



RANCHO SANTA FE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District - Board/Community Room
16936 El Fuego
Rancho Santa Fe, California

September 10, 2003
1:30 p.m.

The Board of Directors participated in a workshop with District Staff from 12:30 – 12:55 p.m. The purpose was to demonstrate how the fire engines operate on a 20' roadway. The demonstration took place at 5433 La Crescenta, Rancho Santa Fe. (T.B. 1168 C-1).

1. *Meeting Called to Order/Roll Call*

President Ashcraft called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Directors Present: Ashcraft, Douglas, Hillgren, Lombard
Directors Absent: Hickerson
Staff Present: Erwin Willis, Fire Chief; Nick Pavone, Deputy Chief; Don Butz, Deputy Chief, Cliff Hunter, Fire Marshal; Karlana Rannals, Board Clerk

2. *Pledge of Allegiance*

Director Ashcraft led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. *Badge Presentation - Introduction*

Chief Willis with the assistance of Director Hillgren presented a Fire Inspector badge to Kelly Arneman. Kelly, the District's former Staff Assistant for Fire Prevention, was selected as the successor to Dawn Robinson effective September 1, 2003.

Chief Willis introduced Karen Berding as the new Staff Assistant to Fire Prevention. She was selected as the successor to Kelly Arneman effective September 1, 2003.

4. *Approval of Minutes*

Karlana Rannals distributed a corrected version of DRAFT minutes, noting grammatical corrections. MOTION BY DIRECTOR DOUGLAS, SECOND BY DIRECTOR LOMBARD, and CARRIED 4 AYES; 0 NOES; 1 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve and file:

- a. Board of Directors regular meeting minutes held August 22, 2003.

5. *Security Patrol Monthly Report – August 2003*

Chief Wellhouser was unable to attend. Monthly report reviewed and filed.

6. *Correspondence*

Chief Willis read letters of appreciation and acknowledged receipt of the following:

Captain Cox received a dining gift certificate

Firefighter/Paramedic Slattery and Wos received tickets to "Party at the Paddock"

A thank you letter, with a \$100 donation, was received and forwarded to the Firefighters Association.

He noted that prior to distributing any items that was for specific personnel, he had consulted with the District's legal counsel to make sure there were no conflicts.

7. *Public Comment*

Marie Addario, Camino Privado – informed the Board of Directors that the Rancho Santa Fe Association - Art Jury had sent a letter to the Fire District to request a meeting to discuss ways in which the two organizations can cooperate.

8. *Administrative Items*

a. *Fire Department Access Roads – Administrative Guidelines*

President Ashcraft informed the members of the public of the format followed on this item. He would allow ample time for public comment (limited to 5 minutes per speaker) and that Staff would have the opportunity to speak first.

Chief Willis provided a PowerPoint presentation covering the historic review of wildland fires statewide, noting the thousands of structures and dozens of lives lost over the years. He also included examples of roads within the Fire District that are currently substandard, and showed actual photos of District equipment that responded on August 29 to the 5,000 square foot barn fire on El Camino Real.

Chief Willis introduced Captain Tony Michel, who responded with a District structure engine to the wildland fire in Fallbrook on February 10, 2002.

Captain Michel summarized the activity of the strike team that their engine was assigned to, and reported on the numerous problems that they encountered. It included weather, narrow roads, and concerned and angry residents.

At the conclusion of the Staff's presentation, Staff responded to questions from the Board of Directors. President Ashcraft invited members of the public to speak. The following is a summary of the speaker comments:

Marie Addario, Camino Privado spoke that she was saddened that this meeting was a reiteration of the three-hour debate from the last meeting. This meeting confirmed her suspicion that the Fire Chief is inflexible and uncooperative. She will support the 20' standard and is disappointed that the Chief did not come back at this meeting with options for a 20-foot maximum, as the Board of Directors directed him to at the last meeting.

Sugie Silver, Camino Privado requested to clarify her comments from the last meeting, noted in the minutes. She did not intend to support that the street needs to be widened; she stated that if cars do not pull off the side of the street, the access is difficult because of landscaping such as sprinklers and large tree trunks.

Ken Bien, San Elijo spoke in support of reducing the road standard to 20 feet. He was a resident of Berkeley at the time the fire occurred. Because of the winds, which were identified as a factor beyond control in the presentation by Chief Willis, the damage could not be contained. He stated that hot embers landed in Sacramento 90 miles away. There is community support to reduce to 20 feet and supports the continuation of that standard.

