

Ross Valley Fire Department

Board of Directors

Policy and Procedure Manual

DRAFT



**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT
POLICIES and PROCEDURES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MANUAL**

SECTION I PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the Ross Valley Fire Department and its governance, and establish general guidelines for roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors as a group and its members as individuals.

SECTION II REFERENCE MATERIALS

The following materials and resources were used in creating this handbook.

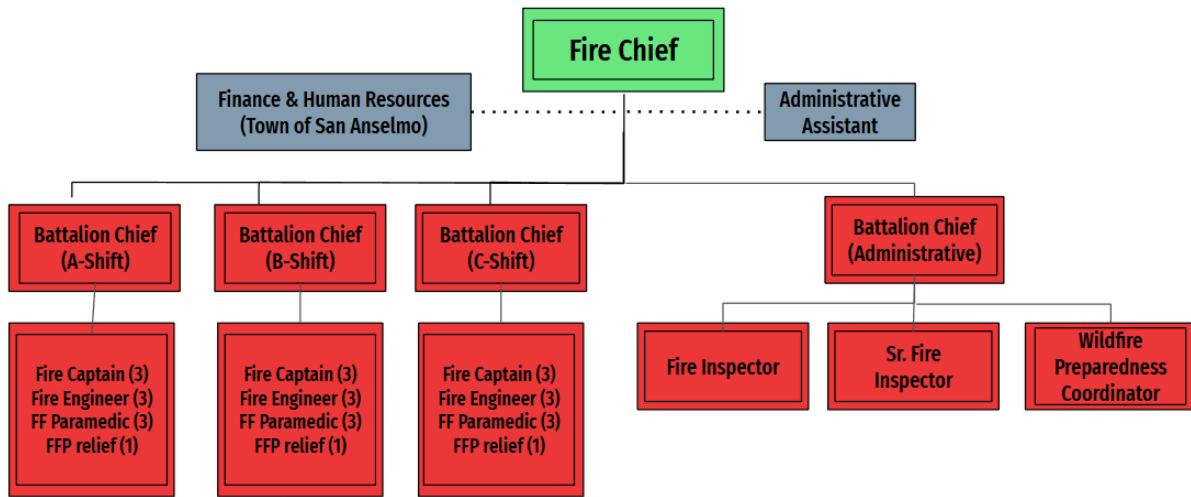
- [Joint Powers Agreement with Amendments](#)
- RVFD website www.rossvalleyfire.org
 - [Fire Board Meetings](#) - members, agendas, minutes, etc.
 - [Overview of fire stations, equipment, etc.](#)
 - [FY 2025-26 Budget](#)
 - [Financial Audit FY 2024-25](#)
 - [History of the Ross Valley Fire Department](#)
- Memorandums of Understanding & Contracts:
 - [Ross Valley Firefighters' Association I.A.F.F., Local 1775 2025-2028](#)
 - [Chief Officers MOU 2025-2028](#)
 - [Fire Chief Employment Agreement](#)
- Websites to JPA members
 - [Town of Ross](#)
 - [Town of San Anselmo](#)
 - [Town of Fairfax](#)
 - [Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District](#)

SECTION III ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Ross Valley Fire Department is a consolidated department, operating under a Joint Powers Agreement, with the mission of protecting lives, property and the environments of Ross, San Anselmo, Sleepy Hollow and Fairfax. There are three fire stations: Fire Station 19 - San Anselmo, which also serves as the Administrative Headquarters; Fire Station 20 - Sleepy Hollow; and Fire Station 21 - Fairfax. Fire Station 18 in Ross closed on July 1, 2025. The Town of Ross is currently served by Fire Station 19.

Below is an organization chart of the department:

RVFD Organizational Chart



In addition to the above staff members, there are 3 Captains, 3 Engineers and 4 Firefighter-Paramedics assigned to each shift, bringing the total number of FTEs to 39. The Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator is a five year fixed term position funded separately by the member agencies.

The Fire Chief is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Board. The Fire Chief is responsible for general operations of the Fire Department including budget, personnel, operations and emergency operations.

