

# NORTH SAN JUAN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, July 27, 2021

**Final – Adopted 9/28/21**

**PRESENT:** Tim Tschantz, Chair; Bruce Boyd, Vice-Chair; Pat Leach, Treasurer; Rhea Williamson,

**ABSENT:** Samantha Hinrichs

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM. Roll taken. Quorum established. Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Diana Gamzon, Executive Director of the Nevada County Cannabis Alliance, which was founded in 2016. Diana is a resource for anything cannabis related.

Ed Beckenbach thanked the District for their work.

**3. CONSENT CALENDAR:**

**A.** Minutes of June 22, 2021, Regular Board Meeting

**B.** Correspondence of June 2021

Pat Leach asked to strike through the last sentence on page 5 of the June 22, 2021, Regular Board Meeting Minutes as it is not accurate.

Pat Leach moved to approve the Consent Calendar with the correction on the June 2021 Regular Board Meeting Minutes, Bruce Boyd seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Bruce Boyd wanted to acknowledge how difficult the month has been with the heat, fires, and PG&E shutoffs and hopes for a return to normalcy.

**5. REPORTS**

**A. Chief's Report – Tom Browning in Jason Flores' Absence.**

- Chief Flores is on an activation with his Team in Washington State.
- The Firefighters have been busy, including responding to many vegetation fires.
- Firefighters did a great job catching the recent fires at both Purdon Crossing and Moors Flat.
- Trainings have been going well.
- The new engine (E6168) has been going out on fires.
- Chris Rainville is the Engineer on E6168, and he has recently obtained his commercial Class B license.

- Engine 6186 has been moved to Station 4, Ananda.
- With Boyd Johnson's resignation, to which he is already duly missed, Chief Flores and Tom are seeking letters of interest from Captains to be considered for the vacant Battalion Chief position. Chief Flores and Tom would like to meet with the Personnel Committee about making changes to the organizational structure of the Department.

Bruce Boyd asked about the coverage in the District. Tom responded that coverage has been good, even with E6168 on assignment with a crew of three.

Tm Tschantz asked for an update on E6164. Tom Browning replied that E6164 is currently at Burtons in Stockton waiting on a new starter for the pump.

Bruce Boyd asked for a breakdown of the Purdon Fire and the response from the Nevada City side. Tom provided the following description:

"Nevada County Consolidated and a CAL FIRE Engine from Nevada City came to the fire from the Nevada City side and laid a hose lay across the bridge and put out the right flank of the fire. Our engine and one engine from Columbia Hill did a hose lay around the left flank and were able to catch it. Josh Sundae was the Battalion Chief for Consolidated and he staged all resources at the top of the hill on the other side while the fire was assessed. I staged our resources at the top of Purdon until we could get the tender down."

Boyd Johnson acknowledged that the Purdon Fire was a terrific save but wanted to know what would happen if that fire happened on Tuesday, with E6168 was out of County and E6162 responding to a fire in Dobbins. Boyd asked how the District is ensuring an effective response within the District over a fully staffed out of County response. Tom Browning acknowledged that Tuesday would have been more different than Wednesday night. However, the response to Dobbins was not a strike team assignment, it was an immediate need for structure threat, and those requests are going to happen because of our Mutual Aid Agreements.

Boyd Johnson heard that there was a recent Wednesday night training on the topic of Covid-19, led by Dr. Kellerman (Nevada County Public Health Officer), and a Public Health nurse. Boyd was informed that the training was very poorly attended and that firefighters were discouraged from attending. Boyd made the assumption that our constituents are most concerned about not losing their homes in a forest fire, and the once-in-a-century pandemic. Boyd stressed that the public needs to know the role the District's leadership is taking on Covid-19. Tom Browning responded that he was not aware of firefighters being discouraged from attending the Covid-19 training but would be disappointed if that were true. Tom continued that he was very surprised at the turnout. Besides Tom and his wife, there were three other attendees. The training was great and eye-opening. One highlight from the training worth noting: Initially, Public Health officials had a goal of 70% vaccination rate, but with the Delta Variant, they are shooting for 85%. The Delta variant is 50% more contagious than the original strain. Although vaccinated individuals can still contract Covid-19, the vaccine has severely lessened the severity of their symptoms. Additionally, no Covid-19 hospitalizations in the County are of vaccinated individuals.