Franci Free, La Crescenta supports the 20-foot road width standard and encouraged the Fire District to educate the residents about having an evacuation plan. The Fire District developed an excellent brochure and should plan an outreach using this as a tool.

Jim Schumacher, La Gracia asked why this topic could not be treated as each situation occurs. He supports the 20-foot standard; he does not want the community to look like a freeway.

Sharon Dunn, Las Colinas spoke in support of the 20-foot road width.

Tom Lang, La Orilla spoke in favor of the 20-foot road width. He also asked why this topic cannot be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Jenny Freeborn, Las Colinas conveyed her appreciation for the fire departments work, but she question whether we are comparing apples to apples, such as the Harmony Grove Fire and the Gavilan Fire. With the landscaping, ponds and swimming pools, could the fire department make available pumps to pump water if necessary? She does not support changing the character of the community. Ms. Freeborn reported that has lived in Rancho Santa Fe for 36 years and there have not been any brush fires. She asked when the last time the Ranch had a brush fire.

Smith, Rancho Santa Fe Association Manager, 17022 Avenida de Acacias commended Staff on being a strong supporter of fire safety. However, as the Association Manager, he believes the report appears to be zealous, is inaccurate and misleading information. The experts they have talked to paint a different picture. He noted that regulations are not so set or firm that they do not have exceptions. This is a unique Fire District, which needs unique solutions. He encouraged the Board of Directors to seek a reasonable compromise in looking for a unique solution.

Captain Greg Rainville, President, Rancho Santa Fe Firefighters Association spoke of how unique the community of Rancho Santa Fe is the type of real estate, unique governance and the hometown spirit. He believes that the Fire District has responded to the uniqueness of the community by making every effort to prevent a large wildland fire from occurring, which includes the type and design of equipment, and public education. He reminded the Board of Directors and the community that on the eve of September 11th two years ago the Nation's perfect world ended. It also ended the lives of 343 firefighters. Not one of your firefighters live in Rancho Santa Fe, yet we are here every day of the year committed to protecting your property and your lives, and they put their lives on the line for the people of this community. He urged the Board of Directors support the Fire Chief and not to compromise the safety of the residents or the firefighting personnel retain the minimum standard of 24-foot roadway widths.

President Ashcraft offered each board member an opportunity to comment on the DRAFT guidelines.

Director Douglas – complimented the speakers of their passion of the rural community; however, they are asking that he weigh safety against aesthetics. He does believe that the Board of Directors or Staff should not implement any guideline that is not consistent with the District's Ordinance, particularly after witnessing the demonstration showing that two engines cannot pass each other on a 20-foot roadway.

Director Lombard – shared his observations from the demonstration noting that the engines could not pass each other without potential damage on a 20-foot road. He noted that as a board member he was having a difficult time with his ethics and responsibilities. Perhaps the District should consider handling these issues on an appeal basis.

Director Hillgren – understands the dilemma between the life safety standards set by the fire district and the issue of aesthetics and cost. She supports a compromise by enforcing a 20-foot standard.

Director Ashcraft – reported that he has been looking at the roads of the entire area. Many areas of the District have problems. He reported that he believes that more work needs to be done in fire prevention, evacuation training, and does not believe that the County will actually fund to improve the roads to 24 feet. Our personnel should review our method of training and come up with new techniques to deal with 20-feet in residential areas.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR HILLGREN, SECOND BY DIRECTOR ASHCRAFT, and CARRIED 3 AYES; 1 NOES (Douglas); 1 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to direct Staff to implement an administrative policy for Ordinance No. 03-01 when determining road widths that includes the following:

1. When an existing private road serves 2 or fewer homes, the minimum road width shall be 16-feet.
2. When an existing private road serves 3 - 8 homes, the minimum road width shall be 20-feet.
3. When an existing private road serves 9 or more homes, the minimum road width shall be 24-feet.
4. Further, any new road that is constructed, or a road that has never paved, is not subject to the administrative policy and shall have a minimum road width of 24-feet.
5. Roads that are 16-feet or 20-feet in width shall have turnouts every 400 feet.

Chief Willis requested that the Board of Directors also increase the minimum square foot trigger from the current 1 square foot to 500 square feet. The board members believed that they did not have enough information and agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.

b. Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District Strategic Planning Process

Mr. Jim Boylan, Pathfinders summarized the changes between his original proposal and the revised proposed schedule that was included with their board agendas. He reported that he held his first meeting with the Executive Management Team, and this meeting was very productive. Through everyone's effort, the outline provided will be used to meet with all members of the district. He reminded the board that the meetings scheduled with personnel is not intended to establish goals, but provides enough information for the Board of Directors to use in their goal setting sessions.

