

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
La Pine Rural Fire Protection District
February 10, 2022 Regular Meeting 9:00 a.m.

Open Meeting Director Witmer opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and led the flag salute.

Roll Call

Directors Present: Robin Adams, Jim Landles, Dick Swails, Joel Witmer

Directors Absent: Doug Cox

Staff Present: Chief Mike Supkis, Assistant Chief Dan Daugherty, Office Manager Tracy Read

Kevin Leehmann, Lieutenant Fire/Medic – IAFF 3387

Kyle Lohner, Engineer Fire/Medic – IAFF 3387

Special Presentations and Recognition

Chief Supkis introduced District staff members.

Administrative Staff – Sue Curl and new Administrative Assistant Tammie Waters

Firefighter/Paramedics

- Travis De Lorto – Travis began his career at Crook County Fire & Rescue where he worked part-time after completing their student program. He obtained his paramedic certification in 2014 and has worked in John Day as well as agencies in the Central Oregon area. He enjoys serving the rural population.
- Ethan Axten – Ethan has been a paramedic for almost three years, starting his career in Sunriver as a reserve. He also worked for Crescent Fire & Rescue.
- Wes George – Wes began his fire service career in 2005 as a volunteer with Sisters Fire. He then worked for the forest service, obtained his paramedic, and then worked for Warm Springs Fire & Rescue and other smaller central Oregon agencies before coming to La Pine Fire.

- Josh Erwin – Josh has worked in fire service since the age of eighteen and has been a paramedic for twelve years. He began his career at Crescent Fire & Rescue where he was one of their first students, worked two seasons for Cal Fire, then moved to the Los Angeles area where he worked as an EMT and obtained his paramedic in 2010. He moved back to the Portland area where he worked for AMR and Yachats Fire, then worked as a flight medic in Alaska. He most recently worked for Crook County Fire & Rescue.
- Natalie Dickson – Natalie has been with the District two and a half years in the student program and received a direct appointment to a career Firefighter/Paramedic position. She is being heavily recruited by larger metropolitan agencies and the District appreciates her service as long as she is able to remain here. Natalie stated it has been an honor serving the District, and thanked everyone for the support and help she has received. She feels this is an amazing program and she has grown a lot. Natalie is very appreciative of all that has been invested in the student program, which has allowed her to get to where she is today.

Chief followed up stating that during his tenure, the District has turned out many well-qualified graduates who have gone on to serve in highly respected agencies throughout the Northwest. With the current labor and employment dynamic, the District will begin providing direct offers to senior students, so those graduates know that when they complete the program there is a job for them here.

Promotions

With recent retirements and staff movement, there have been opportunities for promotions and direct appointments.

New Engineer/Medic – Promotions – Mason, Harrison

Chief Supkis feels the most important position in the District's line staff and operations is the engineer. They make the scene and fire grounds operational. Chief elaborated on the history of the term "engineer" and congratulated Engineers Mason and Harrison on attaining this important position. Engineer Harrison came up through the District's student program after graduating from La Pine High School. Engineer Mason is a purple heart veteran of multiple deployments; he became interested in the fire service in his hometown of Baker, Oregon. He entered the student program after working in construction and high tower work.

New Lieutenants – Promotions – Leehmann, Ryan

Lieutenants are responsible for making sure each station is operating, all crews are assigned, apparatus ready to go, and all other day-to-day operations. There is normally a lieutenant on duty at each station, and they are working officers – responding to calls while also serving as duty officer when needed. The position is awarded the first bugle, signifying the first level of formal leadership in the fire service.

Lieutenant Leehmann is a rancher in Lake County and went through the student program in Redmond and was hired by the District after being the top candidate in the recruitment process held at that time. He founded, organized and serves as the chief of the Lake County Rangeland Fire Protection Association. That group was able to stop the Dixie Fire from moving into that area last year.

Lieutenant Ryan started with the district over 15 years ago after being in the IT industry and became a career firefighter/paramedic in 2010. He forte, other than helping the District with IT, is our rescue programs- water, technical, and extrication.

New Captain – Promotions – Miller, Rigney

Captains' responsibilities include 'running the show' – taking care of everyone and everything in the District. They do all scheduling, project coordination, personnel matters, and answer directly to the Chiefs. Captain Miller is in charge of training and has also assisted in the P25 radio conversion. Captain Rigney oversees all apparatus and chairs that committee.

- Captain Miller came to the District from the Air Force where he served as firefighter. He was promoted directly from the firefighter/paramedic position to Captain.
- Captain Rigney was a student in one of the District's first student reserve programs. He started as a volunteer in 1995, then moved to the student program in 1998 and has promoted through all the ranks leading up to Captain.

