

## ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Ross Valley Fire Board Meeting of January 8, 2025

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

*The passcode is Rvfd010825#*

### RVFD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

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

**Board Present:** Kircher, Robbins, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman, Coler

**Board Absents:**

**Staff Present:** Mahoney, Lim

**Town Managers Present:** Donery, Johnson, Abrams

#### Agenda – January 8, 2025

Agenda Update: President Steve Burdo reported two communications were received after the Board packets were created. Both letters related to Agenda Item 8. One letter was from Directors Robbins and Kircher and the other was an email sent by Jeff Koblich of the Ross Valley Property Owners Association. Copies were made available to the Board and are available on the website.

#### 2. Announce Adjournment to Closed Session:

##### Convene in Closed Session:

##### a) Conference with Labor Negotiator (Government Code §54957.6)

- i) Agency Designated Representative: Dan Mahoney/Dave Donery  
Employee Organization: Ross Valley Fire Chief Officers Association and  
Ross Valley Fire Fighter Association  
Regarding: Labor Negotiations

**No public comment.**

#### 3. Announce Action in Closed Session, if any.

Board authorized Tim Davis, Partner at Burke, Williams & Sorensen to handle labor negotiations and discussed negotiating parameters.

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

**Recruitment Update:** FireFighter recruitment in process. Initial interviews yesterday. Two positions are open. One candidate is on the list so we expect to open another recruitment in a month or so. Fire Inspector recruitment is due to close next week. Administrative Assistant recruitment is open and closes February 5.

**Operations Update:** Marin Agencies are supporting LA fires. County sent 12 engines. Due to staff out on injuries, RVFD has not sent staff but has received a request to lend an engine. Chief encouraged people to sign up for emergency alerts through AlertMarin and go to FireSafeMarin.org for information on defensible space, home hardening, and evacuation preparedness, and encouraged people to participate in evacuation drills.

**Incident Report:** Juvenile was struck in the crosswalk on Sir Francis Drake and Broadmoor. Treated on the scene and transported to hospital. A positive outcome is expected. Simultaneous unintentional overdoses occurred in Fairfax in the same area. Fairfax Police and Engines 19, 20, 21 and Battalion 20 responded. Narcan administered to both patients who were transferred and are stable with positive outcomes.

Director Burdo acknowledged the good work related to the incident of the juvenile struck in the crosswalk and President Finn acknowledged the dangerous work of the first responders in the LA fires.

**No public comment.**

**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.**

Regarding 5e Fire Inspector/Sr Fire Inspector, Director Coler commented she doesn't see a distinction in the two positions. Chief Mahoney clarified it is currently the same job description and it would be better to split into two in order to clarify tasks and daily roles. Stay tuned over the coming months.

**Public Comment: Frank Egger had questions on item 5b which was removed from consent and considered separately. No public comment on Items 5a, 5c, 5d & 5e.**

**M/S Coler/Burdo to approve consent agenda 5a, 5c, 5d & 5e – roll call vote, seven ayes: Kircher, Robbins, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman, Coler**

**Item 5b Public Comment:** Frank Egger asked if we were charging to make EMS runs up to the watershed for things like bicycle accidents and asked if the County comes from Woodacre and backs us up when Station 21 is empty when we are responding to such calls. He expressed concern about response and budget. Fire Captain Mahoney explained that we have an annual automatic aid agreement that covers the cost and we have an agreement that if we need station coverage we will call for it.

**M/S Coler/Burdo to approve consent agenda 5b - roll call vote, seven ayes: Kircher, Robbins, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman, Coler**

**6. Appoint President and Vice President to the Ross Valley Fire Department Board of Directors for 2025 – Fire Chief Mahoney**

Chief Mahoney summarized the Staff Report.

**M/S Hellman/Coler to appoint Director Burdo as President and Director Robbins as Vice President - roll call vote, seven ayes: Kircher, Robbins, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman, Coler**

**No public comment.**

**7. Approve Resolution 25-01 Adopting a Department Purchasing Policy – Fire Chief Mahoney**

Chief Mahoney summarized the Staff Report and called out a typo on page 2 of the staff report under *Key Provisions of the Purchasing Policy*. It reads “For purchases valued at \$1,000 or less...”. This should read “For purchases valued at \$10,000 or less...” This is correct in the related Resolution and Policy.

President Burdo thanked the Fire Chief for bringing this policy forward and thanked San Anselmo Treasurer Jeff Zuba for his work on it.

No public comment.

**M/S Finn/Kircher to approve Resolution 25-01 - roll call vote, seven ayes: Kircher, Robbins, Burdo, Shortall, Finn, Hellman, Coler**

**8. Receive Staff Report and Provide Staff with Direction Regarding the Town of Ross Station 18 One-Year Delay Closure Letter – Fire Chief Mahoney**

Chief Mahoney summarized the Staff Report. Chief Mahoney mentioned that the agenda was amended to include the letter from Director Robbins and Kircher and he received an email from Jeff Koblick, President of Ross Valley Property Owners Association, asking to delay the closing of the Ross fire station. This letter can be found on the website.

