

MINUTES
VILLAGE OF LOS RANCHOS de ALBUQUERQUE
6718 RIO GRANDE BOULEVARD N.W.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING
JULY 23, 2008 -7:00 p.m.

Present:

Larry P. Abraham, Mayor

Kelly S. Ward, Administrator

Annabelle Silvas, Clerk

Donald T. Lopez, Trustee/Mayor Pro-Tem

Greg Perez, Fire Chief

Tim McDonough, Trustee

Pablo R. Rael, Trustee

Mary Homan, Trustee

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Village of Los Ranchos' Governing Body held a Special Meeting on Wednesday, July 23, 2008 in the Warren J. Gray Hall. The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Trustee Lopez moved approval of the agenda. Trustee McDonough seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Mayor Abraham stated that a closed meeting was held at 6:30 p.m. on July 23, and only those items stated on the posted notice for the closed meeting were discussed.

MOTION: Trustee Homan moved approval of the Mayor's closed meeting statement. Trustee McDonough seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously, 3-0. (Trustee Rael did not attend the closed meeting.)

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD [3 MINUTE TIME LIMIT]

None

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. PRESENTATION ON FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET AND STAFFING PLAN BY FIRE CHIEF GREG PEREZ

Fire Chief Perez said he was going to give a presentation concerning the past, present and future direction of the Los Ranchos Fire Department. He said Dr. Weis, the Village Medical Director and Juan Cordova, Fire Marshal, were both in attendance at the meeting to offer clarification or answer any questions.

Chief Perez said the areas he is going to focus on are budget, community, call volume and personnel. He said the bulk of calls that they run are EMS, not fire. He discussed automatic aid with Bernalillo and the reason is that the Village and Bernalillo County share the same dispatching unit. He said mutual aid is what the Village has with the City of Albuquerque which means they must request the City bring aid to the Village.

Chief Perez discussed personnel next. He said in 1998, there was one firefighter per shift who would stay at the Fire Station overnight and a Fire Chief; the remaining staffing was accomplished by volunteers. Today, he said there are two paid firefighters and one paid paramedic per shift and a full-time Fire Chief. He said they became ALS certified and transport capable when they had the paramedics in place. In 2006/2007, he said they created a full-time Fire Marshal/Investigator position which is responsible for inspecting 479 businesses plus the schools in the Village.

Chief Perez said their actual spending for 2007/2008 was \$820,607. He noted that the community has grown and likewise the call volume for the department has increased. He also discussed Prado Subdivision and the fact that there are eight homes currently built representing 77,000 sq. ft. with 22 total lots available. He said that is what caused him to go with the zero tolerance regarding home fire sprinkler systems.

Chief Perez said looking to the future, their proposed budget is \$945,662 which includes \$53,000 for one additional person to be the driver/firefighter and the remainder is operating budget. He said this will move them toward the 4-person crew because he believes the paramedic position should be separated out from the driver/firefighter position.

Chief Perez said they have a great group of volunteers. He said they are required to pull 38 hours a month in order to stay active with the department and it is pretty much hit or miss if they are present when a call comes in. He said there are currently 29 volunteers and it is expensive to keep them in the proper protective equipment. He said the last Village resident who was a volunteer was in 1999. He said the average age of current volunteers is 22 years old.

Chief Perez closed by saying that what is before them is making the move to a 4-person crew. He said in approving the budget, they set the stage for that to happen. He said he does not think the Village would want to have one shift as a 4-person crew and the other two shifts as only 3-person crews. He said when fighting a fire, the rule is “two in and two out” which means you can’t send two firefighters in to save someone if you don’t have two firefighters on the outside to save them. He said on the EMS side, it allows them to live up to the commitment of being transport capable and allowing them to operate a rescue 24/7.

Doctor Weis said he has been the Medical Director for the Village for the past four years. He said what that means is he acts as the indirect oversight of the paramedics and ALS units. He said when they are not on a call, his job is to provide the protocols so they know how to handle the call, to watch quality assurance and to handle education. He said in addition, he would be part of direct medical control which means if the paramedic gets to a scene, they would have access to him or to one of the other physicians at the hospital. He said he works at UNM as one of the emergency physicians there. He said Los Ranchos has reached the point where there are two sections in the Fire Department – the EMS section and the fire section. He said the EMS portion represents 70% of the calls for the department. He said the average training time for a paramedic is somewhere around 1,000 hours of total time to get to the paramedic license. He said he feels it is important to move forward, not to be the service that excels in the whole area, but to be the service that is on equal standing with Bernalillo County and Albuquerque Fire.

Trustee Lopez commented that over a period of time, the budget has increased about 34% and that is fairly significant. He said he supports the fourth person because they must have it, but there has to be some way that the community can achieve its goal of having protection, but at a reasonable price.

Chief Perez said he understands Trustee Lopez' financial concerns and he believes he can find ways to keep the Village safe from huge increases. He said he will continue to be fiscally responsible with the funds allocated to his department.

Mayor Abraham said hypothetically, if they went to a fourth man and they have a separate transport vehicle and they had the same identical type of calls that they have now, how many times would the Fire Department only take out one vehicle?

