



Superstition Fire & Medical District

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Governing Board Work Session Meeting Minutes September 25, 2019

PURSUANT TO A.R.S. §38.431.02, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE SUPERSTITION FIRE & MEDICAL DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD A WORK SESSION ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2019. THE MEETING WAS HELD AT THE SUPERSTITION FIRE & MEDICAL DISTRICT'S ADMINISTRATION OFFICE, 565 N. IDAHO ROAD, APACHE JUNCTION, ARIZONA.

THIS WORK SESSION WAS OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND BEGAN AT 7:00 PM.

A. Call to Order

Chairman House called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

B. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance led by Director Cross.

C. Roll Call

Board Members in attendance were Chairman Todd House, Clerk Kathleen Chamberlain, Director Jeff Cross, Director Jason Moeller. Director Larry Strand attended via conference call.

Senior Leadership Team in attendance were Fire Chief Mike Farber, Assistant Chief Rick Ochs, Finance Director Roger Wood, Deputy Chief Jeff Cranmer and Administrative Services Director Anna Butel.

Board Secretary and HR Generalist Sherry Mueller attended. Legal Counsel William Whittington attended via conference call

1. Call to the Public. (BOD #2019-09-N/A)

None.

2. Discussion and presentation by Brenda Tranchina regarding the selection process for the next Fire Chief. (BOD #2019-09-01)

Fire Chief Mike Farber introduced Brenda Tranchina who spoke to the Board of Directors on the process for finding a new fire chief to replace Chief Farber upon his retirement. Brenda spoke to the following points:

- Finding a fire chief is the single most important decision a Board can make
- Timing is important – at this point, there is plenty of time
- Questions posed by Brenda:
 - What process do you want? Internal vs. External
 - Internal vs. External Process: Do you want to keep it internal? – will you handle the process internally or are you going to contract for services from an outside consultant to administer the recruiting process?
 - Internal vs. External Candidates: Will this be open to strictly internal candidates or will it be open to outside, external candidates as well?
 - Do we need overlap with Chief Farber and the new fire chief before he retires?



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- How much overlap time will we need? (Brenda recommends 30 – 60 days at the most)
- Brenda said she's seen other Districts keep the former chief in a "consultant" role for a time during the final days of the chief's tenure before retirement
- Brenda does not recommend making the new fire chief an "interim" role
- What is our timeframe from beginning to end of entire process?
 - *The first thing we need to do is establish a timeline
 - *Start by figuring out just when do we want to have someone in place?
 - *Start the process approximately 6 months (minimum) to 8 months ahead
 - *Perhaps 30 days before Chief Farber leaves – back into the timeline / process
 - *Factor in to the timeline that the incoming fire chief may need to give a 30 to 60-day notice to their current Board. You will need a 30 to 60-day window from time of offer to taking the seat
 - *Brenda would tell her clients for her part of the process, a minimum of 4 to 6 months ahead of the offer
 - *We'll need time for enough Board Meetings to make decisions, review / revise and approve the job description, determine minimum requirements, qualifications in education and experience, ideal traits, residency requirements, etc.
 - *Once the job description is approved by The Board, Brenda would develop the recruitment materials and get them posted for six weeks
 - *After the posting closes, time is needed to review / screen all the applicants. Often, applicants wait until the last minute to apply and send in their resume
 - *If the process is open to outside applicants, time may be needed for them to make travel arrangements
 - *In summary, the assessment process and interview process with the Fire Board takes time
- Typical education requirements for fire chiefs in Arizona varies. The trend is towards more education than what we've seen in the past. A Bachelor's Degree is the minimum. Many organizations require a Master's Degree or make a Master's Degree a preference. EFO and/or CFO certifications are sometimes required or preferred. The fire chief in a fire district wears many hats. It is much more difficult and more experience is required to run a fire district than a fire department in a municipality. The fire chief in a district must deal with legal issues, HR issues and needs experience in budgeting.
- Years of experience also varies for fire chief's in Arizona. Typically, a minimum of 15 years (minimum) in fire service experience is common. The size of the fire district makes a big difference in relation to years of experience.

Fire Chief Mike Farber described his research and opinion on experience and educational requirements. He named the fire chiefs around the Valley and other areas in Arizona who have Master's Degrees. The Board asked for a copy of the list from Chief Farber.

Captain John Walka (VP, Labor Union) told the Board that a survey was put out to the membership to find out what they want in the fire chief.



