



# Golden Valley Fire District

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## MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE GOLDEN VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD

The Governing Board of the Golden Valley Fire District met in regular session on **Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.** The meeting was held at the Golden Valley Fire District Public Safety Training Center, located at 423 South Colorado Road, Golden Valley, AZ 86413. The public will have physical access to the meeting place at 8:45 a.m. The Board may vote to go into executive session on any agenda item, pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A) (3) for legal advice with the district's attorney on matters as set forth in the agenda item. Board members or other participants may attend by telephonic conference. The following topics and any variables thereto will be subject to Board consideration, discussion, approval, or other action. All items are set for possible action.

### MINUTES

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

- Chairman DeMaio called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 a.m.

#### 2. ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS

- Director Jack Hommel, Clerk Sue Foster, Chairman Tony DeMaio, and Director George Payntar were present. Director Gary Juneau was absent.

#### 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### 4. PRAYER

- Pastor Mike Willis from Abundant Grace of Laughlin led the board in prayer.

#### 5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

##### A. Regular Meeting Minutes of April 24, 2024

- Comptroller Kindelberger stated that there was a correction the on the minutes and those corrections are in red. Revised minutes were posted on the website.
  - Director Payntar moved to approve the revised minutes as presented. Director Hommel 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor, motioned carried.

#### 6. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

##### A. April 2024 Operational Report. (Chief Cunningham)

- Chief Cunningham stated for the month of April there were 262 calls total: 176 EMS and rescue calls and 18 fire-related calls.

##### B. Fire Chief's Report. *The governing body may not propose, discuss, deliberate, or take legal action on this matter unless the specific matter is described in detail. Therefore, action taken as a result of the Chief's report will be limited to directing staff to study the matter or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date. (A.R.S. 38-431.02. K)*

- District properties – Chief Martin
  - The concrete slab for communications tower has been poured and will require a 28-day cure. The tower should be up next month.
- Equipment – Chief Martin
  - Engine 121: Back in service. DPF filter fixed.
  - Attack 135: Back in service. Fuel leak fixed.
  - Engine 131: Leaky valves need replacing but vehicle remains in service with a temporary solution until work can be performed.

- C-102: Brake and cruise control switches were sticking; all repairs have been made and vehicle is in service.
- Training
  - Asst. Chief Dallman stated that he has been working with the crews on additional Image Trend training.
- Meetings Attended
  - Yucca Fire District's board meeting was this past Monday, which included their public hearing regard the consolidation with Golden Valley Fire District. The Yucca Board voted unanimously to consolidate.
- Projects in the works
  - Staff continue to work on the budget for next year.
- Thank you
  - Thank you to Pastor Mike Willis for being here today.
- Anniversaries
  - Firefighter Logan Sweet – 3 years
  - Firefighter Joseph McKinney – 4 years
  - Battalion Chief Robert Arnold – 14 years
  - Engineer Scott Proudfoot – 15 years

**7. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED CONSOLIDATION OF THE YUCCA FIRE DISTRICT AND THE GOLDEN VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT.**

**A. Staff presentation regarding the proposed consolidation.**

- **Chairman DeMaio** introduced himself to the public, he has lived in Golden Valley since 1989. My family has owned property here since the 1970's. I was employed by the Golden Valley Fire District from 1993 until 2014. I retired in 2019 and became a board member for Golden Valley Fire. I am in my 31<sup>st</sup> year of my firefighting career. When I started on this board, I approached the administration about bringing Yucca into our fire district. I strongly believe this is a good move for everybody involved. It benefits everybody. I believe that our tax dollars should stay in our tax district, I believe that we should have control of our destiny as much as possible. Over the past decade the state legislature has tried to force fire districts into a county wide fire district. I have read the proposals and I disagree with them. They want us to give our assets to the County Board of Supervisors. I don't think they should be involved in emergency services. The people that know and do emergency services should be the ones in charge. These are my personal opinions, and they may not reflect the opinions of the Golden Valley Fire District Board. I also want to note that we are already providing services to Yucca Fire under a contract now for 3 ½ years. We are sharing positions, the fire chief, fire marshal and admin for a cost. If I didn't think this wasn't good for Golden Valley I wouldn't be up here talking. My family lives in Golden Valley, I would not support this if I thought that it would take services away from Golden Valley.
- **Director Hommel** stated that Yucca Fire District has been limping along for many years. They have been robbed, embezzled, and have had many issues with money. I attended the Monday meeting in Yucca, their chairman made the statement that this is a live or die decision for Yucca Fire. The only path for Yucca Fire is to join forces and take advantage of the mutual strength we have. If we were to deny this consolidation it will be like watching a relative die, our sister district. If we can't help them, they will eventually close the doors and there will be no fire protection in Yucca.
- **Director Payntar** stated that the board has been discussing this consolidation for the last couple of years. My main concern was that services to Golden Valley would be affected. But our staff and crews have successfully improved the situation in Yucca without hampering our services locally. I think this is important for Golden Valley to help the citizens of Yucca.

