

ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting of January 12, 2022

Note: These are summary action minutes only. The zoom recording can be accessed by clicking [here](#)

1. 6:30 pm Call to order. Announce action in closed session, if any.

Board Present: Hellman, Kuhl, Shortall, Finn, Goddard, Burdo, Greene, Brekhus

Board absent:

Staff present: Weber, Yeager, Marinelli, Zuba, CPA Ahmed Badawi

Town Managers Present: Politzer, Donery, Johnson

Agenda – January 12, 2022

2. Open time for Public Expression: The public is welcome to address the Board 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

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

None.

No public comment concerning this item.

4. Chief Report – Verbal Update by Chief Weber

COVID Impacts with the Current Surge: Chief Weber reported that the surge is not having a high impact in hospitals or the pre-hospital system, and the Department impacts are tolerable. However, we have one employee out with covid, one working remotely, one out because of a child with covid, and three exposures working on-site with masks. The Staff is 100% vaccinated.

MWPA: Chief Weber reported that the core projects for the Greater Ross Valley area from last year were successfully completed. Additionally, the Defensible Space program is expanding, and he will talk more about it further down in the agenda. Finally, Chief Weber mentioned that the MWPA grant program is now open, and we will add some information on our website, but it is on the MWPA website.

FIRE Foundry Program: Chief Weber reported that this program would start on January 31, and they had about 70 applicants; five women and seven men were selected. For this program, a fuel crew will be doing vegetation management work, and it is a “earn to learn” program with a Monday to Thursday work schedule and through a partnership with UC Berkely, College of Marin, and Stanford; they will be in class on Fridays. Additionally, the participants will be housed at a retired firehouse in San Rafael, and food will also be provided.

Dir. Greene asked about the evacuation plan program and its delivery date. Chief Weber provided a summary of the process, and we could have some data in the next 12 months.

Dir. Hellman asked about the MWPA grant application process and who would manage it. Chief Weber provided some estimates and some information about the process, and we will add the MWPA link to the Department’s website for easy access, and it will be shared with the Towns to add to their newsletters.

Dir. Goddard asked for an update about the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Chief Weber responded that the scope of work is not changing, and the candidate is completing the onboarding process, and once the candidate starts, he will introduce them to all stakeholders.

Dir. Shortall mentioned that information about grants could be found on the FIRESafe Marin website and the MWPA website. Additionally, he noted that they are working on a webinar that will go over all the grants available for the Marin County area.

No public comment concerning this item.

5. **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.**

M/S Burdo/Brekhus – roll call vote, all ayes.

No public comment concerning this item.

6. Appoint President and Vice President to the Board for 2022 – Chief Weber

Dir. Greene, Hellman, and Brekhus thanked Staff for the board packet presentation and the links added to the agenda.

Chief Weber thanked Dir. Greene for his leadership, time, and energy over the last year. Moreover, he mentioned that the two positions rotate between the four JPA members in previous years, and if the previous rotation is followed, then Dir. Kuhl should be appointed president, and a Fairfax member is set to vice-president.

Dir. Brekhus asked if the Fairfax members had submitted letters of interest. Dir. Hellman responded that she had not discussed it with Dir. Goddard, but she would defer to Goddard, who has more tenure on the Board. Goddard answered that she would be honored to serve as vice-president.

Dir. Greene thanked everyone for their thoughtful and diligent participation throughout this challenging year. Further, he added that it was an honor to serve as the president. Brekhus, Burdo, and Kuhl thanked Greene for his leadership.

M/S Brekhus/Burdo – roll call vote, all ayes.

No public comment concerning this item.

7. Approve Resolutions 22-02 & 22-03 for the Position and Compensation Package for the Wildfire Mitigation Specialist - Defensible Space Lead I & II

Chief Weber provided details about the Defensible Space Program, the Defensible Space Lead I & II role, and why the two other limited-term fixed positions are being added (Defensible Space Lead I). MWPA funds all three positions.

Dir. Goddard asked about the jurisdictions. Chief Weber responded provided a list of Fire Departments (Central Marin FD, Kentfield FD, RVFD, and MCFD).

Dir. Burdo added that funding these positions is a priority for MWPA and the voters who voted to create the MWPA.

M/S Greene/Burdo – roll call vote, all ayes.

No public comment concerning this item.

8. Accept the Annual Audited Basic Financial Statement for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, prepared by Badawi & Associates, Certified Public Accountants

***For detailed information regarding this item, please refer to the zoom video recording and staff report. ***

San Anselmo Finance Director Jeff Zuba thanked his team for their work during the audit, and he summarized the staff report. In addition, Zuba introduced the new audit partner (Badawi & Associates) for FY2020-21.

