



**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
September 19, 2023**

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**Call to Order:**

Noting a quorum was present, President Ed Van Walraven called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Roll call:**

Deputy Chief of Operations Richard Cornelius, Human Resource Director Renee Thomas, Treasurer Ellie Striegler, Board Member John Young, Vice President Scott Arthur, Deputy Chief Fire Marshal John Mele, Deputy Fire Marshal Brooke Stott, Firefighter/EMT Ethan Printy, President ED Van Walraven, IT Director Eric Johnson, Finance Director Jennifer Thompson, Deputy Chief of Administration Kevin Issel, Executive Assistant Jennifer Diamond, Lifesize, Board Member Dave Heivly, Fire Chief Scott Thompson, Board Member Leroy Duroux, and Attorney Bob Cole.

**Swearing in and badging for Ethan Printy**

**Approval of August minutes-**

Treasurer Ellie Striegler motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Board Member John Young made a second motion to approve the board minutes, non-opposed.

**Attorney Bob Cole Report:**

Attorney Cole said he worked on the Basalt Election, preparing the ballot for the tabor notice; he advised he was also working with the bond council through election issues. Attorney Cole said he attended last month's SDA Meeting and saw Jennifer and Scott Thompson at the SDA meeting and recommended other board members attend. Attorney Cole said there were many education opportunities for special districts, educational legal requirements applicable to all districts, tabor elections, the Open Records Act, and more. Attorney Cole said, in addition, there were break-out sessions that focused on fire districts and the fire service. Attorney Cole stated this conference did an excellent job of educating legal requirements that apply to all districts. President Van Walraven had a couple of questions as he attended some of the classes virtually; regarding the HH presentation, as a Board Member, what are we allowed and not allowed to do regarding the HH Bill? Attorney Bob Cole responded this applies to all matters before the

elector, not just HH, with something that includes the bond issue ballot question that Basalt Fire is asking; this is a discussion of the Fair Campaign Practices Act. Attorney Coles goes on to say once a ballot has been certified, the Fair Campaign Practices Act kicks in, and it prevents spending public money or taking a position to advocate for or against any candidate or ballot measure; so, once HH is certified, we are hands off on talking about them if spending public money to do so. Attorney Cole reviews, you can't spend public funds to prepare campaign signs; you can't spend Authority money to advocate voting one way or another; you can't use the copy machine; you can't use the paper. Attorney Cole says you must be independent from the Fire Authority if you take a position. Attorney Cole says three areas in the law that allow public funds to be used: 1) Attorney Cole recommends doing this with all Boards - any board can adopt a resolution, take a position on the matter, and then decimate in it the usual way if you already do - if using the web site or highlight in a newsletter. Attorney Cole said that sometimes the resolutions are picked up by an independent campaign committee that publicizes them. 2) it is not recommended by Attorney Cole - to allow a neutral piece for and against and have no conclusions. Attorney Bob Cole does not recommend this because you cannot use it to advocate your position. Attorney Cole says it is tough to walk the fine line and not advocate having the best, most compliant because if topics get heated, whoever is against waits two weeks before the mail ballots are out, then they can file a piece that says they are not neutral. Attorney Cole says they can damage your reputation in the paper with the opportunity to say it was not neutral. 3) each elective official can spend \$50.00 on an advocacy piece to cover minor inadvertent violations not intended to use public funds to advocate. Attorney Cole recommends a resolution; if the Board is in favor, you have the right to advocate and write letters to the editor. Chief Thompson asked Attorney Cole for a fact sheet for firefighters; what can or can't they do? Attorney Cole said yes, he can develop that. Attorney Cole said if someone calls into the district office and asks a question directly, you can answer their question. Board Member John Young asked if we would be in violation by using public money to have the Attorney do the fact sheet? Attorney Bob Cole said the fact sheet is information on the Fair Campaign Practices Act. Attorney Cole says an example is yes, you can stand outside the post office, don't wear a Roaring Fork Fire Rescue uniform or shirt, but driving there in a marked Fire Vehicle is okay. Attorney Cole reminds the Board that public funds cannot pay for the campaign; if creating a focus group, you need to form a committee to comply with the Fair Campaign Practices Act. For more information on a campaign committee, contact Attorney Cole offline, as there will be no charge, so there is no violation, and he will give you further direction. Attorney Cole says the latest challenge to HH contains too many subjects, and the Supreme Court heard a violation of constitutional and statutory provisions in that regard. Attorney Cole said the Supreme Court kicked it back and said it's okay, so Attorney Cole doesn't think any pending challenges could be brought up to prevent HH from being on the ballot. Attorney Cole says he fully expects it to be before the voters.

