

Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MARCH 19, 2025 — 7:00 P.M.
COTATI FIRE STATION - #1 EAST COTATI AVE.
COTATI, CALIFORNIA**

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Bob Moretti, called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The agenda for this meeting was posted on March 14, 2025.

Directors Present: Mark Hemmendinger, Bob Moretti, Michael Gadoua, Brian Proteau, Pete Albini, Ray Peterson, Bret Herman

Minutes Conducted by: Jennifer Bechtold

II. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

A. Citizen Business/Public Comments on Items not appearing on Agenda

There was no public comment.

B. Correspondence and/or Presentations

There was no correspondence.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Board Meeting of February 19, 2025

Motion moved by Mr. Proteau to approve the minutes of February 19, 2025 and seconded by Mr. Hemmendinger.

Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

B. Special Meeting of February 21, 2025

Motion moved by Mr. Gadoua to approve the minutes of February 21, 2025 and seconded by Mr. Albini.

Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Ratification of Checks Issued

Motion moved by Mr. Herman to approve the consent calendar and seconded by Mr. Albini.

Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

V. **ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Firefighter's Union Report

Captain Gromala would like to set a meeting date in April to begin negotiations.

B. Firefighters' association Report

No report filed.

C. Chief's Report

Chief Veliquette reported the following information:

- 1.) District events: Mechanic onboarding, fire captain and firefighter paramedic recruitment, BC Caldwell is reviewing needs for fire prevention positions and working on preparation for defensible space inspectors, chassis remount project in progress, District is in contract with Pierce for a Type 3 engine, finance committee meeting was held, capital improvement committee continues their work with Van Pelt Construction Management, received first sales tax deposit.
- 2.) Calls – 53 SSU, 118 EMS, 89 good intent, 16 false alarms, 13 service, 9 hazard, 6 fire. We have begun billing SSU for false alarms, though it is unlikely we will receive payment.
- 3.) Operational Update by BC Caldwell – probationary firefighter testing, active shooter training last month, live fire training on all three shifts, EMS recertification, weather related calls, recruitment of defensible space inspectors, working with SCFD on building our ImageTrend prevention program, spring cleaning at stations and we are in our third phase of hazard mitigation plan.
- 4.) Strategic Plan 2025 – reviewed ongoing activities and goals as well as new goals for 2025.

D. Director Reports

Created ad hoc negotiations committee of Mr. Hemmendinger and Mr. Peterson.

E. Committee Reports

a. Finance/Budget

Mr. Hemmendinger said the committee met and we will take a closer look at discussion points later in the meeting. We also did a brief overview of the preliminary budget for FY 25/26. Additionally, now that we have received our first Measure H deposit, we will need to begin budget projections moving forward.

b. Ad Hoc Capital Improvements

Mr. Proteau commented that Van Pelt is working on some different floor plan options. They will have a presentation at the April Board meeting.

VI. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. Discussion on Consolidation with Sonoma County Fire Protection District

Chief Veliquette said we covered much of where things stand with consolidation at our strategic planning meeting. The ad hoc committee has been established, and a joint meeting will take place in April. Chief Veliquette also noted a letter from the CAO's office was received denying our funding request.

The Public Hearing was opened at 7:33 p.m.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Discussion on Public Agency Vacancies (AB 2561)

Chief Veliquette reported we currently have three vacancies within the District which includes one fire captain and two firefighter paramedics. We are recruiting for both at this time.

Captain Gromala mentioned that the job market is getting challenging and competitive as everyone is hiring at this time. Our total compensation package is lower but base pay is close.

The Public Hearing was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Bonding Options from Measure H Funding

Chief Veliquette shared a presentation regarding funding options for our capital improvement projects. Funding options include private placement as a loan with a banking institution, public bonds, and USDA Rural Development loans. The hope is to bond out approximately \$7M-\$8M with a funding timeline of six to nine months.

Next steps are direction to staff on what funding options to pursue and at the April Board meeting, we will discuss and initiate process. We hope to receive funding sometime around November.

The Board has directed staff to follow up on the USDA loan and public bonds.

B. Discussion and Direction on Resolution R-6: Resolution Approving the Participation in and Adoption of the Post-Employment Benefits Trust Program, Authorizing Forms of and Directing the Execution and Delivery of an Adoption Agreement and an Agreement for Administrative Services; Authorizing an Initial Contribution Amount and Providing for Other Matters Property Related Thereto

Chief Veliquette noted that we began this process back in October when the Board approved PARS to hold our Section 115 Trust. Following a pause during consolidation discussions, the District would like to authorize the Fire Chief to execute the documents necessary to move forward and fund the trust. Our reserve account currently holds \$400K for pension liability and we will likely have an unfunded liability payment in July, though it's unknown how much that payment will be. Following Board discussion, \$200,000.00 was approved to initially fund the Section 115 Trust and authorize Chief Veliquette to execute all documents on behalf of the District.

Motion moved by Mr. Hemmendinger to adopt Resolution R-6, which authorizes the District's participation in the PARS Post-Employment Benefits Trust Program, approve the form of all required legal agreements, designate the Fire Chief as the District's Plan Administrator, authorize and direct the Fire Chief to execute all required legal agreements and approve an initial contribution of \$200,000.000 to establish and fund the District's 115 Trust account and seconded by Mr. Gadoua.

Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

Roll Call:

Mr. Proteau – aye
Mr. Howell – aye
Mr. Peterson – aye
Mr. Gadoua – aye
Mr. Moretti – aye

Mr. Hemmendinger – aye
Mr. Herman – aye

C. Discussion on Lease Agreement for Station 1 with the City of Cotati

Chief Veliquette commented that the current lease of station 1 expires in 2039 and at that time, the building reverts back to the City of Cotati. He suggests that we begin discussions with the City to extend the lease for another 50 years.

The Board authorizes the Fire Chief to start renegotiating the lease with the City of Cotati. Chief Veliquette will report back to the Board President on how to proceed.

D. Discussion on Fire Hazard Severity Zones for Local Response Area (LRA)

Chief Veliquette gave a presentation regarding fire hazard severity zones, what they are and where they exist within our jurisdiction. Most of our District falls within the moderate risk category, with a few areas of high and very high risk. Impacts of the new LRA fire hazard severity zones include new regulations on construction materials and defensible space clearance in high and very high zones. Links to this information and the maps are located on our website.

In April, the Board will motion to adopt an Ordinance on the fire hazard severity Zones, which is then sent to the California Fire Marshal's Office.

E. Discussion and Presentation on Community Education and Outreach

Chief Veliquette discussed the goals of our outreach and community education programs. Currently we run the defensible space inspection program from May to October each year and CalFire's Ready for Wildfire program takes place annually in April and May. One other program we can consider hosting for the community is COPE, which we have taught in the past. The CERT program is offered through the County of Sonoma.

IX. DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Loan costs on bonds and USDA loans as well as other information to consider
- Van Pelt Capital Improvements Presentation
- Ordinance on Fire Hazard Severity Zones
- Cotati Fire Station Lease

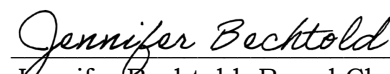
X. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the Regular Board meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Motion moved by Mr. Gadoua and seconded by Mr. Herman.

Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Bechtold, Board Clerk

Date Approved by Board: April 16, 2025