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Questions asked in the survey:

- Auto Aid system vs. outside the Auto Aid system – 63% of membership said they would like someone from the Auto Aid System.
- Importance of membership buy-in for the fire chief hiring process – 94% said “very important”
- Importance of vetting of credentials and the reputation of candidates for the next fire chief – 87% said “extremely important”
- Should the process be open to external and internal candidates? 96% said “yes”
- SFMD has unique issues – Only internal candidates would be capable of handling these issues – 97% disagreed
- Setting qualifications based on comparable agencies – 90% said yes, qualifications should be set based on comparable agencies
- Ad-hoc committee to evaluate the requirements of other organizations – Captain Walka believes the best thing we could do is form a committee with Board Members, Labor and Admin – 90% of membership said “Yes” we should form an ad-hoc committee
- Value in a diversified interview panel – 94% sees value in a diversified interview panel
- Value in the next chief being in support of labor management – 91% says this is important
- The most important things the next chief should be qualified for - #1 was Annexation and growth, then Leadership, vision and accountability, budgetary practice, internal customer service and moral

Education - Golder Ranch and Northwest Fire both require only Bachelor’s Degrees for their fire chiefs

- Brenda mentioned that the Board should establish minimum requirements, then add preferred qualifications so you’re not locked in with strict requirements. In years gone by, resumes would flood in for fire chief openings. Now it’s different. Far fewer resumes are received for fire chief openings. It may be better to “cast our net wider” with less strict requirements to draw a larger pool of candidates. As for years of experience, minimum of 12 to 15 years of exposure to all the different levels such as chief officer roles (Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, program management roles, budget, finance, HR) that they will be overseeing.

Brenda said if she were doing the process, she would like to bring 7 or 8 candidates to the full assessment process and end up with 3 candidates to bring to the Fire Board for interviews and final selection.

- Chief Farber said a Bachelor’s Degree should be the minimum and a Master’s Degree preferred along with many years of experience. Experience at an Admin level is important. EFO and/or a CFO program does not replace a Bachelor’s and/or a Master’s Degree.
- Captain Walka said 3 months for the ad-hoc committee would be enough time to accomplish what they need. Chairman House recommended that Captain Walka go ahead and start putting the committee together. Chairman House recommends an odd number of members (5 or 7 or 9). Captain Walka would like members from Labor, Board Members, and Admin.



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- Director Cross stated it is the Boards duty to select the next fire chief and the ad-hoc committee should simply look for information. What is currently in the Valley in similar districts, how do they differ, why do they differ. Information on smaller districts is not relevant.

Brenda Tranchina recommends that the ad-hoc committee obtain recent job descriptions rather than older job descriptions from similar districts and find out how recently those job descriptions have been reviewed and updated.

- Captain Jon Williamson stated the importance of drawing our future fire chief with experience in the Auto Aid System. It would be a much easier and better transition for everyone.
- Clerk Chamberlain believes that everyone including Labor, the Board and Admin all must be in agreement of the selected candidate. Clerk Chamberlain, Director Cross and Chairman House stated it would be a good idea for the Board Members and Admin personnel to complete a survey to see what qualities and characteristics they believe the next fire chief should have.
- Director Cross brought up the “residency requirements” and Brenda stated the ARS Statues prohibits departments from residency requirements for Firefighters but there are exceptions at the executive level. The Board could make this requirement for the fire chief to live in this District.
- Clerk Chamberlain inquired as to the cost of the process with a consultant such as Brenda Tranchina. Brenda said it depends on the scope of services that the Board needs and wants from the consultant. How involved does the Board want the consultant to be? The last time Brenda was involved in the hiring process for the fire chief for SFMD, the cost was approximately \$17,000 - \$20,000.
- Brenda stated that other Fire Districts do not pay for out of state candidates travel and lodging accommodations during the recruiting process.

NO MOTION

Note: Announcement – Chief Farber announced that Captain Amy Brooks was selected for the Battalion Chief



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3. Adjourn (BOD #2019-09-02)

Motion by Director Cross at 8:21 PM to adjourn the meeting. **Seconded** by Director Moeller.

Vote 5 ayes, 0 nays. **MOTION PASSED.**

Governing Board Approval:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sherry Mueller', is written over a horizontal line.

Board Clerk Kathleen Chamberlain
Sherry Mueller