

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Meeting Minutes of the Estes Valley Fire Protection District

May 15, 2026, 4:00 pm (Special Board Meeting)

Dannels Fire Station, 901 N. St. Vrain Ave., Estes Park, CO 80517

Board: Sandra Smith (Zoom), Scott Dorman (Zoom), Ryan Leahy (Zoom), Jon Smith (Zoom), Jeff Robbins (Zoom)

Staff: Chief Warren Jones, Marinda Baxter, Rebecca Gelsinger, Logan Lasley

Also Attending: Patti Brown, Travis Machalek, Nola Greenwald, Randy Repola, Steve Welchert, Michael Barnthouse

Absent: None

Sandra Smith called the special board meeting to order at 4:07 pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Jeff Robbins and seconded by Scott Dorman to approve the agenda for the May 15, 2026, special board meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Discussion/Action re: Reconsider direction to seek RFPs for consulting and services for a possible November 2026 sales tax election.

Chief Jones explained that staff acted immediately on the Board's prior direction to prepare and distribute an RFP for consulting and survey services related to a possible November 2026 sales tax election. After reviewing the timeline, Chief Jones determined that even an expedited RFP process would delay consultant selection until at least the June 1 meeting, with additional time needed for contract negotiations and project startup. Chief Jones expressed concern that this timeline would jeopardize the ability to conduct a meaningful survey and adequately prepare for a November election.

Because of these timing concerns, Chief Jones requested that the Board reconsider its earlier direction and allow an exception to the purchasing policy to proceed with a sole-source consultant rather than a formal RFP process. Chief Jones noted that if the board declined the exception, the RFP would still be issued immediately with a shortened turnaround period.

Board discussion generally supported the rationale for bypassing the standard RFP process due to the compressed timeline. Members acknowledged the importance of obtaining reliable survey data quickly if the district intends to pursue a November election.

Discussion also focused on the projected cost of consulting and survey services. Board members asked whether the proposed costs were reasonable compared to similar election efforts. Chief Jones shared examples from other districts, including Windsor and Evans, indicating that comparable projects ranged from approximately \$80,000 to \$120,000 for full election-related consulting and education efforts.

Consultant Steve Welchert clarified details regarding his proposed services and contract structure. He explained that:

- The initial survey would cost approximately \$20,000.
- Consulting services would cost approximately \$10,000 per month.
- If survey results indicated the district should not proceed with the election effort, the contract could be terminated after the initial work, resulting in an estimated total cost of approximately \$30,000.

Meeting Minutes: May 15, 2026

Board members expressed that the pricing appeared to be within a reasonable range, given the circumstances and accelerated timeline.

*Moved by Jon Smith and seconded by Jeff Robbins, a motion to approve to reconsider direction to seek RFPs for consulting and services for a possible November 2026 sales tax election.
Motion carried unanimously.*

Discussion/Action re: Sole source consultant for a possible November 2026 sales tax election.

Chief Jones introduced the proposal from consultant Steve Welchert regarding consulting and campaign preparation services for a potential November 2026 sales tax election. Chief Jones stated that Mr. Welchert was recommended by the district's attorney and by West Metro Fire Chief Don Lombardi, who had previously worked with him successfully.

The Board discussed contract logistics, including attorney review and execution of the agreement. Chair Sandra Smith noted that Vice Chair Scott Dorman would be authorized to sign documents during her absence, and Mr. Dorman agreed to sign those documents in her absence.

Mr. Welchert provided an overview of his proposed approach, including:

- Conducting a voter survey to evaluate community support for a potential sales tax increase.
- Assisting with messaging, public education, communications planning, and election strategy.
- Helping determine appropriate ballot language and potential tax rate scenarios.
- Supporting creation of a separate "Yes" campaign committee if the district moves forward.

Mr. Welchert discussed challenges related to obtaining statistically meaningful survey participation in a smaller community and explained that polling would likely rely on a combination of online and telephone outreach. He estimated:

- Approximately 5,300 registered voters and 3,300+ households within the district boundaries.
- A likely survey sample size of approximately 100–150 respondents due to anticipated response rates.

He explained that polling results would be used as a "go/no-go" decision tool and emphasized that:

- Polling support in the 40% range would be considered insufficient.
- Support in the low 50% range would still be risky for a tax measure.
- Stronger support levels in the mid-to-upper 50% range or higher would ideally be needed to proceed confidently.

Mr. Welchert also discussed:

- The importance of developing a clear public rationale ("the why") for the ballot initiative.
- Messaging focused on modernization and enhancement of community protective services.
- The possibility of coordinated public education efforts with the Town of Estes Park.

Board members and Chief Jones discussed whether the potential costs of replacing the fire station should be included in the ballot initiative. Consensus generally favored:

- Avoiding inclusion of a major new fire station project in the current proposal.
- Focusing instead on operational needs, equipment replacement, and more limited facility improvements or renovations.

Several members expressed concern that a larger capital construction project would complicate the ballot measure and reduce voter support.

Town Manager Travis Machalek expressed the Town's willingness to partner with the District in public outreach and educational efforts related to the initiative.

Mr. Welchert stated that his services would include:

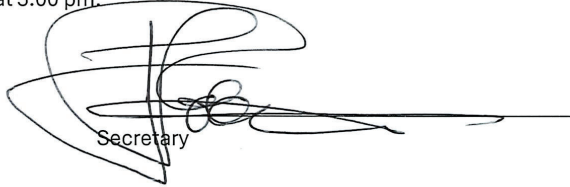
- Assistance with survey development and interpretation.
- Coordination with legal counsel on ballot language.
- Public education and communications planning.
- Guidance in organizing a "Yes" campaign committee and outreach efforts.

Meeting Minutes: May 15, 2026

*Moved by Jeff Robbins and seconded by Ryan Leahy, a motion to approve a sole source consultant for a possible November 2026 sales tax election
Motion carried unanimously.*

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.



Secretary

The Mission of the Estes Valley Fire Protection District is to provide the citizens of and visitors to the Estes Valley with superior fire prevention, fire protection, and emergency services in a safe and efficient manner."

"The Mission of the Board of Directors of the Estes Valley Fire Protection District is to establish policy, goals, strategies, and financial leadership that are the foundation for the long-term sustainability of the District."