

Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
SEPTEMBER 16, 2020 — 7:00 P.M.
COTATI FIRE STATION - #1 EAST COTATI AVE.
COTATI, CALIFORNIA**

MEETING WAS HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE FOR ALL BOARD DIRECTORS, STAFF AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

President, Mark Hemmendinger, called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The agenda for this meeting was posted on September 10, 2020.

Roll Call:

Directors Present: Mark Hemmendinger, Brian Proteau, Michael Gadoua, Nole Pacheco, Bret Herman, and Carla Grube and Leslie Cozad

Minutes Conducted by: Jennifer Bechtold

III. 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.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting of August 19, 2020

Motion moved by Mr. Herman and seconded by Mrs. Cozad.

Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

Roll Call:

Mr. Pacheco – aye

Mrs. Cozad – aye

Mr. Herman – aye

Mr. Proteau – aye

Mr. Hemmendinger – aye

Mr. Gadoua – aye

Mrs. Grube – aye

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Ratification of Claims and Journal Vouchers

Motion moved by Mr. Gadoua and seconded by Mr. Pacheco.
Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

Roll Call:

Mr. Pacheco – aye
Mrs. Cozad – aye
Mr. Herman – aye
Mr. Proteau – aye
Mr. Hemmendinger – aye
Mr. Gadoua – aye
Mrs. Grube – aye

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

A. Chief's Report

Chief Thompson reported the following items:

- 1.) During recent fires, we had ten committed pieces of fire apparatus and two members for overhead. There was no drop to daily staffing in our district during this time.
- 2.) We have had one case of COVID-19 and the member was isolated and removed from engaging with others. All members at all stations are virus-free and tests that resulted from the exposure have come back negative.
- 3.) Vegetation management continues to our #1 commitment. Reinspections of violation parcels and late-season complaints continue. We will invoice the County for time spent on inspections and a summary will be prepared this month with results of the inspections completed.
- 4.) We are awaiting favorable weather to do some right-of-way maintenance and driver familiarization on the new fire roads on Sonoma Mountain. A new gate was made and several homeowners have cleared ranch roads to facilitate these new roads.
- 5.) BC Weihman held a Zoom-based COPE/disaster preparedness class and may do more classes this fall.
- 6.) New BK radios have been evaluated and “field tested” on several strike teams. BC Weihman has purchased programming software and adapted the Cal Fire load for our use with a candidate load. He will be going out to bid for purchase of another ten radios once they settle on a better speaker/mic.
- 7.) B-shift had one in-district structure fire this month and several vegetation fires. There was considerable staffing effort and equipment repair during deployment to the Wallbridge Fire.
- 8.) Acting BC Task books are in process and a working draft will be completed by the end of September.
- 9.) Training continues with PFD and Rohnert Park Fire and includes the development of interagency familiarization.
- 10.) EMT Refresher has been scheduled and will be delivered on-shift in 3-hour classes by Cathy. PPE and social distancing will be used.

B. Director Reports

Mr. Hemmendinger said everyone should have received a copy of the minutes from the meeting with the three VFCs in Region 9. It was a long, slightly contentious meeting and it seems this group is focused on wanting to stick with the group they are already part of under North Bay Fire (NBF). Without a clear way forward, Mr. Hemmendinger has discussed with LAFCO’s general manager and President they are charged with going about their own findings. LAFCO will perform an MSR of

Region 9 and make their recommendations following completion. This is where we are leaving things at this point. Mr. Hemmendinger feels it would be hard to incorporate three VFCs who are resistant but he is not sure what the County will decide to do. Chief Thompson said that because NBF will not meet the County's timeline to merge, they are possibly going to ask for another year's extension. He does not feel the VFCs are looking to improve service in the south county.

Mr. Hemmendinger pointed out at the LAFCO meeting, and in the group meeting, it was clear that the VFCs have the misunderstanding that they County will continue funding them past June 2021. LAFCO members were quick to dispute this. If they are unable to make the merge deadline at the end of this fiscal year, this may be an issue.

Mr. Pacheco asked what their biggest concern is in moving forward to a new model. Mr. Hemmendinger commented they are stuck in the rut they are in. There has been a constant allegation that RAFD and PFD not being open to volunteers, though they did not really share this point of view at the meeting. Chief Thompson stated that PFD and RAFD have been subsidizing the volunteers for years, and this problem will only worsen as the call volume increases.

