

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
ROARING FORK FIRE RESCUE AUTHORITY
VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING**

October 20, 2020

Authority Board President Ed Van Walraven called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Board members present were Ed Van Walraven, Leroy Duroux, John Young, Bill Boineau, Dave Heivly, and Irene Greiser. Others present were Chief Scott Thompson, Deputy Chief Pete Bradshaw, Division Chief Richard Cornelius, Finance Director Jennifer Thompson, Human Resources Director Renee Thomas, IT Director Erik Johnson, Attorney Bob Cole, Lieutenant Andy Fisher, Firefighters James Dirkes, Gregory Gibbons, and Ben Smith and Administrative Assistant Susan Herwick.

Minutes of September 15, 2020 Meeting:

Director John Young made a motion to accept the minutes as read, the motion was seconded by Director Irene Greiser. All were in favor and the motion carried 6 – 0.

Public Comments:

None

Attorney's Report:

Attorney Bob Cole stated that he had no report for this month.

Chief's Report:

Chief Scott Thompson stated that Front Range Fire paid a \$9,000 penalty on our new Ladder Truck so that issue has been completed to our satisfaction. The older of the new Ladder Trucks is now in Denver being fixed.

Chief Thompson stated that the big issue that he brought before the Board at the last meeting was the West Sopris Creek Fire Station. He has worked with length with the water attorney, engineer, and Greg Winkler with the State. The estimate for all of this work will be \$150,000. The State is willing to pay for half of that. He is in the middle of writing a grant request to add those funds to our current grant from DOLA. This will add \$75,000 to our portion of construction costs which is doable. He explained every other possible option that they could think of in order to make this project work. Paul Moto, the water attorney, says that in his experience the augmentation plan will make this project happen. The only thing that would cause an issue is if one of the five ranches that has water rights on West Sopris Creek would protest our plan to build a fire station. Once we get a date for water court, we are going to take the plans to Pitkin County and try to get a building permit so this project can get started next Spring. Tom Newland has been working on the building permit for the last six months and has it partially approved. It should take less than six months to obtain a complete building permit from Pitkin County. Lots of discussion ensued.

Chief Thompson stated that he and Renee had a very positive meeting with the Union group. They want to help us enhance our communications which is what we try to do every day. They want to help us try and figure out why we have had people resign from the Authority in order to take a job elsewhere. We are going to interview the people who have left and try and come up with a common theme as to why they are resigning. We are trying to condense the two set of minutes that were typed up down to one concise document that contains all of the information of the meeting. As soon as it has been completed, he will send a copy to all Board members.

Director Irene Greiser asked if we have an unusually high rate of turnover compared to other Districts. Human Resources Director Renee Thomas stated that she ran the turnover statistics for volunteer, part-time, and full-time responders. As of August 18, 2020, our turnover rates were 2.5% for full-time, 23.8% for part-time, and 2.27% for volunteer responders. All of these combined equals a turnover rate of 6.67% of total personnel. Anything less than 10% is considered ideal. The percentage for part-time responders was high because we had five part-time people resign who weren't keeping up with the minimum requirements. The turnover rate standard is 7 – 8%. Lots of discussion ensued regarding turnover. We are conducting exit interviews. Director Greiser asked whether anyone had viable complaints.

Chief Thompson stated that we can't compete with the wages at other agencies in the metro area and Aspen Ambulance District. He doesn't think that our turnover is high. Living in this valley is hard. The cost of housing, food, gas, etc. are all higher here than elsewhere. Most of the people who live in this valley are also away from extended family. Chief Thompson stated that the strategic plan should help us identify some of these things and make it better for our employees.

The strategic plan is not on hold but moving forward slowly. The vision part has been finished. We can't meet in person yet. Chief Thompson explained that we have been working on what the Authority will look like in thirty years. The next phase is to make initiatives for how are we going to get there in the next thirty years. The executive staff and Board members will be involved in this next step.

Director John Young asked how many Union members we had. Chief Thompson stated that he did not know. Union President Aaron Allard stated that they had 23 of our 24 full-time employees enrolled with the Union.

Deputy Chief of Operations Report:

Deputy Chief Pete Bradshaw stated that he and Chief Thompson were continuing to work with the Communications Center to bring them into 21st Century standards. Lots of positive changes are being made. The goal is to improve customer service.

New SCBAs and Thermal Imaging Cameras are in the budget to be purchased next year. These items should be ordered before 10/30/2020. If we do so, we can get our order in with Garfield County and a Front Range order which will be a significant savings to us per unit.

Deputy Chief of Administration Report:

Deputy Chief Kevin Issel stated that he has been busy getting vehicles, buildings, and landscaping winterized.

He sold the Heavy Rescue unit to a small Volunteer Fire District in South Carolina. The Ladder Truck for Station 41 should be back soon. As soon as it is back in service, we will pull the oldest Ladder truck out of service. It is on the market and we have reduced the price of it twice but we haven't had anyone interested in it yet.

