

Ridgway Fire Protection District
Regular Meeting
February 17, 2025

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 5:01 by Board Chair, Christen Williams, at the Ridgway Fire Department located at 251 N. Railroad Street, Ridgway, Colorado. Also, in attendance were Board members Terry Schuyler, Adam Johnson, and Pam Kraft; ex-officio Board member Chris Bolane; Chief Chris Miller; and District Administrator Katy LaSala.

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA INCLUDING ADDITIONS & DELETIONS

A conversation with Cat Lichtenbelt, OCEMS Community Outreach Coordinator, was added to New Business following the presentation from members of the San Miguel Power Association (SMPA).

NEW BUSINESS

Board discussion and Q&A with San Miguel Power Association representative, Phil Zimmer, to review the upcoming new rate structure and its potential impact on the District's electrical expenses

Phil Zimmer provided an overview of the new time-based rate structure set to take effect in May. The shift is driven by increasing electrification and the transition towards 100% renewable energy. Zimmer explained that the new system is designed to balance grid stability while adapting to the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources. He highlighted the key details of the rate structure:

- **Time of Use Rate:**
 - Off-peak hours are from 9 PM to 4 PM the next day, lasting 19 hours.
 - During off-peak hours, power will be cheaper at \$0.11 per kilowatt-hour.
 - Peak hours are from 4 PM to 9 PM, lasting 5 hours.
 - During peak hours, the rate increases to \$0.22 per kilowatt-hour.
 - This represents a two-times cost factor between peak and off-peak rates, which is lower than the industry standard of three times.
- **Time of Day Peak Power Rate:**
 - Base rate set at approximately \$0.12 per kilowatt-hour.
 - A demand charge of about \$3 per kilowatt is applied to the highest peak power usage recorded between 4 PM and 9 PM in a given month.

Zimmer noted that based on the department's energy usage from December 2023 to December 2024, San Miguel Power's cost to supply energy was approximately \$3,000. Under the current legacy rate, the department paid about \$2,200. If usage patterns remain unchanged, the new *Time of Use* rate would increase the department's bill by approximately \$13.52 per month, while the *Time of Day Peak Power* rate would result in a \$10.26 monthly increase.

Zimmer discussed the impact on solar users, explaining the introduction of a two-bank credit system under the Time of Use rate. He also provided insights on potential cost-saving measures, such as using timers on heating equipment to shift energy usage away from peak hours. He offered to have Paul Hora, also in attendance, conduct a facility tour to identify additional energy-saving opportunities.

LaSala and Miller were tasked with organizing a walk-through with an Alternative Power Enterprises representative as well as Paul Hora, and the Board will revisit the discussion at the next District Meeting.

Board discussion with Cat Lichtenbelt, OCEMS Community Outreach Coordinator

The Board heard from Cat Lichtenbelt about collaborative efforts between Ouray County Fire Agencies and EMS to improve visibility and community engagement. Key points included:

- Increasing public awareness that Fire and EMS services are active daily, not just during emergencies.
- Highlighting recent instances where fire personnel assisted OCEMS with high call volumes.
- Strategies to enhance public visibility, including volunteer recruitment efforts to foster transparency and support.
- Discussion of attendance at relative local discussions and events to increase awareness and representation without direct involvement.
- Reviewing the section of a document provided outlining the Chiefs' and Captains' Authority goals.
- Upcoming event on September 20th focusing on survival skills and public safety education in which most Ouray County Emergency Services Agencies will participate.

Board discussion of the Verizon Equipment Lease termination

The Board reviewed Verizon Wireless's decommissioning of equipment from the building and its financial impact on the District's budget. The termination results in a revenue loss of \$17,500, requiring budget adjustments to address the shortfall. The Board discussed possible strategies to offset this loss, including cost-saving measures and exploring alternative revenue sources. According to the Termination Letter, Verizon's equipment is scheduled for removal by February 28, 2025. However, LaSala and Chief Miller plan to request compensation for the period in 2025 during which the equipment remains on-site. Additionally, an officer will oversee the removal process to ensure no damage occurs to the building or District equipment.

Board discussion of a recent insurance claim related to a broken water line caused by freezing temperatures that caused damage to several areas of the building

Chief Miller explained that the firehouse experienced a flooding incident due to a -20° cold snap, which affected the administrator's office, front office, the wall adjacent to the administrator's office in the gym and the exterior wall along the weight room and turnout room. Cleanup, as performed by Valley Restoration, included removing carpets, sheetrock, and using fans to dry the area. The company handled the cleanup and performed necessary flood cuts and drying procedures correctly, improving the situation compared to the previous flooding incident. We are now awaiting insurance approval to move forward with additional repairs, including installing insulation and addressing other exposed areas.