**B. Consideration of comments of the Mohave County Board of Supervisors in reference to the proposed consolidation.**

- **Chief Cunningham** explained that by statute the Mohave County Board of Supervisors needed to be notified of the consolidation. They received the same information that all the Golden Valley taxpayers did. They do not have to respond, and they did not. I have spoken to Supervisors Gould and Bishop, and both support the consolidation.
- C. Public Hearing/Comments: The Governing Board will hear those persons who appear for or against the proposed consolidation and to determine if the consolidation will promote the public safety, health, comfort, convenience, necessity, or welfare of Golden Valley Fire District.
- **Chairman DeMaio** opened the floor for discussion. Our attorney Nick Cornelius is present for any legal questions. Before I start the district has received a letter of support for the consolidation from an out of state property owner, Eric Sanquist. Chairman DeMaio read the letter aloud.
  - **Kelley Krause** I don't see any reason why we won't do this, even if the taxes were to increase. When you travel through Yucca, and they don't have coverage it is a long way to help. I am in favor of consolidation.
  - **Anabell Rosier** is a Mohave County resident of 20 years and also has property in Yucca. She says thank you for being willing to help the people in Yucca and she's highly in favor of the consolidation.
  - **Michael Switzer** with all the growth happening in Golden Valley will we still be able to take care of everybody the same and Yucca too?  
**Chairman DeMaio** our goal is to not take any services away from the citizens of Golden Valley. My mother lives here and as she ages her use of 911 is increasing. I am here in protection of her and your family members. I have had discussions with the chief about making sure that response times are kept to a bare minimum. I would never take away services from my family or your family to send them elsewhere.
  - **Cynthia Switzer** wants to know if our property taxes are going up or if it will only be the taxes due at the end of the year? In California the fire department taxed us separately in addition to our property taxes, is that going to happen here?  
**Chief Cunningham** If there is an increase it would not have anything to do with the consolidation. If there is an increase in the tax levy, the board would make that decision during the budget process to raise the tax levy. We are currently at 3.50 and we do have a .25 cent tax levy increase available to us next budget year.  
**Attorney Cornelius** Fire Districts are special taxing districts, like a school district. There is a charge that shows up on your annual property tax bill, and that is it. No additional charges or fees. If the district was to build a new building they could do a bond, but that would require a vote of the property owners in the district.
  - **Jerry Ness** If Yucca was so mismanaged then who will be going down there and fixing things? Who will be their Fire Chief?  
**Chairman DeMaio** we have already done that when we entered into the IGA with Yucca 3 ½ years ago. Our staff has spent countless hours in Yucca working on their books. Before we considered a consolidation all of that needed to be straightened out. Everything now is being run in Yucca like Golden Valley.  
**Chief Cunningham** It was good that we had that time to clean up the books, even one year after we entered the IGA with Yucca, we had vendors and even citizens saying that the district owed them money. Three and a half years later we feel it is time to move forward. After the consolidation Yucca will become part of the Golden Valley Fire District so I will be the Fire Chief for the newly combined fire district. The fire station in Yucca will become a Golden Valley Fire station.
  - **Bertha Carter** I work for BLM and FEMA and have seen entire communities devastated by the lack of fire protection. She expressed how important this consolidation is in order to save lives and property.
  - **Peggy Esquivel** Will the fire station in Yucca be manned 24/7 like ours are here in Golden Valley? I live in Walnut Creek Estates, will the fire station near me be the first to respond to Yucca? Regarding the new truck stops on I-40, will we respond to them if there was a fire there?