### **Fire Chief Thompson Report:**

Fire Chief Thompson said The Chamber of Commerce is doing a get-together for the taxpayers at Basalt Library in October and would like some Basalt Fire Board members there to sit and talk with the community; just a heads up, for now, nothing needs to be decided.

Chief Thompson wanted to ensure the Board received the Meet and Confer notes as they had not been receiving the minutes from the Local Union. Vice President Arthur wanted to confirm the

minutes came from the Union. Fire Chief Thompson confirmed that union members wrote them. Vice President Arthur had questions about the verbiage in the notes, particularly about the volunteer organization and the discussions of it emerging on your relevancy. Vice President Arthur asked if we are still working on trying and bolstering that volunteer program or if it will continue to be a program where we hire a few people till they disappear. Chief Thompson said the volunteer program is now a recruitment tool. Chief Thompson said older volunteers are not doing station coverage hours, and the volunteers need to feel needed. Chief Thomson said we have to have paid staff to run the stations, and there are several volunteers who help us keep our stations open, but most of our volunteers are here as a recruitment. Chief Thompson says some older volunteers are moving away from this organization because they need to meet our standards. Vice President Arthur said it's unfortunate and believes other organizations in the valley do not have these issues. Chief Thompson said we hold our firefighters to a higher standard and are not willing to have firefighters go on calls on the 2nd day; they must get their certifications first. Vice President Arthur advised that the volunteer requirements for Aspen Fire were the same as those requirements for RFFR and that all response by new recruits prior to finishing their training was in controlled crew configurations for safety.

Chief Thompson said Aspen Fire offers full-time medical benefits for their volunteers. Unfortunately, Chief Thompson stated, that is not something we can afford to provide; that budget is five firefighters for us. Chief Thompson said it's difficult for us; many volunteers have lost housing, have had to work two or three jobs, and we are low on their list of priorities. Vice President Scott Arthur asked another question from the Meet and Confer notes: if the number of people RFFR is hiring is more than six, RFFR may not be able to pay in the future; the Board was told you didn't have the resources to train more than six. Chief Thompson said this should have been revised as the number fifteen is the relief factor we cannot hire as we do not know in two years if we can continue to support fifteen on a shift; we can support twelve people on a shift.

Chief Thompson said he had scheduled a planning pre-application meeting for Station 42, and they are working on an RFP for the architect. Fire Chief Thompson said the survey had been done for the purchase contract, and the Attorney will review it as soon as it's on paper. Fire Chief Thompson said there are some easement issues to work out, but nothing complicated. President Van Walraven asked Chief Thompson where we were with the water tank in West Sopris? Fire Chief Thompson said he got the draft engineering report, and it needs some changes, so we are waiting for the final draft report.

