

# Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District

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**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
FEBRUARY 21, 2018 — 7:00 P.M.  
COTATI FIRE STATION - #1 EAST COTATI AVE.  
COTATI, CALIFORNIA**

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

President, Carla Grube, called the Regular Board Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The agenda for this meeting was posted on February 15, 2018.

Roll Call:

Directors Present: Carla Grube, Mark Hemmendinger, Greg Karraker, Michael Gadoua, Nole Pacheco

Directors Absent: Harold Griffith, Brian Proteau

Minutes Conducted by: Jennifer Ober

**II. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

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

Mr. Mark Landman, the Mayor of Cotati, introduced himself and thanked everyone for their hard work they do every day and for all their work during the firestorms. He thanked Chief Thompson and all the BCs for their communication and work with the staff at the City of Cotati and noted this is beneficial to both the city and the district. He offered his time to meet with the Board of Directors and discuss any issues or as an opportunity to get to know one another. He would like to suggest that the Chair and Vice-Chair visit the Council and explain the needs we have as we go on the ballot this year.

Mr. Karraker introduced Mayor Landman to SCI Consultant Mr. John Bliss.

B. Correspondence and/or Presentations

Items of correspondence were in Board packets.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Meeting of January 17, 2018

Motion moved by Mr. Karraker and seconded by Mr. Pacheco.  
Motion Carried: Aye 5 No 0 Abstain 0 Absent 2

#### **IV. CONSENT CALENDAR**

##### **A. Ratification of Claims and Journal Vouchers**

Motion moved by Mr. Karraker and seconded by Mr. Hemmendinger.  
Motion Carried: Aye   5   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   2  

Meeting carried forward to Item A under Unfinished Business.

#### **V. ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

##### **A. Chief's Report**

Chief Thompson commented that we had 157 total incidents in January with 83 EMS calls. BC Weihman commented that retention and recruitment has been a real issue the past 6-8 months, but we now are picking up three firefighters that will be starting and another three that will be starting the background process. We are also losing three part-time firefighters, one of which was working many shifts each month. Chief Thompson also noted that we are conducting exit interviews to find out what we are doing good or what can be improved upon. Members will be attending sexual harassment training on April 3 and Chief officers will be attending a training on April 4 titled "Managing Risk in Fire Service Operations." BC Wandel said we are working on the probationary handbooks with new firefighters and engaging in the first round of testing. The Engineers academy has four participants and the Captains assessment center is being worked on. Work continues on the plan to put an EMT ambulance into service at RAFD, and the old engines are being advertised for sale.

BC Wandel said he has spoken with many different contractors about the roof at station 3. He has two more local companies coming Monday or Tuesday to look at the roof, but we are looking at a substantial increase in price due to so few contractors. The project won't be started probably until summer.

##### **B. Director Reports**

Mr. Karraker stated that he and Chief Thompson met with the CFO and CSU Attorney at SSU today. Their CFO stated law prohibits them from paying for fire service but if we can offer up other additional services, they may be able to come up with \$40K. There is some momentum, but we aren't where we thought we might wind up. Mr. Karraker would like to investigate how San Luis Obispo was able to pay their fire department for services.

Mr. Hemmendinger said that he and Mr. Gadoua went to the SCFDA meeting and Jim Colangelo spoke about the fire consolidations currently being looked at. He also mentioned that there was an article in the opinion section of the Press Democrat which was written by two Board members from Geyserville and Kenwood about the county stepping up to help the fire districts. These gentlemen were also attending the SCFDA meeting.

##### **C. Committee Reports**

###### **a. Finance/Budget**

Ms. Ober noted that we did a portion of the April property taxes due to the recent tax law changes. This amounted to approximately \$400K.

Mr. Hemmendinger commented that he and Mrs. Grube sat down and talked about the current budget. In doing projections, it looks like we may come in with less of a deficit than what we are seeing now. However, this will only happen if we don't spend what we are currently projecting. We are in a very

tough year and they suggest we take a hard look at areas we haven't spent yet. BC Weihman feels that there isn't much in the budget that doesn't need to be spent. Chief Thompson said he will meet with the BCs and Ms. Ober and go over the budget.

b. Negotiations

Mr. Pacheco stated two contracts being approved tonight and one more is being worked on that will be discussed in closed session.

c. Equipment

There was no report.

d. Legislative

There was no report.

e. Chief's Evaluation

There was no report.

f. Long Range Planning

There was no report.

