

ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting of October 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: Brekhus, Kuhl, Greene, Burdo, Goddard, Hellman

Board absent: Shortall, Finn

Staff present: Weber, Zuba, Black, Mahoney, Arenas

Town Managers Present: Donery, Johnson, Abrams

Agenda – October 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.

Director Kuhl queried if the Board will be recommencing in-person meetings.

Per Chief Weber, hybrid board meetings will commence at the Boards discretion. Options will be discussed at the next Town Managers Meeting, then brought back at the upcoming Board Meeting November 9, 2022. Currently the law allows Board Meetings to continue in video conferencing form.

No public comment concerning this item.

4. Chief Report – Verbal Update by Chief Weber

Bald Hill Vegetation Management Project:

Cal Fire Grant and Camp De Marancho will work over the next 5 months with project scoping well underway. Cedars in the triangle of San Rafael, San Anselmo and the County unincorporated is a superb example of jurisdictional boundaries not being the driver for vegetation management projects.

Marin Municipal Water District:

Making plans on the watershed for a prescribed fire on test plots (30 acres) to burn in timber. This will require a little bit of rain, followed by a dry period, with predicted rain ahead of it in order to have a successful burn.

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 / Greene – roll call vote, 6 ayes.

6. **Update on Leadership and Governance Study – Verbal Update by Chief Weber**

Local Motion Solutions (LMS) have completed interviewing stakeholders. Protentional options are currently being assessed to provide the Board a high level of costing and the operational impact. The project is currently on track. After exploring options and gathering data LMS will present the Board with a thorough presentation. The timing is such that a December Board Meeting will be required to discuss the options and data.

Director Hellman made a request to hold the Board Meeting on December 14, 2022.

Chief Webber added, there may be a workshop if extra time is required.

Director Greene asked for a description of Local Motion Solutions next steps.

Chief Webber explained that LMS will meet with stakeholders, gather basic information, then identify potential options. In phase two the potential options will be reviewed.

- 1- Standalone fire chief
- 2- Shared services with a neighboring agency
- 3- Contract for services
- 4- Others that live within that realm

LMS are currently assessing associated costs and operational impacts, both beneficial and detrimental.

Director Greene confirmed that in December the Board will receive a written presentation detailing what was presented to the Board at the previous Board meeting in September.

Burdo verified that LMS is on track in regards to the timeline.

Chief Weber explained that LMS is on track for November and prepared to go into December if required.

No public comment concerning this item.

7. **Notice of contract termination from Marin County Sheriff's Office related to fire dispatch services; Recommendation: Receive report from Fire Chief and Direct staff. – Fire Chief Weber**

It is required that law enforcement answer the first emergency call in every county of California, known as the Public Service Answering Point (PSAP). PSAP then determines if the call is a fire, medical or law enforcement emergency. PSAP will then transfer the call to the correct dispatching agency. Marin County has the four following police departments (PSAP): Novato, San Rafael, Fairfax (answers for Ross as well) and Marin County Sherriff.

County fire related calls are transferred to one of two fire service-related centers, the Marin County Sheriff's office or Marin County Fire in West Marin. Marin County Fire dispatches for Marin County Fire and volunteer agencies on the coast. Through the Cal Fire contract, Ross Valley Fire manages wild land fire dispatch within California state responsibility areas. Marin County towns do not participate.

Key point: 4 dispatch centers, 2 fire dispatch centers.

Historically Marin County towns handled their own fire dispatch. 25 years ago, the Marin County Sheriff began to oversee fire dispatch. Over the past 5-7 years fire agencies have been looking at alternatives for dispatch to improve services. The following are examples of the differences between Fire and Law Enforcement dispatch; Law – running license plates, domestic issues or a robbery; Fire – a medical incident, CPR pre-arrival instructions or taking aspirin for a heart attack. Advanced emergency medical procedures pose as a challenge in a dispatcher's ability to be knowledgeable in both settings.

A study has been conducted with Sonoma County and Marin County conducted a study to see if it would behoove them to combine all resources under one roof. Providing fire and EMS services on a regional level is thought to create a scale of economy and depth in the system.

Sonoma County fire dispatch utilizes a private ambulance company. Recent legislature does not allow fire agencies and private ambulance companies to enter into new agreements for public safety dispatching fire and EMS.

In the study dispatch provider American Medical Responses offered services at a built-in profit margin. The cost is similar to a JPA with predicted issues to arise. Due to SP4-38 and recent legislature it is a violation of the law for private ambulances to cross the county jurisdiction.

The preferred option is JPA because there is ownership in the system. Most fire agencies prefer contracting out services out of convenience due to difficulties in creating a JPA, such as growing unfunded liabilities. A cost analysis can be found in the Staff Report.

Both options increase costs, nonetheless come with enhancements and opportunities to improve public safety. The exact percentage increase can be located in the staff report.

Town Managers have been made aware and the board does not have to take action just yet. This is merely informational allowing time to understand and ask questions before making a decision. Recommendations will be presented to the Board. Chief Weber asked the other fire agencies for their questions, concerns and wishes by Dec 1, 2022. It will take time to develop a CAD system and such. The Sheriff is willing to share systems but wants to separate operations, staffing and functions.

Director Brekhus questioned if the Ross - Fairfax dispatch center can be utilized for fire.

Heather explained that Ross – Fairfax dispatch do not have the bandwidth to expand services.

Burdo asked which CAD service RVFD are planning to use.

