PLEASE NOTE, THE JUNE 17, 2020 REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES ARE FOLLOWING THE MAY 27, 2020 SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES.
ATTENDANCE

Directors Present: Obe Brown, Ron Fiorca, Joe Guardino, Al Iaccopucci and Edgar Monroy
Staff Present: Fire Chief, Jeff Cookson and Clerk of the Board, Andrea Adams

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. Director Monroy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. NEW BUSINESS

1. Full-Time Captain Positions – Chief Cookson
   Recommendation: Hire Full-Time Captains
   Discussion: Chief Cookson stated the power point presentation is available on the website, www.wilton-fire.org, under the Board Agenda tab. The WFPD is funded by property tax dollars. The current budget is over 1.35 million dollars and currently sound without debt. The WFPD is governed by five elected officials with Board meetings held the third week of each month.

   The current staffing is all volunteer except for part-time office staff, the Fire Chief, and the Building/Vehicle Maintenance Position.

   On duty firefighters are assigned a 24-hour shift and receive a stipend. The staffing schedule can be volatile with many of our firefighters servicing other agencies during the summer months. On duty crews are supported by resident firefighters.

   We propose three full-time captains as a pilot program in order to maintain safe emergency response. It will be funded by the District’s current budget with only minor changes made. The base pay is $22 per hour with a $900 stipend for health care and retirement. It’s not a CalPers position. Holiday pay is 11 holidays per year, four vacation days per year, and three sick days per year.

   There are three shifts (A, B, and C), with Shift Captain A EMS, Logistics and perform additional duties, Captain B, PPE, Risk Reduction, Safety Officer, Pub Ed and perform additional duties, and Captain C, Training and Recruitment and Retention and perform additional duties as needed.

   One Duty Officer $200 per 24-hour shift, one Captain (full time position), one Engineer $150 per 24-hour shift, one Firefighter $100 per 24-hour shift, one Paramedic Intern $100 per 24-hour shift, two Interns paid per call with one call guaranteed, Volunteers $18 paid per call with $23 per call for paramedics. All Paramedics will receive an additional $25/shift. All Ranks excluding paramedic interns.

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The Position: A person assigned to Fire Captain Classification is trained in fire suppression and emergency medical care and is engaged in the prevention, control, and extinguishment of fires and response to emergency situations where life, property or the environment is at risk. Under the supervision of higher level supervisory and management staff, the Fire Captain operates and maintains fire apparatus and other fire agency equipment; responds to fire alarms and other emergency and non-emergency calls to protect life and property; provides basic life support and medical assistance; and conducts fire prevention inspection and public education programs. The Fire Captain supervises the District’s Firefighters and Fire Engineers at assigned stations and works directly for and in cooperation with the Duty Chief.

The examination for this recruitment will consist of the following: application appraisal, written examination, skills assessment, and interview. A Chief’s interview will also be conducted. Applications will be reviewed for minimum and desired qualifications. An offer of employment is conditional pending the results of an employment Entrance medical examination including drug screening and a criminal background check. The selection progress will be weighed 1/3 written exam, 1/3 skills assessment and 1/3 interview. Applicants must provide verification of legal right to work in the United States at the time of the job offer. This position is a pilot program and will have a 12-month probationary period.

The written examination administered to qualified candidates will be based on IFSTA 6th Edition Essentials of Firefighting and IFSTA 5th Edition, Fire and Emergency Services Company Officer. The written examination is tentatively scheduled for April 2020. Applicants who successfully pass the written examination will be invited to the skills assessment and interview scheduled for April 2020.

Proposed Budget Changes: Utilize the current shift Captain stipend towards full-time Captains and remove Training Captains (three) $100/month stipend. Duties carried out by full time Captain Duty Officer - $25 reduction in stipend per shift. Reduction from two Firefighters to one Firefighter daily, reduce Training by $3,000, Expendable Tools reduced $1,000, Monitor removed for $12,000, Fuel reduced $6,000, Radios reduced $7,500, PPE reduced $3,000, Structures and Improvements reduced $1,264, planned MDT replacement not carried forth to save $10,000.