He has been recently working on Stations 43 and 44.

We are hanging onto the two-bedroom/two-bath employee housing unit in Crawford right now. One of our new employees may need it. Director Boineau asked how long we would let it sit empty before we gave it up. Chief Thompson stated that we will be interviewing a few people for full-time positions in the next couple of weeks. Whomever we hire might need housing. Jennifer Thompson explained the monthly cost of keeping the employee housing unit available. Director Young thinks we should sit on it until it is filled. Lots of discussion ensued. The District owns all but two of their employee housing units outright.

He met with FCI at Station 45 in order to make adjustments to the heating/cooling system for the training room. This is a separate system from the rest of the building. We are also working on some on-going maintenance issues that need to be resolved before we close out the Bond Fund in January.

He is also trying to figure out vehicle maintenance now that Brian Benton has retired. We are using outside entities to get the smaller maintenance items completed.

Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal Report:

Deputy Chief John Mele stated that they would be interviewing two local people for the Fire Inspector I position on October 29, 2020.

Director Boineau stated that he would be talking with John regarding wildfire mitigation and what some insurance companies are telling their customers they must do in order to obtain fire insurance. Wildfire mitigation inspections and hardening building construction will help a lot. You do not need to clear cut your land. The Fire Prevention Bureau can intercede on behalf of the homeowner with their insurance company to some degree. Lots of discussion ensued.

Division Chief of EMS:

Division Chief Richard Cornelius stated Pitkin and Eagle Counties have adopted the Colorado COVID-19 Dial. The State of Colorado is currently in the Yellow Safer at Home and in the Vast, Great Outdoors Level 2: Concern (middle of the dial). 58% of new cases in Eagle County could not recall a known exposure to someone with illness or confirmed COVID-19

Statewide mask order extended through at least November 10, 2020. The statewide daily positivity rate is hovering around 5% which is the threshold among other metrics to transition to more restrictions.

RE-1 Schools grades K-3 are expected to return October 19, grades 4-8 on October 26, and High School students on November 2, 2020.

Aspen Schools are planning a phased reopening. Aspen Elementary School will open on October 26, secondary students grade 5-12 will do a hybrid fashion with two groups of students half attending in A week and half attending in B week.

We are currently fit testing all members of RFFRA to a standard N-95 respirator. All N-95 respirators will be standardized throughout the Authority. Richard explained the differences between a surgical mask, an N-95 mask, and the standard face covering that most people are wearing.

With regards to a COVID-19 vaccination, Pfizer expects to have an Emergency Use Authorization out possibly in late November. All states submitted their COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans to the CDC last Friday. HCP and public safety have been prioritized. Richard stated that if we need to get someone tested, we will be able to do so. The turn around time for results is about three days.

Director Boineau asked what message the Community is receiving about wearing a mask. Discussion. Eagle County is revving up their public messaging. We can get a copy of it and share it with Pitkin County. Chief Thompson stated that we can also post something on our social media account and website.

Flu season is upon us. The State started influenza surveillance on September 27. We strongly recommend that everyone get a flu vaccination. There will be a free flu vaccine clinic in conjunction with MIRA, ECPH and MVFP on Thursday, October 22 from 1300-1700 at English in Action.

Please maintain your diligence. The COVID-19 pandemic still poses a threat. Just yesterday we transported two patients that required that we FOLLOW-ID protocol. We know one patient tested positive. Crews wore appropriate PPE. We have reminded the duty crews to maintain physical distance and wear a mask anytime you can't, particularly while on-duty. Crews were also asked to remember the enhanced PPE requirement anytime you are on an EMS call. A neighboring fire department has a COVID-19 positive responder and now other members on the public health team have been ordered into isolation or quarantine. We've also had two people contact traced to a class they were taking last week so they are being quarantined at home right now.

Chief Thompson is thinking about locking down the fire stations again. Director Ed Van Walraven stated that he would rather us be proactive rather than reactive. Richard explained our COVID guidelines to the Board. We are going to be stuck with this pandemic for a long time.

We received the three Mechanical CPR devices that we ordered on Friday. We will be placing them in service next week. We will close out the DOLA grant once an invoice is received. With the mechanical CPR devices and PPE, we should reach the \$100,000 limit.

Richard thanked the Board of Directors for letting us upgrade to the Life Pak 15 monitors. This allowed us to replaced monitors form 2010 with version 1 software to version 4. These monitors have already been placed into service.

Richard stated that he received word yesterday about some new technology out that tests for exposure to COVID. Each ring costs \$300.

Division Chief of Training:

No report.

HR Report:

Human Resources Director Renee Thomas stated that we just completed interviews for full-time firefighter this week. We are conducting interviews for Fire Inspector I on 10/29/2020, and we have a volunteer recruitment underway.