Chief Webber explained that the multimillion-dollar Hexagon CAD system will be utilized by sharing the system and costs.

Director Goddard stated a collaboration would be the ultimate goal.

Chief Weber explained the importance of sharing costs with design and development as well.

Director Goddard verified the number of supervisor/dispatchers required and cost.

Chief Weber stated there would be 12 dispatchers. Chief Webber used the same costing formula as the Sheriff's office. The elevated cost is due to the need for additional staff, 4 more supervisor positions, a technical manager and a director. Under the JPA model proposal the JPA will become the employer.

Director Goddard queried if going forward the Sherriff will continue managing Alert Marin.

Chief Weber stated that the county will move Alert Marin services under fire. Around January 1, 2022 County Fire will oversee Emergency Services. Additionally, County Fire will add on 3 Captains who will work 24-7 to ensure operational consistency and safety.

Director Burdo asked if the JPA option will require creating a new board?

Chief Weber confirmed that the JPA option will require an additional Board. The addition of a new Board may create challenges, such as both Boards agreeing to have a governess structure, voting structure and costing appointment. These are examples of why many agencies use contracted services and pay 10% more. Due to the many intricacies the Sheriff is willing to work with RVFD on timing.

Director Beach noted that it's challenging to find goo employees in a short amount of time.

Chief Weber explained the advantage with contracting out for fire dispatch services, affording the ability to transfer knowledge to dispatchers who want to focus on Fire and EMS Dispatching. This will take roughly 9 months to hire an Executive, 6 months to hire Management and many months to hire staff which is concerning.

Director Greene requested cost analysis clarification on page 5 of 7 regarding the contract for services amount increase. There was concern over weather there is sufficient funds in the budget and allotted time for executing the endeavor.

Director Kuhl stated that RVFD will have to take on a new form of JPA and Governess. These additions to the current Board will also have to discuss and approve the issue being weighed on today.

Director Goddard asked if any of the information provided require feedback from Town Council.

Chief Weber, Executive Director Donery and Director of Finance Zuba explained there would be a onetime cost estimate of \$129k plus the annual increase of costs of \$90K equaling to \$223k for the first year. The continuing annual cost would be the increase of \$90k plus the baseline. As of now the cost would be \$94k more than the organization is currently paying in which 40% of is paid for by the town. This would equal to \$38k being covered by savings. The team is very couscous about the cost which is based on the usage of the dispatch system regardless of the Governess Model. Additional details will be brought back at the November Board Meeting.

8. **Authorize Board President to execute first amendment to the MOU between the County of Marin Fire Department and the Ross Valley Fire Department, reducing the annual contract amount and implementing a cost covered Interim Deputy Chief position to support increased workload;**
Recommendation: Authorize Board President to execute an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Marin Fire Department and the Ross Valley Fire Department for Shared Services from the Marin County Fire Department to the Ross Valley Fire Department, Reducing the annual contract for fiscal year 2022-23 by \$125,000.

Chief Weber recently spoke with Town Managers and the County Administrator proposing an interim deputy chief. Adding this component will add depth with a lower lever step up. Adding this component will not come at the cost of Ross Valley Fire Fighters and the current contract will be followed through with. The County agreed in reducing the contractual amount by \$125k for the rest of the year allowing one Ross Valley Battalion Chief to work at a higher-level role. This individual will work with County Fire Executives during the transition period of the next 8 months. This is required to ensure a smooth transition period. This is cost neutral to the RVFD.

The role and responsibility will include daily operational tasks, making sure RVFD is responsive to the community and the Firefighters. The implementation plan being developed is well thought out. If the Board approves it would be effective at 11/1/22 through 6/30/23.

Director Burdo highlighted the \$125 reduction in cost for the backfill position due to the governess study. Concern was expressed regarding leadership details after June 30, 2023, when the Deputy Battalion Chief goes back to the original position. There was also concern over the new position affecting what Local Motion Solutions is considering.

Director Goddard was curious if there is an issue operationally with labor and how this would affect Firefighters operationally.

Director Greene requested additional information regarding the scope of the change. Whether the position will be using the management capacity provided. Director It was also asked for Chief Weber to quantify what the percent will be and the scope of services. There was concern over whether the Labor Boar is in full support with the endeavor. Lastly Director Greene requested the definition of the term "backfill".

Chief Webber explained that the position will be handled similarly to an employee who gets injured on the job, requiring they not return to work for 9 months. The position would be back filled, after 9 months the employee would return to their original position. This position is required because the volume of work will increase substantially over the next 8 to 9 months due to the transition. The position will safeguard any dropping balls, especially guaranteeing immediate response to the town managers and the public during the governess study of leadership. Ultimately providing support in building a thoughtful transition plan.

The labor board was concerned about the process. The labor board have agreed upon using all existing processes and procedures in place for temporary promotions. This process is typical in a paramilitary organization. If one falls off at the top, someone will grab the sword and run. Everyone is well equipped to see this endeavor through. The labor board is a fantastic group of whom everyone works well together. After talking through all concerns, the labor board cognize. Furthermore, the positions will not be vacated they will be backfilled and Chief Weber's involvement will remain at the Manager and Board Policy level. This position will pick up any new issue focusing on communication in the rank and file hence the reduction in cost.

Captain Oscar Arenas explained that the labor board has had several conversations and association is in full support of the position at hand.

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

No public comment concerning this item.

9. Adjourn 7:36pm

The next meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2022 via zoom video conferencing.

Respectfully submitted,

s/Monique Black
Temporary Administrative Assistant