### **Finance Director Report:**

Finance Director Thompson said the budget committee met last week to discuss the 2024 budget, and she is presenting this Board with the same presentation. Finance Director Thompson noted on page 12 of the budget summary that she took the revenue we would gain from 2024 if we took the full mil. Finance Director Thompson said the assessed evaluations already fluctuate in Eagle County; Basalt is at fifty-nine, and Snowmass is between sixteen and sixty-two. Finance Director Thompson said there is no number for Pitkin County till September 27 and came up with a 10 % decrease, but it will not count toward the majority of the people who have contested their bills; it is unknown what the number will be. Finance Director Thompson said she took a conservative approach and took 10 % off that number given to her in August. Finance Director

Thompson said 10 % for Pitkin County, and our net gain if we take the whole mil is 5 million dollars going from that number. Finance Director Thompson noted on page 15 that this is the generalized budget for the State of Colorado: yellow if we took the full mil, the blue if we took two mil credits, the orange if we took one and half mil credits, the pink at the bottom, is a one mil credit. Finance Director Thompson said going to the bottom of the sheet will show you the net or loss; in the yellow, it's \$556,000 extra. Finance Director Thompson said the last is \$968,900 in the red; if you go to the line below it, the top number is the operating, so if we take a mil credit at the end of the day, we would have 6 million in operating remaining. Finance Director Thompson said we would have 4.6 million in capital remaining. Finance Director Thompson said there isn't a deficit; we are just spending down our reserves in capital. Finance Director Thompson noted other areas of unknown revenue are wildfire; we have been budgeting \$75,000, and this year, we will have \$200,000 from two partial deployments. Finance Director Thompson said we will continue to budget \$75,000, but it's a revenue item that will probably come in higher. Finance Director Thompson said the grant would offset the ambulance purchase next year. Finance Director Thompson said for operational expenses, here is a summary of how we came up with numbers. Finance Director Thompson said our medical insurance came in at a 3 ½ % increase on our rates from last year. Finance Director Thompson said this includes a step implementation plan for all personnel, longevity pay, and differential pay, which are paid out as a bonus and only affect the singular year; they do not affect the benefits. Finance Director Thompson said this includes a COLA based on the new hourly salary from the step plan. Finance Director Thompson said the COLA is set at 7%, 2% for the 2023 catch-up because we only did 3% last year, bringing that up to 5% and then 5% for 2024. Finance Director Thompson said the budget includes an addition of six full-time responders, three Paramedics, and three Lieutenants, with an estimated cost including benefits of seven hundred and eighty thousand. Finance Director Thompson said the proposal for overtime for responders is built-in overtime regardless of PTO usage. Finance Director Thompson noted the estimated cost is around \$360,000, including benefits. Finance Director Thompson explains further our responders either get 28 or 4 hours of overtime built into their salary, depending on their shift, and we would have to pay benefits on that. Finance Director Thompson said adding an EMS division Chief with a cost estimate of about \$173,000. Finance Director Thompson said salary adjustment ranges from 107 -110 percent over the market. Finance Director Thompson said in 2023 our overall payroll budget was 6.3 million; with these changes, our payroll budget will increase to 8.6 million with a net increase of 2.3. Finance Director Thompson said our budget for this year was 8.1 million dollars. Finance Director Thompson said our operating budget for this coming year is 10.9 million. Finance Director Thompson said the overall budget increase for next year is 2.8 million. Finance Director Thompson adds that 2.8 and 2.3 of that is in personnel. Finance Director Thompson said items of note in the budget increase of 500 million were an increase in wildland mitigation, training by almost \$30,000, and \$85,000 in paramedic education, including tuition, rent, and cost of living. Finance Director Thompson said there was an 11% increase in building with a new facility. Finance Director Thompson said the contracted service maintenance agreement that's our life pack increased substantially. Finance Director Thompson said the AI wildfire cameras, including a \$50,000 new line item, increased operations with seven new employees and employees housing due to our assessments. Finance Director Thompson said the operating budget is a 29% increase overall. Finance Director Thompson said there have been some changes to the capital items, and the public safety for \$62,500 has gone away and will drop out of that line item. Finance Director Thompson said 450,000 for the tender carried over from