C. Committee Reports

a. Finance/Budget

Mr. Hemmendinger said in reviewing the budget so far this year, we have gone through a lot of money. This is because we have paid some bills up front for the entire fiscal year and other expenses were for the strike teams this month. Many of these costs are reimbursed downstream. We need to get through the coming months with the cash available. Mrs. Grube thanked the firefighters for all their hard work on recent strike teams and asked if we are going to be reimbursed for all the hotels and food for the strike teams. Mr. Hemmendinger replied we would only be reimbursed for these costs indirectly. Most of the hotel costs were due to the local fires and because of disruptions to normal operations; we were not able to house them locally at our stations. Mr. Pacheco noted that we are cash flow positive for the strike teams and Mrs. Bechtold noted that we are only positive on the reimbursement for the engines. Mrs. Bechtold commented that we are reimbursed by the state for those hotel and food costs for out of county strike teams.

b. Negotiations

No report filed.

c. Equipment

No report filed.

d. Legislative

No report filed.

e. Chief's Evaluation

No report filed.

f. Long Range Planning

No report filed,

g. Capital Improvements

Mr. Proteau commented that with the fires, everyone has been so busy and we have not had a lot of time to follow up on outstanding items.

D. Firefighters' Association Report

No report filed.

E. Firefighter's Union Report

No report filed.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Discussion and Direction on Crown Castle Lease Extension Offers

Mr. Proteau noted that we received a letter many months back from Crown Castle to sign a letter of authorization (LOA) to upgrade the cell towers at station 3. We did not sign this at the time and they never got back to us after we tried to contact them for further information. We recently were contacted again about this LOA. Mr. Proteau talked to Alvin Laxamana at Crown Castle about this letter and reviewed with him the history of the cell tower upgrades and our questions from 2019. We looked for answers at that time, many of which they never answered. Mr. Proteau told Mr. Laxamana that in order to sign the LOA; we need full approval of the Board, which means we need to know precisely what they are doing at the site.

Mr. Proteau also discussed with Mr. Laxamana our budget shortfalls and reviewed the list of capital improvements needed at station 3. Mr. Laxamana noted in the conversation they like to keep their landlords happy, but he has unfortunately turned ours account over to a new person, Safiya, which is about the fifth person we have dealt with. Mr. Proteau has reached out to her twice already, and it was not until late this afternoon they finally talked. Safiya notified Mr. Proteau that Crown Castle has not obligation to help Rancho with anything. Mr. Proteau reminded them they are not following the original terms of the cell site agreement back when this lease was bought 15 years ago. Mr. Proteau also brought up the lease extension offers and that the Board feels they are far from sufficient offers. Safiya feels these are good points and maybe Crown Castle can help with some of these things. He forwarded the lease extension calculations from June to her on what the cost of a 99-year lease is worth in today's money. He expects to hear from them tomorrow. Mr. Hemmendinger thanked Mr. Proteau for his work on this.

B. Discussion on Liability Insurance Policy for Rancho Adobe Firefighters'

Captain Jimmy Bernal talked to the President of the Association, he has made some calls this month regarding insurance, and none has been returned. They are doing more follow up and hope to hear more next month.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution R-3: Adopting a Final Budget for FY 2020/2021

Mr. Hemmendinger noted that the final budget has been calculated and leaves the district \$7000 in the positive.

Motion moved by Mr. Proteau and seconded by Mr. Gadoua.
Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

Roll Call:

Mr. Pacheco – aye
Mrs. Cozad – aye
Mr. Herman – aye
Mr. Proteau – aye
Mr. Hemmendinger – aye
Mr. Gadoua – aye
Mrs. Grube – aye

B. Discussion of Five-Year Plan

Mr. Hemmendinger commented that the budget plan we put together last year for the current fiscal year was less than 1% off what we just adopted. The new Five-Year Plan includes the following changes:

- In wages and benefits, salaries is projected with an estimated 2% increase each year, as a placeholder, though this is no way a promise of what may be given. Also the following years includes a full year of salaries and costs for three full-time paramedic hires. Many costs are associated with our actual costs expected and will change on each category.
- In 2022/23, an administrative contract for Chief has been budgeted for \$150K per year. Mr. Hemmendinger feels this is relative since we do not know what changes are in store for the district. Again, this is just a placeholder for the future.
- Capital improvements have been relatively unchanged this year, and there are some placeholders in the future, though the estimates may be low based on costs projected for engines.
- Starting next year, we are going to dig into our reserves by \$200K, \$372K in FY 22/23, \$150K in FY 23/24 and in FY 24/25; we may see reserves go up \$305K if expenses stay on track.

