

# Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

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**NOTICE & AGENDA OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 16, 2022 — 7:00 P.M.  
COTATI FIRE STATION - #1 EAST COTATI AVE.  
COTATI, CALIFORNIA**

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

President, Michael Gadoua, called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The agenda for this meeting was posted on March 11, 2022.

Directors Present: Mark Hemmendinger, Michael Gadoua, Leslie Cozad, Bret Herman, Brian Proteau, Ray Peterson

Directors Absent: Carla Grube

Minutes Conducted by: Jennifer Bechtold

**The Board made a motion to add one item to the agenda that needed action prior to the April meeting.**

**Item to be added to agenda is “Discussion on Reducing Board of Directors from Five Members to Seven Members.”**

**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 Meeting of February 16, 2022

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

Motion Carried: Aye   6   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   1  

**IV. CONSENT CALENDAR**

A. Ratification of Checks Issued

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

Motion Carried: Aye   6   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   1

## V. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

### A. Chief's Report

Chief Gossner reported the following items:

- 1.) We are in the process of hiring two paramedics, two full-time firefighters and three part-time firefighters. The process of standing up ALS continues movement forward.
- 2.) We have initiated the upcoming budget process; BCs will be turning in budget reports to Mrs. Bechtold at the of March and then we will schedule a meeting date with the budget committee.
- 3.) We are purchasing four portable radios, an additional heart monitor and hose, all of which are currently budgeted. It is important to note we have one heart monitor on the BLS and once we go ALS, we will need a second one.
- 4.) We recently discovered the Type 6 chassis we thought was ordered long ago was in fact never purchased on the vendor's side. A Dodge chassis has now been ordered.
- 5.) CalFire says we will be in a drought again, and with no measureable rain predicted in the next month, this will put us in a worse situation. Fuel conditions are worse this year than last year at this time.
- 6.) Mrs. Bechtold has been working on part-time firefighter pay issues with PERS. We are awaiting a decision and will report to the Board once we have a determination and solution. We also have a BLS parity pay issue with Petaluma. Their pay is \$2 more per hour and we have found there is some difficulty staffing our days because of this. In May, we will meet with Petaluma to review last quarters BLS figures.
- 7.) On March 1, we reinstated our fire inspection program and are looking at businesses in Cotati and Penngrove. Chief Gossner has notified Cotati's City Manager that we have resumed these inspections.
- 8.) With the inspection process back in place, we do need to update our fee program and complete a fee study. Next week, we have an appointment with a vendor to look at costs associated with doing this study. In May we will likely have something for Board to look at.
- 9.) Monthly call volume is around 200 and we do seem to be responding to fewer calls at SSU.

Mr. Hemmendinger asked where we are at in receiving income from responses to SSU. Chief Gossner replied there is no update on his end. He has been speaking with the Police Chief but he has no money to give, though there may be items they can donate to us for training.

Mr. Herman asked if we would be responsible for inspections at SSU and Chief Gossner replied the state is responsible for conduction these.

### B. Director Reports

Mr. Hemmendinger commented the SCFDA has been trying to improve participation such that we communicate better across the county as well as increased voting and actions. Only about half of the districts are represented at the meetings, with about 15 people attending. Meetings will continued being held through Zoom with a change to in-person sometime this spring. There has been discussion on the ambulance contract as well as what is happening within other districts.

### C. Committee Reports

#### a. Finance/Budget

Mr. Hemmendinger noted we are about \$1.2 million ahead year-to-date from last year's figures. In wages and benefits, we are a bit over on some categories, which is mostly due to overtime and extra help. We will have about \$13K to pull from

the former Chiefs contract. Our expenses remain ahead of budget for supplies and services, though legal services has gone over due to a variety of small reasons. Overall, we still are running about \$580K ahead of budget in unanticipated revenues. Mr. Hemmendinger is working on how this budget is affecting our reserves, and as we look at next year's budget, we need to tie this information in.

Mr. Hemmendinger stated we would need to begin discussions on how to purchase the Type 1 engine. Previously, we were quoted 2.49% on a 7-year loan, which will cost around \$63K in interest. This was quoted a while back, so that interest rate is likely to increase. Mr. Hemmendinger stated he and Mrs. Bechtold have looked into a line of credit through the bank and what this would cost us in comparison. We might not need this line of credit each of the seven years, but may happen some of the time. A \$1 million line of credit at 5.75% would cost us \$2,188 per month in addition to a flat fee of \$2,700. Over seven years, we would spend \$17K if we had to borrow funds for one month to get us through dry period funding. This is still half of what we would pay on a loan. Mr. Proteau said the line of credit makes sense and Mr. Hemmendinger thinks it might be useful to have this line of credit one way or another. Using a line of credit as opposed to taking a loan might even help us with additional funds that could go to personnel over the years.