**Chief Cunningham** With the revenue that Yucca has, it won't be staffed 24/7 immediately. We must hire more firefighters. We are budgeting to hire two firefighters to put in Yucca and pair them with a part time firefighter. When we first started managing Yucca 3 ½ years ago they could only afford 8 to 10 days a month. Now we are up to 15 to 18 days a month. As the revenue allows, we will keep increasing the coverage. The goal is to get them staffed all the time. Responses are based on availability. If Yucca is staffed Golden Valley would only respond if they requested aid. There is a county wide mutual aid agreement in place so Desert Hill Fire could also respond if available as they do currently. The two truck stops are within the district boundaries of Yucca, so yes, we would respond. Both truck stops pay taxes to the fire district.

- **Becky Foster** Did you do a study on how much taxes will go up if you consolidate? Will adding Yucca increase calls for Golden Valley and cause an increase in taxes? Does Golden Valley Fire have a contract with Anderson, Inc.?

**Attorney Cornelius** There was a study done by The James Vincent Group. The taxes for a fire district are not like a city where the city council can raise the sales tax by a vote. The tax levy rate is set by the State. There were two recent increases to 3.375 and then 3.50. It is at 3.50 until the statute goes up again. Then the Governing Board of the fire district votes to raise the tax levy increase or maybe they vote to just take a piece of that increase. It depends on the needs of each agency. Over the past 3 ½ years Golden Valley has been supplying administrative and services to Yucca already under an IGA. That IGA will terminate upon the consolidation. All of Yucca's assets become assets of Golden Valley Fire District. A lot of agencies will rebalance assets after a consolidation, in case of duplicate assets. There are also administrative savings, you don't need two lawyers, two CPA, two audits. A lot of districts in the state are combining forces for these savings.

**Chief Cunningham** Golden Valley Fire does have a contract for services with Anderson, Inc.

- **Chuck Therrien** Does Golden Valley Fire District and Yucca Fire District touch or is there state land in between? Will that affect the consolidation? What is the financial situation in Yucca? Is there any negative aspects of the consolidation? Will our ISO rating change?

**Chief Cunningham** There is State and Federal land in between. That will not affect the consolidation.

**Comptroller Kindelberger** when Golden Valley Fire entered the IGA with Yucca Fire, we found that they had not produced financial or bank reconciliations for years. The Board was not given any financial information and that is how the embezzlement and theft happened. They only had about \$65k in the bank, they were being staffed 24/7 with up to 4 employees daily. Their payrolls were running 25k bi-weekly, they had only a few pay periods and they would have been broke. Since we started staffing based on revenue their bank balance is now over \$300k.

**Chief Cunningham** At any time, Golden Valley Fire could pull out of the IGA with Yucca Fire, they could fail. That was the statement made by the Chairman of Yucca Fire Board at the Monday meeting. The ISO rating will not change in Golden Valley, it may help the ISO rating in Yucca.

**Chairman DeMaio** I would not say there are no negative aspects regarding the consolidation, but things are getting harder and harder every day. Harder to get firefighters and paramedics. When you can make \$20 to flip burgers why be a firefighter.

- **Jennifer Esposito** Regarding the bonds and overrides, could you explain the statutory regulations? That a bond could not happen after the consolidation until 2026.

**Attorney Cornelius** To do a bond or an override the entire population of the newly formed district gets a vote in the matter. Consolidations are voted on by the two boards. After this consolidation is completed, the consolidation will need to be assimilated before a bond can be issued. The fire chief has not indicated that there has been any talk about a bond.

- **Kelly Krause** When the two districts do combine how does that affect the board?

**Attorney Cornelius** The board will remain the same size. The Yucca Board will cease to exist. There are three openings on the Golden Valley Fire Board at the November election. Candidates can run for the Board from the combined district. So, a citizen from Yucca can run for the board.

- **Manuel Esquibel** How far past Yucca will the new district go? What about the land in between the boundaries? Where do bonds come from?

**Chief Cunningham** The boundary map and descriptions are here for your review and are on our website.

**Attorney Cornelius** There is State and Federal land between the districts. There may also be privately owned parcels that may contract for fire service, or they may annex into the district. So, there may be opportunities for more tax revenue.

A bond is issued by a fire district by an underwriter at a specific interest rate and payment terms. It is like a loan secured by the assets of the district.

- **Becky Foster** I think that consolidating will help with expenses. Is the tax levy rate tied to the consumer price index? What rate is Golden Valley at?

**Attorney Cornelius** The tax levy is not tied to the CPI, it is set by the State Legislature. The cap right now is 3.50 and that is where Golden Valley and Yucca is at.