Bruce Boyd noted that Sierra County worked to vaccinate all emergency responders early on, and Sierra County has had a low Covid-19 infection rate. It appears disrespectful for the Fire Department to not take this seriously, the perception from the public might be that the Fire Department is not concerned about the public's health. Bruce Boyd also added that he lost his brother to Covid-19, so it is very personal for him.

**B. Treasurer's Report – Pat leach**

Pat Leach announced there we have no Financials this month. Our District Manager, Lynn McGarva has twice been hospitalized in the last two weeks. We will give her time to recover and review the Financials at a Board meeting for June in August.

**C. District Manager's Report – Lynn McGarva**

No Report

**D. Firefighters Association Report – Angela Flores**

The Association has not met this month. As a reminder, Kirtters Blevins is temporarily stepping down as President of the Association, Angela will be taking over the role in their absence.

**E. Fire Safe Council /FireWise Coalition/Ridge FireWise Communities Report – Pat Leach**

Fire Safe Council will oversee the AB 38 inspections.

The Firewise Coalition is hosting a Zoom meeting focusing on survivors of recent Fires. There are 64 Fire Wise Communities in the County. French Corral, Lake City/Grizzly Hill, and Ponderosa are now recognized by Cal Fire. Robinson/Byron/Brem, Wampum, Old Mill, and Cruzon Grade are in the process of development.

**F. NCFR Report – Pat Leach.**

Next Meeting is in August.

**6. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Water Storage Committee Update- Bruce Boyd**

Bruce Boyd and Rhea Williamson presented a list of site criteria that could guide how potential water storage sites could be selected within the District. Tom Browning asked to include a potential sites proximity to existing available water to help determine "why" water storage is required at a specific location/area. Rhea then summarized the working document she has kept on all Water Storage Committee meetings. This document could be a starting point for an official Water Storage Plan.

Unfortunately, the water storage being proposed for this project (s) will not affect our ISO ratings.

Diana G added that all legal cannabis farms have water storage tanks on site. Tim Tschantz asked Diana if she could provide a map of all water storage on cannabis farms. Tom Browning pointed out that private water tanks are difficult to rely on because they are not filled and monitored by the Fire Department, which means we cannot count on them being full when needed.

Liz Walsh asked if the District would cover liability on the storage tanks, to which Bruce Boyd replied yes, and the NSJFPD would have “exclusive use”. Liz also asked about preventing water theft at the tanks. Bruce Boyd suggested we contact Camptonville Fire Protection District to see if they have experienced theft on their water tanks.

Rhea Williamson reminded the group that she would like to have the first site help develop the model for all future tank sites. There are many questions that will be worked out once a project is started.

Bruce Boyd asked for guidance on where the Committee should focus next. Tom Browning suggested a written policy that can be adopted.

**B. “Preparing for Large Fires” – Tim Tschantz**

Tim Tschantz announced that the ad hoc committee on the subject is made up of Tom Browning, Rhea Williamson, and Tim Tschantz. Local resident Heidi Starr has also volunteered to join the committee. The committee’s focus is to get information out to the community. Tim has been working on a map which labels the ZonesHaven Zones within the District and highlighting evacuation routes. The idea is that this outreach could reach members of the community who are not online, as well as seasonal visitors. Rhea Williamson added that there has been fantastic material put out by Nevada County OES, including the Ready, Set, Go! Handbook. The book is fantastic, but the goal is to create a one-page summary of the handbook that could go out with the map Tim is working on. This handout would need to receive the blessing from Nevada County OES. Rhea read the document she prepared.

Tom Browning added that Mary Eldridge, CAL FIRE PIO has provided many handouts and offered to ensure handouts are stocked and seasonally relevant.

The Postmaster has offered space to the Fire Department for Community Outreach. Rhea Williamson said the Community Center has offered display space for the Fire Department as well. The local library, the Family Resource Center, Mother Truckers, and the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center could all be potential display sites.

