

## Meeting Minutes

Blue Ridge Fire District Wage & Benefit Committee

September 5, 2017

Revision 1 September 29, 2017

A meeting of the above committee was called to order at 1300 hrs. by the Clerk of the BRFD Board, Cindy Perelli. Also present were BRFD Board member Pete Fenton, Fire Chief Philip Paine, firefighter Brandon Sewell, and volunteer Chuck Buddle.

Ms. Perelli suggested a chair person be nominated to conduct the meeting. Chief Paine nominated Ms. Perelli for the role. Chuck Buddle inquired as to whom had created the committee, the Fire Chief or the Board of the District and when informed it was a District committee he seconded the nomination of Ms. Perelli as Chair. Chuck Buddle appointed as scribe.

Ms. Perelli suggested the committee form goals for the committee and a discussion involving all members ensued. It was determined the primary issues to be dealt with were the bullet point issues listed on the agenda section b. that being:

- 1) PSPRS District and Employee contributions, and
- 2) the BRFDAPBP (457b plan) and the contributions by both employees and the District

Chuck Buddle provided an overview of the origination of the 457b plan for volunteers, its later (2008) conversion into a qualified tax-exempt plan for paid staff as an alternative to a Public Safety pension plan, and as to the District resolving to contribute budgeted funds (company FICA contributions) to the paid staff members of the plan who were FICA exempt due to participation in the plan.

Goals for the Committee were eventually set as;

- A. Resolve the 6% FICA contribution issue to a second retirement plan for BRFD PSPRS employees.
- B. Explore benefit increases in other areas.
- C. Resolve the volunteer pension issue regarding the insurance premium sur tax (fire marshal) funds.

## Committee Recommendations

- 1) The District Board should act on a reallocation of the 6%,

- 2) FICA offset contribution to paid (PSPRS only) employees as soon as possible. (at its next meeting) In effect, no longer contributing to two retirement plans for PSPRS employees but continuing the contributions to non PSPRS employees.
- 3) Fire Chief should gather additional information toward increasing benefits for the PSPRS employees in other areas. Costs of said benefits to be determined, as well as how to finance those increased costs while still covering new mandates regarding sick time accounts for paid employees.
- 4) The District Board should act on approving payment of funds to the 457 accounts of volunteers. These funds, formally called the "Fire Marshal funds" were previously sent directly to the pension fund and distributed to volunteer pension accounts based on activity. Since PSPRS is now in place the funds were sent instead to PSPRS and credited to the Districts PSPRS account. The funds should be re-allocated via a disbursement to the BRFDAPBP for credit to the volunteer accounts. This has been an issue for some time and apparently awaits a written confirmation the funds were received by PSPRS.

Chief Paine will obtain a written confirmation.

Section C items on the meeting agenda were noted by the committee. It was suggested that many of the items are more closely related to Fire Chief responsibilities as a part of operations and once the Fire Chief could apply a cost of benefit analysis he could present the issues to the District Board as part of the budget process normally starting in the spring.

The committee did however discuss issues related to Personal Time Off, mainly because of a new mandate regarding sick time benefits being allocated separately from vacation time. Chief Paine will research this increase in employee costs as a part of benefit increases and provide more information and at the next committee meeting.

As far as a "PTO policy" it was noted policy is created by the Fire Chief with the approval of the board, not by a committee.

A follow up meeting of the committee was scheduled for Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at 1300 hrs. at Station 1.

Minutes Approved September 29, 2017