



**MINUTES  
OF THE  
TOWN OF CAREFREE  
PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**WHEN:** FRIDAY, JANUARY 21, 2022

**WHERE:** ZOOM WEB

**TIME:** 1:30 P.M.

*Members of the Committee are participating by technological means or methods pursuant to A.R.S. §10-708.*

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Chairperson - Leslie Hine

Vice Chairperson - Philip Henn

Sheila Amoroso

Peter Burns

Scott Peterson

Kim Taha

Jerry Wetta

Anton Wilke

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

Chairperson Hine called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Committee Member Wetta disclosed that he had received a letter from Carefree resident, Mr. John Traynor. Committee Member Wetta will follow up with Mr. Traynor and ask him to share that letter with the Public Safety Advisory Committee.

**ITEM #1 Approval of the Public Safety Advisory Committee meeting minutes dated January 05, 2022.**

Committee Member Wetta **MOVED TO APPROVE** the January 05, 2022; Public Safety Advisory meeting minutes as presented. **SECONDED** by Committee Member Wilke. **CARRIED** unanimously.

**ITEM #2**      **Complete review of draft report.**

Mr. Neiss provided an overview and information regarding Mutual Aid and why it's important. Explaining that Mutual Aid is about first responders helping first responders', public safety and working with each other to cultivate solutions. Mr. Neiss is optimistic and hopes that we can continue to cultivate solutions that respond to not only for the Town of Carefree, but regional needs as well. Expressing, this is what it's all about, nothing more, nothing less. Helping our citizens in our collective communities. Furthermore, according to the National Protection Standards and Recommendations, Mutual Aid and Automatic Aid call for these compacts, so neighboring towns can help one another in time of need.

Town Administrator Neiss shared a letter that was received from the City of Scottsdale Fire Department dated, December 07, 2021, in response to Recommendation #1 in the final Public Safety Advisory Committee Report and Recommendations. Town Administrator, Neiss disclosed, following a discussion with the City of Scottsdale, Mayor and City Manager with the City of Scottsdale raised concerns regarding the liability assumed by the City of Scottsdale as a result of the Town of Carefree continuing its relationship with Rural Metro and the level of service that Rural Metro provides. As a result, the City of Scottsdale looking to terminate the agreement with Rural Metro in the near term.

Furthermore, the City of Scottsdale is calling for the Town of Carefree to transition into Automatic Aid sooner than the 3-to-5-year period as planned.

Additionally, Mr. Neiss informed the group, there was a recent article in the Foothills Focus, in which the head of the Life Safety Council, Scott Walker, who is also the Assistant Fire Chief in the City of Phoenix, stated, that as long as Carefree has a contract with Rural Metro, the town will not be accepted into Automatic Aid. Town Administrator Neiss announced, over 2 months ago, there was written communication to the Life Safety Council, requesting information as to the process to be accepted into Automatic Aid. Eventually, Mr. Neiss did receive a letter from the Life Safety Council declining Carefree's entrance into Automatic Aid; determining, as Rural Metro is not and will not be a qualifying entity and as long as the Town of Carefree has a contract with Rural Metro, they will not meet the Automatic Aid standards and therefore, will not be accepted into the Automatic Aid program. This is a non-negotiable, an absolute from the Life Safety Council. Mr. Neiss advised; their determination does not address the request for the process associated with how the Town of Carefree enters into Automatic Aid. This is the conversation that Town Administrator Neiss hoped to have with the Automatic Aid partners, to be given an opportunity to provide essential information regarding the Town of Carefree's position.

Town Administrator Neiss declared, we are all in this together, we need to cooperate and find a path that serves the community of Carefree as well as our surrounding neighbors. Adding, this is what the Public Safety Advisory Committee is seeking with the suggested amendments to the Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendations Report. A level of cooperation, with our partners, the communities next door and the fire district, to cultivate a solution within the capacity of the Town of Carefree.

