

Chester Public Utility District
PO Box 503
251 Chester Airport Rd.
Chester, Ca. 96020
530-258-2171

Minutes of Regular Meeting: November 14, 2023, at 3:00pm. Located in the Chester Public Utility District conference room: 251 Chester Airport Road.

Directors Present: Steve Graffweg, Steve Voboril, Art Tharpe, Royce Raker and Kim Green.

Directors Absent: none

Guests Present: unknown.

Staff Present: unknown.

1. **Call to Order:** Director Voboril called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.
 - a. Director Voboril led the Pledge of Allegiance.
 - b. Director Voboril acknowledged all board members in attendance confirming quorum.
 - c. Agenda Approval: Director Graffweg made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. Director Green seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

2. **Public Comment Agenda Items:** none.

3. **Meeting Minutes:**
 - a. October 24, 2023, Regular Minutes.

Director Green asked that under item #9 that the words “his opinion” be amended to “the local president’s opinion” With no further discussion, Director Green made a motion to accept the minutes with suggested amendments. Director Tharpe seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

4. **October 2023 Financials: GM Cox presented:**
 - Explained the cash status.
 - No term loan was ever put in place, rather the deficit method is used to show the Fire Fund status.
 - The property tax in place will be used to lower the Fire Fund’s deficit. This may take several years.
 - A public member suggested looking into Chapter 9 bankruptcy, 1% sales tax and a reorganization of the fire department.
 - GM Cox reiterated that the financials and budgets are online at the CPUD website for public access.

After public comments and brief discussions, Director Raker made a motion to accept the financials. Director Tharpe seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

5. General Manager's Report: by Adam Cox

- Opted to yield his report.

6. Local Union Representatives:

- a. Local 5317/Chester Professional Firefighter's Association (CFD Safety).** no comments.
- b. Local 39/ Stationary Engineers (CPUD Misc.)** no comments.

7. Update regarding Seneca Hospital billing agreement: Director Green said there is nothing to update.

Nielsen, a Seneca Hospital board member, stated she was speaking on her own opinion and not the opinion of Seneca's board. She explained fiscal responsibility, liability concerns and the many hours spent on the topic of acquiring the ambulance.

8. Notice in reduction of force of all Fire Department personnel effective 2-28-2024:

- GM Cox recommended winding down operations. Give the current firefighter staff notice of 12-31-2023 as the last day of operations. Those that want to stay can through 2-28-2024.
- Brown out days a probability for the ambulance.
- Suggested considering going back to being a volunteer department.
- Many public members gave comments, mostly having issues with the lack of information to the public from the district, of district's management and a plea to not shut down the fire department.

Recess at 3:56pm.

Reconvened at 4:04pm.

- Director Tharpe stated that a 1-day planning session to discuss issues further is needed.
- Director Voboril stated that we have to take the worst first step as there is not enough funding.
- Director Green stated she worked on the budget and still came up with -500K as best case with current revenue.
- Director Raker stated that fire has rebounded in the past due to wild land funds. Since there hasn't been a big wild land season in 2 years, the funds have depleted with no rebound in sight.
- Many public members gave comments, mostly asking the board to look into TOT tax options, to contact legislature and the Plumas County Board of Supervisors, and to develop a plan.

- A public member suggested a direction to the board as follows: Ask how did we get here? How do we reverse course? How can we recover revenue and reduce costs? To go after another tax assessment with more public access to the information. Sell the facts to the community. Leverage your Champions. Create a citizens advisory committee, to get some street credit. May have to look at cutting benefits costs, “sacred cows”.
After a bit more discussion, Director Voboril made a motion to table this agenda item as well as item #9 until November 28th. He asked management and staff to run numbers regarding staffing options. Director Raker seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
Director Voboril stated that the radio announcement that CPUD and CFD are liquidating all assets is a false statement.

9. **Authorize GM to cease Fire Dept. Operations:** *Tabled above.*

10. **Closed Session:** Read verbatim from agenda by Director Voboril at 4:45pm.
- a. Public Employee Discipline Section 54957.
 - b. Labor Negotiations 5317 Section 54957.6a
 - c. Pending Litigation Section 54956.9

11. **Reconvene:** 6:00pm

12. **Report on Closed Session:** Informational only, and direction given to staff by Director Voboril.

13. **Public Comment Non-Agenda Items:** none.

14. **Correspondence:** Letters addressed to the Board were given.

15. **Comments:**

- a. **Directors:** Director Green suggested a spending freeze.
Director Raker is looking forward to the workshop.
Director Tharpe hopes public attends.

- b. **Staff:** Clerk to the Board Johnson stated that if a tax measure again is gone after, that if she is in the public promoting said measure, for the record, she will not be on the clock.
GM Cox stated that Ms. Nielsen’s statements made earlier were an omission of facts.

16. **Adjournment:** 6:05pm, Director Tharpe made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Director Green seconded the motion. All ayes, meeting adjourned.

Cheryl E Johnson, Clerk to the Board

Approval of Minutes _____