b. Negotiations

No report filed.

c. Equipment

Mr. Proteau said he has spoken to BC Wandel about 9132's chassis and confirmed this has now been ordered through Dodge. There is no delivery date at this time.

d. Legislative

Mr. Hemmendinger noted there might be some impact to our equipment, which may need to be replaced due to changes Cal/OSHA is working on. This may not have any impact on us financially. Mr. Hemmendinger is keeping an eye on this. BC Taylor has heard through FPOs Cal/OSHA will likely adopt their new regulations after this fire season.

e. Chief's Evaluation

No report filed.

f. Long Range Planning

The committee is continuing to evaluate SCFD and developing a flyer for a full-time fire chief.

g. Capital Improvements

Mr. Proteau and BC Wandel met with Strata Architects to review their proposal for putting together bid packet for the HVAC systems. As of tonight, Strata has not yet responded.

D. Firefighters' Association Report

No report filed.

E. Firefighter's Union Report

Captain Eric Gromala thanked everyone for keeping the Union update on things happening in the District.

VI. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Discussion on Audit Proposal from Blomberg & Griffin Accountancy Corporation

Mrs. Bechtold commented that our auditors, Goranson, CPA has decided they will no longer be conducting public audits. In speaking with other fire districts in the County, most seem to be using Blomberg & Griffin as auditors. Mrs. Bechtold reached out to them and received a very positive proposal, which is attached in Board packets and suggests we align with other fire districts and utilize the resources of Blomberg & Griffin.

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

Motion Carried: Aye   6   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   1  

B. Discussion and Approval of Bid Proposal for HVAC Systems at Stations 1 and 2

Because we have not received the bid to date, item will be continued to next month.

C. Discussion and Review of Recruitment Flyer for Fire Chief

Mr. Hemmendinger said we are adapting an old draft fire chief flyer for the new full-time chief position. The only input so far has been from him and Mrs. Bechtold, so we welcome any suggestions. The salary range is just his suggestion at this point. Chief Gossner is waiting on a couple flyers from other agencies to tune our flyer up. Once we have any other input, we can update the cosmetic stuff within the ad. Mr. Gadoua asked when plan to formally put the ad out. Chief Gossner said he should have something in the next couple of weeks, and are still waiting on stuff from Sonoma County Fire District (SCFD). Mr. Hemmendinger is uncomfortable we are not running dual tracks of advertising for a full-time chief with what is happening with SCFD. He feels we are not reaching out effectively now to see what our audience may be and he urges the group to start to run dual tracks. Chief Gossner feels we have to get some information first from SCFD. A SWOT analysis is supposed to be performed the first part of April and a complete financial picture should be received by the first week in May. Mr. Gadoua would like to get Mr. Hemmendinger in the loop of all these meetings and would like to see a Board member participate in other meetings being held. Chief Gossner replied that the time to involve the Board would be in May with the financial report. Because we are getting close to April, Mr. Gadoua like some landmarks to move forward, as it seems we are just "wait and see" at this time.

The Board would like direction on getting the full-time chief flyer advertised, following a final review at the next LRPC meeting. Mr. Proteau feels the LRPC can finalize the flyer and then begin sending it out. The Board agreed. Chief Gossner suggested the salary range begin at the top-step BC plus 15%.

D. Discussion on Financial Review with Sonoma County Fire District

Chief Gossner noted the SWOT meeting will be held the first part of April and include himself, various members of every rank and file, Board members, and Mrs. Bechtold. The same representatives will attend from the SCFD side. The financial analysis will be held at the beginning of May. From what information Mr. Hemmendinger has gathered from discussions with both district chairs, we have come to SCFD looking for assistance and that we reached out asking us to consolidate with them. He is very concerned there are no Board positions available for our members. Additionally, through SCFD minutes last month, Chief Heine reports they have held collaborative

meetings with Rancho Adobe and the City of Sebastopol. It seems SCFD is treating us as a district in trouble and is concerned this is coming across different from Chief Gossner versus Chief Heine versus what they are hearing from the Board. Mr. Hemmendinger states that we believe we should be allowed two board positions with any agency we merge ourselves into and this is a big worry for our Board with how we are representing our community. There are some concerns over what Chief Heine wants, what the Board wants and what staff wants. It is coming across on a superficial level that we join SCFD and then Rancho Adobe disappears. Mr. Hemmendinger commented Rancho Adobe has spent the past 15 to 20 years correcting what has been done here. He says it is difficult to hear that this should just be wiped out because of a merging of organizations. We have not created financial problems we have fixed them. In 2018, Rancho Adobe went about our tax measure and hired no one as consultants to help pass this. Our supervisor was absent from any help to us. Mr. Hemmendinger is not ready to just roll over and accept SCFDs position. He wonders if this is just empire building to have more weight in front of the county. There are some strong reservations from Mr. Hemmendinger on how Rancho Adobe is being seen by SCFD. He has not spoken to anyone at this point. Chief Gossner said this is the first time he is hearing this and he does not get this viewpoint from Chief Heine. Yesterday Chief Gossner met with Chief Heine who said the voters must vote to extend the Board by two people. Mr. Hemmendinger said this is not true and that it needs to go to LAFCO who would then approve a change in Board size. You can only do this during the course of a reorganization and no general election is required. Mr. Hemmendinger has checked the accuracy of this information with two LAFCO officials. It must be voter approved if not approved through an annexation.

