

PALOMAR MOUNTAIN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Board of Directors

Saturday, May 7th, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by President Leininger.

Board members present: Glenn Borland, David Robarts , Mike Pique, Keith Ronchetti and Suzann Leininger.

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public comment: Kathy Lande expressed her concerns about recent lapses in station coverage and the lack of information about permitted events taking place on Palomar. Alan Serry suggested that anyone with information on upcoming events post them on the new bulletin board at the Post Office.

The minutes of April meeting were reviewed by the Board. Keith made the motion to accept and Suzann seconded. The motion was approved.

Financial Report: Keith went over his written report, (included as part of these minutes.) Suzann made the motion to accept, Glenn seconded and the motion was approved.

Chief's Report: Captain Johnson read from his prepared station report, (included as part of these minutes.) He reported that the station now has a newly qualified driver on board added to the Palomar fire fighter staff. The automated apparatus bay door contract is moving forward after a recent County General Service contractor visit. The County is also moving forward in removing the above ground diesel storage tanks at the station. The crew will be using the fuel tanks at the County Roads Dept. yard from now on. CALFIRE Chief Tony Mecham stated that a fuel truck would be available during emergencies. Station staffing is now being filled by county reserves only, career CALFIRE staffing ended officially on 4/18/16. Defensible space inspections will be starting in a couple of weeks. This will be a joint effort conducted by local USFS and CALFIRE personnel. The USFS Station #36 near the Observatory is now staffed for the season, 9:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M., except for Sundays and Mondays. Suzann made the motion to accept the Chief's report, Mike seconded and the report was approved.

CERT Report: Palomar CERT program director, James Ewen reported on recent activities. He said that they are organizing and inventorying supplies and equipment for future CERT needs. A grant was being submitted to the San Diego Fire Foundation to request funds to purchase a storage trailer. The last meeting/ training were on personal emergency preparedness.

Fire Safe Council: Council representative, Cecelia Borland went over recent developments. She said that an urban/wildlands interface class is scheduled for June 18th at the Fire Station. There are limited openings for this event. The Palomar Fire Safe Council is in the process of reapplying for 501C3 status. She expects approval will be forthcoming .

New Business: CALFIRE Unit Chief Tony Mecham and San Diego County Fire Authority Group Program Manager Herman Reddick gave the Board a presentation on recent developments within their organization.

The Palomar Mountain Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPPP) has been approved. Chief Mecham acknowledged the issue of timely notification of special event permits to affected communities.

He also acknowledged that the County Dept. of General Services is slow in issuing contracts because of problems within the bureaucracy He said that a tactical 2000 gal. water tender is funded for Palomar and should be here in June for a trial period. This has been ordered specifically to maximize ISO points for potential home insurance advantages.

Chief Mecham spoke directly to the state of the County Reserve Program:

The balanced coverage approach to station staffing has not met his expectations. Among the drawbacks has been a lot of moving around by inexperienced firefighters to unfamiliar areas. One remedy to this problem has been to institute changes in training curriculum for better home base coverage. A core group will be assigned to each station to ensure continuity and to provide localized training for newer recruits. He recognized the need to keep more experienced people in place and emphasized the need to for basic training skills applicable to local needs. He also recognized that the current driver/operator 40 hours of training is too onerous for new recruits and has led to a shortage of qualified drivers in the program. He wants the patrol driver training to be simplified to a basic 16 hours of instruction. Chief Mecham intends to elicit feedback from all the County Firefighters in the reserve program to get their input on what kind of changes that might be implemented to improve the program. He intends to take this input and rewrite current policies.

County Fire Authority Group Program Manager Herman Reddick addressed the Board about the outcome of the meeting between Board members Suzann Leininger and Mike Pique with County Supervisor Bill Horn's representative Chris Champine. He stated that Sup. Horn has agreed to fund an Administrative CALFIRE Captain position at Palomar, 10 hours per day, 4 days per week. Chief Mecham filled in the details of the meeting and laid out some of the options that were considered before the final decision was made He said the hiring process was started and that it would be for a two year trial period beginning July 2016. The data would be looked at the end of this two year time frame and a decision made to continue funding.

Among the Chief's long term goals were to have a wild land capable CALFIRE engine on Palomar, full time and convert the current Direct Protection Area, (DPA) from USFS responsibility to CALFIRE control. This agreement is now in negotiations and has one year left in the current contract.

Battalion Chief's Position: Cristina Williamson's vacant position will be advertised as a limited term position due to problems in staffing in South San Diego County. Cristina will stay involved during this transition period. Short term, Palomar will still sometimes lack coverage. This summer, CALORIE will have two engines at Rincon and will send one up if possible. The new Captain will rotate around the week.

Old Business:

1. Bylaw review.
2. SRA Grant. The Palomar Divide fire break grant has been extended to 2017. The chipping for this year has been concluded and all the money allocated has been spent.

Calendar check:

The next meeting will be June 4th at 9:00 A.M.

Adjournment: 11:15 A.M.