this year's budget because it won't be ready till next year. Finance Director Thompson said the same with the ambulance cost of \$332,000, and \$126,000 is covered by a grant. Finance Director Thompson said we have a \$400,000 brush truck and \$80,000 for staff vehicles. Finance Director Thompson said we still need to put the air conditioning units in Station 41, that's \$50,000, and we hope to pay some of that this year. Finance Director Thompson said Station 43 needs a new roof and painting, approximately \$150,000. Finance Director Thompson said she put the 250,000 in for the water tanks for Station 46 and \$75,000 for landscaping and irrigation. Finance Director Thompson said in equipment; they are asking for \$15,000 to purchase a vehicle AC recovery unit for the mechanic and the rest for equipment on the tender. Finance Director Thompson said the total capital pros are more like 1.8 once you take the 62.5 out. Finance Director Thompson said, looking at page 15, she suggests going with one mil credit. Finance Director Thompson said, looking at page 16, where the operating and capital money, we are in the position of \$6,000. Finance Director Thompson said she would take \$975,000 out of the capital budget into our reserves. Finance Director Thompson said one idea to help with the operating side is wildfire money we are already paying them, so taking out \$75,000 in operating and putting it into the capital replacement plan. Vice President Arthur asked a question regarding the paramedic fund: is the \$85,000 coming out of operations or the paramedic fund? Finance Director Thompson said it comes from both and about \$200,000 in the fund. Finance Director Thompson said the new assessments will be out on September 28, 2023. Treasurer Striegler asked how she determines the COLA increase since it changes yearly. Finance Director Thompson said with the step plan and a 5% increase in the budget moving forward, every budget process will need to address the COLA. Finance Director Thompson said that on October 15, 2023, the plan is to bring this budget for 1st reading. Finance Director Thompson said changes can be made until the final December reading; however, if HH passes, everything stays the same except the accessor has until December 29 to get me the changes in valuations and pushes the final reading to January 5, 2024. Finance Director Thompson said I will know more on November 7; RFFR will need to update the calendar for December 6th or 7th and any time after December 29. Board Member Young says glad you are supporting the personnel; it is appreciated.

**HR Director Thomas report:** HR Director Thomas said the compensation team is not presenting forward anymore because we are waiting for final approval on the budget. HR Director Thomas said this is a step plan, and they are working on putting the compensation manual on paper so you can see it. HR Director Thomas said the succession team presented to the Executive Team on September 5, and the Executive Team approved what they were proposing; they plan on presenting to the Roaring Fork Fire Board in October. HR Director Thomas said the employee Recognition Team needs to present to the Executive Team and Roaring Fork Fire Rescue Authority Board in October 2023 so they can present at the annual awards dinner in January 2024. Board Member Arthur asked about the Empowerment Mapping group since Dr. Livengood is not involved; are you finding a different person? HR Director Thomas said no, we are handling it internally. HR Director Thomas said Erik is on the team, so we are moving forward as it is always an ongoing process; for example, when do we send out uniform sizing, etc... Vice President Arthur said he spent time reviewing turnover information; we recently lost career staff, and we are at five career staff, correct? HR Director Thomas noted the transition from that staff member went from full-time to part-time staff. Vice President Arthur requested that our turnover numbers be compared to fire departments and not to private ambulances. HR Thomas said OKAY.

### **Fire Marshal Report:**

Deputy Chief Fire Marshal Mele said the presentation with Snowmass Town Council overview of wildfire mitigation went well. Deputy Chief Fire Marshal Mele said they are finishing up a 32-35 acre burn behind Stellar Ln; it has been a successful year, with only a few weeks to go.

