

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Meeting Minutes of the Estes Valley Fire Protection District

October 30, 2024 4:30 p.m.

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

Board: Dave Hamrick, Brian Tseng, Ryan Bross, Mike Lewelling, Chris Buser

Staff: Asst. Chief Jon Landkamer; Chief Paul Capo; Marinda Baxter; Lt. Shepard, Logan Lasley

Also Attending: Captain Rick Spear, Lt. Ron Bruchwalski, Patti Brown, Kyle Patterson (RMNP), Nathan Hallam (RMNP), Chad Lewis (RMNP) – stayed only for public comment
Linda Glesne (zoom for Executive Session only), Dakota Spence-Zurek (zoom for Executive Session only)

Absent: None

President Ryan Bross called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Chief Capo led the Pledge of Allegiance

Marinda Baxter performed roll call – all present with Brian Tseng & Mike Lewelling on Zoom

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Ryan Bross and seconded by Dave Hamrick to approve the agenda with a modification. It was requested that the Executive Session be moved up in the itinerary to accommodate the time constraint of legal counsel. Motion carried unanimously.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ron Bruchwalski prepared a statement:

“My name is Ron Bruchwalski and I'm a Lieutenant here at Estes Valley Fire Protection District. Anyone who knows me, knows I'm a man of few words. However, there's something I need to address; something I never thought I would have to and that would be my integrity and my character. The definition of integrity is an “adherence to moral and ethical principles, soundness in moral character and honesty”. The Fire Chief interview, which I participated in as a candidate, was three weeks ago today and honestly was the biggest mistake I've made since becoming a member of this department. To be clear, this has absolutely nothing to do with me not being selected. I never expected to be, but I've had a target on my back ever since, which I speculate is partially because of my strategic plan and being brutally honest when pressed to clarify answers. Several days after the interviews, a media article came out speaking about the selection process referencing an internal e-mail that was marked as confidential. I've been asked by several members of this department, from probationary members to senior members, if I was the one that leaked the email. When I first heard this, I was shocked and dumbfounded. Despite what everyone in this room thinks, I'm here to say, on public record, it was not me. I do not know who it was. I don't care to know. I find it not only appalling, but hurtful, that I would be accused of such a thing. For the past five years I've been nothing but dedicated to this department. The department which I love, or at least I did. Now I question my worth here. In the fire service, we talk about loyalty, commitment, respect, dedication, honesty and yes, integrity. Are these just words that we say because that's what's expected of us? Or are they words of personal character that we should each strive for? I hope it's the latter. When I was writing this, I had every intention of making this my resignation. I am not indispensable, and nobody is. This fire department has run for 117 years now and will continue whether I'm here or not. After receiving numerous words of encouragement from several members, I am not resigning. Why? Because I'm here for the community and my fellow firefighters. I would probably lay my life down for each and every person on this department. Even those that are not a fan of mine. Again, you may ask why? The answer is simple. It's called integrity. A trait I pride myself on and one that has never been questioned in my 62 years of being alive. I'm not here to convince you one way or another to change your opinion if I was the one who leaked the e-mail or not. I'm here to defend my character, not high school games and rumors. Thank you for your time and attention.”

Natham Hallam with RMNP spoke about prescribed burns that will be happening on Friday & Saturday around the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center area, weather permitting. Our department has been invited to send a staffed apparatus and would most likely be used for holding crews. They are looking to burn around 50 acres, and this would be the start of a 3–5-year plan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Ryan Bross and seconded by Chris Buser to approve the meeting minutes from the 9/25/24 and 10/9/24 board meetings as written. Motion carried unanimously.

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NEW BUSINESS –

Motion by Ryan Bross, seconded by Dave Hamrick to go into an executive session pursuant to Section 24-6-402(4)(b) C.R.S. for purpose of legal advice regarding notice of intent to file suit letter. Motion carried unanimously.

Entered executive session at 4:44 PM

Reentered open session at 6:09 PM

Notice to File Suit

Board members discussed wanting to be fiscally conservative. Volunteers and staff have been through a lot & dragging this matter out will prevent us from moving on. Promises were made during interviews that comments would remain confidential. Board members feel strongly in honoring that promise as well as protecting our staff. Legal defense fees could cost upwards of \$20k. According to legal counsel, the board operated in good faith.

Motion was made by Ryan Bross and seconded by Dave Hamrick to deny the request, keeping the executive session records confidential. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief Contract

Negotiations are currently ongoing; no motion filed.

PRESENTATIONS

Projected expenses are down slightly from what was predicted last month, and actual expenses are up. Total expense remaining is down to 25%. We anticipate sales tax to be 1.2% below our 2024 budget. Correction from last meeting's presentation: Capital Lease Proceeds was a one-time revenue item from 2023, so \$81k was removed from the final budget. Discussed 1A funding and grant plans: CWDG, COSWAP, FR-WRM (WUI educator). Noteworthy – the positive going into capital reserves is lower than we've had in years past so this is something to keep an eye on.

REPORTS

Chief's Report –

Administrative Division:

Thanksgiving potluck (family dinner) is scheduled for November 12th. Please RSVP to Erika. The sign-up sheet for potluck is in the lounge.

Firefighter appreciation party at the Legion on November 9th.

Prevention Division:

Everyone attended the Fire Leadership Conference last week. There were great speakers. Lt. Sutherland & Chief Landkamer completed the Fire Marshal track and Lt. Shepard attended her 1st year of the Company Officer Track. State WUI code likely coming in 2025 – draft will come in February with expectation to be adopted in July. Departments won't be eligible for Federal grants unless adopted. Could possibly create a bigger burden for prevention division.

Logan Lasley has started in his new position.

Operations Division:

Calls: 676 YTD compared to 553 in 2023. Up by 123 - pretty significant increase
53 Firefighters; 47 of those are volunteers; 7 Auxiliary

Training Division:

Live fire training last night. Thank you to Captain Spear and other instructors.
Academy has 19 interiors & 21 exteriors.

Station & Apparatus:

Ladder 71 had final repairs completed today.
Waiting to hear back from dealership of new type 6
SCBA Air Compressors passed annual testing

Volunteer Captain Report – nothing to report at this time

Treasurer's Report – Reviewed September 2024 balance sheet(s) including, but not limited to governmental fund and schedule of capital assets, statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance for general operations, operating reserve. Moved by Ryan Bross and seconded by Dave Hamrick to approve transactions listed in the Treasurer's report. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Strategic Plan – no update

POLICY UPDATES

#221 Social Media and Public Relations – 2nd Review

Board members wanted verification that this was reviewed by legal. Concerns over freedom of speech
Motion was not made to approve/deny.

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BOARD COMMENT

Board members thanked the staff and volunteers for everything they are doing.

The next main board meeting will be on Wednesday, November 13th. Discussed possibly cancelling the November 27th meeting since this would be the day before Thanksgiving. Will discuss further.

Motion by Ryan Bross, seconded by Dave Hamrick to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM.



David Hamrick, 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."