

# NORTH SAN JUAN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, October 25, 2022

**Final – Adopted December 6, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Bruce Boyd, Vice-Chair; Pat Leach, Treasurer; Samantha Hinrichs (Arrived at 7:09 PM); Rhea Williamson

**ABSENT:** Tim Tschantz, Chair

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM. Roll taken. Quorum established. Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 25, 2022 REGULAR BOARD MEETING AGENDA**

Rhea Williamson moved to approve the agenda as written, Pat Leach seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Boyd Johnson noted that the Board approved a Resolution (2022-09) at the September Board meeting, with a change to the fee made during the motion. Mr. Johnson asked if the Board could make such a change to a resolution when approving, or if the Resolution needs to be re-heard a second time.

Liz Walsh relayed she enjoys participating on Finance Committee and wanted to thank Tom Browning for his knowledge and insights.

**4. CONSENT CALENDAR:**

- A. Minutes of September 27, 2022, Regular Board Meeting**
- B. Correspondence From Nevada County Auditor-Controller**
- C. Correspondence From Boyd Johnson**

Rhea Williamson asked to pull 4.C for discussion.

Rhea Williamson moved to approve the Consent Calendar with item 4.C removed, Pat Leach seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

**Discussion of item 4.C**

*Samantha Hinrichs arrived at 7:09 during this item.*

Rhea Williamson asked Boyd what his intention was with his letter; does he expect the Board to decide whether defensible space or fire engines are better at stopping fires from burning homes? Rhea also noted that she was not familiar with the letter he was

referencing. Heidi Ryan announced that the reason she did not include the letter Boyd was referring to was because she was unable to reach the Board Chair about including the letter in the “Preparing for Large Fires Discussion” item, as Boyd was requesting. Boyd Johnson responded that the letter he is referring to is a political letter put out by a local firefighter union. Boyd thought this letter would be helpful to spur discussion during the “Preparing for Large Fires” items.

Rhea Williamson then asked if any letter, opinion, and correspondence can be put on our agenda and board packet.

Rhea Williamson moved to approve items 4.C, Samantha Hinrichs seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

## **5. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Bruce Boyd expressed his concern regarding the impending closure of the Graniteville Fire Department because of the increase in Liability Insurance.

Rhea Williamson announced that she has recently traveled to Lexington and visited Revolutionary War monuments, which was moving. Rhea realized North San Juan Fire Protection District Board meetings is the only place where she recites the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **6. REPORTS**

### **A. Chief’s Report – Jason Flores**

#### **i. September 2022 Statistics**

#### **ii. Department Activity**

- Chief Flores announced that he has taken a temporary promotion to Division Chief, and his new schedule will be Sunday-Thursday 8:30-5:00.
- We are on trend to be around our average call volume for the year.
- Scott will be out next week to get all our firefighters fit tested, which is a requirement for SCBA use.
- Work is being done to inventory turnouts and procure quotes for possible replacement.
- Staff are working to obtain quotes to replace flooring at Station.
- A glass panel was broken at Station 1, staff are working on getting that repaired.
- We have two new firefighters on the roster, with two more in the early process of joining.

Deputy Chief Tom Browning announced that the District was notified that our current Liability and Vehicle policy holder was not going to renew our policy. Our Broker has found another company to underwrite a policy for us which is double of our previous policy. Bottom line, this is happening to all local fire departments. The Graniteville Volunteer Fire Department will be closing their Department due to the increase in vehicle and liability Insurance. The Board of Supervisors are privy to this crisis, and just today approved a letter to be sent to Governor Newsome, Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, Senator Brian Dahle, and Assemblymember Megan Dahle asking for help in this matter. North San Juan Fire Protection District can draft a similar letter.

## **B. Treasurer's Report – Pat Leach**

### **i. Financials –September 2022**

Pat Leach presented the financial reports for September 2022.

Rhea Williamson moved to approve the Financials for September 2022, Samantha Hinrichs seconded, motion passed by unanimous vote.

Bruce Boyd inquired why we no longer include a separate page for donations. Lynn McGarva answered that details on donations are included in the Deposit Detail page when they come in. Office staff sends individuals Thank You letters when donations are received.

