

ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting of March 9, 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

Town Managers Present: Abrams, Donery, Johnson

Agenda – March 9, 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.

Dir. Hellman introduced new Fairfax Town Manager Heather Abrams. Town Manager Abrams introduced herself.

Dir. Shortall would like to add an agenda item regarding the future of the organization of RVFD such as mergers. He would like to discuss it at the next meeting and would like Sleepy Hollow to be involved in the process from the start.

Dir. Goddard asked about programs such as the goats and sheep's, inspections, etc. as we get close to fire season.

No public comment concerning this item.

4. Chief Report – Verbal Update by Chief Weber

MWPA: Chief Weber reported that most of the core projects have been completed and those projects included evacuations. Also, we will start working on local projects and the FY22-23 MWPA projects are being planned now. Further, the DSpace program will start on April 4, but the inspectors will be trained first and then, they will do the inspections.

Emergency Preparedness Coordinator: Chief Weber said that Miller, the Emergency Coordinator, has reached out to some of the Towns, and the goal is to bring a strategic plan in June and have it developed by September.

RVFD/MCFD Shared Service Agreement: Chief Weber reported a five-year shared service agreement that started in 2018 will expire in August 2023 to be effective and allow the Board to make informed decisions. Staff will present some options at the next meeting similar to what was done for Ross/sta18.

Dir. Greene asked about the vegetation management project in Lake Lagunitas; he mentioned that he learned from some professional points of view that the fire risk is more severe due to all the road clearance. Greene asked if Chief Weber was aware of the opinions and, if so, how is he approaching them. Chief Weber mentioned a recent IJ editorial, and though there are some points where he agrees, such as the 100ft defensible space, he strongly disagrees that changing the vegetation makes the fire risk higher, and it has been contested statewide. Further, Chief Weber mentioned that MWPA is working on a response. Dir. Greene asked about the vegetation disposal process, and Chief Weber explained how it is done and what factors are considered for best practices.

In regards to Greene's question, Dir. Shortall said that he read the articles produced by Chad Hanson, who does not have a background in wildfire science. Further, Shortall reached out to true wildfire experts, and Hanson is distributing the wrong information.

Dir. Burdo added that MWPA has been discussing this and has a similar response to what Chief Weber said. Burdo mentioned that Todd Lando created a 3D presentation addressing the issue, and Burdo could share it with the Board.

Dir. Brekhus said that the Board should not be having full discussions on items not on the agenda.

Fairfax resident Jody Timms said she is in contact with the new Emergency Coordinator, and she appreciates it. She also said that her household was awarded an MWPA grant for defensible space work done in her yard.

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 Greene/Burdo – roll call vote, all ayes.

No public comment concerning this item.

6. **Receive Report on Homeowners Insurance non-renewals & cancelation – Chief Weber**

Chief Weber summarized the staff report regarding insurance cancellations, which is becoming a bigger issue. He added that the staff report provides some resources, which are also posted on the RVFD [website](#). Chief Weber mentioned that there are some steps one should follow, and the first one is to get the insurance to reverse their decision. And the second one is to contact one's local fire agency to do an inspection, and if the home meets the requirement, the Department can write a letter stating that they meet the requirements. When choosing a fire insurance company, one should ensure the company can cover the cost.

Dir. Burdo asked if staff could do a community workshop to give an overview of this item. Chief Weber mentioned a couple options and he will reach out to MWPA and FIRESafe Marin for assistance. Additionally, Burdo asked if Chief Weber was aware of any legislative bills addressing the 75-day notice and possibly extending it. Chief Weber responded that he is not aware but would look into it.

Dir. Shortall mentioned that FIRESafe Marin did a webinar about insurance and brought in experts and they are several videos that cover the topic and are happy to host another webinar.

Dir. Brekhus said that RVFD is doing such a great job helping homeowners with inspections, but we do need to have a plan in place and perhaps, if everyone agrees, the Board could write a letter addressing the severity of this issue.

Dir. Kuhl asked the Board if anyone would like to reach out to the two candidates for insurance commissioner to try to get them involved. Greene and Brekhus volunteered to do it.

No public comment concerning this item.

Dir. Goddard asked about consent agenda item 5f regarding annual inspections. She would like to know why only schools, apartment buildings, residential care facilities, etc. are required to be inspected and not the public buildings. Chief Weber responded that we are required under state law to report on specific occupancies; however, we inspect all businesses within the Greater Ross Valley, but only certain occupancies get reported.

7. Announce adjournment to Closed Session

No public comment concerning this item.

8. Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for April 13, via zoom video conferencing.

Respectfully submitted,

s/Mariana Gonzalez
Administrative Assistant