

Ridgway Fire Protection District

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

May 18, 2026

Upstairs Common Room, Ridgway Firehouse, 251 N Railroad Street, Ridgway, Colorado

CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 5:07PM by Board Chair Christen Williams. Board members in attendance included Jamie Gomez, Terry Schuyler and Pam Kraft. Also, in attendance were Chris Miller (Fire Chief), Bo Nerlin (Legal Counsel), Chris Bolane (ex officio), Kayla Fairchild (District Administrator), and Tyler Ferguson (Lieutenant).

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA INCLUDING ADDITIONS & DELETIONS

There were no changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- ❖ MOTION by Schuyler to approve the April and May special meeting minutes as presented. SECOND by Kraft. ALL IN FAVOR.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT

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

OLD BUSINESS

- ❖ Update on Wildland Engine Purchase
 - Money will be deposited on May 19th. Chief Miller is scheduled to fly out on the 20th to pick the apparatus up. All loan paperwork has been finalized.
- ❖ Update on Authority Progress
 - Nerlin commented on the success of the May meeting. The group is looking to narrow in on a name selection. County Communications Administrator Jennifer Petersen assisted with posting a survey in the newspaper and online to reach out for public opinion on the name selection. Nerlin noted one outlier on the fence for joining. Ouray County, Town of Ridgway, and City of Ouray have expressed interest in participating.
 - Schuyler expressed concern about duplicative costs.
 - Nerlin expanded on concerns from board members and outside entities mentioning that the authority model allows all the jurisdictions participating to exist in their own respect still. The model is designed to improve call and service times and provide better staffed service teams as well as improved equipment. Nerlin discussed anticipated benefits of the authority model, including potential operational efficiencies and possible reductions in insurance costs.
- ❖ Wildland EMS Lease
 - Chief Miller commented that the Wildland EMS Lease is not ready to move forward. Williams asks about feedback from the county. Chief noted that Nate McCullough (OCEMS Chief) has the updates from the county but Chief Miller or LaSala has not seen it. The new goal date is set for August 1st. Williams asks about ways to mitigate having bodies for service present versus having

staff out on a wildland assignment. Chief commented that many are not part of our regular crew. Chief also mentioned that the ambulance cannot leave the state unless a medical director accepts from a different state.

❖ Ladder Truck Update

- Chief Miller stated that the ladder truck is at the station and waiting on one part to correct an issue with a pump. Chief was excited that they were able to use the flag for the first time for a local event. Training on the new apparatus will begin on Saturday the 22nd.

CHIEF'S REPORT

❖ Training Center & Operations Update

- The Training Center had a very active month with several major training events completed.
- The EMT class concluded successfully, with all participants passing.
- The large-scale EMS extrication exercise was conducted last Friday. The exercise involved approximately 175 participants and functioned as a full-scale operation.
- Due to multiple radio training triggers occurring during the exercise, staff were unable to fully test the new 800 MHz radios; however, the overall operation went smoothly.
- The Chief expressed satisfaction with the performance of the fire crews.
- Holmatro Extrication training is scheduled for the end of the month.

❖ Community Risk Reduction (CRR)

- Chief Miller reported that the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) review was nearing completion and anticipated finalization in the coming days.

❖ Training Center Improvements

- Discussion continued regarding the Training Center well issue, identified as a pre-1972 water rights matter.
- It was reported that remediation efforts associated with the septic system have been completed under the MOU, with costs paid by Dalwhinnie.
- Remaining well improvements include replacing the pump and installing a new well cap/top.
- Questions were raised regarding water rights and consumptive water use. The Chief noted the district has some river water rights, though nothing significant, and stated they still retain value and utility.

❖ Staffing and Captain Position Discussion

- Recruitment efforts for the Captain position have generated limited interest to date.
- The Chief requested direction from the Board regarding compensation for the position, noting a proposed salary of \$92,000 annually, excluding insurance benefits.
- Board members requested additional information, including:
 - A compensation/pay scale analysis.
 - A revised job description that better reflects the qualifications of prospective applicants.
 - A promotional ladder and qualification-based compensation structure.
- The Chief emphasized the need to hire a highly qualified candidate who could assist with training existing personnel and support future internal promotions.
- Board members identified insurance and overall compensation packages as the primary issue requiring clarification.
- Concerns were raised about establishing compensation precedents and how offering alternative benefit arrangements could affect other employees.
- Discussion also included the possibility of providing a stipend in lieu of benefits, though the Board agreed the broader concern was ensuring consistency and fairness across all staff positions.

❖ Board Direction and Next Steps

- The Board requested the Chief provide recommendations outlining three qualification-based compensation levels for consideration.
- The Chief stated he needs to fill the position and hopes to have someone hired by June 15. To accommodate the hiring timeline, Board members discussed moving the June meeting forward to June 8.

NEW BUSINESS

❖ Discussion regarding RFPD Inventory

- Williams requested the department compile a list of all inventoried items to aid in future budget discussions. Chief Miller noted that much of the equipment is inventoried and the shelf life of certain equipment is noted. Board members discussed the lack of accountability within the current system used. Board members discussed inventory accountability procedures and requested staff evaluate current inventory tracking practices and provide recommendations for improvement. Chief Miller states that there is a sign out sheet for equipment per shift and the captain is responsible during their respective shifts.
- Williams notes two issues she wants addressed.
 - Accountability and financial responsibility.

❖ SB26-184 Ballot Measure

- The board discussed ballot SB26-184 regarding how state officials handle cancer treatments relating to fire. Many of our regional authorities have suggested opposition to this ballot measure. The board agreed that they would like to proceed with formulating a letter to state officials in opposition to SB26-184.
- MOTION by Gomez to direct staff to write a letter to our elective officials in opposition of SB26-184. Kraft seconds. ALL IN FAVOR.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

- ❖ Board consensus directed staff to reschedule the next regular meeting to June 8, 2026.
 - MOTION by Kraft to Adjourn. Second by Gomez. ALL IN FAVOR

Meeting Adjourned at 6:06PM.

Respectively Submitted,
-Kayla Fairchild