

The Palomar Mountain Community Fire Association

Minutes of the monthly meeting of The Board of Directors, May 3, 2025.

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 A.M. by President Robert Carlyle. Board members present in person at the Community Center (Station 79 grounds): Robert Carlyle, Tom Mendenhall, Michael Pique, Keith Ronchetti, Mark Thompson. Also present in person were CAL FIRE Captain Dean Kowalski, Miriam Munoz, and Cliff Kellogg. Elizabeth Getzoff and Yvonne Vaucher joined our Zoom teleconference.

Pledge: Robert led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: none offered.

Minutes: The minutes from the April 5, 2025, meeting were approved.

Financial Report: Keith Ronchetti's written report (available at palomar-fire.org) showed a balance of \$91,914.79, with an additional \$1220.29 held for CERT. The only expenditure was \$25 for the California Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts. He has re-filed our RRF-1 form. The report was approved.

County Fire Advisory (CFA) Board: Cliff Kellogg attended the March 3 meeting. He says the Borrego Springs fire station is being refurbished. A county-wide issue is the large-scale battery electrical storage sites; 17 of them. The county and state regulations are not keeping up with the process. The county is raising the "Fire Mitigation" building permit fees to \$3.08 per square foot. The county Fire Marshall inspection fee (for enforcing the building codes) is going up from \$104 to \$232 per hour. This covers both residential and commercial properties, grading permits, and fire alarm systems. The first county fire helicopter has been non-operational for two years; the county wants to buy a second one. Cliff says the next meeting is on May 12.

Station 79 Report: Captain Kowalski says that we are well into this year's Defensible Space Inspections (DSI). Yvonne says that the current DSI zones are not designed for people who live in a national forest, especially the Zone 0: no plants within five feet. Who in CAL FIRE can we ask about accommodating our situation? The Fire Marshall? Captain Kowalski will look into this. The station staffing is still requiring a lot of overtime. Our water tender went down to the Shelter Valley fire yesterday. We are promised coverage when our crews are away like that; the dispatch of a "cover engine" for us is getting better. Some snags with supplying medical supplies for our engines and ambulance. Below us, Station 70 at Rincon is being rebuilt: an 18-month process. For now, they are set up at the Lazy H Ranch, with a type-1 engine and an ambulance. The underground water tanks at Station 79 may or may not be ready for use; no instructions yet have reached the crew. As to maintenance and repair of the Community Center building, the roof leak has been repaired and the back/side door has a new combination code. Cliff Kellogg asks about deferred maintenance such as gutter work and paint.

Captain Kowalski says that until July 1, the start of the next fiscal year, only emergency repairs are possible.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): Bill Leininger away, no report.

Palomar Mountain Planning Organization (PMPO): The PMPO is planning to fund four dumpster sessions and to apply for TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax) money to remove a large rock that is blocking emergency vehicle access along Easement Road 30, east of the Lodge. The next PMPO meeting will be the Annual General Meeting with election of board members, Saturday, May 24, at 10 AM immediately following the Pancake Breakfast (which starts at 8 AM).

Community Center of Palomar Mountain (CCPM): Robert Carlyle, Chair. The CCPM board members will help out at the May 24 PMPO Pancake Breakfast.

Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council (PMFSC): Yvonne says the FSC has about \$10,310, almost all unrestricted. We sent in our final 2024 report for the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation (SDRRF) "SAFE" grant - dumpsters and chipping. For 2025, we are requesting 6 chipping days and 8 dumpster rentals. The Dead & Dying Tree Removal grant is funded, and the USFS is "go" on that; the Resource Conservation District is finishing up CEQA approval. The USFS Birch Hill burn is done; Penny Pines (south of Birch Hill) will be done next season. Herbicide work is in progress on the strip of USFS land in Jeff Valley west of Conifer Road. Palomar Mountain probably needs to join the "Fire Wise" association, which works at a community progress level. We will host another Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) workshop on June 14, probably in the morning only, so we will not have a field trip to study preparedness work in action. The next FSC meeting will be 9 AM June 28, in person at the CCPM and by Zoom; we will skip the May meeting because its date conflicts with the PMPO breakfast and meeting.

New Business:

USFS Gates Closing Off Summit Circle: The new gates now block our access to the CERT trailer and to the dumpster. Robert Carlyle says the USFS does not want "civilians" like us to have a key. He met with the USFS supervisor, who is new to the area, hoping we can eventually be trusted with access.

Adjournment: 9:58 AM 05/03/2025. The next PMCFA meeting will be at 9 AM, June 7, 2025, at the Community Center. We expect to have Zoom call-ins available.

Michael Pique, Secretary

Minutes approved by PMCFA Board 06/07/2025