

Minutes: Arivaca Fire District Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
(unapproved)

Date: October 17, 2012

Members: Scott Van Boreum, Kathleen Wishnick, Mark Dresang, Jim Meade, Lance McKinnie (“guest” or member?)

Guests: Rich Milinovitch, Maggie Malinovich, Rick Burton, Barb Burton, (at times there were one, two, or possibly even three responders, “sitting by” in chairs)

At: Arivaca Fire Station

The meeting began at 3:40 PM. Two tables were set up outside because of the fresh paint odor that was noticeable inside. Copies of the strategic plan were passed around. The tone was set immediately when Maggie said that the email she received gave her the impression that this would be a sort of community input meeting, and she said she would be leaving as she didn't want to sit through a two hour long committee discussion. Early on, perhaps at the “opening” of the meeting, and then a number of times later, Maggie reminded the committee members that the “taxes need to be lowered.” (She later remarked, in conjunction with the “length of meetings” issue, that the regular meetings were too long, with too many agenda items carried over, and that the call-to-the-public would be better placed at the beginning of the meeting than at the end.) (Scott and Kathleen said that moving the call-to-the-public was a very good idea and that the board would act on that.)

Scott and the other committee members expressed a desire to reconsider the intended format of the Strategic Plan discussion - recognizing the fact that there were district members present who had come with a particular understanding of what the meeting was to “be about” (an understanding which seemed to be shared by the Burtons, especially by Rick) - and Scott said that the first objective addressed the concern about taxes. He said he would move quickly through the five objectives and began with the first (to control taxes).

Rick wanted the committee members to realize that he and a number of others were “far away” from the services and asked us to realize that response times “over gray hill” were going to be lousy. It was agreed that the tanker trucks wouldn't get there real fast. Rick asked about water availability when the trucks needed to be refilled. We talked about the need for water storage tanks with certain diameter pipes, and certain pressures, and the need for wells to pump the water. (Rick said the department of Water Resources might not like a bunch of water wells [for fire trucks] being put in.) At the present moment, the closest refill spot is the Community Center (for people over gray hill) and we are not sure of the diameter of the pipe (six inches?) and the pressure capacity. Mark mentioned that we had been offered the two water tanks from the townsite water coop, but that they had not been accepted because of their age and because of the cost to set them up somewhere (with all the added cost of cement slabs, supply, pressure, well, etc.)

Maggie said that people are interested primarily in the medical services, and why are we putting so much into the fire aspect (“it costs so much in comparison to use”). “Why go to Sonoita to fight a fire?” Maggie asked. Scott explained that trucks and equipment for wildland fires were necessary because wildland fires provide a revenue stream, and that revenue can help offset the tax rate. Scott mentioned that billing was another revenue source and that billing was taking place, and, that the CON application was in and if the CON is granted that would be a revenue stream (perhaps \$110,000). Also, that there would be structure fire class with people paying to take the course here at the station.

Rick Burton and Maggie said that participation is low from the residents because of residual animosity. Rick said it might be a combination of animosity and apathy, just animosity, or just apathy.

Jim Meade said that he thought there was less animosity. Scott said that about half a dozen of the dissolution group had said to him that they thought things were going alright.

Rick mentioned quite a few times that there needed to be “specifics.” He emphasized it about six times.

“People want SPECIFICS. People are hard headed who live here.” Scott said he would be more specific, especially in his Connection articles (and that in being more brief in those articles, he would – in those articles – invite people to read 'more' at the district web page or facebook page).

Kathleen expressed appreciation for the participation (of those present) and said that more participation would be greatly appreciated.

Maggie said “You, the Chief, are its (the fire district's) greatest asset.” (And, in reference to Scott's rescue of the Sopori School summer swimming program she added, “That pool thing you did was great.”)

Rick Burton asked, “How do you propose to get people to come to the meetings?”

Maggie said, “Get the tax rate down.”

Scott replied, “Perhaps I need to put a “specific” dollar amount, for objective one, on how much the taxes go down, instead of the general “desire to lower the taxes, but this is not so easy, as there are so many aspects [to the equation].”

Kathleen said, “Getting the CON will help, in another year. We have to remember, if we lower the tax rate one year, that it can only go up 8% next time, if it proves necessary.” (The idea being that if we are not responsible in our decision making about lowering the taxes – or something unforeseen occurs - a “mistake,” or “unforeseen” cannot be easily “corrected” because of the 8% limitation if it should become necessary to adjust the rate back up to keep the operation going.)

Rick wondered if Scott or the responders got “health care.” Scott said that he and they did not. Rick thought that health care should be available to “you and the others.” “You mean it's not!?” said Rick.

It seemed to be understood by all that the responders were not being overpaid and that they were making sacrifices to work here in Arivaca, especially the paramedics and the chief. (i.e., Those present seemed to concur with Kathleen on that.)

Lance McKinnie, the paramedic captain, was invited to talk about his background and commitment to the district (“why he was here”) and his presentation was so impressive (I think, to everyone) that Kathleen expressed the need for some kind of “meet who is serving you” situation so residents could learn “who these wonderful people are.”

Rick said that Maggie's CONNECTION was one avenue for that communication.

Scott said that the web page and face book would be used to do that.

Maggie said that when people who have been helped by the responders put thank you's in “The Connection” the community can see individuals are benefiting and that services are being provided.

Scott talked about the “fuels reduction” grant that allowed district personnel to help residents get their yards fire safe. He's hoping more than 100 households will take advantage of the opportunity because any number above that will help him get the grant again next year. Also, the grant helps get four in district employees some additional income, making employment here more inviting as it will add to the limited income and help off-set out of pocket expenses (e.g., fuel cost to drive here).

Kathleen asked everyone to look over the plan during the interim, and if they so desired, to attend the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM