

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting of September 8, 2021

**1. 6:33 pm Call to order. Announce action in closed session, if any.**

**Board Present:** Hellman, Kuhl, Shortall, Finn, Goddard, Burdo.

**Board absent:** Greene, Brekhus

**Staff present:** Weber, Yeager, Cutter.

**Town Managers Present:** Politzer, Chinn, Donery.

**Agenda – September 8, 2021**

**2. Announce action from the closed session of the August 11, 2021, meeting.**

None

**3. Open time for Public Expression: The public is welcome to address the Board at this time on matters, not on the agenda. Please be advised that pursuant to Government Code Section 54954.2, the Board is not permitted to take action on any matter not on the agenda unless it determines that an emergency exists and that the need to take action arose following the posting of the agenda.**

None

**4. Board requests for future agenda items, questions, and comments to Staff, staff miscellaneous items.**

Dir. Goddard requested updates regarding Station 18 and SAFER Grant since the community and the Board have many questions. Dir. Kuhl asked if that can be referred to the Chief's report, and she responded that it could be, yet she would like something more detailed at some point.

**5. Chief Report – Verbal Update by Chief Weber**

**SAFER Grant:** Chief Weber reported that some agencies have been awarded; however, RVFD has not received one yet. But, if we do get selected, Staff will come back to the Board in a special meeting to discuss the grant. Chief Weber checks every Friday, and anyone is welcomed to check for updates directly from FEMA on their website since it is a public website under SAFE Grant 2021 awards.

**Station 18:** Chief Weber reported that the dialogue continues. As the Board knows, we have four options that are being looked at, and data analysis is in process for calls and associated impacts with either reducing the amount of engine companies or moving an engine company to a different station; a report will be provided to the Board at the next Board Meeting, so that the Town of Ross can move forwards with their planning. Further, RVFD met with the Ross Valley Paramedic Authority (RVPA) and with Labor to discuss the options. Additionally, we have a closed session tonight to cover some items related to labor negotiations.

Dir. Burdo ask what other data is being looked at. Chief Weber mentioned that at the moment we are looking at the standards of cover study, and two more recent years of simultaneous data. While the data seems accurate, it does not align with the results he was hoping for; therefore, we are doing a deeper analysis to ensure the information presented to the Board is accurate. Burdo asked if the labor meeting was with the Labor-Management Committee. Chief Weber responded that the meeting was with labor from the International Association of Firefighters Local 1775 and Ross Valley Fire Chief Officers Association. Burdo asked what members of the Board attended the meeting. Chief Weber responded that typically the Board does not participate in labor negotiations, so it was him and Deputy Director Yeager. Moreover, Chief Weber added that the RVFD Executive Team has been meeting regularly with the Management team, and Dir. Finn representing Sleepy Hollow to go over the different options.; and they make recommendations.

Dir. Goddard ask for a potential cost breakdown for the SAFER Grant positions should we get selected for the grant and decide to move forward with it. Further, Godard asked how coverage works for our area when the engine and staff are out of county helping other fires. What happens if we have a major fire here? Chief Weber responded that he would explain it when he covers the fire incidents on his report.

**Fire Incidents:** Chief Weber reported that as everyone is aware the Caldor and Dixie fire continue to be a challenge, and due to that we have had staff committed to helping for over 60 days. CALFire was not designed or staffed to cover these massive fires year after year. Moreover, Chief weber added that the Mutual Aid agreement consist of every agency helping other counties, because there might be a day where we need the resources from across the State, and we would never want to be in a position where we are not able to support each other. Thankfully, we have had a mild summer here in Marin, however, we are getting close to the dryer fall season. We are always looking at our protection levels and risks; therefore, when we send staff to cover the fires, we always have coverage for those positions. Regarding the engine, it is a type 3, for that we share those resources across the county, so when we send those to fires, we are looking at how many type 3's we have available in the area. Additionally, we are daily staffing the RVFD stations with the same number of engines, regardless of the type 3 engine being gone; this just requires that our personnel work more hours while still trying to find a balance, so we try to transition them from fires every two weeks to give them some rest. Also, while we have many agencies in the county, we operate as one. When there is a massive fire, it does not matter the jurisdiction; the same response level is given. For instance, last week, we had a fire in San Rafael- Marinwood, we had engines from different jurisdictions assisting, and resources were moved so that the stations were staffed at all times.

Dir. Finn asked if there was any evidence that the out of county assignments with long shifts and exhausting work puts us at a higher worker comp rate due to injuries? And what is the impact out of county injuries have staffing the stations? Chief Weber responded that he sits on the FASIS board as a RVFD representative which is our workers comp insurance company and that this year our workers comp rate went down and while we as a fire agency are not experiencing that, the fire service as a whole is. Further, he explained that the Department is responsible for the staff when they are out of county, so if we were to have any other agency assists us in a fire, their agency is responsible for them.

**MWPA:** Chief Weber reported that we are continuing the evacuation routes project; our operation staff and BCs have identified critical road in each of the JPA jurisdictions that need work and we are looking into zoning it in three different contractors for a fast completion. Moreover, we will be meeting with the Public Works Directors and Town Managers for the local projects. Additionally, a Project Manager shared with the County and Southern zone region was hired to manage all the projects in the area and hire contractors; and our goal is to finish the projects before the burning season—spring.

**Online Board Meetings:** The meetings will remain online until a better solution is found. San Anselmo’s Town Manager Dave Donery will let us use the Town Chambers for future hybrid meetings.

6. **Consent Agenda: Items on the consent agenda may be removed and discussed separately. Discussion may take place at the end of the agenda. Otherwise, all items may be approved with one action.**

No public comment concerning this item.

M/S Burdo/Goddard – roll call vote, six ayes, two absent.

7. **Approve Resolution 21-11 Amending Resolution 21-02 for the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Position.**

Chief Weber reported that the resolution was amended to include employee only health benefits since the last one did not have any, and we are hopeful we will find the right candidate to get onboard quick.

No public comment concerning this item.

M/S Burdo/Hellman – roll call vote, six ayes, two absent.

**8. Authorize the Purchase of one (1) Pierce All-Steer Type 1 Engine and Associated Fund Transfer.**

Deputy Director Fire Yeager stated that for this item we are asking for three things: (1) the purchase of one (1) new Pierce Manufacturing All-Steer Type 1 Fire Engine one year earlier on the fleet purchase plan; (2) authorizes the Fire Chief to negotiate the best financial package and to sign the associated purchase documents, not to exceed \$1,056,000 plus a 10% contingency; and (3) approve the transfer of \$250,000 from the unrestricted fund to the Fleet Fund. In regards to the requests, Yeager mentioned the Department has been using these trucks for a while due to the narrow roads and hills in the Ross Valley Area; this company has the patent for these types of trucks. Further, the engine we are seeking to replace is the oldest one we have, this one is due for replacement next year, but since it is out of service, it would cost around \$70k and would take six to nine months to be fixed; therefore, it is more cost efficient to replace it a year early. Unfortunately, we have a 09/30/21 dateline to submit all the paperwork or the price will go up. Regarding the \$250k transfer, Yeager added that during budget discussion in May and June, the Board was asked for this and now we are just asking for the transfer to be approved.

Dir. Kuhl asked if the old engine is inoperable at the moment and Yeager responded that it is not.

Dir. Goddard asked that since it is inoperable and we are waiting to get a new one, what are we doing without it? Chief Weber responded that since the county had recently replaced an engine, they have it in reserve and they are letting the Department borrow it.

Dir. Hellman asked to which station will the new engine we assigned to. Chief Weber responded that the reserved engine will be replaced by the next oldest engine which is engine 18, and it would go on reserve status; therefore, the new engine would go to station 18. Moreover, our current vehicle replacement cycle is fifteen years and reserve for five years; and the inoperable engine is nineteen years old. And the goal is to find the best available lease option for the replacement. Hellman asked how the negotiation works and if the engines are sold as is or if we select features and design. Chief Weber responded that most trucks are customized made due to the specific needs.

Dir. Burdo asked if we reported from the closed session from the previous meeting. Staff responded that the item was covered.

No public comment concerning this item.

M/S Burdo/Finn – roll call vote, six ayes, two absent.

**9. Receive Presentation on Defensible Space Program**

Defensible Space Lead Kathleen Cutter summarized her report and provided a brief presentation to the board. In 2019, 4,000 inspections were done by 10 inspectors; in 2020, measure c passed and 10,000 inspections were done by 16 inspectors; and for 2021, 10,784 inspections have been done, by 25 inspectors and the program will run through October. Cutter mentioned that we are

doing community outreach through press releases via the Towns, RVFD social media accounts, Firewise sites, and are connecting residents to all the available resources such as chipper days, Fairfax vegetation grants, FIREsafe Marin and RVFD. Additionally, Cutter mentioned that they are using a defensible space inspector (DSI) software that is in the beta stage; this software provides a detailed report that includes pictures for the inspections, and her team is available Monday to Thursday from 8 am to 6 pm. Further, the software allows for very specific data collection and it's connected to CALFire requirements and the data goes statewide.

Dir. Goddard thanked Cutter for the presentation and added that the inspection report is very helpful. Goddard asked how the information about the inspections gets released due to the bad PR regarding compliance since we are not doing follow up unless it is really necessary. Cutter responded that regarding compliance, our report would put someone out of compliance as an education tool, so that the resident can fix the issues, yet in our community, we have a very positive response, and that in most cases residences are out of compliance due to the CALFire requirements, and we are doing follow ups and second notices, and are collecting data. Goddard asked about the process when someone is not home, how are the inspections done? Cutter responded that the residents can send them an email authorizing the defensible space team to access their property, or a note by their gate granting permission; our priority is privacy and want to make sure the right people get the reports.

Dir. Hellman asked about the second notices. Cutter responded that a second inspection is done and the notice is given then if needed. Hellman mentioned that she just got her reported and it was very detailed. Additionally, Hellman suggested that to save time and resources, letters can be sent reminding people what the top priority issues are and to give them time to fix any non-compliance issues. Further, she asked if the new software is shortening the time spent with each inspection. Cutter responded that it can take from 5 minutes to an hour depending on how many questions the resident has. Hellman thanked Cutter for mentioning the Town of Fairfax vegetation grant and she mentioned that the eligibility was recently changed and If Cutter had that new information. Cutter responded that she has the new information.

Dir. Kuhl mentioned that his home was inspected about two or three years ago and that he understood that the software can determine what plants/trees need to be removed by taking pictures; and he would like to know what the process is. Cutter reported that the software does not work that way, yet the inspectors have been trained to identify any plants that have dying parts and should be removed.

Cutter added that by the end of this year, they should have met their goal not only for first inspections but for second inspections as well. And Kuhl added that it is a worthwhile program.

No public comment concerning this item

**10. Adjourn to Closed Session**

No public comment concerning this item.

Meeting adjourned.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 8, via zoom video conferencing.

Respectfully submitted,

s/Mariana Gonzalez  
Administrative Assistant