

Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 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 February 14, 2025.

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

Directors Absent: Bret Herman

Minutes Conducted by: Jennifer Bechtold

A motion was made by Mr. Peterson to add the following agenda item which arose after the posting of the agenda on February 14, 2025 and needs to be addressed this evening. The motion was seconded by Mr. Proteau.

Motion Carried: Aye 6 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1

“Consideration of Employment Agreement between the District and the Fire Mechanic for March 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025.”

II. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

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

Mr. George Barich commented he would like an item placed on the Board agenda to address emergency preparedness training for the community. He also asked that a banner be posted outside the fire station announcing Board meetings, as was done in the past.

B. Correspondence and/or Presentations

Chief Veliquette noted a letter was received from the SCFCA notifying the District they are unable to fund the consolidation request at this time. ADTR statements for the station loan and POBs was also in correspondence.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Board Meeting of January 15, 2025

Motion moved by Mr. Proteau to approve the minutes of January 15, 2025 and seconded by Mr. Gadoua.

Motion Carried: Aye 5 No 0 Abstain 1 (Mr. Peterson) Absent 1

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Ratification of Checks Issued

Motion moved by Mr. Hemmendinger to approve the consent calendar and seconded by Mr. Proteau.

Motion Carried: Aye 6 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1

V. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Firefighter's Union Report

No report filed.

B. Firefighters' Association Report

Engineer Ruiz noted another successful crab feed was held, with tickets all sold out. Everyone had a great time at the event.

C. Chief's Report

Chief Veliquette reported the following information:

- 1.) District activities included: a conditional job offer has been given for the mechanic position, Captain recruitment begins tomorrow, two firefighter paramedic candidates have been interviewed and will go through testing next week, BC Caldwell is reviewing our needs for the fire prevention position, impact fees have now been approved by both the City of Cotati and BOS, with an effective date of March 29, 9132 chassis remount project in progress, capital improvement committee continues their work with Van Pelt Construction Management and anticipate a March Board presentation on needs, fire hazard severity maps for LRA will be released February 27.
- 2.) Calls for service: 44 SSU, 114 EMS, 97 good intent, 15 service, 13 false alarms.
- 3.) Operational – BC Deurloo noted all engines are back from their deployment to LA and have since been redeployed for local storms and floods. Staff training included a presentation from a world-renowned free diver on breath conservation and training during fires and daily life. Crews are participating in county wide active shooter drills. Live fire training night will be held jointly with Gold Ridge and Petaluma Fire.
- 4.) Upcoming events – Strategic Planning on February 21, FDAC annual conference in Napa, April 2025, March 6 finance committee meeting will address bond funding for capital improvements and a budget discussion.
- 5.) March Board meeting agenda items will include Section 115 trust documents, capital facilities financing options, discussion on community engagement programs.

Mr. Barich asked if we could utilize online training for community emergency preparedness. He also commented that he feels bonds are expensive and dangerous long-term.

D. Director Reports

Mr. Peterson said he noticed the press talked a lot about plastics and toxins burning during the Southern California fires and asked how our staff protects against the dangers of these chemicals. BC Deurloo said we do have masks and filter cartridges, but working day to day in these fires, there are no feasible options for fully protecting firefighters. To protect themselves, they would have to wear masks 24 hours a day, which is just not realistic. Mr. Peterson also commented there is a private equity firm that has purchased most of the fire engine manufacturers and turned them into just a couple, which has greatly increased prices. Chief Veliquette said he also read this article and noted these companies have the market on the construction of engines.

Mr. Albini asked if we made any progress passing on costs for ladder trucks to new developments. Chief Veliquette replied the time to do so is when new developments turn in plan documents, then we have that discussion.

E. Committee Reports

a. Finance/Budget

Mr. Hemmendinger said the budget is on target for this fiscal year. Wages and benefits are right on target and services and supplies are about 10% low, but our purchasing does fluctuate. We have about \$300K in strike team revenues and this helps to reassure us that our debt service ratio is met, and some funds may go into reserves.

b. Ad Hoc Capital Improvements

Mr. Proteau said they had a meeting last month and discussed different ideas for each of the stations, contract delivery methods and working with Van Pelt. Much of this will be brought forward at our March Board meeting.

Chief Veliquette noted that Van Pelt takes a very high-level look at our needs and from there we prioritize what is necessitated at each facility. Van Pelt will then help us determine what projects we do.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Consolidation with Sonoma County Fire Protection District

Chief Veliquette commented that meetings continue with SCFD and the County Administrators Office. We expect a response from the CAO to our funding request, though no funding has been agreed to. The County has clawed back previous consolidation funding from two agencies, including SCFD. The LAFCO timeline for reorganization for June 2025 has passed, however we will continue to look at opportunities to collaborate for funding. At this time, we will focus on RAFD for FY 24/25 service delivery to our community.

Mr. Albini mentioned that he would like to see more in-depth financial statements from SCFD and for them to provide this information to us. Mr. Hemmendinger replied that in his 17 years on the Board, the County has gone from \$40M funding fire service to \$9M, which is now going to just two agencies. He feels the County has been pretty clear on their position of funding fire service. Mr. Peterson replied we need to continue to push SCFD to share their financials, as he is worried they have taken on a lot over the years and may only want our share of Measure H.

Chief Veliquette noted that we are doing very well at this time filling vacant positions, adding new positions and our five-year plan looks really good. He suggests we continue investing in our people and our community and if we end up consolidating, that's great.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Interest to Serve as Vice-President to the Sonoma County Fire Districts Association

Chief Veliquette commented SCFDA is looking for a VP from elected officials if anyone is interested in serving this role.

B. Consideration of Employment Agreement between the District and the Fire Mechanic for March 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025

Chief Veliquette asked the Board for approval of the Fire Mechanic’s employment agreement which has already been vetted through our legal counsel. We do have a candidate and would like to offer the position. This contract would cover the remainder of the fiscal year and then go into negotiations for the new year.

Mr. Proteau asked to have the HSA language in the last paragraph clarified that the \$7,100/\$3,550 contributions are paid twice per year and deposited in half increments.

Motion moved by Mr. Hemmendinger to approve the employment agreement, hiring the Fire Mechanic at Step 4 Step of the pay scale and amend verbiage of the HSA language and seconded by Mr. Proteau.

Motion Carried: Aye 6 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1

VIII. DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Resolution and Funding of Section 115 Trust
- Bonding of Measure H Funds
- Discussion on Community Engagement
- Brown Act and Robert’s Rules Training with Legal Counsel (April)
- Van Pelt Report and Presentation

IX. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the Regular Board meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

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

Motion Carried: Aye 6 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1

Respectfully submitted,



Jennifer Bechtold, Board Clerk

Date Approved by Board: March 19, 2025