President Burdo first asked if the Board had questions.

Director Finn commented that he's a member of RVPA Board and the RVPA Working Group #1 to strengthen RVPA working agreement which is meeting on Monday, January 27. No further questions from the Board.

Attendee Kristin Johnson, Ross Town Manager, asked what percentage of construction costs are attributable to adding the third person to the engine. Fire Chief Mahoney said it was not that easy as dividing costs by four. President Burdo recapped the question as how much of the renovations would have needed to be made if Ross didn't close the fire station and proceeded to answer the question by saying the primary reason, without putting a dollar figure on it, was to accommodate the staffing infrastructure coming over from the closure of Station 18.

**Public Comment:** Tommy Pastalka, Fire Firefighter Association President and Engineer Paramedic Station 20, said he was representing the Firefighters who stand with and support the Fire Chief and that this statement was his alone. He appreciated the concerns brought up and expressed support for 3-person engines and acceptable living quarters for firefighters.

President Burdo asked if Board members would like to make any comments.

Director Robbins summarized the letter she and Director Kircher wrote. Director Robbins passed out copies of screen shots of information that was given to Ross about response times which guided their decision at the time. This document will be made available to the public. Director Robbins said the purpose of sharing this was to show that Ross was told the response time would remain unchanged for 85% of the time and this is the key problem as Ross was told in the 2024 Citigate study that the RVPA ambulance would be in Ross less than 50% and perhaps 40% of the time. This was not what Ross residents were expecting with the closure of the station. A reason to delay is to avoid significant delays in the emergency services that will start on July 1, 2025 and to provide time to figure out how to best provide services to all jurisdictions. Another possible option would be to consider adding a third ambulance which is a recommendation of the 2024 Citigate study. A vote against delaying the closure jeopardizes the health of Ross residents. Ross had been assured response time would be unchanged. It shouldn't be either or: That Ross gets adequate response times or that there are 3 people on an engine. Both should be goals.

Director Kircher commented that he's hopeful that what is underway now will be productive and a way

can be found to bolster RVPA and keep response time. One thing is apparent is that it is a process that will take some time. And the concern is if the fire station is closed, there is not an engine and the ambulance response time is at 40 or 50% availability. At the time they acted on information received and shared that with residents and now they know more. He said it's a complex issue and appreciated the participation and consideration.

President Burdo responded to concerns raised saying the task is to see if the Board can get to a unanimous vote. President Burdo thanked Manager Johnson about the information she shared previously. President Burdo said the notion RVPA would dissolve is not founded and RVPA is in lease negotiations with Ross. The Citigate report recommended keeping the ambulance in Ross which is what is happening. At the last RVPA meeting, RVPA agreed to cease discussion of pulling out and two subcommittees were formed to strengthen the JPA and explore if finances could be strengthened, transparent and equitable. The letter centers around how much time the ambulance will be in Ross, but the ambulance will remain there. President Burdo said he understands the nuances with the increased response times. However, he stated he was at the meetings when this was discussed in 2019 and one data point he heard was about the community survey that was done. One survey option to keep Station 18 open did not have support, which was one of the primary reasons Ross decided to close Station 18. Money has been allocated for renovations for Station 20 that begin on March 1 of this year. Another consideration is the morale and well being of the firefighters. This was not a quick decision made by Ross and included a lot of deliberations. Therefore, President Burdo said he can't support it and therefore the Board cannot get to a unanimous decision.

Director Robbins commented regarding the survey of 300 people out of 2,400 that they did not want to fund a fire station under the context of being told the EMS response times would remain the same 85% of the time.

President Burdo and Director Robbins had further discussion back and forth.

Director Coler said she appreciated the work done to date and President Burdo's deep dive into the data and the update on RVPA. Most of the calls in Fairfax are medical calls, not fires. She expressed support for the firefighters and believes we need to move forward with breaking ground. She was not in support of making changes to the plan.

Director Hellman expressed appreciation for the comments and work done. She expressed staff morale and board credibility were on her mind. There are problems with Station 18 and no one should be working in those conditions. She said she is not in support of making changes to the plan.

President Burdo and Directors Coler and Hellman are not in support of making changes and therefore a unanimous decision cannot be achieved.

**No action recommended on this item.**

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

Appreciation was expressed for Samantha Stettler's work and to Director Finn for his role as President over the last year.

**10. 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.

**11. Adjourn**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2025, San Anselmo Town Council Chambers, at 525 San Anselmo Ave. San Anselmo, CA 94960, and via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,  
s/Lauren Houde  
Interim Administrative Assistant