Director Iaccopucci inquired about the daily crew staffing. Chief Cookson responded there will be a crew of four plus two Interns.

Director Monroy asked if the Chief would be open to removing the reduction of the one firefighter since it’s such a small dollar amount. Chief Cookson responded, yes, it’s a $3,600 annual reduction.

Director Guardino stated the issue has been the process, I don’t have an issue with the concept. We need to make sure we’re doing things right. This concept’s been discussed many times with bringing the District along with progress. However, one of the issues is money and is it sustainable? I don’t want to do a disservice to the people hired or the taxpayers. I have concerns about the budget cuts and the one-time fees – where do we find the funds the following year? I received this information today and haven’t been given adequate time to make certain the numbers work. I’m not saying we shouldn’t do it - I want to see the District progress but I want to make sure we can afford it forever.

Director Monroy responded that Director Guardino chose not to be present during the Closed Session Board Meeting and also chose not to attend the Finance Committee Meeting. However, I appreciate his very good perspective in having to look at the financial figures.
Director Guardino stated he was not aware that it was going to be voted upon in Closed Session.

Director Brown stated let’s put this behind us and move on with the meeting. From the people of Wilton, I hear the biggest complaint is that the drivers don’t know where they’re going. It makes sense because we don’t have the volunteer base that we used to have. By putting in Captains, the new people will learn the District’s roads. We’re doing it for the protection of this District.

Director Monroy asked what the one-time expenses are that were removed from the budget.

Chief Cookson stated on the proposed budget changes slide, the MDT replacement was set aside.

Director Guardino stated the funds need to be available reoccurring funds every year so we don’t find ourselves in a hole in the future. If we need to take some extra time to do what’s right for these folks and the community, then I think it’s fair.

Chief Cookson suggested if we look at the budget and vote on it at the June Meeting, we can still stay on schedule for hiring the Captains on 7/1/20. I’d like everyone to be on board.

Mr. Rose stated there’s no guarantee the budget’s going to be the same and adjustments will need to be made dependent on what’s received from the county. If the three Captains are hired, will there be a Captain responding to all calls?

Chief Cookson responded, yes, that’s correct, as a primary first out unit. As you know, there’s multiple calls at the same time occasionally. In the instance when the unit is committed to another incident, there could be a resident volunteer unit responding without a Captain.

Captain Carl thanked the Board for considering the hiring of full-time Captains. He addressed Director Guardino and thanked him for his commentary and his taking into consideration the future of the Captains. He asked to make it a priority.

Chief Blanco stated the Chief Staff and Board made a Captain’s job announcement. We’ve conducted the written test, skills, oral board interviews, and thank you to the Board for helping with this process. The job was posted on 3/18/20, conducted interviews and tests on 4/16/20, Chief’s interviews on 4/24/20, and conditional job offers on 4/29/20. The timeline was designed in order to have the individuals hired on for fire season. From a training standpoint, we need the extra time to get these individuals on board. They’ve agreed to come in at a volunteer rate. If we push the timeline back, it’s going to put them in the middle of July and fire seasons already here.

Director Guardino stated that’s in conflict with what the Fire Chief just told us. If we wait until the next board meeting, it allows us the time to work these figures out and make sure it’s not just affordable this year but forever. It also allows for some constructive input on how to better adjust the numbers for sustainability.

Director Monroy asked is the consensus to wait a couple of weeks to align the budget and keep the selected candidates? Director Guardino responded, I think that’s a prudent course of action.

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C. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Closed Session Item:
Personnel – Government Code Section 54957
Full-Time Captain positions to be discussed in open session at the June 17, 2020 Board Meeting
No Action Taken

D. ADJOURNMENT

Board adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Adams
Clerk of the Board

Approved:

Edgar Monroy
Chairman

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ATTENDANCE

Directors Present: Obe Brown, Ron Fiorica, Joe Guardino, Al Iaccopucci and Edgar Monroy
Staff Present: Fire Chief, Jeff Cookson and Clerk of the Board, Andrea Adams

A. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

1. Director Monroy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS

1. Board Committee Updates – None

C. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

1. Mr. Rose stated he has about four questions. He stated the minutes from previous meetings have not appeared on the webpage until today. I would like the request on the agenda and to release hard copies at the meetings in which they’re approved posted on the website no later than the following day they were approved.

