

PALOMAR MOUNTAIN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the monthly meeting of The Board of Directors, August 3, 2019.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by President Kellogg. Board members present: Cliff Kellogg, Robert Carlyle, Glenn Borland, Michael Pique, Keith Ronchetti. Also present were CalFire Battalion Chief Cal Hendrie, CalFire Captain Dean Kowalski, and Palomar CERT Program Manager Bill Leininger.

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: None offered.

Minutes: The draft minutes from the 07/06/2019 board meeting were approved with the change of Bill Leininger to 'present' and corrections by Captain Kowalski.

Financial Report: Keith Ronchetti's written report (included as part of these minutes) showing a balance of \$107,111.54 was approved. Our liability insurance forms have arrived. Cliff will call Liz Johnson at the county to ask who pays.

Station 79 Report: Captain Kowalski said the Defensible Space Inspections are 90% done for the year. There are still a few houses far from the station to inspect, mostly down the East and South Grades. We will be getting a "TMU" (Temporary Hire) paramedic: the job offer is for a maximum of nine months, but could re-test and become permanent. California has a shortage of firefighter-paramedics, with only 32% of the applicants passing their final tests.

Battalion Report: Chief Hendrie says that CalFire prediction services are forecasting less influence from the coast moisture during August and September and starting into fires in earnest in October. Central and northern California will be at most risk, but we all need to be aware. Overall, hiring in San Diego county is hard - Orange County draws crew away as soon as they qualify. The first of the C-130 air tankers should arrive at Ramona airport at the end of August. These carry 4000 gallons of retardant. This phase is for testing and training, with operational flights in about two years. There is to be a meeting soon on Palomar about evacuation routes, with "resilience" being the new theme. The US Forest Service station Engine 36 (near the observatory) has a cracked frame and is out of service. The Lake Henshaw station's engine is also broken.

County Fire Authority (CFA) Update: Cliff and Suzann Leininger attended a meeting at the San Diego County Fire Authority headquarters in Kearny Mesa. Cliff brought up the lack of county support for routine property maintenance. Don Heiser will discuss the problem with CFA Public Safety Group Program Manager Herman Reddick, remarking that it's a common problem around the county. Our board could write the county supervisors or bring it up with our battalion chief. Cliff suggests we wait a little to see if the service improves. Chief Hendrie says he's seeing most of these problems in the outlying stations. Cliff will keep squawking as necessary.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): Bill Leininger says CERT did Barricade fire-protection gel training at the Observatory last week; 16 people came. Next Saturday he will work with Will Meyst at the State Park on adding wildfire preparedness to the Park's evening campground talks. The Palomar Observatory superintendent Rick Burruss is getting serious about fire safety. He wants to be clear that the observatory is not an evacuation site. The Office of Emergency Services grant for CERT equipment is delayed for more paperwork; hope to receive it by September.

Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council (FSC): Yvonne Vaucher offered a written report. Cash on hand is \$3910.66, with about \$9000 in restricted grant funds. "Building Resilient Wildfire-Resistant Communities" is a new San Diego County Fire Authority (CFA) program. It has four areas of focus: Community education, Defensible space/structure hardening, Vegetation management, and Evacuation. Palomar is a priority this fiscal year and we need to report our priorities by mid-August. Our WUI workshop will be held August 24. Eric Just of the CFA Community Support Program would like a list of Crestline/Birch Hill residents consenting to brush clearing. Our Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is awaiting approval by San Diego County FSC. Phil Boczanowski cleared brush 15 feet on both sides of Conifer Road. We are still discussing where to put the two 2500-gallon water tanks we were given – Cliff Kellogg and Robert Carlyle worked on a cost estimate for fittings and installation. Captain Kowalski wants one tank at the station; Alan Serry has not yet asked the Lodge owners if they would agree to host the second tank. Dumpster for residents' use today and every 1st Saturday. Chipping for residences to help owners clear their properties for fire safety - several days more available this summer - call Robert Carlyle to sign up.

Cliff Kellogg offered a draft of the Fire Board's priorities. Under the specified four headings, he suggests priorities:

- Community Education: 1st- Alert San Diego, 3rd- Safety Zones- definitions and how to identify, Other- Mountain visitors and campers
- Defensible space & structural hardening: 1st- ember-resistant vents, 2nd- Knox box [gate & home access by emergency responders]
- Fuel Management: 1st- Tree limbs cleared for fire engine access, 2nd- Private property dead tree removal, 3rd- Private property heavy brush clearing
- Evacuation Corridors: 1st- South Grade enhancement, 2nd- East Grade enhancement including Walls 11E road to East Grade, 3rd- State Park/Palomar Christian Conference Center, Other- Nate Harrison Grade.

Michael Pique suggests a priority for resilient communications: 1st- a "wake up" siren or other low-tech wide-area alert mechanism, 2nd- cellular nano towers placed at the fire station, the Lodge, State Park, and on Birch Hill that would provide emergency cell phone service even if conventional towers are inoperative, 3rd- signage showing "Fire Emergency Route" and "No outlet" roads.

Cecelia Borland attended the July 30 SDG&E Fuels Management Roundtable in Warner Springs and offered a written report. SDG&E is pruning and replacing trees along power lines and will partner with landowners to remove dead trees. The county road department is mowing roadside right-of-way including on Palomar. Cal Fire and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are maintaining fuel breaks and truck trails.

Glenn Borland says clearing alongside easement road 32J has improved the passage from Birch Hill to Conifer Road. There now is room for a 5000-gallon water tank on the pass. Captain Kowalski notes that the massive gate at the Conifer Road – East Grade Road junction is a safety issue. Even though some residents know the access code, the locked gate could make evacuation down Conifer a death trap. Captain Kowalski says that the Nate Harrison grade is currently in bad shape - the county has generally cleared and graded the lower portion but the upper, State Park, roadbed is heavily cratered and eroding.

Community Center of Palomar Mountain: The US Forest Service's Crestline Picnic Ground (next to the Fire Station, on Summit Circle) is the site for the August 31 picnic, noon to 3 PM. Potluck and opportunity drawings (please donate items for the drawings).

PMVFD Board of Directors Election: Two terms expire in September: those of Michael Pique and Keith Ronchetti. Cecelia Borland will chair the Nominations Committee, publicizing the opportunities and reporting nominees back to the Board.

Old Business:

Station Construction Progress: Cliff learned from Liz Johnson that the station plans have not yet been published for bids. David Beck, the project manager, called Cliff again about the water supply tanks and piping. He said there are no dates yet, they are still working on this & that.

Adjournment: 10:48 AM 08/03/2019. The next meeting is the Annual General Meeting Sunday 09/01/2019, at noon.

- Michael Pique

Minutes approved by PMVFD Board 10/05/2019