We need to figure out if this plan is sustainable. We will be cutting the budget close when we are spending \$600K a month and we spend much of our money April through October. One option to consider is to borrow \$500K instead of paying cash for an engine. This would cost us 2.5% interest rate on a five-year loan. The first engine purchase is early next year and we should start thinking how we want to handle our money in the wisest possible way. Mr. Hemmendinger said that once we have a better consensus on the capital improvements, we would publish the updated Five-Year Plan on our website.

C. Discussion and Action on Sending Letters to Sonoma County Supervisors and Sheriff Essick Opposing Defunding of Henry One

Mr. Hemmendinger stated that SCFDA sent a letter to the Supervisors and the Sheriff asking they not defund Henry One. Supervisor Hopkins talked about placing Henry 1 under the Sonoma County Fire District's budget at a cost of about \$2 million per year. Mr. Hemmendinger does not understand how this can make sense and does not feel we should get into the middle of this matter now. Mr. Pacheco does not know of often RAFD or PFD use this resource but he feels it is a vital resource for other areas. Chief Thompson said Henry One is a very valuable resource for Sonoma County and he would hate to see it go away. He feels we should say something to that affect. Mr. Hemmendinger feels this is more of a public debate to get behind and not so much as a funding issue. He thinks Henry One is a valuable asset to all agencies. Mr. Herman commented that the Board of Supervisors have agreed to extend the funding for Henry One for the next two years. The Board agreed not to take action on this item.

D. Discussion and Action on Supporting One Nominee for Vice President of the SCFDA

Mr. Hemmendinger noted that every two years we nominate a new Vice President for the SCFDA who then becomes President for two years. Frank Treanor is stepping down and Steve Akre from Sonoma Valley will be the new President. The two nominees for VP are Fred Petersen and Bill Norton. Each district is entitled one vote at the October SCFDA meeting. Mr. Hemmendinger nominated Fred Peterson for this position because his outlook would be the most useful to the fire districts for the four-year timeframe. Bill Norton comes from Sonoma Valley and he is a bit uncomfortable with both President and Vice-President coming from the same area, as this does not add much point of view. Mrs. Cozad feels Fred Peterson is good choice, as does Mr. Proteau and Mr. Pacheco.

Motion moved by Mr. Gadoua to nominate Fred Peterson and seconded by Mrs. Grube.

Motion Carried: Aye __7__ No __0__ Abstain__0__ Absent __0__

Roll Call:

Mr. Pacheco – aye
Mrs. Cozad – aye
Mr. Herman – aye
Mr. Proteau – aye
Mr. Hemmendinger – aye
Mr. Gadoua – aye
Mrs. Grube – aye

E. Discussion and Action on Appointment of Leslie Cozad to Vacant Board Director Position

Mr. Hemmendinger commented that Mrs. Cozad was given incorrect information on the timeframe to get her candidate information turned in to the County. The communication from the County this year was very poor overall. Mrs. Cozad was not allowed to sit again for her seat, but we will need one more person in addition to the seat Ray Peterson will fill. We want to get this filled before the County appoints someone.

Motion moved by Mr. Proteau to appoint Mrs. Cozad to the Board of Directors and seconded by Mr. Gadoua.

Motion Carried: Aye __7__ No __0__ Abstain__0__ Absent __0__

Roll Call:

Mr. Pacheco – aye
Mrs. Cozad – aye
Mr. Herman – aye
Mr. Proteau – aye
Mr. Hemmendinger – aye
Mr. Gadoua – aye
Mrs. Grube – aye

IX. DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Discussion and Possible Approval on Letter of Authorization for Station 3 Cell Site.

X. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the Regular Board meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Motion moved by Mrs. Cozad and seconded by Mr. Proteau.
Motion Carried: Aye 7 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 0

Roll Call:

Mr. Pacheco – aye
Mrs. Cozad – aye
Mr. Herman – aye
Mr. Proteau – aye
Mr. Hemmendinger – aye
Mr. Gadoua – aye
Mrs. Grube – aye

Date Approved: 10/21/2020