

## ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Workshop and Board Meeting of September 13, 2023

*Note: These are summary action minutes only. The zoom recording can be accessed by clicking [here](#). The passcode is Rvfd091323#*

### RVFD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

#### 1. 6:30 pm Call to order.

Hellman welcomed Samantha Stettler as the new Ross Valley Fire Department Administrative Assistant.

**Board Present:** Cutrano, Brekhus, Robbins, Burdo, Hellman, Shortall, Finn, Colbert

**Board absents:**

**Staff Present:** Mahoney, Lim, Illingworth, Peterson, Arenas, Zuba

**Town Managers Present:** Donery, Johnson

#### Agenda – September 13, 2023

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.**

No public comment concerning this item.

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

No comment or question concerning this item.

#### 4. Chief Report – Verbal Update by Interim Fire Chief Mahoney

**Introduce New Staff and Command Staff:** Chief Mahoney introduced the new Administrative Assistant Samantha Stettler, thanked Mariana Gonzalez for training Stettler, and introduced the current Command Staff: Acting Battalion Chief Jake Peterson, Acting Battalion Chief Oscar Arenas, Battalion Chief Tim Grasser, and Interim Deputy Chief Gavin Illingworth.

**New Fire Engine Received:** Chief Mahoney reported the new type 1 fire engine is expected to go into service mid-September.

**PG&E Helicopter Open House:** Chief Mahoney provided information about the new PG&E helicopter pilot program in Marin and invited Board Members to attend the open house on September 19th at Gness Field in Novato. The helicopter will be used exclusively for firefighting purposes.

**Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) Project:** Chief Mahoney provided information on the upcoming multi-year, phased San Rafael and San Anselmo Fuel Reduction Project. He shared the project focus on thinning non-native eucalyptus trees with the goal of reducing fire danger and returning the habitat back to its original native landscaping. The project is estimated to begin in late December or January.

**HERo Girls Fire Camp:** Chief Mahoney shared information on the free, two day, girls camp that is being instructed by Golden State women in the fire service, as well as, women firefighters throughout Marin County. The camp will be held at Novato Fire Station 62 and encourages and empowers campers to learn skills associated with the fire service. RVFD has provided a donation and offered equipment to support the camp.

**Firefighter Recruitment Test:** Chief Mahoney provided an update on the firefighter recruitment process and expressed his hope to provide two offers of employment in order to fill the two current vacancies within the Department.

**Multiple Engines Deployed throughout State:** Chief Mahoney reported receiving simultaneous requests to fight fires in Northern California, as well as to provide support for the floods in Southern California as a result of Hurricane Hilary. Two engines were deployed North to Six Rivers National Forest and Klamath National Forest.

**Dispatch Update:** Chief Mahoney discussed the shared dispatch process being contracted with Marin County Fire Department following Marin County Sheriff's Office notice to terminate dispatch services. He anticipated presenting a new contract to the Board for approval at the next Board Meeting in October. Chief Mahoney also highlighted service level enhancements that the new dispatch center would bring, but noted additional costs for infrastructure due to relocation. Fiscal impacts for RVFD will be an increase in our annual cost. There will also be one-time costs for start-up and infrastructure, which have the option of being financed or paid in a lump sum. All costs will be broken down and better defined at the October Board Meeting and include recommendations on how the Board could choose to pay the one-time costs.

Brekhus asked if the Board has an opportunity to weigh in on the costs if there are concerns and what kind of oversight is the Board giving for the added expense since the scope is growing? Chief Mahoney shared that an extensive staff report and additional information will be provided and that the Board will be asked to take action based on the information provided.

Brekhus asked if there was a deadline or if more time would be available to make a decision, if additional information was needed. Chief Mahoney has not heard back about a specific deadline and provided that all the information MCFD has will be provided to all participating Boards to review and discuss if they want to support the contract or proposal.

Hellman recommends everyone look at the Board Packet once it is published Friday and to reach out to Chief Mahoney with any questions prior to the meeting, so a fruitful discussion can take place at the October Board Meeting. Hellman asked if contracts have been signed in other jurisdictions. Chief Mahoney explained that no contracts have not been signed; the next step is for member agencies to present to their Boards in October.

Brekhus asked if the Board would get a copy of the JPA and for clarification on the new governance. Chief Mahoney explained that Marin County Fire Department will be the contractor and that RVFD would enter into a contract for services with them.

Brekhus asked if we were in a prior contract for services. Chief Mahoney explained that previously we were in a contract for services with Marin County Sheriff's Department for dispatch services.

Lim advised the Board that the conversation, in terms of clarification of the process, was appropriate, but delving into questions regarding the actual contract was getting close to violating the Brown Act.

Hellman requested the former contract be shared with the Board, so they can familiarize themselves with

the services from the past.

Hellman thanked staff for stepping up and into the interim roles and asked if the PG&E helicopter event is open to the public. Chief Mahoney stated the event is for stakeholders and not open to the public. Agency Council Members are invited

Hellman asked if there will be interruption to trails with the MWPA Project. Chief Mahoney explained there would be interruptions and that all information would be on the MWPA website.

