



**VISTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Minutes – March 11, 2026**

These minutes reflect the order in which items appeared on the meeting agenda and do not necessarily reflect the order in which items were considered.

**BUSINESS SESSION – REGULAR AGENDA**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Ploetz called to order the regular meeting of the Vista Fire Protection District Board of Directors at 1:00 PM at the “Smart Space” conference room located at 450 S. Melrose Dr., Vista CA.

a. Roll Call

Directors Present: Elliott, Hill, Miller, Ploetz, Fougner

Directors Absent: None

Staff Present: Karlena Rannals, Administrative Manager; Gerard Washington, Fire Chief; Bret Davidson, Deputy Chief; and Chris Cardinale, Legal Counsel

**FLAG SALUTE**

Director Fougner led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ORAL COMMUNICATION (PUBLIC COMMENT)**

No one requested to speak to the board.

**MOTION WAIVING READING IN FULL OF ALL RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES**

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to waive reading in full of all resolutions and/or ordinances.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR FOUIGNER, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve the consent calendar with the removal of Item 1 a. Board of Directors Minutes as submitted:

2. Payroll Register (Ratify)

a. Payroll paid on March 7, 2026	\$6,250.00
b. Payroll taxes paid on March 6, 2026	<u>\$478.13</u>
	<u>\$6,728.13</u>

3. Accounts Payable (Ratify)

a. Accounts Payable Check 4388 through 4393 paid March 11, 2026	\$147,464.93
b. Auto withdrawals(s) paid February 7 – March 6, 2026	<u>\$1,126.76</u>
Total	<u>\$148,591.69</u>

4. Receive and File (Information)

a. Monthly Reports

i) Fire Chief

ii) Fire Marshal

iii) Effective Response Force Report – January 26

- iv) Southern Operations Seasonal Weather Outlook – March – June 2026
- v) Administrative Manager’s Report
- vi) Correspondence
  - (1) None

MOTION BY DIRECTOR HILL, SECOND BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, CARRIED 4 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 1 ABSTAIN (Fougner) to approve the balance of the consent calendar as submitted:

- 1. Board of Directors Minutes - APPROVE
  - a. Regular Meeting February 11, 2026

**DISTRICT BUSINESS**

1. Strategic Plan Update

Chiefs Washington and Davidson delivered a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following information:

Vegetation Management Notices The board reviewed an updated mailer notice to be sent to all properties in fire hazard security zones. Key revisions include: highlighted compliance dates, QR codes linking to the ordinance and instructional videos, a contractor list for vegetation removal, and a smoke detector program reference. The notice will be translated into Spanish. Staff confirmed the mailer is nearly ready to send mid-March, pending any final board edits. The board requested removing the appeal rights language from the notice, as it is premature before any violation has been issued, and softening the compliance language (e.g., "you may assume your property is compliant").

Xylo Plan (Fire Risk Mapping) The city is in procurement for the Xylo plan, a GIS-based fire risk mapping tool. The vendor estimates an 8-week turnaround once data access is granted. The goal is to have the system operational before fire season to help prioritize fuel abatement locations and provide information for future grant applications.

California Conservation Corps (CCC) Workforce Program Chief Washington presented a multi-agency pilot program pairing Vista Unified School District seniors with the California Conservation Corps for wildland fire training and vegetation management. Key points included cost savings (CCC crews run roughly \$3,600/day versus \$8,500/day for private contractors), the grant funding is tied to a 6-month timeline, and potential for multiple CCC crews operating within the city and district simultaneously. MOUs and legal review are in progress, with CCC crews expected to begin clearing vegetation soon and student participants joining in June/July.

Red Flag Warning Protocols The district has partnered with Vista Unified School District to display red flag warnings and is working to align all regional water districts (Rainbow, Vista Irrigation, Vallecitos, Oceanside) on a common red flag response policy modeled after Rainbow Water District's existing policy. Plans are also underway to push red flag alerts to unhoused residents via county-provided phones.

Additional Updates

- A SIM table was debuted at the Havens event for public education and EOC training; train-the-trainer sessions are scheduled for next month.

- Zone 0 inspections have been rolling out with a soft, educational approach, with positive results noted.
- The district continues to promote Alert San Diego, Genesis/Watch Duty integration, and the Pulse Point CPR app to the public.

## 2. Fixed Assets Impairment

Ms. Rannals summarized the staff report noting that the district's financial records have included capitalized assets, specifically road improvements and signage, that the district does not own and has easements only. These items should not have been capitalized to begin with and have been carried on the fixed asset schedule at a depreciated value.

She reported that in coordination with the district's auditor, recommended removing these improperly capitalized assets from the fixed asset schedule. The adjustment would result in a one-time non-cash expense of approximately \$98,000 (the original capitalized value), replacing the current annual depreciation expense of \$15,960. After this adjustment, the financials would reflect only cash-related assets and liabilities going forward. The auditor confirmed that because the district does not own the property, these items do not qualify as fixed assets and should be removed.