He requested that the Board schedule their two ½ days planning sessions and encouraged them to meet away from their normal meeting place. All members agreed to bring their calendars to the next meeting to schedule the sessions.

c. Emergency Response Compensation

Chief Willis summarized the staff report included with the agenda. He reported, that if approved, Staff will have authorization to compensate Fire Marshal Hunter for excess hours worked when he has been requested to participate with his assigned team.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR DOUGLAS, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILLGREN, and CARRIED 4 AYES; 0 NOES; 1 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to accept Staff's Recommendation and modify the language of *Resolution 221 – Emergency Response Compensation* which includes the ability to compensate the Fire Marshal.

d. Deputy Chief Recruitment - Compensation

Chief Willis summarized the staff report included with the agenda. He informed the Board that Chief Neville plans to retire this year. The desire is to have a closed promotion recruitment. Our employees who are eligible to compete would have to take a pay cut if they want the promotion and would also be required to relocate to be within a thirty minute response time, based on the current salary range of \$88,666 - \$113,900. He recommended that the Board authorize a starting salary of \$101,760 for a successful in-house candidate.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR HILLGREN, SECOND BY DIRECTOR LOMARD, and CARRIED 3 AYES; 1 NOES (Douglas); 1 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to accept Staff's Recommendation and approve the starting salary for an in-house successful candidate at \$101,760.

9. Finance

a. List of Demands – August 2003

Monthly report reviewed and filed.

b. Final Budget FY 03-04

President Ashcraft opened and closed the public hearing. Karlana Rannals informed the board that she had not received in written correspondence regarding the final budget.

Chief Willis summarized the changes between the final and preliminary budget adopted in June 2003. Staff responded to questions from the board.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR LOMBARD, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILLGREN, and CARRIED 4 AYES; 0 NOES; 1 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve Fiscal Year 2003/2004 Budget as presented.

10. Staff Report

a. Fire Prevention Report

Fire Marshal Hunter reviewed the previous month's statistics, noting that new construction square footage had increased. He noted a large project in the 4S Ranch area, a Boys & Girls Club, and increased the number of inspections.

b. Contaminated Soil

Chief Pavone reminded the members that they had a copy of the quarterly report ~~feasibility study~~, which the County is still reviewing. From the last quarter test, additional free product was discovered in a new well. The direction of the plume is moving northwest.

c. Operations Report

Chief Neville summarized the monthly activity report and provided information on the structure fire on El Camino Real. He noted the cause of that fire is undetermined.

d. Training Report

Chief Butz summarized the previous month's training hours, which had an emphasis on Cal OSHA and EMS training.

e. Fire Station(s) – Update:

Chief Butz reported on the following:

Rancho Cielo – the District has been informed that a grading permit has been approved by the County.

Fairbanks Ranch – no additional information.

Admin Building – no additional information.

Training Tower – the project continues to move forward, however, we have not broken ground to date.

f. AB 1690 (Leno) Public Safety Finance Agencies

Chief Willis provided an update on the status of this legislation, which is still active. The Board requested that Staff continue to monitor the status of this legislation, and did not take a position (favor or opposition) at this time.

g. Rancho Santa Fe Review Letter to Editor – Should the District Respond?

Director Douglas discussed with the board the merits of responding to the resident to correct the inaccurate information included in the “Letter to the Editor” He believes that all residents should know that resident disputes with the Rancho Santa Fe Association do not come to the Fire District and the Fire District Board of Directors treats all residents with respect. Another option discussed included requesting that the Fire Chief respond to the resident correcting the inaccuracies and invite him to a meeting. At the conclusion of this discussion, no action was taken.

11. Directors Report

a. North County Dispatch JPA – Director Ashcraft reported the following:

No report

b. CSA-17 – Director Lombard reported on the following:

No report

c. Ad Hoc Committee – SFID Projects

No report.

12. Directors Comments

Director Hillgren stated to Staff and members of the Board that she hopes that everyone understood her decision regarding the road width decision. She stated that she tried to do her homework and that she would never do anything inappropriate, or compromise the safety of others. She was looking for balance on this issue.

13. Closed Session

President Ashcraft reported that the matter scheduled for closed session was not complete and there was no need to have a discussion.

14. Announcement of Closed Session Actions

President Ashcraft reported there is no announcement due to there being no need for closed session.

15. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Karlana Rannals
Secretary

James H Ashcraft
President