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.**

No public comment concerning this item.

**M/S Burdo/Finn to approve consent agenda – roll call vote, eight ayes. Brekhus, Robbins, Colbert, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman, Cutrano.**

**6. Receive Verbal Emergency Preparedness Presentation – Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Miranda Miller**

Chief Mahoney highlighted that September is National Preparedness month and introduced Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Miranda Miller.

Miller provided a presentation to the Board about the progress and plans for emergency preparedness in the communities the Ross Valley Fire Department serves, with focuses on training, education, and communication. Future goals include investing in what's been working, finding innovative ways to engage with the community, and strengthening partnerships.

Shortall, Burdo and Cutrano thanked Miller for her hard work and contribution to the community, acknowledging her success in reaching a wide audience. Cutrano also thanked the Fire Department for allowing Miller to staff the Town of Fairfax's new Community Emergency Preparedness Committee.

Cutrano asked where the December life saving training skills was being hosted and if communication has started with respective staff to get the word out to the community. Miller shared the location will be at the Fairfax pavilion and that registration opens in October. Information will be shared with the towns to include in their newsletter and will also be in Miller's Emergency Preparedness Newsletter.

Public comment in the room was good job Miller. No public comment on Zoom.

**7. Appoint One Board Member from Ross to Fill the Town of Ross's Vacancy on the Labor-Management Subcommittee. - Interim Fire Chief Mahoney**

Chief Mahoney summarized the Staff Report, reviewing the origin, background and evolution of the Labor-Management Subcommittee and its members. With the departure of Director Kuhl, there was now a vacancy on the subcommittee for the Town of Ross. Staff recommendation is the Board appoints one Board Member to fill Ross's vacancy for the Labor-Management Subcommittee.

**No questions from the Board and no public comment concerning this item.**

Hellman asked the Town of Ross Board Members if they had conferred on this topic. Robbins stated they had and that she would be delighted to replace Director Kuhl on the Labor-Management Subcommittee.

**M/S Burdo/Brekhus – roll call vote to appoint Elizabeth Robbins as the Ross member to the Labor-Management Subcommittee, eight ayes. Brekhus, Robbins, Colbert, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman.Cutrano.**

**8. Receive Recommendation from Undesignated Reserve Subcommittee and Provide Direction to Staff as Necessary. – Interim Fire Chief Mahoney**

Chief Mahoney summarized the Staff Report providing background of the previous recommendation to use reserve funds for the remodels of Fire Stations 20 and 21; the motion did not pass. A Special Meeting was called where four options were presented, three of which included spending options. The Board did not come to consensus on the three spending options. Chief Mahoney recommended option four, the creation of a new subcommittee to discuss department services and future expenses. The Board voted to support Chief Mahoney's recommendation. The subcommittee's recommendation was to leave the undesignated reserves in the reserve fund. Staff recommendation is the Board receive the recommendation from the subcommittee and provide staff with direction as necessary.

**No questions from the Board and no public comment concerning this item.**

Hellman opened it up to deliberation or comments. No subcommittee members had anything to add beyond what was included in the Staff Report. Cutrano summarized the subcommittees perspective, that given the known expenses on the horizon the subcommittee felt the most prudent approach would be to leave the reserves where they are.

Hellman addressed prioritizing these subcommittee meetings and requested everyone be responsive in providing availability when solicited. Burdo added for members to take under consideration talking to the firefighters about how they would want to spend the money when considering making recommendations on how to use the reserves. Hellman additionally added the importance of transparency and public comment in the decision making process.

**9. Receive Future Board of Directors Agenda Items and Provide Direction to Staff as Necessary. – Interim Fire Chief Mahoney**

Chief Mahoney presented a recommendation for the Board to receive future agenda items and provide direction to staff as necessary. The recommendations included: a proposal to hold the Labor-Management Subcommittee Meeting before October 6th in order to provide an update at the October Board Meeting; present a detailed plan no later than February 14, 2024 for the closure of Fire Station 18 by July 2025 with accelerated timelines; present a recommendation no later than March 2024 on best practices related to accounting for all California fire assistance reimbursement revenues.

Hellman requested Chief Mahoney include any cost savings associated with closing Station 18 before July 2025 in his presentation.

Brekhus asked Chief Mahoney what the Board protocols are for identifying future agenda items and calling special meetings. Chief Mahoney stated he would bring that back to the November or January Board Meeting.

**No public comment concerning this item.**

Chief Mahoney will reach out to the Labor-Management Subcommittee to identify their availability for a meeting since he received consensus from the Board. We have a quorum so the meeting will be agendaized.

Cutrano thanked Chief Mahoney for laying out all the steps and timelines that need to be taken in the upcoming months to achieve the department's goals. Hellman agreed with Cutrano.

## **10. Adjourn**

The next meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2023, San Anselmo Town Council Chambers, at 525 San Anselmo Ave. San Anselmo, CA 94960, and via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
s/Samantha Stettler  
Administrative Assistant