The Fire Inspectors are responsible for ensuring code enforcement and conducting mandated and routine fire inspections. They work closely with the Member Agencies' building and planning departments as well as with homeowners, contractors and the general public. The Senior Fire Inspector performs fire investigations.

The Town of San Anselmo provides fiscal and human resources services to the Department. The staff report and agreement can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

New Board Members are encouraged to meet with the Fire Chief for an overview of the Department and a tour of the stations.

SECTION IV ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING & BUDGET

The RVFD operating budget is currently funded by member contributions from the four participating Joint Powers Authority members (Ross, San Anselmo, Sleepy Hollow and Fairfax)

based on the cost-sharing percentages as outlined in the Joint Powers Agreement. Below is a list of some of the elements of the cost-sharing structure, but this list is not exhaustive. The complete language can be found in the JPA and its Amendments.

- The cost-sharing formulas take into account the following:
 - Costs of pre-existing financial liabilities of the members related to employee benefits
 - Sleepy Hollow's unique legal structure as an autonomous Special District of the State of California
 - MERA Bond and fire engine lease payments
 - Capital Assets
- Fire Stations are owned by members and replacement or reconstruction costs are the separate responsibility of the owning member. Routine maintenance is the responsibility of the Authority.
- Closure of the Ross Fire Station on July 1, 2025 and subsequent revision of the cost-sharing formula

Below are links to the most current budget documents.

[2025-2026 Proposed Budget Staff Report](#)

[Revised FY 2025-26 Budget Report](#)

[FY 2025-26 Adopted Budget Summary](#)

[Five Year Budget Forecast](#)

SECTION IV ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT BOARD OVERVIEW

Below is a summary of the governance model and board overview.

A. Basis of Authority:

The basis of the authority is the Ross Valley Fire Service Joint Powers Authority that includes the Towns of Fairfax, Ross and Fairfax and the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District. Sleepy Hollow FPD was established in 1949 as an autonomous Special District of the State of California. It is a different type of entity than the Towns. Below is a timeline of the Authority:

- 1982 Authority was formed with Fairfax and San Anselmo
- 1983 Authority amended to include Sleepy Hollow
- 2012 Authority amended to include Ross
- 2014 Authority amended to establish a management committee
- 2022 Authority amended to provide for the closure of the Ross Fire Station

B. Governance:

The Authority created a Joint Powers Agreement, which is a written document that governs the Ross Valley Fire Department. The Agreement has been modified in 1982, 1983, 2012, 2014 and 2022 to reflect the changes made to the Authority. Please refer directly to the Agreement and Amendments for more information regarding a detailed list of the powers and duties of the Authority, votes that require unanimous decisions or multi-member majorities, and information on closed sessions. Currently there is not one consolidated document that incorporates all of the amendments. The original agreement and amendments can be found [here](#). RVFD is working on creating a consolidated document for approval and distribution to the Board.

The Board has operated on a governance model based upon reaching consensus. The Board shall consist of eight (8) voting members (each a "Board Member"), two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Fairfax Town Council, two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the San Anselmo Town Council, two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors of the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District, and two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Ross Town Council; provided, however, that each Board Member shall be an elected or appointed Town Council or governing body member of the Member by whom he or she is appointed.

Each Member shall also appoint an alternate to serve in a Director's place at any meeting of the Board. Any such alternate shall be an elected or appointed Town Council or governing body member of that Member.

C. Board Members

Current board members can be found [here](#). New officers for President and Vice-President are appointed in January of each year, serving a one-year term. The practice has been to alternate the presidency and vice presidency between member agencies, with the vice president to be appointed at the president the following year.

Year	President	Vice President
June 2025	Steve Burdo (San Anselmo)	Julie McMillan (Ross)
Jan 2025	Steve Burdo (San Anselmo)	Elizabeth Robbins (Ross)
Jan 2024	Thomas Finn (Sleepy Hollow)	Steve Burdo (San Anselmo)
Jan 2023	Stephanie Hellman (Fairfax)	Thomas Finn (Sleepy Hollow)
Jan 2022	Beach Kuhl (Ross)	Renee Goddard (Fairfax)
Jan 2021	Ford Greene (San Anselmo)	Beach Kuhl (Ross)
Jan 2020	Richard Shortall (Sleepy Hollow)	Ford Greene (San Anselmo)

D. Executive Officer & Management Committee

The Board has an Executive Officer. The Executive Officer shall rotate among the Town Managers of Fairfax, San Anselmo, and Ross for two (2) year terms, or such other term as may be determined by the Board. The most recent Resolution can be found [here](#).