### **Deputy Chief of Operations Report:**

#### **August Volunteer Hours**

234 total volunteer hours  
204 In-station hours  
22 All Call Only  
8 Special Event hours

#### **Incidents**

##### **August 2023**

250 Total Incidents  
111 EMS-related incidents

##### **August 2022**

221 Total Incidents  
100 EMS related incidents  
Increase of 29 incidents  
13.1% increase

##### **2023 YTD**

1807 Total Incidents  
831 EMS-related incidents

##### **2022 YTD**

1670 Total Incidents  
813 EMS-related incidents  
Increase of 137 incidents  
8.2%

#### **CO EMS Supplemental Payment**

Deputy Chief Cornelius advised on August 25, 2023, he signed the FY 2022 Medicaid Cost Report certification. Deputy Chief Cornelius said after the 10% state administration fee of \$10,274.71, we will receive \$92,472.43. Deputy Chief Cornelius said we will participate in the FY 2023 CO EMS Supplemental Payment Program. Deputy Chief Cornelius adds training for the FY 2023 program will take place next week and cover the program overview and the Ambulance Service Cost Reporting portal, where all data is entered.

### **Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control 2023 Direct Distribution Grant**

Deputy Chief Cornelius said he applied for the 2023 Direct Distribution Grant through the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control for structural personal protective equipment (PPE). Deputy Chief Cornelius said that ten sets of structural PPE were requested through this grant. Deputy Chief Cornelius adds should the grant be awarded; we can purchase ten sets of structural PPE in 2023, totaling 20 new sets. Deputy Chief Cornelius said we estimate each set of structural PPE to cost \$3804.57.

### **MSA Altair 4XR 4-Gas Meter**

Deputy Chief Cornelius said the Fire Apparatus Standardization Team (FAST) worked to purchase new 4-gas monitors to replace existing RKI 4-gas monitors that have reached the end of their useful life. Deputy Chief Cornelius added that all 4-gas monitors will be identical on all fire apparatus. Deputy Chief Cornelius said our vendor provided a trade-in value for the RKI monitors. Deputy Chief Cornelius says that in addition to 12 new MSA Altair 4XR 4-Gas Meters with charging stations, two calibration stations were purchased so crews on the east and west sides of the Authority can easily calibrate the 4-gas monitors. Deputy Chief Cornelius said the total of the capital purchases was \$22,120. Deputy Chief Cornelius adds Thanks to FAST for their work on this important project.

Board Member Young asked if more volunteers would be needed in areas like Thomasville. Deputy Chief Cornelius said we are lucky to have seven volunteers in good standing in that area who meet RFFR's training requirements. Deputy Chief Cornelius said it's great to rely on those who have training and can relay information to the rest of the team. Board Member Young is supportive of helping them in any way we can.

### **Deputy Chief Administration Report:**

Deputy Chief Issel said Station 44 continues to have drainage issues, and a dry well is being installed. Deputy Chief Issel said Station 41 generators are installed. Deputy Chief Issel says we are renting eighteen of nineteen filled units and are holding a vacant for the upcoming hiring process in case it's needed. Deputy Chief Issel said the Thomasville Hunter dinner is in October, and he will get information out to the Board when he has it.

### **Master plan discussion:**

Fire Chief Thompson says we are slowly picking away on items.

### **Public comments:**

None

### **Board Member comments:**

President Van Walraven said lots of great information at the SDA conference: lots of good information on the recorded meetings, including information on HH and classes on reading financial statements, but most of all, it was good to get with like-minded people.

**Staff comments:**

Chief Thompson said thank you for our Board conduct and how we work together; we have an adaptive Board for the firefighters, no bickering. THANK YOU!

**Other News:**

Chief Thompson advised the Board the new Volunteer's official name changed to Roaring Fork Fire Rescue Volunteers.

Chief Thompson advised that RFFR is doing live fire training this week, so personnel are covering for each other.

Heivly volunteered for the next volunteer meeting. October 3, 2023.

**Swearing in and badging for Ian Lumsden**

**Adjournment:**

10:24 Treasurer Striegler motioned to adjourn. Board member Scott Arthur seconded the motion, and the motion passed non-opposed.

To watch this meeting in its entirety, please go to the following link:

<https://youtu.be/IHH7GaWXQUU>