Oregon State Fire Marshal Firestorm 2020 Medal

Captain Fred Franklin (ret)

Lieutenant Mike Larson

Lieutenant Mike Mooers (ret)

Engineer Paul Stevenson

Acting Engineer Luke Jerome (Redmond)

FF/Paramedic Nick Addy (Redmond)

FF Justin Mellow

FF Sean Fortune (Redmond)

Assistant Chief Dan Daugherty

Chief Supkis presented this Medal awarded by the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office to those in attendance – Engineer Paul Stevenson and Assistant Chief Dan Daugherty. Lieutenant Larson was not able to be present today. He reviewed the fourteen major fires/conflagrations that started on September 7, 2020 and commended the actions of the crews on duty that day. A Shift responded to a wildfire that began in the neighborhood of Hermosa Drive where a tree fell on a power line during the historic wind event. As trees were immediately being torched, multiple residences were threatened and an area-wide evacuation ordered. A task force was activated and then stood down. Crews responded in Engine 142 and wrapped the fire with progressive hose lay. The fire was stopped at two acres with no homes lost.

Lieutenant Larson was the initial commanding officer on scene. He and Engineer Stevenson immediately went into action on direct attack. Their actions prevented this event from potentially becoming the fifteenth major fire that day.

Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 3387 Report

(Moved up from Management Reports by Chair)

Lieutenant Leehmann began by recognizing fire service volunteers across the nation and asked for a moment of silence to honor St. Paul Volunteer Austin Smith.

He then provided the Union's perspective on current District staffing. Currently in the State of Oregon there are 400 unfilled firefighter positions every day. Leehmann reported that his shift has recently responded to two major fires and one major auto extrication. When the structure fire was toned out, both medics were already on medical calls. Chief Supkis was first on scene and established command. That home was saved even though only four crew members were available to respond. On the MVA, there were two patients requiring extrication. Fortunately, four students responded on that alarm. It was Leehmann's first call as a Lieutenant with only nine crew members responding.

Engineer Kyle Lohner addressed staffing concerns. He stated the staffing issues faced now by the District are just the tip of the iceberg. He reported on agencies in the state that have had openings since 2019 with no applicants to fill them. He stressed the dangers of responding to emergencies, particularly structure fires, with inadequate staffing. The current application process has had no new applicants. Lohner proposed forming a workgroup with representatives from line staff, Board of Directors and Chief Officers. He encouraged thinking outside the box to come up with ideas and programs to attract and retain new employees. Director Swails reminded everyone of the importance of the chain of command. Director Adams stated she would like to participate in this process. Director Landles commented that in a workgroup there are

no bad ideas, and no one is more important than anyone else. Engineer Lohner agreed on the importance of finding common ground in order to move forward.

Lieutenant Leehmann followed up in agreement with the above comments. He reminded everyone that four months ago the District had twenty-five career firefighter/paramedics; currently there are only eighteen. The four new recruits will likely not be fully online for another four to six weeks. He expressed appreciation for all that has been done to secure funding and reiterated everyone is doing more with less during this time of increased call volume. The current staffing MOU will expire when there are twenty-one full time filled positions. At that point the discussion will need to resume as to whether to renew the MOU or look at other options, including closing a station. He reviewed vacation scheduling MOU and other MOUs being considered, including uniforms.

Senator Merkley – Jerry Hubbard – US Capitol Flag flown for LPRFD

Jerry Hubbard reported on his success in securing over \$940,000 for the District since last July. The District just received a \$250,000 grant from Deschutes County, which will pay for a new quick response unit as well as four new Stryker gurneys. Before Congress as part of the current budget under consideration is an additional \$660,000 to fund two new medics and four sets of defibrillators.

Jerry is also working on funding to secure eighteen new firefighter/paramedic positions, \$18 million over five years. He is in communication with Representative Breese-Iverson and Senator Wyden’s office to assist in securing these funds.

Senator Merkley’s office presented the District with a flag which was flown over the US Capitol in recognition of the hard work and dedication the District has put into fighting fires and medical care to individuals in Deschutes, Lake and Klamath Counties, and the excellent training it provides to its student firefighters and paramedics.

Director Witmer thanked Mr. Hubbard for all his invaluable work to assist the District in obtaining much-needed funding.