D. Firefighters' Association Report

Captain Jimmy Bernal noted the Awards Dinner will be held on April 20, and Ms. Ober will be sending out invitations soon. The Association is also talking about the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and dinner plans.

E. Firefighter's Union Report

The Union continues to work on negotiations for the MOU. Captain Bernal expressed that the Union is very happy that the three-year contract for the Chief services was approved. He also mentioned that community outreach is ongoing, and they are meeting on March 1<sup>st</sup> meeting with students at Rancho Cotati High who are interested in firefighting careers.

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

A. Discussion on Ballot Measure for November 2018

Item was moved under Consent Calendar.

Mr. John Bliss introduced himself as the CEO of SCI Consulting Group. They work with a lot of governments to put measures on the ballot. The goal is additional revenue for the district that is significant enough to keep us from treading water and keep us afloat. We want something with at CPI and something that doesn't expire. There are two ways to do this; a special tax (voted on in June or November, with a 2/3rds threshold) or a benefit assessment, also called Prop 218, (must hire engineering firm and they must do a study that shows the citizens receive a benefit from the assessment). There is vulnerability in the benefit assessment, which calls for 50% of property owners to pass, as opposed to registered voters. The votes are weighted by how much property the person owns. Mr. Bliss feels that we are better off trying to pass a special tax.

Mr. Bliss offers two pieces of advice, one being authenticity. This means owning up

to past mistakes, don't hide things and earn credibility. The second thing is specificity, which means we absolutely need to know our numbers; financial and budget in particular. We should consider doing a survey before we do anything moving forward. This is done to test the threshold. This determines what types of services are most important. Community outreach is very important; both meetings and door to door.

Mr. Karraker said we have been working on a five-year plan and this will be released to the public soon. Mr. Bliss said this is a good idea. He suggests creating a service model that supports the \$300/parcel. We may also come up with several models at different rates to test. Chief Thompson commented that if we go our five years, we are under water by \$1.5 million. Mr. Karraker asked about the timing of the survey and Mr. Bliss said about three months prior to the measure and the cost will be around \$30K. We need to determine what stuff we can do ourselves and what stuff we may need to hire out. Mr. Bliss said that in August, we will need to turn in a resolution to the County asking to put a measure on the ballot which will also include the ballot language.

Mr. Gadoua asked what needs to be determined by an Engineer firm for the benefit assessment. Mr. Bliss responded that we would hire a certified Engineer who will determine what special benefits property owners will receive through the benefit assessment. The report would have to be persuasive. He noted there are two types of survey's and the most appropriate for our situation is called a cold survey, which is done prior to any public outreach.

Chief Thompson asked if the pension issues in the fire service will have a negative impact on our ballot measure. Mr. Bliss said yes, this will, but we need to explain that we have made a commitment to firefighter salaries that we have to stand by. We need to stand by retention and the fact our pensions are lower than other agencies.

Mr. Karraker reviewed the recent PAC meeting notes and revised documents were handed out to the Board and the Public. The five-year plan was reviewed and a few more changes were made. Mr. Landman commented that we have a compelling story about our financial woes and that we were formed without a good financial plan 30 years ago. He feels that selling this in the right way, and after the tragedy of the firestorms, we have a fantastic opportunity to pass this measure. Furthermore, he offered any assistance we may need on the measure.

B. Discussion on Replacing Roof at Liberty Fire Station

Item was discussed earlier.

C. Discussion on Five-Year Plan

Item was discussed earlier.

D. Discussion on Policy 4011 Code of Ethics (Final Reading)

There was only one correction which has been made. The Board discussed who is ultimately allowed to speak to the press and it was decided the Board President would always be the contact.

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

Motion Carried: Aye   5   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   2

E. Discussion and Presentation on Core Values (Report to Be Provided by Captain Jimmy Bernal)

Captain Bernal handed out a revision of the Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values. The Board reviewed these and agreed they are appropriate for our district. They thanked Captain Bernal for his time and effort on this.

Motion moved by Mr. Karraker and seconded by Mr. Pacheco.

Motion Carried: Aye   5   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   2  

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Resolution R-6: Resolution Authorizing a Three-Year Shared Service Contract Between the City of Petaluma and Rancho Adobe Fire

Chief Thompson commented that the only difference that occurred in this draft was the he was able to reduce the total cost from \$72K to \$57K.