Mr. Neiss concluded; unfortunately, this is what it has come down to. Regardless of what the Town of Carefree does, they will not allow the Town of Carefree to partner with Rural Metro, forcing the Town of Carefree to head down a more consolidated path than the Town

of Carefree was on. These external influences have impacted the Public Safety Advisory Committee's current recommendations, resulting in necessary modifications. Mr. Neiss expressed, this is an extensive public process predicated on citizen involvement and we must reinforce the next steps in continuing this process. The next step is the retention of consultants to flush out the Committee's recommendations, to ensure the Town of Carefree's best interests are protected. Having a financial analyst take a deeper dive to look at the viability of the Town absorbing this and research the impact that this will have on the Town's financial capacity. Additionally, Mr. Neiss explained, it is important to understand the health of the partners that the Town will be participating with, is there a potential liability to the Town of Carefree in the future? Noting, these potential liabilities can impact the annual inflators of this contract. As this is a 25-year contract, it is important to project what the escalators could be and put a cap on that, to have a rational basis to negotiate from, and ensure that the Town of Carefree's best interests for this contract are addressed in those contract negotiations. Then the process continues with public open houses, Town Council decisions and finally, implementation.

Town Administrator Neiss provided clarification while responding to questions and comments from the Committee.

Scottsdale Fire Department, Chief Shannon, responded to questions from the Committee, regarding his determination letter dated December 07, 2021. Mr. Shannon was also asked to address what specifically about their liability concerns changed between August 2021 to present as well as all of these past years the City of Scottsdale held a Mutual Aid agreement with Rural Metro.

Chief Shannon explained that he had performed a regression analysis of the number of work-related injuries that occurred on Rural Metro calls for Mutual Aid in the last 3 years the injuries amounted to over a million dollars in workman's comp liability. Adding, Scottsdale Fire Department will not supplant daily fire or EMS service needs for their neighbors directly to the east of them. In summary, Scottsdale Fire Department has no interest in seeing any of the neighboring communities struggle with fire and EMS protection. Chief Shannon further explained, what the City of Scottsdale Fire Department can't do, is bake into their service delivery model, servicing the Town of Carefree, at the expense of Desert Mountain, or any other part of North Scottsdale. Fire Chief Shannon informed, that is precisely the reasoning behind his recommendation, with what he believes to be with full support of Scottsdale City Manager and Town Council, to terminate the existing agreement with Rural Metro. Concluding, the current model as it exists does not work for Scottsdale.

Chairperson Hine requested clarification surrounding Chief Shannon's regression analysis, asking if it was specific to Carefree. Chief Shannon responded, no, it was based primarily on fires that were in the Cave Creek area, due to the limited staffing that existed with Rural Metro, causing career ending orthopedic injuries. Adding, those injuries arose out of extended scene times and work cycle periods where they would have normally been cycled out of those calls much sooner. Shannon recognized Rural Metro Firefighters as ferocious firefighters who attain a higher level of work ethic and capacity than the average automatic aid employee is required to have. Fire Chief Shannon reiterated, the reason for him putting a pause on the Mutual Aid Agreement, was to relook at how our Mutual Aid partner, Rural Metro, staffs their equipment and cycles their personnel.

Chairperson Hine affirmed that the data that Chief Shannon accumulated and the regression analysis that he performed over the last three (3) years, was based on his experience in Cave Creek, not Carefree. Adding, Cave Creek is a community that prior to

December 2021, had no fire service, and was by subscription. Clarifying, the Town of Carefree however, who has a long history of having a fire service, does not rely on the day-to-day reliance of Mutual Aid partners. Concluding that Chief Shannon extrapolated from experience more broadly with other areas not specific to the Town of Carefree. Ms. Hine acknowledged the level of service that Rural Metro has provided the Carefree community for over 50 years and asked that we never stop honoring Rural Metro's service and contribution, while now having to deal with realities, on the ground, political and otherwise, that force us to come up with a different way forward.

Committee Member Burns and Rural Metro Fire Chief Gilbert asked Scottsdale Fire Chief Shannon point blank, is Scottsdale Fire Department and the City of Scottsdale interested in partnering with Carefree? Adding, if Scottsdale is not interested in reaching an agreement with the Town of Carefree to staff our Fire Department, that would be helpful to know now.