Open Forum for Public Comment

Name	Purpose for Attending
<i>Courtney Ignazzitto</i>	<i>Interest</i>
<i>Mike Thorne</i>	<i>Board</i>
<i>Rex Lesueur</i>	<i>Citizen</i>

Courtney Ignazzitto asked about the progress of the Public Private Partnership. Chief Supkis responded Cascade Medical Transport (CMT) received iPad and radio training and

has met with Deschutes 911 this week. They plan to be available with crews by March. Chief has encouraged them to provide whatever response availability they can as they work to become fully response-ready. CMT is faced with the same staffing challenges as everyone else.

Approval of Minutes

Director Witmer called for review of the January minutes. No comments, questions, or corrections.

Action: Director Adams moved to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2022 Board of Directors Regular Meeting. Second by Director Landles. All in favor. Motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

Financials

Monthly Revenue and Expenditure Statement. Staff answered Board questions regarding current revenues and expenditures.

- 5104 – GEMT – Director Swails asked when this revenue is expected. Staff responded the fee for service funds are expected in April. The CCO funds should have been received by now. Staff is working with OHA to resolve this delay.
- 6200 – Employee Maintenance – Director Swails asked when this line needs to be reviewed for supplemental budget action. Chief responded this individual line is part of the larger category, and that category total is what needs to be monitored, rather than individual line items.

Staff will provide a summary of those year-to-date expenditures at the next meeting.

Monthly Expenses by Vendor

Reviewed, no comment.

Monthly Expenses Paid

Action: Director Swails moved to approve monthly expenses presented from 1/14/22 – 2/10/22 in the amount of \$311,782.40. Second by Director Adams. All in favor. Motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

Management Reports

Monthly Alarm Report

Director Adams commented that January's alarms are down a bit from November and December. Staff noted while this is true, calls for January are up twenty percent from January 2021.

Multiple Alarm & Building Permit/Valuation Report

Building permits remain strong. Jerry Hubbard requested 2021 statistics. Staff will provide.

Chief's Report

Director Adams asked what an LE request is. Chief responded this is a law enforcement request, when a medic assessment is requested.

Code 99s were down in January with three; two of which were ROSC.

Director Witmer stated chiefs written summary is an extremely helpful report.

Correspondence/News

- A. Thank You – Lyle
- B. SDAO/SDIS – 2022 Best Practices Program
Discussion regarding the importance of participation in this program.
- C. SDAO – Board and Staff Training Opportunities
- D. Wise Buys – Board Meeting Dates
- E. KTVZ – Deschutes County distributing American Rescue Plan Funds
- F. KTVZ – Fire Destroys La Pine Area Garage; Crews Save Home, Shed, Cats
- G. My Central Oregon – Home, Pets Saved From La Pine Fire
- H. The Bulletin Deschutes County will put 1.3M Towards Homeless Solutions, La Pine Rural Fire District
- I. Wise Buys – La Pine Fire District Receives \$280K from Deschutes County Commission
- J. KTVZ – Highway 97 in La Pine Reopens After Two-Vehicle Crash
- K. SDAO/SDIS \$10,000 IT Security Grant
- L. Oregon State Fire Marshal – 2021 NFIRS Report Card

Discussion regarding this new annual report. The District has a 94.6 percent validation rate which is very good. Most reports are submitted within one day. Discussion regarding how responses are reported and tracked; i.e., if a homeless person living in their car has a car fire, is it a car fire or a home fire? Director Swails asked how much time is involved in creating reports. Chief responded crew completes after each run 30 minutes for basic runs and that while it is time-consuming, it is beneficial to the District in terms of statistics, getting funding and is also mandated by state law.

Old Business

A. Director Witmer, Board Position #3

Director Witmer nominated Mike Thorne to serve the remainder of his term. He highly recommends Mike for this position.

Mr. Thorne addressed the Board, stating he retired from Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue (TVF&R) in 2019 as a Lieutenant Paramedic. He tested and interviewed with La Pine early in his career, and hired on with West Linn which at that time was a single-engine department with three firefighters. He understands the challenges La Pine is facing. He started in the student program at Beaver Creek (Clackamas), then worked with West Linn, and then with TVF&R. He has spent a considerable amount of time in Central Oregon. Mike and his wife moved to the Spring River area in 2021.

He loves the fire service, is very familiar with staffing and capacity issues, and has experience with progressively addressing these challenges.

Action: Director Witmer moved to accept Mike Thorne to complete the term of Board Position #3. Second by Director Swails.

Roll Call Vote:

Swails:	Aye
Witmer:	Aye
Landles:	Aye
Adams:	Aye

Motion passed on a 4 – 0 vote.