Chief Perez said the Clawson Code is what determines what call dictates what kind of response; i.e., Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta or Echo. He said today, on a Charlie call (e.g., a seizure), they may be sending both a fire engine and a rescue unit to that call. He said he believes that the Clawson Code may be looked at again and redefined based on today's environment of rising fuel costs. He said the Department runs a lot of Charlie calls, in addition to Alpha calls for severely drunk people, mentally disturbed or potential suicides. He said the Alpha calls would require just the one piece of apparatus to respond. He said some of his paramedics want to have the rescue apparatus with them in case the call goes south and Albuquerque Ambulance is unable to provide a transport unit. He said the last thing his paramedics want to do is leave a Village resident without the ability to be transported to a hospital if they need it. He said one thing the four-man crew provides for them is if the rescue unit is tasked with transporting someone to a hospital, then the Department is not out of service, they are still operating on a fire engine at a BLS and sometimes at an ILS level. Today, when they transport, they shut down the Village of Los Ranchos as far as fire protection and EMS.

Trustee McDonough said he cannot argue with any of the safety considerations. He said he is disappointed to hear that volunteerism is no longer going to be part of the picture because that is what endears fire departments to communities. He asked if anything has been done to recruit volunteers from the Village. He said he spoke with Corrales and they have three persons with one volunteer making up the fourth member of the crew.

Chief Perez responded that he has put articles in the *Village Vision*, invited people to the testing, put booths at CNM and UNM. Inside of the Village, he said it is word of mouth, their presence at the Growers' Market and talking to residents.

Trustee McDonough said the request is for \$53,000 to hire a fourth person, but there is a lot more money going towards bringing up the other positions to where they should be in order to keep the strata. He said we are not really adding drivers, we are adding higher positions that we must compensate. He said the challenge is how do you do this and still manage to be financially efficient? He said his other big issue is transport because if you are transporting someone, then you cannot fight a fire because there are only 2 people left.

Chief Perez said before you compare the \$300,000 that is paid to the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office to the Fire Department, you need to look at the Sheriff's call response time to incidents in the Village and where they are stationing officers in the middle of the night. He said you need to compare the service you receive from our Fire Department to that of the Sheriff's Office.

Trustee Rael said he knows when he calls the Fire Department that they will show up; when he calls the Sheriff's Office, they don't always show up.

Ed Paschich, 6842 Rio Grande Blvd., said he believes new homes do not burn down on a regular basis. He said he believes that when government passes new laws the first test should be whether it is reasonable. He said he believes the zero tolerance law for fire sprinklers in every house with no exceptions is unreasonable. He said he believes it adds expense to homes that is not absolutely necessary. He said he thinks the main reason for the Fire Department's existence is to protect life and protecting property is secondary. He said he would like to speak in favor of the Fire Department's budget so they can have an adequate and full crew to respond to house fires so that if and when house fires happen, they can respond fully so that there is no justification for requiring fire sprinklers in every house.

B. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF FIRE DEPARTMENT FY 2008/2009 BUDGET AND STAFFING

MOTION: Trustee Lopez moved approval of the Fire Department FY 2008/2009 Budget and Staffing with the understanding that the approval of the fourth person shall not be construed as an approval for four persons for all three shifts. There needs to be an initiative by the Village of Los Ranchos to look at cost-saving methods for the Fire Department for next fiscal year and beyond. Trustee Rael seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Mayor Abraham said if he understood correctly, it means they would add a fourth person, but actually the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal would make up the fourth person for now and they would not be adding three more persons.

Chief Perez said he and the Fire Marshal have agreed to step into that position, but he does not think it is fair to expect them to continue without some sort of timeline when it will end.

Trustee Lopez said this is the budget for 2008/2009 and he would expect that there will be cost-saving measures brought forward sooner rather than later. He said he thinks it would be wise to allow the Village Staff and the Fire Department to explore all options.

Trustee Homan said she would support that statement. She said we can't continue to let this escalate at the rate they have been seeing. She said she acknowledges the fine service the Fire Department has given them and also the needs of the community. However, she said in these times of belt-tightening they must look at every avenue possible for that cost-savings.

Trustee McDonough said when the budget was proposed at this level, it was understood that the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal were going to fulfill certain rolls. He asked what their expectation was for how long they were going to do that.

Chief Perez responded that for himself, he thought it would be until the February or March timeframe when the SAFER Act funds were awarded.

Mayor Abraham said he believes this needs to be addressed and evaluated again within the next four to five months. He said he also thinks they need to determine how the Fire Chief and the Fire Marshal are going to be compensated. He said they will also be looking at another \$150,000 for an EMS vehicle.

Treasurer Haines said regarding cost-savings on the Fire Department General Fund, the operating expenses are less than 10%. She said she is not sure how much they could realistically reduce the operating expenses because most of the expenses are personnel costs. She said she believes they should be looking at other ways to obtain funding. She said the only way to look at a reduction in personnel costs is perhaps to re-evaluate the vacation/comp plan that is in place.

4. **TRUSTEES INFORMAL DISCUSSION**

Trustee Rael asked if Roger Erker ever received his survey.

Administrator Ward said it is on his list of things to do.

Trustee Rael asked if a survey has ever been done on his property because he has not been contacted.

Administrator Ward said he believes the survey was accomplished, but he will check to be sure.

Trustee McDonough said they have grants for repaving Ortega and Osuna that are getting old. He asked for a status report.

Administrator Ward said the Village has received additional money and hopefully the agreements will be signed at the August meeting.

Trustee McDonough said he saw Debbie O'Malley on the news discussing the money that is up for grabs from MTB.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Abraham adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

APPROVED by the Board of Trustees of the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque this _____ day of _____, 2008.

ATTEST:

Annabelle Silvas
Village Clerk