

LEWIS MAY STEP DOWN FROM FIRE DISTRICT LEADERSHIP POST

Patti Lewis has disclosed that health issues may force her resignation as Chairman of the Board of the Hualapai Valley Fire District (HVFD). Her announcement came during the March 9 meeting of the Board.

“I’ve have three heart attacks and they’re going to do open heart surgery,” Lewis said. “I don’t know whether to resign or just tell you I’m going to be gone for a little while, but I’ll know more on the 29th of March.”

Lewis’ remarks came during a meeting in which the HVFD Board postponed actions on the appeals of Jeff Campbell and Oscar Lopez of their terminations by Fire Chief Wayne Eder. An independent appeals board conducted a full day of hearings on the dismissal appeals on February 15.

The appeals board essentially affirmed the firing of Lopez but has urged the HVFD Board to overturn Chief Eder’s firing of Campbell. HVFD Board member Ed Schrum said he felt it best to put the appeals matter on hold until the Board can review transcripts of the appeals proceeding.

Lewis said it would take time to review the transcripts because the appeal hearings lasted an entire day.

“I understand you have to have your information, but it’s affecting people’s lives,” said Porter Williams, urging the HVFD to expedite the appeals matter. “If you have to have a special meeting, I would say have a special meeting.”

Professional Firefighter’s Association Union President Robert Borker agreed with Williams. “Two lives are hanging in the balance,” Borker said.

Borker said the Union “will not rest” until the HVFD Board properly addresses personnel issues. He said he saw that Eder said in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper that high turnover is commonplace in rural fire districts.

But Borker challenged HVFD members to check with other Fire Departments in the area to see if their personnel turnover is anywhere near the level that the HVFD has experienced in four years under Chief Eder. Lewis said HVFD Board members can’t engage in a dialogue with Borker since Campbell, Lopez and four other firefighters have filed a wrongful termination lawsuit against the District.

“It’s not that we don’t want to respond to you, we can’t at this time,” Lewis said. “We do have responses but we have to save that for the federal court.”