Mr. Thorne will be sworn in at the March Board of Directors Meeting.

B. Recruit, Select and Appoint Budget Committee Members

Director Swails nominated Paul Gilchrist.

Director Adams nominated Rex LeSeuer.

Action: Director Adams moved to accept the nominations of Paul Gilchrist by Director Swails and Rex LeSeuer by Director Adams, and to appoint Paul Gilchrist and Rex LeSeuer to serve on the 2022/2023 Budget Committee. Second by Director Witmer.

Roll Call Vote:

Swails:	Aye
Witmer:	Aye
Landles:	Aye
Adams:	Aye

Motion passed on a 4 – 0 vote.

New Business

A. 2022/2023 Budget Calendar

Chief Supkis reviewed the proposed calendar and the budget process.

Action: Director Adams moved to adopt the 2022/2023 Budget Calendar as presented. Second by Director Witmer.

Roll Call Vote:

Swails:	Aye
Witmer:	Aye
Landles:	Aye
Adams:	Aye

B. Firefighter/Basic Classification Staffing Concept

Chief Supkis briefed the Board on current staffing challenges. Using the student program as a possible staffing model. The budget is for 12. However, the goal is always to bring on fifteen reserves at the start of the year which by attrition (graduations hired away, or just changing paths) by the end of the year it is often down to 9, however the average is normally twelve. There have been ten additional career firefighter/paramedics positions added and hired over the past decade. The district had to hire only 3 additional replacement positions during that time. This past November and December

has brought staffing volatility not seen before following many years of static personnel levels. The district is still short 2 positions unfilled from the old normal and that number most likely will go up again. Looking at the student program as a staffing model, instead of looking for two should the district recruit for up to six additional positions to get the average back to the budget 25. Also, it is the feeling of our staff that there are great potential candidates out there, but they are not all qualified full paramedics. Maybe Firefighter/EMT basics could those positions fill specialized slots in the organizational needs? Qualified as firefighters, medic drivers or tender operators? Chief requested the Board consider the proposal and be prepared to further discuss it next month. Lieutenant Leehmann stated many EMS calls tend to be BLS and can be staffed with EMT basics. Additionally, interest in the program is down and candidates with experience are no longer as available. Discussion regarding the logistics of staffing with putting a student on the staffing roster while they have classes. Director Witmer asked how often is a paramedic-level response actually warranted, and how often there needs to be two paramedics on an ambulance. Engineer Lohner referenced a recent critical patient call where Natalie Dickson (as a student) was able to provide a level of care at her newly obtained paramedic level along with his experienced paramedic intervention capabilities, where the patient was successfully stabilized for the transport to Bend. Other possible scenarios were discussed including staffing a medic with two EMT basics. There are multiple staffing options that can be placed under consideration. Just as important is to consider in staffing are decisions is providing firefighter coverage for fires.

These challenges are not unique to this District. Many agencies including Portland, Gresham, Tualatin Valley and others are being forced to adapt their staffing models to adjust to the lack of available, qualified personnel. Staffing in Oregon is more difficult due to the high bar placed by OHA.

Chief Supkis recapped by stating the District will survive this dynamic, challenging situation. We must continue to focus on serving the public, meeting the needs of staff, the District and the community, and prioritizing what's most important first.

Director Witmer wrapped up by stating this will likely need an aggressive timeframe to move forward, and encouraged everyone to continue moving forward and working together. Chief agreed that we cannot wait to start the recruiting process until every detail is addressed, referencing the recent hiring process to fill the vacancy by the Captain retirement last July.

Appeals (Ordinance 2021-01)

Paused per Tolling Agreement January 26, 2022 Sussman Shank LLP/Hart Wagner LLP

Chief Supkis noted the Tolling Agreement, is in the best interest of all parties to allow the parties to focus on the major issues involving the district's cost recovery efforts.

Special Meetings and Workshops

A. SDAO Conference February 10 – 12

Virtual conference this weekend. Mr. Hubbard reviewed an upcoming webinar which will provide information on upcoming funding opportunities, which he plans to attend.

Good of the Order

A. Recruitment updates - Firefighter/paramedic; Student Reserves
Covered earlier in the meeting.

B. Grant efforts – Homeland Security – State; State Legislature; County

The District is first on the list to receive this grant to fund radios.

Next Regular Meeting: March 10, 2022, 9:00 a.m.

Regular Board Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully Scribed and Submitted
La Pine Rural Fire Protection District
Administrative Staff

Date Presented to Board and Approval

Board Secretary

Board President

3-10-2022