Motion moved by Mr. Karraker and seconded by Mr. Pacheco.

Motion Carried: Aye   5   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   2  

Roll Call:

Mr. Hemmendinger – aye  
Mr. Pacheco – aye  
Mr. Gadoua – aye  
Mr. Karraker – aye  
Mr. Griffith – absent  
Mr. Proteau – absent  
Mrs. Grube – aye

B. Discussion on Proposal for Volunteer Fire Companies Administrative Services (Report by Chief Thompson)

Chief Thompson put together a proposal of ideas on the best ways to move forward in Zone 9. He is waiting to hear back from the County on the idea of funding the training officer position for \$100K. Mr. Hemmendinger asked what the reaction was from the five other agencies and Chief Thompson said they are all very supportive, as is Rohnert Park. We just need money to move forward at this point. There is an excellent value in standardization and meeting state mandates, as well as having a responsibility for the reserve program. Chief Thompson will keep the Board updated as things move forward.

C. Consideration of Memorandum of Understanding between the District and The Paid Firefighters Union for January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

Item has been tabled until the March Board meeting.

D. Consideration of Memorandum of Understanding between the District and The Battalion Chiefs for January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

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

Motion Carried: Aye   5   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   2  

E. Consideration of Employment Agreement between the District and The Administrative Manager for January 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

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

Motion Carried: Aye   4   No   0   Abstain   1   (Mr. Karraker) Absent   2

F. Discussion on Change in Pay Rate for Part-Time Firefighters (Staff Report by Jennifer Ober)

Ms. Ober reviewed the main points of her staff report with the Board and pointed out that we have a real challenge on our hands for recruitment and retention of the part-time firefighter program. While there is a monetary challenge with the overtime, her concerns from a Human Resources standpoint is the fatigue factor currently hitting the full-time staff. Some members are working five to six days with no time off. This can create a dangerous environment for them as well as their peers. While we recognize our budget is in deficit mode, we also need to consider the costs that are generated when we have so much turnover. Increasing the minimum wage may be a way to keep people committed to Rancho Adobe instead of having to hold two or three other jobs.

Mr. Hemmendinger said that he is in favor of increasing the wage, but we have used some of the monies for pay increases in the chart laid out by Ms. Ober. He feels we can consider the increase in wages while budgeting the next fiscal year. Mr. Hemmendinger is concerned that we may have no choice and he has spoken to many staff members about the overtime issue and mandatory requirements. Mr. Pacheco said that often times part-time staff is not happy even with increased pay until they get a full-time position. BC Wandel said these people are going to shop around where they can get the most pay and health benefits. He does feel that increases in wage will help keep them local and pay for their health insurance, possibly keeping them for years. BC Weihman also commented that most of our part-timers have second jobs, and so an increase in pay could tilt the balance a little more in favor of Rancho Adobe.

Mr. Hemmendinger agrees there is a sense of urgency in deciding what to do with the part-time rate. Captain Bernal feels that we need to increase the pay. He would like to speak to the part-timers about whether \$15.00 is enough for them to stay. This is yet another stepping-stone towards getting the appropriate level of staffing. Ms. Ober commented that there is more to this than the dollar figure. There is a demand on staff to be at work days on end, leading to more fatigue and injuries. It's also a hardship for spouses and children. Engineer Kyle Heard said there may be some leverage if we offer benefits as opposed to pay increases. We will look at any possibly financial savings in the next month and come back and talk more about this at the March Board meeting, with the goal of getting this concluded in the next couple months.

**VIII. DIRECTION ON FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Presentation by William Berry about campaign.
- Decision on using Streamline for our website management.

**Meeting adjourned into Closed Session at 9:35 p.m.**

**IX. CLOSED SESSION**

A. Pursuant to Government Code §54957(e), the Board will hold a closed session for the following reason: PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT.

Action Taken: None

B. Pursuant to Government Code §54957.6, the Board will hold a closed session for the following reason: CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATORS. District

Subcommittee: Nole Pacheco, Mark Hemmendinger and Michael Gadoua

Employee Organization: Paid Firefighters Union

Action Taken: Changes are being made to the MOU.

**Closed Session was adjourned at 10:09 p.m.**

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, the Regular Board meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

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

Motion Carried: Aye   5   No   0   Abstain   0   Absent   2  

Date Approved:   3/21/18