I previously requested a copy of all materials to the board with the exception of personnel and litigation matters prior to the scheduled board meetings each month - that’s not happening.

In reference to assistance from outside agencies, in a grass fire which occurred on 5/24/20, Chief Cookson stated in the River Valley Times that outside agencies were involved. I suspect that both water tenders were dispatched to the 5/24/20 grass fire. Of the seven engines, I’m asking how many are equipped to deal with grassland fires and how many were dispatched on the 5/24/20 grass fire.

Chief Cookson responded all four of our water tenders were at that fire. All seven engines are able to put out grass fires and we had five engines and four water tenders that were dispatched on that call.

Mr. Rose asked what is the total cost of all three captains positions. Director Monroy responded $293,112.

Mr. Rose also asked how the three Captains positions will benefit the Wilton community. Chief Cookson stated that would be addressed in his report.

Mr. Rose asked if the board would consider funding fewer than the three positions in order to augment the paramedic program.

Director Monroy stated the minutes will be posted at a more prudent time.
D. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. M/S Brown/Monroy - Director Brown stated he would like a total of the purchases for the Type Five Engine. To approve the consent calendar as written
   Approved 5/0

E. STAFF REPORTS

1. Chief Cookson updated the Board on the prior month’s activities through the Chief’s Report:
   i. May 2020 reported 98 calls and May 2019 reported 40 calls;
   ii. Total ALS days were 18;
   iii. Significant incidences to report – From 5/20/20 to date there have been 32 grass fires with 20 in Wilton, we also had a detached shed fire;
   iv. Building & Vehicle Maintenance – New brakes on Engine 81, Engine 684 new belts and pulleys, Rehab 81 air conditioning and engine work, Engine 581 nearly in-service, working on annual ladder and extinguisher testing, roof prop is still being worked on at Station 84;
   v. Fire Prevention – Five new projects;
   vi. Training includes a Wildland refresher, Rescue 42 Vehicle Stabilization, Firefighter 1 – Master Stream Operations, Driver Training for Drafting Operations, Firefighter Skills, EMS, Paramedic signoffs, the monthly drill is Wildland and Pump Operations; Firefighter 1 Skills. We are planning on doing a live fire Saturday morning;
   vii. General Information – Our regional grant with Amador has been submitted. Chief Blanco and I met with Fire Dispatch to fine tune what equipment is dispatched to our calls. They’re revamping their system. Two individuals completed the paramedic process – congratulations to Paramedics Mudrik and Cooper.

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. Water Tender Monitor – Chief Cookson
   Recommendation: Purchase a monitor for Water Tender 83
   Discussion: Chief Cookson stated in 2014 when Water Tender 83 was ordered, we removed the front monitor to cut costs. It’s time to move forward and have it added on. Often, Water Tender 83 responds alone with one person. It’s a valuable resource and I’d like to move forward with getting it installed in this year’s budget. It’s budgeted in the Fire Equipment Supplies line item. The cost won’t exceed $11,000. We have $12,000 budgeted in that line.

   We are proposing to purchase the Task Force for $10,571 to include the monitor, nozzle controls, miscellaneous plumbing, and materials. Captain Kunz will install it.

   Director Brown stated when it was ordered in 2014, the monitor was supposed to be taken off the truck that it was replacing and put on this truck. That’s why we omitted it in the order.

   Chief Cookson responded, no, that’s not true. That monitor was obsolete and it wouldn’t work on the new vehicle with the way the hood is. The current monitors are smaller and more efficient and will fit with the hood configuration.
Director Brown asked how many monitors we have. Chief Cookson responded zero.

Director Guardino reiterated that the monitor is in the 2019-2020 fiscal year budget. It’s useful and would be a beneficial tool.

Director Brown stated I would like to see one budgeted for 2020-2021 for Water Tender 84.