Chief Shannon replied, Daisy Mountain would be a smarter partner for both geographic reasons and continuity of services. As far as Scottsdale partnering with Carefree there is expressed concern surrounding the cost associated when going with a partner like Scottsdale. Chief Shannon shared information regarding another Automatic Aid partner option, the Arizona Fire Medical Authority, which has a service delivery capacity, but does not have the geographic continuity.

Rural Metro Fire Chief, Tim Soule commended the Committee for their hard work. Chief Soule challenges the fact that the only way to work with Rural Metro was to disintegrate the current Mutual Aid agreement. Being new, Chief Soule has had no discussions regarding levels of service, liabilities or gifting clauses and hopes to communicate with Chief Shannon to discuss these important issues. To ensure not only the safety of Rural Metro's personnel, but the safety of the citizens of Carefree that Rural Metro serves.

Chief Soule declared, he is more than willing and encourages discussions that would allow Rural Metro to address any concern as to how they provide services or the staffing of those services. For example, if the issue is 4 person engines, Rural Metro will staff 4 person engines. In conclusion, Chief Soule hopes to have conversations prior to some of these large decisions being made rather than after the fact.

Chief Soule declared, he is committed to making sure that Rural Metro will do what is needed according to Scottsdale Fire Chief Shannon and the Automatic Aid system, to meet those requirements.

Chief Soule responded to questions regarding staff turnover, explaining, there is turnover, but no differently than other fire departments. Noting, all Rural Metro fighters meet the same NFPA requirements as every municipal fire fighter in the state, as well as the country. In addition, Rural Metro has made offers to become a part of the training grounds and academies that are being offered through the automatic aid system and contribute financially to do so.

Chief Soule concluded, Rural Metro is a Public Safety organization, their heart and why for their existence is to serve the public and protect the citizens as well as the areas that we serve in the unincorporated areas of Arizona because the State of Arizona chose not to make that an essential government service. Concluding, if Rural Metro was not here, there would be areas that would not have any service whatsoever.

Committee Member Burns presented via PowerPoint; context and overview of the final Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendation Report that was approved at the

January 05, 2022, PSAC meeting. The Committee has since been presented with suggested amendments to consider, modifying the approved report. The group reviewed the proposed amendments and collaborated to finalize the Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendation Report in preparation for presentation to Town Council at the joint workshop in February.

Committee Member Wilke **MOVED TO APPROVE** the full amended Public Safety Advisory Committee Recommendation Report, with the addition of the prior recommendations in the appendix, notated to include why it exists there. In the recommendation, adding the reference that property tax is on the table as part of a forward financial strategy. **SECONDED** by Committee Member Burns.

Chairperson Hine opened public comment.

Committee Member Amoroso provided clarification to comments and questions from Mr. John Mattes regarding Town of Carefree finances, and the implementation of a property tax. Mr. Mattes stated that Cave Creek did not need a property tax.

Member Amorosa responded to Mr. Mattes, explaining that is not necessarily true. Cave Creek is starting without a property tax and it's uncertain if they may need to implement one down the road. In Committee Member Amoroso's 30+ year career managing municipal bond assets, Ms. Amoroso has seen time and time again, state, and local governments, putting expense items into their budgets without having a way to pay for them and getting themselves into trouble, running deficits and deficits because they didn't do the right thing at the very beginning. Committee Member Amoroso concluded, although a property tax may be unpopular, budget sustainability is critical. Cautioning, if there is a budget crisis in the next recession, we have a community crisis and we cannot use reserves and leave ourselves in a position of weakness.

Mr. Daniel XXX raised questions regarding the 1-year time frame to transition to automatic aid. Town Administrator Neiss responded, indeed there are challenges with that time frame and why originally the Public Safety Advisory Committee was looking at a transition period of 3-5 years. Explaining that this would have allowed the Town to yield some of the successes in Economic Development that Town Council is trying to cultivate, which would have offset the need for a property tax. Mr. Neiss agreed, yes, 1 year is an aggressive timeframe.

The **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

**ITEM #3**      **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m.

DATED this 21st day of January 2022.

By: *Samantha Gesell*  
Samantha Gesell, Planning Clerk

APPROVED:  
February 15, 2022