Director Elliott noted the one-time non-cash expense will appear on year-end financials but will not recur unless the district acquires qualifying assets per its existing capitalization policy.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR MILLER, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to authorize staff to remove the improperly capitalized assets and record the associated non-cash expense for the FY26 fiscal year.

## **ORAL REPORT(S)**

### 1. Fire Chief

In addition to his report, the following information was discussed:

Mr. John Conley, City Manager, City of Vista attended the meeting to discuss the following and respond to any questions the board may have. The following summary is reported:

Office Space at Station 3 The City Manager reported that office space at Station 3 has been constructed and will be ready for occupancy after April 1st. The space includes a separate entrance, foyer, private office, and dedicated bathroom access separate from the station. The space is being offered to district staff at no cost (effectively \$1/year) through the term of the current contract.

Meeting Space at Civic Center In response to the district's request for regular meeting space, the city agreed to provide space at the Civic Center at no cost to the district. This arrangement, along with past cost offset reimbursements, will be memorialized in a side letter or formal agreement. City and district legal staff are already in communication to draft the documentation.

City Hall Office Space A question was raised about the feasibility of placing district staff in City Hall for convenience. The City Manager indicated that City Hall does not have dedicated, private office space that could be guaranteed long-term, and that the city needs to reserve available space for its own potential staffing growth.

Board members expressed appreciation for the significantly improved working relationship between the district and the city, noting the City Manager's willingness to attend district meetings with reasonable notice.

Chief Washington also informed the Board that Vista Fire Rescue's Senior Management Analyst is no longer with the City of Vista, and that a replacement will need to be identified.

## 2. Administrative Manager

In addition to her report, she added:

- California Special Districts Association (CSDA) Annual Conference: staff announced that the CSDA Annual Conference will be held in Palm Desert, August 24-27, 2026. Board members and the Chief who attended last year's conference in Monterey spoke positively about the experience, noting strong content on current issues facing special districts, including legal challenges. Board members interested in attending were asked to notify staff as soon as possible, as securing hotel accommodations is the primary time-sensitive item. Registration is currently open.
- Aztec was authorized to complete the repair on Hardell Drive, which an additional 200 sandbags were needed to complete the repair work. The additional cost to complete the repair work is \$3,350.
- The grand opening of fire station 3, located at 1962 E. Vista Way, is scheduled for April 27, 2026 starting at 10 am. All board members and legal counsel are invited to attend.

## 3. Legal

- Mr. Cardinale expressed appreciation for the City Manager's attendance at the meeting, noting it was responsive to prior communication and administrative support concerns. While the district did not receive everything requested, he highlighted the key outcomes: office space at no cost (\$1/year) for the life of the contract and meeting space at no charge. He also acknowledged Ms. Rannals leadership in facilitating the arrangement.
- He noted that homeowner's insurance rates have been a concern for many residents and board members. He referenced a recent state settlement that reportedly capped single-family home insurance rate increases at 17%, down from the 33% insurers had sought. He noted that some policyholders who already paid at the higher rate may be eligible for rebates and encouraged board members and the public to follow the news on this topic.

## 4. Board of Directors

- Miller: inquired if staff were aware of a project at 2183 Primrose Ave. He recently received notice from a property manager regarding a proposed development — Primrose Homes, located at 2183 Primrose — a County of San Diego discretionary permit application for 56 duplex structures totaling 112 condominium units. The project appears to be in or near the district boundary in an unincorporated county area. He expressed his concern about not receiving timely notification of new development applications. Staff have noted they have previously made requests to be included in early-stage county notifications and do receive some notices, though the process is inconsistent. Staff agreed to research the matter further and reach out to county contacts.
- Ploetz: reminded the board that this is an election year and that District D currently has no candidates identified. Maps of District D with street boundaries were distributed to board members to help identify the area. He encouraged board members to spread the word within their personal and community networks — such as church, youth sports, or neighborhood connections — to identify potential candidates who reside within District D. The filing period is July 13 – August 7, 2026. He also expressed his appreciation for the support on the vegetation management program.

- Fougner: He announced that the April meeting will mark his 20th consecutive year of service on the board and that it will be his final meeting. He made the announcement in advance to give the board ample time to identify and seat a replacement. He advised that it would be better to identify and onboard a successor sooner rather than later, noting that placing someone on the board only a couple of months before an election is not an effective recruiting approach. An earlier appointment would allow an individual to get up to speed before potentially running as an incumbent. He expressed his gratitude to Director Miller and former board members Mike McReynolds and Richard Hemenez for the opportunity to serve 20 years and thanked current board members and staff for their experience. The board acknowledged the announcement with gratitude for the members' long tenure and dedication to the district.

**CLOSED SESSION**

Legal Counsel reported that there was no need for closed session.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(s)**

No additional items were added to the list.

**ADJOURNMENT**

President Ploetz adjourned the meeting at 2:24 pm.

  
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Karlena Rannals  
Board Clerk

  
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John Ploetz  
President