

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Meeting Minutes of the Estes Valley Fire Protection District

May 11, 2026, 4:30 pm (Special Board Meeting)

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

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

Staff: Chief Warren Jones, Division Chief Jon Landkamer, Marinda Baxter, Rebecca Gelsinger

Also Attending: Patti Brown, Mayor Gary Hall, Travis Machalek, Ashley Hernandez-Schlagel

Absent: None

Sandra Smith called the special board meeting to order at 4:38 pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Jeff Robbins and seconded by Ryan Leahy to approve the agenda for the May 11, 2026, special board meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Moved by Jon Smith and seconded by Jeff Robbins to move into an executive session pursuant to C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b) for the purpose of receiving legal advice from the District's legal counsel regarding pursuit of a revenue election in November 2026 and discussion regarding a proposal related to same from The Bighorn Company.

Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Scott Dorman and seconded by Jon Smith to reconvene the special board meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Discussion/Action re: Potential 2026 Election

Chief Jones provided an update on outreach to consultants regarding a potential 2026 election. Seven consultants were contacted, and five responded. One consultant submitted a full proposal, while another declined due to insufficient time to complete the work effectively. The request was limited to evaluating the district's current situation and recommending whether to proceed with a 2026 election; it was not a full RFP for election consulting services. Chief Jones noted that any future decision to proceed with an election and hire a consultant would require a formal RFP process due to the anticipated cost.

The proposal received from Bighorn Company could not meet the requested timeline, as analysis would not begin until late May and discussions would not occur until early to mid-June, delaying any decision by at least another month.

Chief Jones reviewed the election timeline provided in the board packet, noting that the legal process would begin in mid-July and that it includes several required steps, some of which are difficult to stop once initiated.

Additional information was presented regarding public surveys. While no RFP has been issued for survey services, Chief Jones shared a sample proposal from Magellan to illustrate survey processes and associated work. The proposal suggested conducting two surveys: an initial survey to assess community awareness and sentiment, followed by a more comprehensive survey later in the process to support public information efforts. Chief Jones noted the district remains in the

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“why” phase of planning and has not yet fully identified or cost-estimated needs related to apparatus replacement, station renovations, or wildfire response improvements.

Election turnout data was also discussed. Noting turnout is typically highest during presidential election years, followed by the 2026 general election cycle, with lower turnout expected in an off-year 2027 election, and the lowest turnout occurring during stand-alone May elections. Chief Jones acknowledged that a 2026 election would likely produce higher voter participation than a 2027 election but stated that additional public outreach and engagement efforts could improve turnout in 2027.

Based on the information presented, Chief Jones recommended pursuing a fall 2027 election timeline rather than 2026. Staff also recommended establishing a financial independence task force to assist with planning and community engagement. Additionally, Chief Jones emphasized the importance of expanding public information and public engagement efforts immediately, noting that administrative staffing is now in place to support increased outreach activities.

Board members discussed the proposed timeline and strategy for pursuing a potential financial independence election. Several members expressed support for staff’s recommendation to pursue a fall 2027 election rather than 2026, emphasizing the importance of public engagement, community education, and adequate preparation. It was noted that prior successful district efforts benefited from a community task force comprising both in-town and out-of-town stakeholders.

Discussion included concerns that a rushed 2026 effort could fail and negatively affect the district’s ability to pursue a future election. Staff and board members also discussed the significant workload associated with preparing a financial plan, public information campaign, surveys, ballot language, and capital improvement estimates, particularly while onboarding a new permanent chief.

The board discussed the possibility of beginning preliminary work toward a 2026 election while retaining the option to withdraw later in the process if polling, consultant availability, staffing capacity, or project readiness indicated the district was not prepared.

The discussion also addressed the feasibility of including major station renovation or replacement projects in a 2026 ballot initiative. Chief Jones expressed concern that adequately evaluating station needs, property options, architectural requirements, and financing structures would require additional time. Several members suggested that major facilities projects could instead be addressed separately in a future bond or dedicated funding initiative.

Chief Jones advised that if the board wished to pursue a 2026 election, direction would need to be provided promptly, as statutory timelines begin in July. Chief Jones further advised that an initial focus on public opinion surveying may be the most appropriate immediate step.

Moved by Jon Smith and seconded by Ryan Leahy, a motion to approve sending an RFP out for a consultant to submit a proposal that would include a survey to pursue financial independence and a financial independence selection in November of 2026.

Following the motion, the discussion focused on whether to proceed with consultant proposals and survey work for a potential November 2026 financial independence election.

Some board members expressed concerns that the timeline may be too compressed, and also expressed concern about spending funds on an election effort that may ultimately fail. It was noted, however, that approximately \$30,000 is currently allocated in the budget for election-related purposes, and no election is scheduled for 2026, and those funds could potentially be used for survey and consulting costs.

Board discussion clarified that the proposed action was not necessarily a final commitment to placing a measure on the 2026 ballot, but rather authorization to begin the process by seeking consultant proposals and conducting a survey to evaluate viability. It was emphasized that the board would retain the ability to pause or discontinue the effort at several decision points, particularly after reviewing survey results and consultant recommendations.

Board members discussed the importance of revisiting the issue publicly after survey results are received, with the expectation that additional board meetings and deliberations would occur before any final election decision is made.

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EVFPD staff were authorized to prepare and solicit an RFP related to survey and consulting services for a potential November 2026 election effort.

All in favor: Sandra Smith, Ryan Leahy, Jon Smith

All opposed: Jeff Robbins, Scott Dorman

Motion passes

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Jeff Robbins and seconded by Jon Smith to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:26 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."