

# Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 15, 2023 — 7:00 P.M.  
COTATI FIRE STATION - #1 EAST COTATI AVE.  
COTATI, CALIFORNIA**

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

President Brian Proteau, called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The agenda for this meeting was posted on March 10, 2023.

Directors Present: Mark Hemmendinger, Michael Gadoua, Bob Moretti, Brian Proteau, Ray Peterson, Sage Howell, Bret Herman (late arrival).

Minutes Conducted by: Jill Melendy

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

**II. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

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

There were no public comments.

B. Correspondence and/or Presentations

There were none.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Meeting of February 15, 2023

Motion moved by Mr. Gadoua to approve the minutes of February 15, 2023 and seconded by Mr. Hemmendinger.

Motion Carried: Aye 6 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1

**IV. CONSENT CALENDAR**

A. Ratification of Checks Issued

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

Motion Carried: Aye 6 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 1

## V. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

### A. Firefighter's Union Report

Engineer Ikalani reports they are starting the process of negotiations. Mr. Hemmendinger will discuss with Captain Gromala and Chief along with other committee members and will put out a request for negotiations.

### B. Firefighters' Association Report

Engineer Ikalani announced nominations have opened for the 2023/24 Executive Committee. Voting will occur before the next meeting in April. New terms start May 5th. Engineer McClendon will take the seat of President and all other positions will be up for voting.

### C. Chief's Report

Chief Veliquette reported the following:

- No significant storm damage, minor flooding, trees down, vehicle accidents.
- Type 3 engine on Monterey strike team. OES order sent down 3-4 days ago for reposition for atmospheric river.
- Penngrove remodel set to begin late April. Had kickoff meeting with contractor.
- HVAC project for Cotati and Liberty beginning late March and one weeks' worth of work but delay in obtaining products.
- Temporary housing trailer moving to Penngrove starting April 3rd. Propane and sewer tanks to be connected.
- Crews are preparing for move out at Penngrove station.
- Rough draft of preliminary budget 2023/2024 complete. Received input for spreadsheet and will have to the Finance Committee at the end of March. Will also discuss CalPERS unfunded liability and how that will affect us.
- Logo design for branding and patch. James gave overview of design. Goal is to represent our communities. Three emblems include Liberty Bell representing Liberty Valley, hexagon representing Plaza in front of Cotati Station, hills in background representing the Penngrove and Sonoma Mountain hills.
- Standing item for each meeting will be the status of a potential ballot measure which is petition driven for March 2024. Requires 50% threshold for passing. One-half cent tax approximately \$62 million dollars annually to Sonoma County Fire Service. Fire Service driven and independent of County of Sonoma. Working group is looking to hire contractor for ballot language. Polling happening now and available for review next week.
- They will be hosting a zone meeting (Rancho Adobe is in Zone 9 along with Petaluma and Rohnert Park) on April 6th for one hour. Presentation for Chiefs, elected officials and union representatives with question and answers. Can bring as many, or as few people. Extended invitation to Board President and Union President. Will be in Santa Rosa and possibly Zoom availability.
- Reviewed various training and operations this last month which included storm preparations, some snow and rope rescue.
- Feb Calls for service include 107 medical, 88 good intent, 36 other, 6 fire and 9 false alarms. Sonoma State had 42 calls which 27 were cancellations, 7 medical calls and a couple of carbon monoxide.
- Review of upcoming events and meetings.

D. Director Reports

Mr. Hemmendinger reported that LAFCO meeting met at first of month. There were no protests on Northern Sonoma County Fire District. In April there will be a meeting considering a sphere of influence change needed for Gold Ridge's operating plan approval to incorporate North Bay Fire. He expects it to be a long and contentious meeting.

E. Committee Reports

a. Finance/Budget

Mr. Hemmendinger commented on the increase of overtime costs in February compared to last year. Chief had mentioned there were people on strike teams, people off on Worker's Comp and vacations that led to an increase of overtime. Other than that, spending appears to be on budget and on target.

Finance Committee needs to meet before end of month to discuss budget and with unions and other employee groups where to go with their needs. Should be able to report back on some recommendations on CalPERS evaluation report of unfunded liability. We have received recommendations, will look at alternatives, and summary of what options are available.

