

Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 11, 2017
6:30pm

Board members present: Weinsoff, Shortall, Reed, Finn, McInerney, Brekhus, Kuhl

Greene absent

Staff Present: Toy, Chinn, Donery, Meagor, Stasiowski, Grasser, Lewis

Board requests and staff miscellaneous items: Acting Chief Meagor gave a report on the OES engine that is staffed with two RVFD personnel and two MCFD personnel at the Atlas fire. They have been on the line since being dispatched. RVFD has up staffed our Type 3 engine. Most, if not all, departments have increased their staffing in order to protect the County. The fires are very little contained as of tonight. Issues facing the fire crews are lack of resources, fire conditions, and weather conditions. President McInerney asked if there was something the community could do to raise funds for the victims of the fires. Our Fire Inspector, as of today, still has his home however he is still in the active fire area. Chief Welch from Mill Valley FD lost his home while evacuating his neighbors.

Consent Agenda: M/S Weinsoff/Reed to approve consent agenda. All ayes. Reed abstained 2B, Peter Laques in place of Reed.

Volunteer Firefighter Assistance Grant – Acting Chief Meagor presented the staff report and explained the grant and the fiscal impact. The funds are in the equipment budget line item. M/S Kuhl/Brekhus. All ayes.

Suppression Volunteer Firefighter Program – Captain Oscar Arenas presented the staff report and explained the changes that we have identified that need to be updated and changed within the program. The changes will streamline the process for paying them \$120 per shift. Member Brekhus asked if legal opinion was obtained regarding how they are paid, etc. Captain Arenas responded that there was research into what their status is. Discussion ensued about whether legal counsel should be contacted to review the program. Staff will run this by legal counsel for a review to ensure it is. M/S to approve changes to the Suppression Volunteer pay, after review by legal counsel. Brekhus/Finn. All ayes

Discuss options for fire chief recruitment/shared services: Acting Chief Meagor presented the staff report and explained the background of discussions in the past during mergers. He asks that everyone keeps an open mind and he believes that all options are on the table. Staff would like feedback and questions and concerns from each agency. The board will need to reach an agreement and come to conclusion. We need to move slowly in order to move fast, so that we can do the due diligence while continuing to move forward. Acting Chief Meagor explained the example organizational chart and what agency the positions would be employed by. He then went on to report on the discussions the he has had with Kentfield and Marin County FD. Both agencies are interested in the shared services model. He explained the two agencies and their unique characteristics. Where Kentfield is a single station agency, Marin County FD is part of the county system. Discussion ensued regarding the differences between the two departments.

What does the board envision in the long term of RVFD? Are we looking at future mergers, staying as a stand-alone department with a shared services chief? Concerns about the timeline

and that it needs to be established at some point. There are a number of items that need to be addressed and what is the best path to move forward. Member Finn asked if maybe freeing up some "bandwidth" operationally to relieve some administrative functions with a shared services agreement. He doesn't believe that shared services would change the culture or influence the culture of the department. He likes the idea to have someone to turn to for administrative support. He doesn't want to have the next chief to leave in the same way that the previous chief did and doesn't want to see someone come in who is at the end of their career and leave in a few years and we would have to go through the process again. Acting Chief Meagor asked what would be the expectations from the board and councils for that chief. Member Kuhl asked if Chief Weber, if decided on MCFD, would be the Chief of the department. Acting Chief Meagor explained that yes, he would be the Fire Chief and then there would be Deputy Chief to deal with more of the administrative functions. Member Shortall suggested that both chiefs be asked to come in to make a "pitch" to the board and show what it would look like with either department. Acting Chief Meagor responded that we aren't at that point yet. There would need to be a workshop to determine what the board's expectation of the fire chief is.

President McInerney understands bringing in an administrative chief to do schedule, etc. but does have concerns about having a "part time" chief. There would be some expectations of the chief to attend council meetings, be part of the community, and have level of leadership that the community has come to expect. Member Kuhl agreed with what President McInerney said and would we get the level of attention from the chief that the board would want. What are the differences fiscally/financially, how many residents do they serve, would need data to make a decision. Member Shortall asked what employees MCFD has – they have approximately 80-90. Member Finn stated that conceptually this is not a takeover of RVFD, but an agreement between agencies. Acting Chief Meagor responded that if it was decided to contract with MCFD, Chief Weber would be the fire chief, and the Deputy Chiefs would be responsible for administrative and operations. Executive Officer Toy spoke for the managers that while in discussions with Chief Weber; Chief Weber stated that he would be in RVFD for the first six months to get things going for the department. He believes that there should be a workshop to discuss out the expectations. Member Finn feels that it is a confidence builder to know that Chief Weber would be here to get things integrated. Member Kuhl asked if there would be cost savings in order to look into hiring additional staffing for the engines. Acting Chief Meagor responded that they are trying to get the fully burdened costs for the position. This would most likely not be a cost savings for the department. There are many differences between the workers compensation or finance, for example, and the way that RVFD and MCFD handle them.

Discussion ensued regarding the future of consolidations, mergers, etc. Member Weinsoff spoke on his time on the board that 12 years ago there were mergers and consolidations were not a popular idea, and now there are consolidations all throughout the county. Member Reed spoke that the department had a part time chief recently and that he agrees with Member Weinsoff point that consolidation. Often the talent pool would be reduced because of rate of pay and what the department has to offer. Member Finn stated that we have a lot going for us, board works well together, the department is fantastic, and there are a lot of good people here that could make this work. We are good where we are now and feel that this could help strengthen it. Member Kuhl asked if there had been any discussion as to what term of contract would be. It may be two to three years, if it doesn't work then how would the department get out of the agreement. BC Stasiowski has discussed this with the Chief and one of the biggest decisions that need to be made is what is the type of "touch" that the councils/board would like. Is it important for the Chief to be available/accessible to the towns on a daily basis? What meetings, events, would it be the chief would need to attend. Not a representative of the chief. Town Manager Chinn asked BC Stasiowski what he would like to see – he replied that he has a

lot of responsibilities could be taken on by an EMS Chief or other administrative tasks. He doesn't have an answer one way or another at this time. BC Grasser was asked the same question and he replied that most of his career was at Ross and the merger opened up opportunities. Does the board want to increase efficiencies, what does the board want for the future, being able to remove some responsibilities and have more time to devote to operational efficiency of the entire organization, there would be more personnel to spread the work out between. Depends on the touch and feel that the board wants and needs.

Lengthy discussion about what a public meeting/discussion/workshop would entail. It was decided to hold a forum at the next board meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, November 8th, 2017. The location of the meeting will be changed in order to accommodate a forum, discussion setting. The public, other council members and department staff will be encouraged to attend.

Meeting adjourned until November 8, 2017, location to be determined.

Minutes respectfully submitted,


JoAnne Lewis
Administrative Assistant