She is also working on updating any policies that need the Boards approval at the meeting in January. With COVID there are a lot of Federal and State policies that need to be added to our updated policy manual such as the Healthy Families Act. When COVID-19 first hit, emergency personnel could be exempted from some of this but going forward that is not the case. All public agencies who meet the criteria will have to provide sick leave pay. We already comply with this mandate by having sick leave banks and we have an emergency sick leave bank for COVID-19 that we enacted. The other one is Equal Pay for Equal Work. This is all about compensation and was enacted because of gender inequality in wages. There are six criteria in this Act that you must comply with. Most of this we already do but we need to do an analysis and look at where we are and what else must be done. We also need to look at how we can change our wording so that we comply better with these mandates. The public sector is ahead of the private sector in data collection for this project. We are already doing a lot of the items required by this Act. She explained the requirements.

Harassment training is coming up for cost containment and employee performance evaluations are also coming up in the next couple of weeks.

Finance Report:

Finance Director Jennifer Thompson stated that page eight summarizes what is going on with the budget and the revenue that is coming in. The increases and decreases in property tax revenue through abatements and the Gallagher adjustment were explained. We are looking at a net gain of \$204,580 in revenue. The increases and decreases in budget line items were explained. The 2021 Operations budget is pretty stable. It has only increased 2%. On page nine is the capital purchasing schedule which

details the purchases needed in 2021. Deputy Chief Bradshaw stated that we are going in with Garfield County on a large MSA SCBA order that will save us a lot of money. We chose MSA because it is the pack that everyone in the valley uses. We will receive a free bottle with every pack that we order. The bottles will all be labeled RFFRA which is a big issue on mutual aid calls. We were able to get a volume discount and regional grant for this order. Pete explained the number of packs and bottles that were being ordered. Director Boineau asked what the discount was that we received by doing this. DC Bradshaw did not know right off. Director Boineau thinks that it would be good to know so that we could explain to our taxpayers that we saved a specific amount of their money through due diligence in our bulk purchasing with other Departments for certain items. Chief Thompson stated that this order costs less than what we paid per pack nine years ago and that is outstanding. Lots of discussion ensued.

Director Boineau made a motion to approve the replacement program for the SCBA packs . The motion was seconded by Director Van Walraven; all were in favor and the motion was approved 6 – 0.

Jennifer stated that there are two budgets in this packet on pages 12 – 13. The budget on page 12 is what is reported to the State. The budget on page 13 shows how we separate out all of our accounts. Most of our spending is in the Capital Fund. If you look at column one on page 13, we are running a -\$115,000 shortfall on the books because she underestimated all of our revenue line items.

Director Irene Greiser stated that apparently, we are not going to lower the mill levy once again. Jennifer explained that to do so would require a major rework of all of the budgets. Director Boineau stated that we agreed to take the heat if anyone were to ask. We are being as fiscally responsible as we can be with the taxpayer's money. Lots of discussion ensued. Chief Thompson stated that we will leave the matter of lowering the mill levy up to the individual District Boards. We have had lots of things hurt us this year such as COVID-19, the economy, and the Gallagher Amendment. Jennifer stated that when we have a windfall, we can issue a temporary tax credit to the taxpayers. A temporary credit is reversible. Lots of discussion. Chief Thompson hopes to lower the mill levy sometime in the future. The difference in Districts was discussed. The amount of revenue each District contributes to the Authority is very even. Jennifer stated that if you look on Page 22 of the profit and loss statement, we have sold almost \$80,000 worth of vehicles and we received \$24,700 as a supplemental cost reimbursement from EMS this year.

We have already de-Gallagherized. Chief Thompson stated that no one expects the de-Gallagher Amendment to pass at the State level.

All budget resolutions will be voted on at the regular meeting in early December.

Resolution Seven amending contribution rates to the FPPA Defined Benefit System Administered by the Fire and Police Pension Association for reentry firefighters for the Roaring Fork Fire Rescue Authority was explained by HR Director Thomas. Director

Boineau made a motion to approve Resolution Seven as read; the motion was seconded by Director Duroux. The motion was approved 6 – 0.

Jennifer stated that next year we will need to approve a supplemental budget resolution for the budget year of 2020.

Information Technology:

None

Board Comments:

Director Heivly stated that it would be common sense that the Sopris Mountain Ranch Homeowner's Association would support what we are trying to do out there. Does our contract with the HOA have any kind of time-line as to when they are going to get the monetary pledges from their members for this project? Chief Thompson stated that before we sign the contract with a construction company to build Station 46 they will need to come up with the portion of the construction costs that they have promised us or we will not move forward with the project.

Director John Young stated that he wanted to thank Jennifer Thompson for the outstanding job she is doing with our budgets and audits which are spot on. The Board agreed.

Staff Comments:

None

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

None

Volunteer Meeting:

We will have a virtual meeting on November 3, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. We have requested that questions be submitted ahead of time. Director John Young stated that he would attend this meeting.

Adjournment:

Director Greiser made a motion to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Director Van Walraven. All were in favor and the motion passed 6 – 0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.