### **ii. Finance Committee Report**

Tom Browning provided a re-cap of the recent Finance Committee meeting, indicating a major focus of the meeting was discussing the fund balance rollover and how to separate that fund out to capital improvement, apparatus replacement, and other one-time costs. There are plans to upgrade our structure turnouts, to replace the flooring in the training room and barracks at station 3, as well as a radio system at Station 3.

### **iii. Year-to-Date Budget vs. Actual FY 2022-23**

Tom Browning presented the year-to-date budget vs. actuals. This will be presented to the Board quarterly, with the intention of having this prepared and presented monthly.

## **C. Firefighters Association Report –**

- Badri Matlock is the new Vice President and Sambhava Burke is the new Treasurer.
- The Association approved the purchase of a new computer at the residence and a donation to Gardenia Penniman.
- Current account balance is \$17,942.
- The Association is still working toward obtaining a 501c3 status.
- The Association is brainstorming another appreciation dinner.
- Next meeting is November 9<sup>th</sup>.

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

There are currently 81 FireWise Communities, with 9 more pending review. Additionally, there are 33 FireWise Communities in development. Nevada County has added more FireWise Communities than any County in the Nation.

## **E. NCFR Report – Pat Leach.**

The next meeting is October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. “Preparing for Large Fires” – Tim Tschantz**

Bruce Boyd offered to use this item to discuss the content in Boyd Johnson's Correspondence (Item 4.C). Tom Browning noted that the letter written by the Local firefighters Union was stating that Measure V funds would not go to fire departments, and they did not want people to think otherwise. The topic of preparing for large fires is for us to figure out how to save lives, it's a large topic.

Rhea Williamson added that this is a big discussion topic that we have on every agenda so we can continue brainstorming and find ways to help our community. To date, the Board has discussed evacuation routes, signage, prescribed fire courses, among other things.

Boyd Johnson asked if there has been a product produced following discussion on this item. Tom Browning responded that the Board developed a flyer that has been mailed to residents and handed out at events, the Department hosted a prescribed fire class, and held an open house at station 3. Sam Hinrichs added that this topic is a source of continued education and outreach.

Boyd Johnson said if there is a large fire in the District, citizens have every right to come to the station and ask, "So, what have you been doing all this time?", and he suggested the Board should be prepared to answer that question. Rhea Williamson suggested summarizing discussions and identifying actions resulting from the "Preparing for Large Fire Discussion" item in the Newsletter.

#### **B. Hydrant Committee Update – Tom Browning**

Tom Browning shared that the County is meeting with the United Methodist Church in North San Juan to present the plans for the storage tank. Once the Church gives approval, the project will move forward. Construction could begin as early as July, 2023.

Rhea Williamson asked if the project could include an expansion to the North San Juan Sewage District. Tom Browning responded that the infrastructure for the hydrant will likely be bored under Highway 49 and likely not combined with sewage infrastructure. Tom noted that the project will need to put in a new well on our property on Reservoir Street, so we will be asked to go into an agreement for that soon.

This project all hinges on approval from residents in the proposed service area with them accepting an assessment. Residents in the proposed hydrant service area should see a reduction in their ISO ratings which could reduce fire insurance costs.

### **8. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Discussion on Correspondence from Boyd Johnson**

Heidi Ryan summarized what attachments were included in the Board Packet:

- Boyd Johnson's letter to the North San Juan Fire Board dated September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- Heidi Ryan's response letter to a public records request. Heidi's letter is dated August 19, 2022.
- Statement from EDD's website detailing every payment NSJFPD made to EDD since June, 2012.
- Statement from EDD's website identifying refunds NSJFPD received from EDD between March, 2011 and July, 2019.

