

Ridgway Fire Protection District
Regular Meeting
March 9th, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 5:36 pm by Board member, Eric Dickerson, at the Ridgway Volunteer Fire Department located at 251 N. Railroad Street, Ridgway Colorado. Also, in attendance were Board directors Mary Reinhardt and Gary Redmond, Ridgway Fire Chief Chris Miller, RFPD administrator Katy LaSala, and RFPD legal counsel Bo Nerlin. Board Chair Charles Mueller and Vice Chair Ned Bosworth were also in attendance via Zoom.

FINANCIALS

BILLS

➤ MOTION by Reinhardt to approve bills as presented. SECOND by Dickerson. ALL IN FAVOR.

MINUTES

➤ MOTION by Bosworth to approve the 2/9/21 minutes as presented. SECOND by Dickerson. ALL IN FAVOR.

OLD BUSINESS

Ouray County Extrication

Chief Miller stated that we are still trying to work out the details with OCEMS. No action was taken at this time.

Ladder Truck Update

Chief Miller stated that the ladder truck is back from being painted. We are currently letting the paint cure while getting it equipped with necessary tools and equipment. However, if needed, we could use it now.

CHIEF'S REPORT

- Chief Miller reported that we purchased an engine that is in Las Vegas for \$43,000. He plans on driving to pick it up later this month.
- We voted Steve Menz onto the fire department at last week's RVFD meeting. He is structure FF1 certified, but, more importantly, he has over 10 years of wildland firefighting experience. As such, he will be our Engine Boss for wildland assignments.
- Dickerson arranged for us to train and burn a house in Elk Meadows. The current plan is to burn it on April 3rd.
- We received permission from the County to use the Communications Van. Chief Miller has a revised IGA that he will give to Mueller to sign. All Ouray County emergency organizations will have permission to use the van, but Ridgway Fire will be responsible for it. Finally, repairs and maintenance cost will be split between all entities.
- The RVFD will be holding an officer election in April for the positions of Chief, Captain, Lieutenant 2 (LT2), and Lieutenant 3 (LT3). The positions of Chief, Captain, and LT2 are running unopposed, and as such, the officers will remain the same. Chief Miller noted that he is considering only remaining chief for one more term as the demands of the job are interfering with his actual career and financial livelihood. It was agreed upon among all the members of the board that we need to think of ways to pay the Chief a more substantial and livable salary. Reinhardt suggested that we revisit the idea of trying to raise our mill levy. Dickerson recommended we look at other Combination Fire Departments to see how they are managed. He also noted that it is "sad that volunteers can no longer afford to be volunteer firefighters." Chief Miller reiterated that he does not want to go, but "priorities need to be met." The Board will investigate options and revisit the issue at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

RFPD Restructuring Presentation by Legal Representative Bo Nerlin

Mr. Nerlin gave a presentation describing the importance of restructuring the Ridgway Fire Protection District (RFPD) to incorporate the members of the Ridgway Volunteer Fire Department (RVFD) by making them “responsible to the District” as the current structure is antiquated. He noted that the RVFD would be kept as a 501c-3 fundraising agent and essentially become a fraternal agency under the RFPD, rather than a suppression agency working with the RFPD. He also explained that the restructure would better protect the volunteer firefighters in terms of liability as a nonprofit does not hold the same protections as a Special District under the current statutes. Thus, by incorporating the members into the RFPD, they would be protected in the event of a lawsuit. Bosworth noted that we would not be seeing a change in “task” but rather a change in “legal accountability.” After discussion, it was decided that Miller and LaSala will meet with Mr. Nerlin to create a vision of what the process will look like. That will be then presented to the Board and then the finally the volunteers. When all processes and documentation have been completed, the Board will need to create a resolution.

Wildland Assignment Payment Discussion

LaSala explained that we will need a fuel card for each truck that we plan on sending out to wildland assignments as a debit card is not suitable to fill the trucks at commercial gas stations. She further explained the need for a credit card assigned to the RFPD that can be used for hotels and emergency expenses while on wildland assignments. Dickerson noted the additional work that having these cards would present for the Administrator.

- MOTION by Reinhardt to apply for a WEX fuel account as well as a credit card, all of which to be used for wildland assignments. SECOND by Redmond. ALL IN FAVOR.

ADJOURNMENT

- MOTION by Dickerson to Adjourn. SECOND by Reinhardt. ALL IN FAVOR

Meeting Adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectively Submitted,
-Katy LaSala