Liz Walsh volunteered to join the “Preparing for Large Fires” ad hoc Committee.

**7. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Resolution 2021-08, Honoring Tracy Corris – Tim Tschantz**

This resolution was prepared by Ed and Sharon Beckenbach. Heidi Ryan read the resolution aloud. Per Mr. Beckenbach’s request, Heidi Ryan shared that Cindy Corris was contacted regarding the Resolution and invited to the meeting, but although she was very thankful, this item triggered an emotional response, and she could not bring herself to attend.

Bruce Boyd moved to accept Resolution 2021-08 Honoring Tracy Corris’ contributions to the North San Juan Fire Protection District, Tim Tschantz seconded, motion passed by roll call vote as follows:

Bruce Boyd – Aye

Pat Leach – Aye  
Rhea Williamson – Aye  
Samantha Hinrichs – Absent  
Tim Tschantz - Aye

Ayes: 4   Noes: 0   Abstain: 0   Absent: 1

**B. Firefighter Backfill Assignments – Tom Browning**

All NSJFPD firefighters commit to one 12 hour shift a month and one 48 hour weekend shift a month. Firefighters that are assigned to out of county assignments are well paid for their assignment, and the District receives an admin fee for their time. When firefighters are out of county, their shifts need to be covered. Tom put together a plan to backfill those shifts to ensure continued District coverage. This plan will be funded with the admin fee and will not affect the General Fund. The current admin rate is 22%. Tom’s biggest concern is that this plan could negatively affect the volunteer culture of the Department.

Boyd Johnson asked how the positions will be filled out of fairness. Tom replied that this program will have a manager that will work to fill the positions with the most fairness.

Bruce Boyd would like to evaluate the program this fire season then re-evaluate for upcoming fire seasons.

Liz Walsh asked how many firefighters could be out at once. Pat Leach added that there is not a single fire department in this county that can cover every incident all the time, that’s why there are many MOU’s (Memorandum of Understanding) enacted. Our role is to have at least two people on call to respond at all times.

Bruce Boyd moved to accept the Firefighter Backfill Assignments plan as outlined and that it will be revisited this winter for effectiveness, Pat Leach seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**C. Commercial Agriculture Impacts to System Discussion – Jason Flores**

This item has been tabled due to Jason Flores’ absence.

**D. Rental of Facilities – Heidi Ryan**

Heidi Ryan reminded the group that the District stopped renting our facilities with the onset of the Pandemic. Office staff have received inquiries about renting Station 1 and would like to know if the Board would like to continue with that stance. There are currently no restrictions about renting facilities in the County, however, the challenge with renting our facilities is ensuring proper sanitizing/disinfecting after usage. The Board decided to maintain our current stance and assess the Covid-19 rates in October.

**E. LAFCo Election – Heidi Ryan**

With the retirement of Kurt Grundel there is an opening on the LAFcO Board. This election ballot has two candidates, we can select one. It should be noted that the Fire Chief’s Association has endorsed Mr. Mangel to ensure the Fire Districts have a voice on the Board.

Rhea Williamson moved to vote for Gordon Mangel for the open position on the LAFcO Board, Pat Leach seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**F. Purchase Approval: Hose – Jason Flores**

This hose is needed to ensure all engine hose compliments are complete with backup. Heidi Ryan obtained quotes from two vendors (only two vendors that had all items needed). Fire Hose Direct had the best price.

Bruce Boyd moved to approve the hose purchase for the \$5,600 plus all tax and shipping costs, Tim Tschantz seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**G. Purchase Approval: Monitor for E6168- Jason Flores**

A quote was obtained by Engineer Chris Rainville with the only vendor that had the item in stock. This item is needed to complement E6168 for ISO rating.

Bruce Boyd moved to approve the monitor purchase for the cost of \$3,600 plus all tax and shipping costs, Tim Tschantz seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**H. Purchase Approval: Office Phone System – Lynn McGarva**

This item will be tabled until the next meeting.