*Heidi Ryan's complete response to Boyd Johnson's public records request was available during the Board meeting and is available upon request.*

Tom Browning began the discussion by stating, in his opinion, that Boyds interpretation is that the previous administration, current staff, Chief Officers and the Board are deliberately trying to mislead the public by not publicly recognizing penalties and fees from EDD, or other entities. When the District transitioned from 1099's to W-2's in 2018, this was a huge learning curve for Tracy Corris (former Financial and Facilities

Manager), and mistakes were made. Since 2012, the District has paid a total of \$769.12 in penalties to EDD, with over half the total penalty amount incurred during the transition period directly following Tracy's untimely death, and the new Finance and Facilities joining the Department and getting up to speed on her new job. Since June, 2020, the District has not incurred penalties with EDD and we are trying to move forward as best and open as possible. Tom added that he resents that Boyd accused the Chief and staff of falsifying reports to obtain raises.

Rhea Williamson added that from her perspective, she appreciates Boyd bringing this topic to the Board's attention, but wanted Boyd to know that the Board has discussed the issues with the IRS and EDD extensively over the last two years, during public meetings, and asked Boyd what the Board can do so we finalize the discussion and move forward? Rhea added that Boyd's letters are difficult to read due to the inflammatory language but reiterated that she does appreciate his intentions. Board members are volunteers, and speaking for herself, she is doing the best she can with the knowledge she has learned throughout her tenure on the Board. Rhea would like to look to Boyd as a mentor.

Boyd Johnson stated the public deserves the truth. If you look at the complete packet Heidi Ryan provided (dated August 19<sup>th</sup> as a response to Boyd's public records request), there are notices from EDD stating an additional \$3,000 in penalties incurred. Tom Browning noted that the District never had to pay those penalties. To which Boyd responded that it is irrelevant to his point. Boyd Johnson then asked for details on the refunds page.

Sam Hinrich noted that when she worked for the North Columbia Schoolhouse Cultural Center, they encountered a similar situation with EDD where they incurred multiple penalties with EDD that were due to overpayments (because the payments were based on estimates), then they would be refunded for the overpayment from EDD.

Boyd Johnson stated that a penalty to the IRS listed in the September, 2020 Board packet was not labeled as a penalty, and claims penalties to the IRS were only labeled appropriately in subsequent Board packets due to his multiple letters and public record requests. Why were the penalties not listed clearly before? Boyd said he would be happy if the Board made a statement that they will ensure penalties are clearly identified. Both Bruce Boyd and Rhea Williamson responded that the Board has already made such statements. However, Boyd believes there needs to be a Board motion because he believes Board statements are meaningless without a motion.

Boyd relayed that it baffled him that the District would pay a penalty to EDD and not clearly label said penalty in the board packet. After reviewing statements from EDD, he noticed penalties paid to the EDD are combined with other employment taxes, so they are not stand-alone payments, but they should be noted for the public to see and understand. What the public needs to see for the Board to be completely transparent, is the granular details.

Bruce Boyd stated that the Board will continue to strive to be as transparent as possible. Bruce added that all the information on the penalties to the IRS and EDD public

information and recorded in the minutes, the Board and District would like to move forward. To move forward, Boyd Johnson asked the Board to make a motion.

Samantha Hinrichs made a motion that Board members will continue to oversee the details of the financials of the Fire District and do their due diligence to ensure the public is informed of the details and will raise red flags as necessary, Rhea Williamson seconded.

Samantha Hinrichs sees her job as a director includes ensuring the money received from the taxpayers is spent appropriately. This is not a fun job, Sam does this because she enjoys the fire department and wants to serve the community responsibly. Unfortunately, mistakes are inevitable, but she will raise a red flag when necessary.

Rhea Williamson wanted clarification on what was expected of the motion. Boyd Johnson responded that the Board should make a motion to be completely transparent with the public. Bruce Boyd then suggested the Board table the motion and get something in writing for the next meeting.

**B. CLOSED SESSION: Pursuant to Section 54967 of the Brown Act: Public Employee Performance Evaluations: District Manager of Finance and Facilities.**

**C. Report on Closed Session**

The Board received an evaluation on the district Manager of Finance and Facilities and were very pleased. No action was taken.

**9. NEXT MEETING:** December 6th, 2022, 6:00 PM.

**10. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.

*Heidi Ryan*

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Heidi Ryan, Board Secretary