Director Guardino stated the budget for next year is stretched thin. I don’t see it as feasible. The Preliminary Budget is finished and I don’t know where we’d find another $12,000 – $15,000 in that budget.

Director Brown stated he would like it for 84. Chief Cookson stated it’s something we can look into – maybe applying for a grant or with miscellaneous revenue.

Director Guardino stated I’m not opposed to doing a mid-year budget review but putting it in the budget would be irresponsible.

Director Brown stated put it as a priority on the radar.

M/S Guardino/Monroy To approve the staff report as written
Approved 5/0

G. OLD BUSINESS

1. Full-Time Captain Update – Chief Cookson
Recommendation: Hire Full-Time Captains
Discussion: Chief Cookson stated the Wilton Fire Protection District is staffed with Resident and Shift Volunteers. The District began the Shift program in 2003 in order to enhance the staffing levels and services to the community. Shift members work 24-hour shifts and staff the District 365 days a year and are paid a small monetary stipend. Staffing levels fluctuate based on members availability due to having other work and family obligations.

Our members obtain valuable experience and several members have been successful at landing full-time positions in the fire service with agencies all over California. Our current staffing has seen a significant shortage due to members obtaining full-time employment at other agencies. The recruitment and retention of members has not been able to keep up the hiring demand for the District. This has created a staffing shortage.

The District currently has seven Shift Captains. Most days of the week have vacancies for the Captain Position. For the month of May 2020, 17/31 days have vacancies in the Captain rank. The Captain rank is essential because these members provide leadership and supervision on all day to day operations including, but not limited to, Emergency Response, public education, weed abatement inspections, business inspections, incident reporting, and crew training. These members also have the ability to operate the District apparatus in the event that there is not a qualified operator in the Shift Engineer rank.
The District requests to hire three full-time Captains to work a 48/96 schedule in order to ensure adequate Company Officer staffing year-round. Hiring full-time Captains will greatly enhance our ability to provide Fire and EMS services to the community and uphold our mission “Committed to the care and protection of the community we serve.”

These full-time Captains will ensure that there is staffing 365 days a year, and have the ability to operate District apparatus. This ensures every day the Wilton community can expect the adequate response they deserve. Maintaining Captain coverage for the District greatly enhances the safety of our personnel.

This pilot program is funded with our current budget with minimal budget changes to line items listed below. With the District being in an ongoing staffing shortage, in order to adequately staff units for the upcoming fire season and year around, maintaining coverage in the Captain rank ensures safety, accountability and efficiency.

The proposed cost of the Captain Program is $293,112. The existing cost that were putting forth is $146,693 for a total increase of $146,419. It basically costs double of what we’re doing now.

Director Guardino stated a lot of work went into this since the last meeting. The original proposal didn’t include the monitor that we just approved. Safety shouldn’t be sacrificed to make this happen.

Director Monroy asked Director Guardino to stop insulting the Directors.

Director Brown stated we’re off track.

Mr. Rose stated the April Minutes contained sixteen pages and fourteen pages consisted of matters related to personnel. A matter which I believe, should have been dealt with in closed session and not addressed in a public forum. This matter keeps cropping up and you keep going around and around with it. Put it to bed and let’s move on to matters that affect the community of Wilton. I would like the Chief’s Report as it relates to the three Captain positions. Thank you.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that this report be approved as written with three full-time captains hired as a pilot program.

M/S Monroy/Fiorica To approve the proposal as written
Approved 5/0

2. Preliminary Budget – Chief Cookson
Recommendation: To review and approve the Preliminary Budget as presented
Discussion: Chief Cookson stated the Preliminary Budget includes the full-time Captains Proposal. Keep in mind it’s the Preliminary Budget. Hopefully, we can approve it tonight and if something comes up, we can change it in the Final Budget.

M/S Fiorica/Iaccopucci To approve the Preliminary Budget as written
Approved 5/0
H. IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

1. None

I. ADJOURNMENT

Board adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Adams, Clerk of the Board

Approved:

Edgar Monroy, Chairman