- **Georgia Carter** Most people are concerned about taxes going up. I have seen the destruction that fire can do to a whole community. I don't think money should be an issue when you are talking about fire protection. Is a \$5, \$10 or \$20 increase worth the loss of human life and property?

D. Discussion and possible action regarding: possible approval of the proposed consolidation with Yucca Fire District.

- Chairman DeMaio motioned to approve the proposed consolidation with Yucca Fire District. Clerk Foster 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

E. Possible approval of a Resolution approving the proposed consolidation with Yucca Fire District.

- Chairman DeMaio motioned to approve resolution #2024-03, approving by unanimous consent a consolidation with the Yucca Fire District to be effective July 1, 2024 after determining that the consolidation will promote the public safety, health, comfort, convenience, necessity, or welfare of the Golden Valley Fire District; and authorizing the transfer of the Yucca Fire District assets to the Golden Valley Fire District as mandated by statutes, and further authorizing Chairman, Chief and staff to execute such further documents that may be necessary to complete said consolidation and to take such further and other actions that may be necessary or appropriate in conjunction therewith.

Director Hommel 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

**8. BUSINESS.** *Public wishing to speak on agenda items must complete a speaker card and present to the Board Clerk prior to the start of the meeting.*

A. Discussion and possible action regarding: Approval of April 2024 financial reports. (Administration)

- Comptroller Mindy Kindelberger noted for the month of April 2024 the ending register balance for the warrant account at Wells Fargo Bank was \$1,375,949.13. Capital reserve account at Wells Fargo Bank was \$142,937.72. Payroll account at National Bank of Arizona ending register balance \$28,934.95. Revenue \$572,226.70; Expenses \$417,187.13. Comptroller Kindelberger continued to explain that the largest expenditures last month were two sets of extrication equipment which was approximately \$65,000 and a \$25,000 loan payment towards our platform truck.

- Clerk Foster motioned to approve the April 2024 financial reports as presented. Director Hommel 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

B. Discussion only: Review records request for the month of April. (Administration)

- Comptroller Mindy Kindelberger read the following:
  - 04/03/24 TRC Environmental Corp, all Fire and HazMat, no records found.
  - 04/03/24 Lerner & Rowe, EMS report, ready 04/22/24, collected \$15.00.
  - 04/22/24 Donor Network of AZ, EMS report, ready 04/22/24, no charge.
  - 04/29/24 Christina Seigworth, fire report, still pending.
  - 04/30/24 Metropolitan Reporting Bureau, fire report, still pending, collected \$15.00.
  - 04/30/24 LexisNexis, fire report, ready 05/16/24, collected \$15.00.
- No Action

C. Discussion and possible action regarding: Approve the Pension Funding Policy per A.R.S. §16-225(C). (Administration)

- Comptroller Mindy Kindelberger provided some background to the public present and noted that our pension plan with PSPRS is currently underfunded. We are under a 20-year amortization to have the pension fully funded by 2036. Each year we put together a funding policy to inform the public of the status of our pension. For tier 1 & 2 we were at 78.3% last year and ending June 30, 2023 we are at 82.4%. Tier 3 is fully funded at 107.3%.
  - Chairman DeMaio motioned to approve the pension funding notice per A.R.S. §16-225(C) as presented by administration. Clerk Foster 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor, motion carried unanimously.

**9. CALL TO THE PUBLIC.** *Consideration and discussion of comments and complaints from the public. Those wishing to address the Golden Valley Fire District Board need not request permission in advance. The Fire District Board is not permitted to discuss or take action on any item raised in the call to the public, unless the item is specifically noticed for discussion or legal action. However, individual Board members may be permitted to respond to criticism directed to them. Otherwise, the Board may direct that staff review the matter or that the matter be placed on a future agenda. The Fire District Board cannot discuss or take legal action on any issue raised during the Call to the Public that is not on the agenda due to restrictions of the Open Meeting Law.*

- Jennifer Esposito what can the district do to clear excessive brush that may pose a possible fire hazard, be it working with a potential property owner or the community at large.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

- Chairman DeMaio motioned to adjourned. Director Payntar 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Chairman DeMaio adjourned at approximately 10:23 a.m.

**MINUTES prepared by:** Emily Byrne / Mindy Kindelberger  
*(This is a working draft until board approval)*

**Date:** 05/22/2024

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved:  
Sue Foster, Board Clerk