

ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting of October 9, 2024

Note: These are summary action minutes only. The zoom recording can be accessed by clicking [here](#). The passcode is Rvfd100924#

RVFD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

1. 6:30pm Call to order.

Board Present: Kircher, Robbins, Burdo, Colbert, Finn, Hellman

Board Absents: Shortall, Cutrano

Staff Present: Mahoney, Zuba

Town Managers Present: Donery, Johnson, Abrams

Agenda – October 9, 2024

2. Chief Report – Verbal Update by Interim Fire Chief Mahoney

Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Update: Expect to bring the position back to the November Board meeting for Board approval. Looking at changing the title and the job description.

Firefighter Paramedic Recruit Update: Our first Firefighter Paramedic, Darian Lockhart, is onboard and is almost done with his training. Another candidate we made an offer to is about one month out from completing paramedic school. Chief's interviews are in progress, one was done today and another is happening tomorrow with the hopes of making at least one conditional job offer. Difficult time recruiting. We went through three or four recruitments to make three conditional job offers.

Ember Stomp: Took place September 7th at the Civic Center. Great turnout. We had a booth and educated anyone that came through about the Greater Ross Valley Shaded Fuel Break. We had RVFD sunglasses that were a big hit.

Sidewalk CPR in Fairfax: Marin County EMS hosts Sidewalk CPR every year. We hosted a table at Station 21 in Fairfax and trained 95 people total and gave out 73 packages of Narcan. We might consider rotating the table between towns or see if another town is interested in hosting, but it does take time and involved the help of town volunteers.

AB2408 Update: The Assembly Bill was placed on hold. More research needs to be done. Will keep the Board up to date.

Sleepy Hollow Celebrated 75th Anniversary: Great event at the Sleepy Hollow Community Center. It was nice seeing everyone who attended.

Incidents Since Last Meeting:

60 Red Hill Structure Fire - Commercial building that caught fire around 4:30am. It quickly spread to the wildland and was threatening homes. No one was hurt. The house above did a fantastic job providing defensible space.

Town Manager Abrams thanked Chief Mahoney and staff for also participating in Fairfax's Evacuation Drill. 182 people walked in, 88 cars, 5 dogs, and 2 cats. Chief Mahoney said it was the most well attended evacuation drill he's ever attended and that there were a lot of engaged citizens.

Director Burdo attended the Fairfax Evacuation Drill volunteering with Fire Safe Marin. The booth was dialed in terms of information and the swag makes a big difference, especially when you have people coming with kids to these events.

Director Hellman asked for clarification on the Firefighter Paramedic recruitment. Chief Mahoney stated out of the three Firefighter Paramedic positions that were approved, two of the positions are filled. Technically there are three positions currently open - the third Firefighter Paramedic position and then two additional positions.

Director Hellman said it was good hearing about the defensible space from the Red Hill fire and wondered if we can use that as an example or do a webinar talking about the success of defensible space. Chief Mahoney did film a video following the fire where he talked about how the defensible space work the homeowners did, saved their home. *The video was shown after Item 5 on the Agenda - Board Requests.*

Chief Mahoney presented Kathleen Cutter with an appreciation plaque thanking her for her hard work and dedication. Her position moved to the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) earlier this year.

No public comment.

- 3. 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.

M/S Burdo/Robbins to approve consent agenda – roll call vote, six ayes: Kircher, Robbins, Colbert, Burdo, Finn, Hellman

- 4. Receive Presentation on Defensible Space Program – Kathleen Cutter**

Senior Wildfire Mitigation Specialist (WMS) Cutter presented her Defensible Space Program PowerPoint highlighting what has been unique this year.

Dynamic Risk Score is new this year, which involves modeling and algorithms about how fire behaves topographically in line with weather and climate change. Willow Labs superimposes data that the Defensible Space Program brings in and overlays it on the land. This allows the MWPA to get a risk score for a small group of parcels or neighborhoods, but not individual parcels.

Director Hellman asked if the Dynamic Risk Score modeling and methodology was created in-house and if the information gathered can be used by individuals with insurance carriers. MWPA has contracted with Willow Labs for the dynamic risk score. The best person to speak to the information being used with insurance carriers would be Mark Brown. MWPA is trying to figure out how all the work being done in Marin can be applied towards better insurance rates or more acceptable rates and less non-renewals.

A big ask from this Fire Board last year was better notification for the residents that inspectors were coming to town and to open their reports. This was achieved by sending emails, postcards, door hangers, and lawn signs. It really helped because there was a substantial increase in report open rates.

Director Robbins asked what the status of the Zone Zero Law is. WMS Cutter said it's expected to come into play, but that it's unknown when. The date keeps being pushed out.

President Finn shared what Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District has been doing to support and encourage home hardening. They initiated their own inspection program in 2015 where Marin County Fire was hired to conduct inspections and they currently have their own direct assist program for residents. While at Ember Stomp, he heard a rumor that was shared among people who had received non-renewal notices or had their insurance canceled, that insurance companies had gotten a hold of data from the MWPA inspections and were using the information against homeowners. He emphasized that the MWPA does not share the data and information collected with insurance companies.

There's an arrangement with Willow Labs and other software companies MWPA is working with, that if the models we've created can be commercialized, we might be able to recover some of the cost.

Director Hellman asked how the MWPA responds to residents' inquiries when they receive a non-renewal notice or cancellation. When people call the MWPA because their insurance has been canceled or they received a non-renewal notice, they are directed to two places. The first thing is to Google "[Fire Safe Marin Wildfire Insurance](#)" because this web page lists a step by step process residents can take if they receive a non-renewal notice or if their insurance is canceled. The second is a non-profit, advocacy group called [United Policyholders](#). They help guide homeowners on buying insurance and navigating claims. There are options, but people just need to do their homework.

No public comment.

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

No Board comment or public comment.

6. 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.

The Board agreed to move Item 6 - Public Expression ahead of Item 3 - Consent Agenda

Connie Valentine moved back to Fairfax about 5 years ago. The first thing to happen was her fire insurance was canceled because she lives in a fire hazard zone. Since then, she's been fire nervous. A couple of years later, a house collapsed on Pine Drive in Fairfax due construction. Residents have been hoping it would get resolved. Neighbors don't know what to do about the house. The fire department came out and said it's not an extreme hazard. Neighbors have a difference of opinion and don't know what to do. They would like the homeowner to be required to remove the boards. The neighbors are open to other ideas, but wanted to bring this to the Board. Chief Mahoney stated the Department has actively been engaged with this.

7. Adjourn

The next meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2024, San Anselmo Town Council Chambers, at 525 San Anselmo Ave. San Anselmo, CA 94960, and via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
s/Samantha Stettler
Administrative Assistant III