Mr. Gadoua noted he had a meeting with the SCFD Board President. He was told Rancho Adobe came to SCFD about consolidation. SCFD's President also said Rancho Adobe would disappear following the consolidation. Mr. Gadoua said we have been working hard the past couple years to right the boat and move forward. He hates to rush into anything and wants to ensure we pursue the full-time fire chief position. Chief Gossner commented that Chief Heine feels it would be a huge problem if we hire a fire chief. Mr. Hemmendinger replied that we have to clear with any candidates about our future. Mr. Proteau said there is a lot to impact with consolidation and we need to see the financial reports. He said not to take too many discussions personal. Mr. Hemmendinger would like to clarify Rancho Adobe's interest in continuing on the future Board with SCFD. Mrs. Cozad said she wonders if we should hold back on pursuing the fire chief's posting. Chief Gossner commented we could put the flyer out in a manner that is not confusing to potential candidates. Mr. Herman said he has searched for online fire chief recruitment flyers and there are some fancy flyers out there. He feels we have some work to do on our draft. Mr. Gossner commented many flyers are professional brochures.

Mr. Herman asked once we get financial information from SCFD, who is the accountant checking all the boxes on our end. Chief Gossner said since we went to SCFD for consolidation, they are producing the reports, which we will review it and see if it makes good financial sense to move forward. He also noted there must be a five-year service plan to go with any consolidation. Mr. Herman said since they just took on Bodega Bay, wouldn't those numbers be available publicly. Mr. Hemmendinger said as a LAFCO member, he has a copy of what was submitted to LAFCO and will have Mrs. Bechtold forward this information to Board members. Operationally it does not make sense to us but SCFD does have this financially worked out within the report. Mr. Herman also wants to know on our side who is running the numbers and reviewing them. Mr. Hemmendinger replied our staff and the Board would vet the reports.

E. Discussion on Retraction of SOI Request Regarding Lakeville, Wilmar and Two Rock Volunteer Departments

Doug Hamilton, North Bay Fire Authority Board President commented Mr. Gadoua reached out schedule a meeting with him. During the meeting, Mr. Gadoua asked what he could do help them out and Mr. Hamilton asked our Board to retract the SOI request sent to LAFCO back in 2019 so it does not affect their three-year process of consolidation with Gold Ridge. Mr. Proteau commented that three years ago when the letter was written, we had a different dynamic with Petaluma Fire. While the letter is not currently obstructing North Bay Fire's progress forward, the Board felt since we are moving in a different direction, it makes sense to retract the original letter.

Motion moved by Mr. Proteau to rescind letter and seconded by Mrs. Cozad.

Motion Carried: Aye   6   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   1  

F. Discussion on Reducing Board of Directors from Seven Members to Five Members

**Item F arose following the posting of the March agenda. Board of Directors has voted to add item to the agenda as it will need formal action this evening.**

Mr. Gadoua commented he received a call from Director Grube that she is resigning from the Board due to personal circumstances. The Board now must address the interest filling this vacancy or reducing the Board down to five members. Mrs. Cozad said that she does not have the personal time to give to the Board and she feels it is a perfect opportunity to offer her resignation. She has learned so much over the years and her heart is heavy in doing so.

Mr. Hemmendinger said the Board must vote on reducing to five-person Board. A letter should be written to LAFCO requesting approval of this action. LAFCO allows under their laws and rules to consider this request for reorganization of the Board under any other reorganization in front of them. He believes in April that North Sonoma County Fire District annexation will be in front of LAFCO. If not in April then the first Wednesday in May. We should request this item be placed on their agenda. Mr. Hemmendinger will notify LAFCO and the Board of Supervisors of our request.

Motion moved by Mr. Proteau to reduce the Board of Directors to five members and seconded by Mrs. Cozad.

Motion Carried: Aye   6   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   1  

**VII. DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Bank papers for signers
- Property liability insurance option

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, the Regular Board meeting was adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

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

Motion Carried: Aye   6   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   1

Respectfully submitted,

*Jennifer Bechtold*  
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Jennifer Bechtold, Board Clerk

Date Approved by Board:

April 20, 2022  
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