**I. Purchase of SCBA's and Pagers – Jason Flores**

Tom Browning informed the Board that our entire stock of SCBA's are expired and need to be replaced. We did apply for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant to replace the SCBA's, but the grant award recipients have not been announced yet. With Jason Flores and Lynn McGarva absent, the Board had insufficient information to take action on the SCBA purchase.

Tom Browning announced that we are currently out of pagers, and some pagers issued to new firefighters are in need of replacement. Heidi Ryan did have a copy of the quote for pagers that Chief Flores obtained from 49ere Communication.

The purchase of SCBA's and the radio that was included on the quote for pagers from 49er Communications will be revisited at the August meeting.

Bruce Boyd moved to purchase 5 pagers for a total cost not to exceed \$4,000, Rhea Williamson seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**J. JoAnn Fites Kaufman Correspondance/Station 3 Report – Pat Leach**

JoAnn Fires-Kaufman prepared a Defensible Space & Firefighter Safety Advisory Visit pro-bono, for Station 3. Pat Leach wants to ensure that the Board agrees to follow-up on the recommendations identified in the report.

Tim Tschantz informed the Board that he has already cut back many plants and limbed trees that were identified in the report which resulted in two trailer loads of green material that he hauled away. Tim's main concern is that all the plants and landscaping would be removed, he would rather keep some of the landscaping, spaced out, and replace the wood chip mulch with gravel. Station 3 should be the standard for defensible space.

Pat Leach's main concern is the area surrounding the hydrant along the road. Another priority should be on the neighboring parcels as well as the area surrounding the water tanks.

Bruce Boyd is grateful for JoAnne's report and pledge to bring in volunteer help. However, historically, it has been difficult to maintain the landscape at Station 3 on volunteer labor alone. Our current landscaper, Niema, is a professional and has done a wonderful job. The Board would like to retain her services.

Rhea Williamson and Pat Leach will do a walk through with JoAnn and select 5-10 items from the report to focus on the next 6 months.

#### **K. Grand Jury Report – Tom Browning**

The Grand Jury sent out an inquiry on Health and Safety code inspections compliance, to which we responded that we were unable to complete the inspections as we are a volunteer department, and the inspector has to maintain significant training and knowledge. The Grand Jury responded that our stance is not acceptable and the District must ensure these inspections are completed. Tom Browning contacted the Nevada County Fire Planner, Scott Eckman, who has agreed to complete these inspections within our District and submit his reports to the Board to ensure compliance. Heidi Ryan will notify the Grand Jury of our plan of action.

#### **L. North San Juan Hydrant System – Pat Leach**

Tom Browning and Pat Leach have attended two meetings on the topic. So far, LaMalfa, Feinstein, and Padilla have all moved to approve the funding for this project, but it could still get denied. Mike Green has offered ¼ acre of his property for a tank location. The tank(s) will hold 340,000 gallons which would service three fire hydrants. Under the original project proposal, the County would own the system and North San Juan Fire would maintain it. A recent report recommends that the District should own the system. Business owners in North San Juan are in support of this project. Tom Browning is currently investigating how maintaining this system would affect our General Fund.

#### **M. Unmanned Aircraft for Cannabis Cultivation – Tom Browning**

Nevada County Code Compliance is looking to develop a drone program that they can utilize to verify complaints received on cannabis cultivation. Code Compliance is asking local fire departments/fire protection districts to submit letters to the Board of Supervisors in support of the proposed program.

A discussion ensued on how and why the County would use drones to inspect private property and how this could affect the entire community. Diana Gamzon provided a very thorough assessment of the proposed drone program from the viewpoint of the Cannabis Alliance and how it could affect everything from livestock to wildlife, and so on. The Coalition believes there are better ways to inspect and enforce the complaints received on egregious grows. Bruce Boyd is hesitant of the Community Development Department having this sort of outreach and is distrustful of their intention.

The Board was not willing to support this initiative.

8. **NEXT MEETING:** August 17th, time, and location to be determined.
9. **ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

*Heidi Ryan*

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Heidi Ryan, Board Secretary