

Ridgway Fire Protection District
Special Meeting
August 9th, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 5:38 pm by Board Vice Chair, Pam Kraft, at the Ridgway Fire Department located at 251 N. Railroad Street, Ridgway, Colorado. Also, in attendance were Board Chair Christen Williams (via Zoom), Board members Mary Reinhardt and Adam Johnson, RFPD Administrator Katy LaSala, and RVFD Fire Chief Chris Miller.

FINANCIALS

Bills

❖ MOTION by Reinhardt to approve financials as presented. SECOND by Johnson. ALL IN FAVOR.

MINUTES

❖ MOTION by Williams to approve the 7/6/22 minutes as presented. SECOND by Johnson. ALL IN FAVOR.

OLD BUSINESS

Mill Levy Increase

LaSala presented documents with mill levy information for other Southwestern Colorado Fire Districts as well as trends for the number of District residence and commercial building over the past 22 years. She also mentioned that the RFPD has not asked its voters for a tax increase since the year 2000. All board members noted that the increase in buildings as well as the time since requesting a mill levy increase are selling points for a tax increase question on the November ballot. Chief Miller also stated that "it's about the service we provide and the increasing costs to do so." Other discussed reasons for asking include the need for a paid Fire Chief as well as 1 or 2 paid firefighters and additional support staff, to update aging apparatus and equipment, and to provide additional services such as wildfire mitigation.

When considering how much of an increase to ask for, Johnson proposed trying to push it to 8 mills. LaSala then suggested asking for a 4 mill increase, which would put our levy at 7.591. Williams indicated that requesting the taxpayers to double what they currently pay may come as a shock especially in today's economy where "one's dollar doesn't go as far." She further presented concerns about aiming for a high enough number to cover the District's needs without going too high. After much discussion, all board members agreed that asking for a 4 mill increase seems reasonable. The board decided to vote on the number at a special meeting on August 23rd, 2022.

When discussing how to promote the question to the voters, several options were presented. Kraft suggested having the Ridgway Volunteer Fire Department send out a news flyer and possibly holding a public information session. Johnson inquired to whether we should utilize services provided by Magellan Strategies. LaSala noted that RFPD Legal Counsel, Bo Nerlin, also suggested that we hire Magellan Strategies. After much debate, it was decided that Magellan Strategies would be a good option as the survey they provide will enlighten a large amount of our voters to our needs and why we are thinking of putting a question on this year's ballot as well as help shape the ballot question and give the District an idea of where our constituents stand.

❖ MOTION by Reinhardt to hire Magellan Strategies to provide a survey to the RFPD voters regarding the proposal of mill levy increase question on the 2022 General Election ballot with expenses not to exceed \$10,000, which must be expended before September 4th, 2022. SECOND by Johnson. ALL IN FAVOR.

Due to additional responsibilities of putting a mil levy question on the November 2022 ballot, Kraft suggested a temporary increase in the Administrator's salary.

- ❖ MOTION by Kraft to temporarily increase the salary of RFPD Administrator, Katy LaSala, by \$3,500 (paid twice per month) to commence on December 31, 2022. This will bring the total administrator salary for 2022 to \$38,500. SECOND by Reinhardt. ALL IN FAVOR.

Station Housekeeping

LaSala relayed that Nerlin consulted with the Special District Association, and Reinhardt, as a board member, is legally allowed to be hired by the RFPD as an independent contractor to clean the building. However, she must recuse herself from any discussion and votes on the matter. LaSala will ask Nerlin to create a contract between the RFPD and Reinhart.

Extrication Equipment

- ❖ MOTION by Johnson to purchase a battery powered combi extrication tool not to expend \$20,000. SECOND by Williams. ALL IN FAVOR.

Wildland Discussion

LaSala referred to the RFPD account who suggested we create and move expense accounts in our bookkeeping software to better represent District wildland expenses. LaSala noted that we would have to amend our 2022 budget if we implement these changes during this calendar year and recommended that we make the changes on the 2023 budget, to which the board agreed. Finally, Kraft indicated that she doesn't believe we need to open a separate bank account for the wildland program. The other members agreed as well. No action was taken at this time.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Miller had no additional information to report.

ADJOURNMENT

- ❖ MOTION by Reinhardt to Adjourn. Second by Johnson. ALL IN FAVOR

Meeting Adjourned at 7:32 pm.

Respectively Submitted,
-Katy LaSala