The Management Committee is comprised of the Town Managers of Fairfax, San Anselmo and Ross. The Executive Officer serves as the Chair. The Management Committee meets monthly with the Fire Chief to review the Board agenda and any other current issues.

E. Subcommittees

Currently there are no Board Subcommittees. The Board is considering creating a Board Member Onboarding Ad Hoc Committee.

F. Meetings

RVFD Board Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm at the Town of San Anselmo Council Chambers and via Zoom. All regular and special meetings are conducted in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. Meetings are recorded on Zoom and are made available after the meeting on the website.

Board materials, including the agenda, are posted to the website and emailed to Board Members generally the Friday before the Wednesday meeting. Materials must be posted to the website no later than the Sunday before the meeting (72 hours)

The presence of a majority of the Directors including at least one (1) Director representing each Member shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Authority business. Less than a quorum may adjourn or continue meetings from time to time. The Board shall have a President to preside at and conduct all meetings and a Vice President who shall succeed the President and preside in absence of the President. Each Director or his or her alternate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Any decision of the Board shall require a minimum of five (5) votes to be effective, subject to additional provisions as outlined in the JPA Agreement related to matters to requiring a unanimous vote or a multi-member majority.

The Executive Officer and the Town Managers of Fairfax, Ross and San Anselmo are often in attendance. Occasionally RVFD's Counsel, currently David Lim, will attend a meeting, depending on the agenda item.

Below is a list of items that are on every agenda, :

- Chief's verbal report
- Consent Calendar:
 - Check register and budget report
 - Incident Report

- Approval of previous meeting minutes

Below is a list of items that the Board takes action on annually, but is by no means exhaustive.

Month (approximately)	Item
January	Appoint President and Vice President AB 2561 Vacancy Report & Public Hearing
February	Mid year budget revisions
March	Inspection Compliance Report
May	Proposed budget for next fiscal year
June	Approve budget
August	Publicly Available Pay Schedule
September	Receive annual audit Defensible Space Inspection Report

Every two years: Update the conflict of interest code, Appoint Executive Officer

Every three years: Update MOUs and non-union salaries. Current MOUs are approved through June 30, 2028.

G. Renumeration

Members of the Board of Directors shall be paid a stipend of \$100 per meeting attended. The Executive Officer is paid \$300 per meeting attended.

H. Expectations of the Board

- Understand how items are agendized for meetings. See [Resolution 24-01](#)
- Attend meetings in person. If a Board Member is unable to attend, s/he should inform the Fire Chief or the Administrative Assistant and make arrangements for the alternate to attend, if possible.
- Review the materials in advance of the meeting. Information may be requested from staff before the meeting within guidelines of the Brown Act.
- Uphold laws and best practices related to ethics, conflicts of interest and maintaining confidential information
 - Be familiar with and uphold the Ralph M. Brown state law that applies to all public bodies in the State of California.
 - Understand and uphold rules and laws related to the [California Fair Political Practices Commission](#) and the RVFD's [Conflict of Interest Code](#)
 - Complete the annual Conflict of Interest Form 700 and participate in any other

- related training or education as required
- Maintain confidentiality when appropriate and expected. For example, a public servant cannot disclose confidential information acquired during the course of their official capacity for the purpose of private gain or interests.
- Develop a basic understanding of the unique operations of a Fire Department

SECTION V RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CURRENT INITIATIVES

The RVFD has implemented several large-scale projects years in the making. These include:

- The closure of the Ross Fire Station on July 1, 2025
- The transition to a 3-person Engine
- Remodel of the Sleepy Hollow Fire Station (almost complete)

Future large projects include:

- Remodel of the Fairfax Fire Station