CPA Ahmed Badawi summarized the financial statements and their findings. First, Badawi stated that there were no significant audit adjustments, risks, or exposures. They issued an “unmodified opinion,” which means a clean opinion and the best one an agency can get. Second, Badawi compared assets and liabilities over the past three years. Further, the three-year comparison showed that the Department’s ability to operate with no revenue and use the current fund balance is three months. Lastly, Badawi mentioned that they did not have any significant adjustments, and they did not become aware of any instances of fraud or illegal acts.

Dir. Greene thanked Badawi for a detailed and clear presentation. Next, Greene asked about the outflow to pensions and reserves; he would like to know if there is a risk by staying current on the pension liability while going low in reserves. Badawi responded that there is some risk, that if the Department continues to have revenues and excessive expenditures and pensions, more is added to the fund balance building more reserve balance and the revenues stopped. Therefore, the fund balance would be gone pretty quickly.

Dir. Hellman asked about the out-of-county (OES) revenue; she would like to know how the budget is determined and the fires forecast. Chief Weber responded that the balance is not baselined. Instead, we make a mid-year adjustment to account for the additional expenses related to OES such as vehicles, overtime, workers comp, etc., and pay back the deficit.

Dir. Burdo that Yeager and Zuba for their work on the audit.

The Board accepted the report.

No public comment concerning this item.

9. Review of draft JPA Amendments related to Ross Fire Station, provide direction to Staff

***For detailed information regarding this item, please refer to the zoom video recording and staff report. ***

Chief Weber said that the JPA amendments presented here are essentially the same as last month, and the Board requested more time to review. He also mentioned that Ross and San Anselmo did a walkthrough at sta19. Also, Chief Weber said that Staff had not received any request for changes or additional questions. Therefore, the Staff asks for direction to start distributing the amendment to the four JPA member agencies for approval for this item. Once the entire group has adopted the changes, they will be ratified.

Dir. Goddard and Hellman asked if all member agencies’ legal counsel had the opportunity to review the documents. Chief Weber responded that all legal counsels had reviewed the documents before last month’s meeting and that the extension was so that all Board members could review it as well. Interim Fairfax Town Manager Adam Politzer added that legal counsel had reviewed it and provided comment.

Dir. Greene asked Brekhus if she was okay with the draft since she had requested additional time to review it. Brekhus responded that she was.

No action other than providing direction is needed from the Board.

M/S Greene/Burdo – roll call vote, all ayes

No public comment concerning this item.

After the motion, Goddard asked about the council voting process. Chief Weber responded that it is based on the voting procedures for each member agency council.

10. Receive Report on Opening of the FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program Application due February 4, 2022, Direct Staff as Appropriate

Chief Weber said that the SAFER Grant had been an ongoing discussion and the dateline to apply is February 4, 2022, and he provided a background for the grant. Chief Weber said that if the Board decided to apply and it was awarded, then the Board, before accepting it, would have to discuss ways to continue funding the positions after the grant funds are finished.

Dir. Kuhl asked if we could withdraw the application if, at some point, it was decided that additional funding was not doable. Chief Weber responded that we could, which we did last year since there is no harm in rejecting the grant. Additionally, the Staff would discuss with the labor subcommittee and provide financial data to the Board for further analysis.

Dir. Burdo asked what surrounding agencies had applied and were granted the funds. Chief Weber provided names of the ones he knew of, and MCFD was one of them. Burdo agreed with Kuhl about applying and asked if we had reached out to the FEMA office to find out why we were not awarded the grant. Chief Weber responded that we had not but would gladly do it should the Board directed Staff.

Dir. Hellman asked about the response time after the grant is awarded and if the grants are recurring. Chief Weber responded that we have 30 days to respond and that the SAFER grant has been around for at least ten years. Hellman mentioned that if we were to apply, the Board would have about five to six months to plan. Chief Weber responded that the timeline was correct, but the FEMA response time is never the same, so the dates are estimates.

Dir. Goddard supports applying but asked if there is some available funding to hire temporary hires.

Dir. Green asked the Board if they agree to aggressively look at and examine what they would do to fund the positions after the grant is finished, assuming the grant is awarded.

Dir. Brekhus said that each agency needs to analyze its funding and its capacity to provide future funding responsibly. Brekhus and Burdo agreed with Greene about making this a priority.

Dir. Goddard, Hellman, and Brekhus asked for a financial analysis to take back to their respective council. Chief Weber responded that the analysis would be provided to the labor-management subcommittee to return to their council.

M/S Greene/Goddard– roll call vote, all ayes

Chief Weber asked President Kuhl to think about who he would like to appoint to the labor-management subcommittee; it was decided to make it Brown Act compliant, requiring one member from each agency.

Dir. Hellman announced that the Town of Fairfax had hired their new Town Manager; her name is Heather Abrams, and she will start on March 1.

11. Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for February 9, via zoom video conferencing.

Respectfully submitted,

s/Mariana Gonzalez
Administrative Assistant