescribed volume of water per minute from trucks and shuttling the trucks to the standpipe for refilling.

2.) The annexation will bring in \$77,000, which will not pay for it all. Chief Steinberg explained that efficient management and pursuit of grants would pay for personnel and equipment at the Richland Station.

Jim Brower:

1.) Since printing the brochure, the District tax rate has gone from 2.55 to 3.2. Chief Steinberg explained that the 2.55 figure was used as an example. It was not last year's tax rate.

2.) He has been able to maintain insure on his property, in spite of being outside of the fire district. He added that his ISO rating is 10 because he is not within 5 miles of a Station and within 500 feet of a hydrant. Chief Steinberg responded that the proposed boundaries were designed to be within 5 miles of either the Sunsites or Richland Stations.

3.) According to Bisbee, there is no "opt-out" ability for the annexation. However, the Governing Board may opt to change the boundaries of the proposal. What is the process for changing the boundaries? Chief Steinberg explained that the boundaries were set by determining the 5 mile radius from the District's Stations. If the boundaries are to be changed, the process would start over.

Board Member Jones:

1.) Some insurance companies do look at whether or not a Station is manned. Chief Steinberg cautioned property owners to look closely at policies, as to whether they are covered for fire damage or fire suppression services.

Board Member Whiteman:

1.) What is needed to get Richland Station manned? Chief Steinberg responded that some remodeling would be needed to meet OSHA standards.

Public member:

1.) Insurance dropped him because he is outside the District.

Dan Evans:

1.) His insurance company has criteria of distance from a fire hydrant, regardless of being within a Fire District. Because he would have no benefit from the annexation, he is opposed.

2.) He is willing to volunteer with Kurt to remodel the Station, and then revisit the proposed annexation as a means to man the station.

Liz Hagedwood:

1.) What is the 5 mile bubble? Chief Steinberg explained that the 5 mile radius is determined by the “as the crow flies” rule rather than driving distance.

Ron Pepper:

1.) Taxes never go down. What is the motivation here? Chief Steinberg explained that the District’s tax rate is limited by law. However, as property values are reduced, so do the dollars to the District.

Jim Brower:

1.) When did the District move from volunteer staff to paid employees? Mr. Brower believes that the annexation is solely to produce more revenue to fund the department. Chief Steinberg explained that in 2007 the EMS personnel were paid employees, and the fire fighting personnel were paid as they responded to need. In 2008 the EMS personnel were also trained on fire fighting. The Chief also assured Mr. Brower that the Department is financially stable and is not proposing the annexation due to any financial need.

Jim Sodequist:

1.) Thanked the Fire Department, EMTs and Fire Fighters for all they do.
2.) Commented that his insurance has gone up \$700 per year. He lives 8.2 miles from the Station and any hydrant. Being in or out of a district does not matter to their insurance company.

Kurtis Donath:

1.) Water is available at the Greek Orthodox land. Chief Steinberg stated that he would be willing to pursue an agreement with them to have access to water from their land.
2.) Believes the District needs the money to be generated from the annexation. Chief Steinberg repeated that the District is currently financially stable. The proposed annexation is solely to provide Fire Protection services to more properties and the additional revenues generated would fund the protection services of those additional properties.

Rocky Etzenhouser:

1.) Expressed concern that 15 minute response time wouldn’t allow for saving the property. Chief Steinberg explained that the shuttling of water Tenders

begins at the time of dispatch. In addition, salvage operation are performed with the intent of saving as much property as possible.

Peggy Brock:

1.) Commented that Sunsites fire fighters wouldn't be the only ones to respond. Other agencies also respond.

Diane Tucker:

1.) Concerned that the crews wouldn't be able to find the property in question, because crews don't know the areas. Chief Steinberg assured her that the District personnel are familiar with the area.

5. Close Public Hearing - Chairman Fino asked if there were any more questions or comments from the Public. Being none, Chairman Fino moved to close the Public Session. Board Member Whiteman seconded the motion. Vote: all in favor, motion carried. Chairman Fino closed the Public Session at 7:35 pm.

6. Review, Discuss, and possibly take action regarding the "District Boundary Change Impact Statement and Proposed Annexation Process for the Sunsites-Pearce Fire District."

Board Members read emails from property owners who had questions or were opposed to the annexation. Board Members discussed options for proceeding.

Chairman Fino moved to recess and resume the meeting on November 9, 2015, at 6 pm at the Richland Station. Board Member Whiteman seconded the motion. Vote: all in favor, motion carried. Chairman Fino recessed the meeting at 8 pm.

Special Meeting Reconvened November 9, 2015

7. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Robert Fino.

8. Roll Call

A. **Attendance and Confirmation of Quorum** - Chairman Robert Fino, Board Member Jessica Jones and Board Member Tom Whiteman were present. Chairman Fino confirmed that a quorum was met.

B. **Board Members Absent** - Board Member Brian Allen and Board Member Jason Simmons were absent.

C. **Declarations of Conflicts of Interest** - No Board Member declared a conflict of interest.

9. **The Pledge of Allegiance** - Fire Chief Josh Steinberg led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

10. **Review, Discuss and possible take action regarding the “District Boundary Change Impact Statement and Proposed Annexation Process for the Sunsites-Pearce Fire District.”**

Chairman Fino moved to table the District Boundary Change Impact Statement and Proposed Annexation Process for the Sunsites-Pearce Fire District until either the Regular Meeting on November 17, 2015, at 6 pm at the Sunsites Station or a Special Meeting, after we get clarifications from the attorney and the county regarding where we can or cannot place our notices. Board Member Whiteman seconded the motion. Following discussion, the vote was taken: All in favor. Motion carried.

11. **Adjournment**

Chairman Fino made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member Whiteman seconded the motion. Vote: All in favor, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lillian Reed

Board Clerk

Approved: November 17, 2015