There are ongoing concerns regarding missing insulation in the crawlspace, particularly around the water lines. While some insulation has been approved to be repaired and replaced by the insurance company, further inspection is needed to address other exposed areas. The extended cold snap exacerbated the problem, but the building held up better than expected, with some areas, like the Verizon room, narrowly avoiding damage. Next steps involve awaiting insurance approval for repairs, as well as further investigation into insulation issues to ensure all necessary fixes are made. Chief Miller will provide the Board with an update on repairs at the next District meeting.

PAUSE OF REGULAR MEETING FOR PENSION BOARD MEETING

- ❖ MOTION by Schuyler to temporarily adjourn the regular meeting to hold a RFPD Pension Board meeting.
SECOND by Kraft. ALL IN FAVOR.

Meeting temporarily adjourned at 6:11 pm.

RESUMPTION OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING

The RFPD Board reconvened their regular meeting at 6:31.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

❖ MOTION by Schuyler to approve the 1/16/25 minutes as presented. SECOND by Johnson. ALL IN FAVOR.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT

LaSala noted that the new 6-month CD at Citizen's State Bank has been opened with all funds transferred over from the original CD, which has now been closed.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Board Update on Chief's Evaluation Document

Bolane provided an update on the progress of the Chief's Evaluation Document. He mentioned that both Williams and he had worked on a preliminary version, conducting research and developing several frameworks. He expressed appreciation for Williams's input, noting that it helped him think about the process in new ways.

The Board discussed blending their two approaches to create a draft document. The next step is to send the draft to the RFD officers for additional polishing and refinement, making any necessary edits. Once the officers have reviewed it, the Board will perform a final review before moving forward with the formal interview process.

Williams noted that she would like to have the draft document presented to the board by the March meeting, with the final version completed by April. The goal is to have the evaluation process finalized and ready by April.

Board discussion concerning the implementation of a quarterly newsletter

The Board discussed the content, structure, and distribution methods for improved community engagement with Cat Lichtenbelt providing valuable ideas and information. LaSala suggested that the Board team up with Lichtenbelt to create an attractive document that collaborates with OCEMS, while also adhering to HIPPA laws. No action was taken at this time, but Williams was tasked to coordinate with Lichtenbelt.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Miller reported that the year has been off to an exciting start, with the District already participating in 37 calls as of February 25th. These included 25 mutual aid calls with EMS, 8 extrication calls, and a fire at the post office, which provided valuable real-world fire experience. Chief Miller highlighted the collaboration between fire and EMS personnel, particularly praising paramedic Michelle for her exceptional size-up skills and her ability to assist with fire extinguishers at the scene. Her experience from a fire background played a key role in controlling a potentially dangerous fire, which reignited but was successfully managed.

The District's Captains are actively training with their assigned fire personnel, focusing on thermal imaging cameras, forcible entry, and ladder setup. These trainings complement the regular Wednesday night sessions with all department members.

Additionally, a major upcoming event is an extrication training planned for the last week of May. This advanced training will be held in conjunction with Holmatro Tools and Chop Shop RX and will involve all local fire departments, EMS, and up to 50 students. The event will require the organization of 25 cars, feeding 60 people, housing participants, and arranging 11 different rooms for instructors. The department is applying for a \$10,000 state grant to cover the majority of the costs, and we are optimistic about securing the funding. The training will span two days, with each day lasting 8 hours, and will include simulated scenarios with actors and victims to provide realistic experience.

Furthermore, the department is working on improvements to the training grounds, including equipment rentals for gravel extraction from the river and land restoration. The estimated cost for these improvements is about \$15,000, which will help create a better space for training scenarios.

The Chief also reported on progress with the river cleanup project. The District is coordinating with the Army Corps of Engineers and will use a "load-it-up, haul-it-off" approach to clean up gravel from the river. This method will avoid the need for a full set of permits while still preventing further damage during runoff.

In other news, the Chief and Captains are participating in a hazmat class in Montrose. The class will be crucial in preparing the team for future hazardous material incidents and required to receive State certifications.

Lastly, the Chief shared that the initial paperwork for the Authority merge has been received from Lyons Gaddis, and the Chiefs will meet next week to review and finalize the details. The finalized form is expected to be ready for discussion at next month's meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

❖ MOTION by Schuyler to Adjourn. Second by Johnson. ALL IN FAVOR

Meeting Adjourned at 7:04.

Next meeting date scheduled for 3/17/25.

Respectively Submitted,
-Katy Lasala