Mr. Proteau noted that we will begin to spend down line item 9510-Building Improvements and with two contracts left we will be \$50,000 under the budget on that line item.

b. Negotiations

Mr. Hemmendinger questioned if BC's are discussing amongst themselves what they are going to add or are they waiting to get closer to budget.

Chief Veliquette reports that Mrs. Bechtold reached out to legal counsel to get clarification of Negotiations Committee and if it was subject to the Brown Act. We felt in the negotiation process it was not an open meeting to the public, no minutes were kept. Their recommendation was to disband the Negotiations Committee and have the Board President direct whatever members he would like to be the negotiators for District along with the Fire Chief. Per LCW, they recommend the District reorganize this conceptionally and instead of a committee just have the Board designate three Directors as the District's labor negotiators.

The reason they felt it was a standing committee and not an ad hoc committee was that it had continuing subject matter for the District. Even though negotiations would end but would then start up again. It had an ongoing subject matter.

Mr. Hemmendinger indicates the committee will consist of Mr. Hemmendinger, Mr. Howell, and Mr. Peterson. The Negotiations Committee to be removed off list of committees and will now be a report.

c. Ad-Hoc Legislative

No report filed.

d. Long Range Planning

No meeting held.

e. Ad-Hoc Capital Improvements

Mr. Proteau said pre-construction meeting on past Monday with two contractors on two different projects. Waiting for our contracts to be returned. Once under construction, we will have a monthly report. Can remove this item from the agenda. Will need Board Approval for any potential change orders. Chief confirming that District will use the term “proposed change orders”, agree to proposed change orders and to then bring all to the Board at one time for one action. Will keep Board posted on construction status.

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. Discussion on Proposed Sales Tax

Chief Veliquette said this is an opportunity for the Board to ask questions for clarity. Looking to include administrative and financial support, training, Administrative Chief Officer support, capital improvements, expansion and mechanical support. Evaluating what is reasonable and what is needed to carry the District forward. The goal is to get this passed so District’s requests are not underrated and we can look towards a stable financial future.

Discussion about distribution system. There are a lot of ways to allocate funds. They are focused now on ballot language for passing the sales tax. The governance piece will come shortly with more involvement. This will certainly change along the way. Mr. Hemmendinger expressed his objection due to ambiguity of measure and questions if District should take part in assessment.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Discussion and Approval of Strategic Plan and Goal Setting for 2023 – 2028

Chief Veliquette presented the final copy of 2023-28 Strategic Plan from Goal Setting session noting that this is a living document and the goals should be reviewed and refreshed annually.

Motion moved by Mr. Peterson to approve the Rancho Adobe Fire District Strategic Plan 2023-2028 and seconded by Mr. Hemmendinger.

Motion carried Aye: 7 No: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

B. Discussion and Approval of Sonoma County Fire Chiefs’ Association Special Membership Assessment

Chief Veliquette recommended District approves contribution to the Sonoma County Fire Chiefs’ special members assessment. Provides seed money to hire consultant to move forward in ballot measure, polling inquires and reviewing ballot language. Numbers were developed to determine cost per agency by a call volume model. RAFD is in the \$5,000 range. Would potentially provide funding that could provide stability to our organization in the foreseeable future.

Discussion about the shortfall from needed \$150,000 which could be an additional assessment in next fiscal year. Mr. Hemmendinger said he is skeptical and not in favor of assessment wanting more people drawn into process. Concerned with distribution plan. Engineer Ikalani noted Union support for Chief in exploring possibilities to help with long term needs. Mr. Peterson suggests providing a letter of Board’s concerns along with assessment. Agree to Chief, Mr. Hemmendinger, and Mr. Proteau express detailed concerns in letter for future of funding distribution and governance method.

*New Business Continued:*

Motion moved by Mr. Gadoua to provide assessment of \$5,000 to Sonoma County Fire Chiefs' Association Special Membership Assessment along with a letter from the Board, seconded by Mr. Howell.

Motion carried: Aye: 7 No: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

**VIII. DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Mr. Hemmendinger requested Board be prepared to present the consultant's report on CalPERS and unfunded liability for discussion and possible action.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

Motion carried: Aye: 7 No: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 0

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Jill Melendy for Jennifer Bechtold, Board Clerk