

# Fire district minutes delivered after records request

By R.J. Marx  
Cannon Beach Gazette

Meeting minutes from the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District Board shed little light on the firing of Mike Balzer as fire chief.

"This is strictly business, not personal," Director Gary Smith said at the board's October meeting.

After reasons for the chief's dismissal were not immediately released and the board minutes were withheld, the firing resulted in outrage from those who

felt the announcement was "in poor taste."

After the Cannon Beach Gazette submitted a state public records request, all 2015 meeting minutes were delivered last week.

According to the Oct. 12 meeting minutes, in announcing the dismissal of the chief, Smith said, "There was an expectation that (Balzer) would learn the job and improve and follow through in working with the board as a partner, not a manager."

Members voted 4-1 to terminate Balzer's employ-

ment as of that night, based on his "lack of improved performance for his job over the last three years."

President Sharon Clyde said there "has been friction" between Balzer and firefighters.

Board members Linda Beck-Sweeney, Mark Mekenas, Smith and Clyde voted for the dismissal.

In voting to maintain Balzer, board member Bob Cerelli said "he has not seen" any problems with Balzer and the other firefighters.

Board members asked

Balzer to return his keys and the fire district's phone once he retrieved information he needed from it.

The next morning, Balzer was locked out of his office. At the board's November meeting, members of the public took the board to task for Balzer's firing.

Community member Erik Meyer said the board should have placed Balzer on administrative leave for transparency and given him a chance "to save face."

"He has been a respected member of this fire depart-

ment for more years than any of us can remember," community member Alaina Giguere said. "And, truly, for you guys to terminate him in the manner that you did is disgusting and disrespectful and reprehensible. And I think you owe him and all of us a complete apology."

Smith said Balzer was given the chance to resign or retire. The board gave Balzer multiple opportunities and presented him with a time frame in June, "so he wasn't just suddenly ousted

out of the fire department," Smith said.

Assistant Chief Frank Swedenborg was initially appointed interim chief, but Swedenborg, who is ready to retire, stepped aside for an outside interim appointee, Jim Stearns.

Stearns, of Hermiston, spent 31 years — 20 as chief — with Hermiston Fire and Emergency Services.

The district board is scheduled to meet Monday, Jan. 11, at 6 p.m., 188 W. 2nd Second St. in Cannon Beach.

## CANNON BEACH POLICE LOG

### Dec. 13

**12:31 a.m.** Wayside Tolovana: Camping within city limits. Subjects warned for unlawful lodging.

**1:40 a.m.** Second Street Restrooms: Camping within city limits. Subjects warned for unlawful lodging.

**1:17 p.m.** 700 Block North Hemlock: Domestic argument determined to be civil in nature.

**1:42 p.m.** 1300 Block Hemlock: Assistance rendered. Cable cord was disconnected from a power pole. The cable company was contacted and a cone was placed by the cable.

### Dec. 15

**12:08 a.m.** Block East Jackson St.: Assist other agency. Officers responded to a medic alert signal with a request for police response. Call ultimately determined to be medical and EMS was dispatched. Senior Services and CBH will be notified due to officer's concern.

**1:07 a.m.** Hills Lane: Welfare check. Report of male lying in the grass next to the roadway. Male was gone before arrival. Unable to locate.

**12:56 p.m.** Hemlock: Welfare check. Report of an elderly lady wandering on Hemlock, reporting party was unsure if she was lost. Officers unable to locate.

### Dec. 16

**2:58 p.m.** 100 Block East Gower: Property found.

**3:26 p.m.** Silver Point, Property found: Found wallet turned in to police department. Returned to owner.

### Dec. 18

**4:45 p.m.** 200 Block N Spruce: Property found. Found prescription glasses.

**5:20 p.m.** North entrance: Motor vehicle accident. Report of a one-vehicle collision, vehicle rolled off roadway and down in to ravine. Found vehicle and directed fire department and Medix personnel to vehicle then provided traffic control.

**5:35 p.m.** Highway/viewpoint: Suspicious circumstances. Received a report of suspicious activity, truck parked next to spray paint on guard rail. Delayed response due to priority call. Checked area, spray paint was not new.

**9:31 p.m.,** Highway 101 N. Entrance: Assist other agent. Backed up Clatsop County Sheriff's Office with traffic stop. Unsure why case was given.

### Dec. 17

**12:48 a.m.** 5000 Block Underhill Road: Suspicious circumstances. EMS Call- Reported heavily intoxicated male with erratic breathing. Arrived and found Clatsop County Sheriff's Office already on scene, home owner advised this was becoming a trespass issue. Deputy advised.

**8:25 a.m.,** Block Beach St. Missing

person. Report of missing person, later located by family.

**1:55 p.m.,** 1400 Block South Spruce St.: Assist other agent. Officer checked the residence, no answer.

**2:32 p.m.** East Sunset Blvd Exit: Traffic complaint. Report of septic truck in wrong lane of traffic on the exit towards Elk Creek Road, near encounter with a bus, no accident, officer unable to locate offending vehicle.

**6:23 p.m.** Pacific/Hemlock. Assistance rendered. Report of water coming up from under roadway. Checked area and found that due to heavy rain, excessive rain water was bubbling up from man hole cover.

**8:51 p.m.** Sunset /Hemlock: Suspicious circumstances.

**10:08 p.m.** 100 Block East Gower: Property found. During patrol returned to Cannon Beach Police Department to find a key ring hanging on door. Returned to owner.

### Dec. 18

**12:58 p.m.** Highway 101: Assist other agency. Assisted Clatsop County Sheriff's Office on traffic stop with warrant arrest. K9

**sniff. No alert.**

**1:48 p.m.** 900 Block South Hemlock

**Suspicious circumstances. Officer saw open door on a business and checked premises.** It was

an employee.

### Dec. 19

**12:25 a.m.** 500 Block Lea Way: Assist other agent. Assisted Seaside Police Department and Seaside Fire and Rescue with house fire.

**2:39 a.m.** 2700 Block Pacific: Emergency medical response. As-

sisted Cannon Beach Fire Rescue with medical call at the Stephanie Inn. Patient was transported to Providence Seaside Hospital.

**2:09 p.m.** 1600 Block S Spruce St.: Assistance rendered.

**Assisted citizen with entry to residence.**

**4:32 p.m.** 200 Block North Hemlock: Property found. Found key fob on beach turned in. Owner located and item returned to owner.VM

**5:51 p.m.** Ecola State Park: Assist other agent. Officer located and gave a courtesy ride to a lost citizen.

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