



**VISTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes – June 10, 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, Makebakken, Ploetz

Director’s Absent: Miller

Staff Present: Karlana Rannals, Administrative Manager; Gerard Washington, Fire Chief;
and Chris Cardinale, Legal Counsel

Note: Director Makebakken participated via videoconference from 2020 Front Street, Ste 105, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

FLAG SALUTE

President Ploetz led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ORAL COMMUNICATION (PUBLIC COMMENT)

Barry Willis, the District’s LAFCO representative, addressed the Board and provided an update on recent LAFCO-related matters. He reported that LAFCO recently voted not to proceed with the Municipal Service Review (MSR) for the Water Authority and to delay reconsideration for four years. He also discussed several regional issues, including his support for Valley Center Fire Protection District’s successful funding efforts and the Fallbrook and Rainbow water detachment matter. He expressed concern regarding rising water rates and their impact on farmers throughout the county, noting that agricultural water costs are becoming a significant food security and economic issue. He stated that assisting farmers with water affordability is one of his top priorities. He noted that he is in the process of visiting special districts throughout the county to better understand their issues and priorities.

The Board discussed the importance of the upcoming Vista-Municipal Service Review and expressed concern that any LAFCO discussion involving service boundaries or interagency contracts could potentially affect the District’s existing fire service contract with the City of Vista. Mr. Willis stated that he would remain engaged with the District throughout the MSR process and emphasized his general support for local control.

MOTION WAIVING READING IN FULL OF ALL RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and CARRIED 4 AYES; 0 NOES; 1 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to waive reading in full of all resolutions and/or ordinances.

CONSENT CALENDAR

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

1. Board of Directors Minutes – APPROVE
 - a. Regular Meeting May 13, 2026
2. Payroll Register (Ratify)
 - a. Payroll paid on June 7, 2026

\$6,250.00
\$478.13
\$6,728.13
3. Accounts Payable (Ratify)
 - a. Accounts Payable Check 4409 through 4415 paid June 10, 2026

\$150,776.02
 - b. Auto withdrawals(s) paid May 9 – June 6, 2026

\$1,046.84

Total \$158,550.99
4. Receive and File (Information)
 - a. Travel Report (AB 1234)
 - i) Administrative Manager – AFSS Conference
 - b. Monthly Reports
 - i) Fire Chief
 - ii) Fire Marshal
 - iii) Effective Response Force Report – March 26
 - iv) Southern Operations Seasonal Weather Outlook – June – September 2026
 - v) Administrative Manager’s Report
 - vi) Correspondence
 - (1) Robert Fougner

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Fixed Charge Special Assessment for Weed Abatement Unpaid Charges

President Ploetz opened the public hearing. He called the following speaker:

Ms. Liping Gu, Osborne St, Vista, CA

Ms. Gu addressed the Board regarding a vegetation abatement bill and special assessment related to her property. She stated that she had attempted to comply with weed abatement requirements by purchasing an RC mower and previously hiring a tree service company to clear the property. However, she said San Diego County later advised her that portions of the property were within an easement or protected area and that she could not perform certain work there without additional requirements.

Ms. Gu expressed frustration that she felt caught between conflicting requirements: the Fire District requires vegetation clearance, while the County restricted how the work could be performed. She also disputed whether the abatement work billed to her had actually been performed by the District’s contractor. District staff clarified that the assessment related to work completed in November 2025, not the current year, and stated that before-and-after documentation existed showing the vendor had performed the work.

The discussion further clarified that the County's issue appeared to involve work within a conservation easement or protected area, potentially requiring biological review or permits before vegetation removal. Board members emphasized that the District's responsibility was to ensure compliance with its vegetation abatement ordinance, while easement restrictions and County penalties were separate matters to be addressed with the County.

Board members acknowledged Ms. Gu's confusion and frustration and discussed whether to continue or separate the affected parcels from the broader assessment action. Staff explained that the District still needed to recover costs paid to the City, but that parcels could be removed from the assessment list before submission to the County Auditor if payment or another resolution occurred before the August 10 deadline. Ultimately, the Board discussed moving forward with the resolution while pulling or deferring the affected parcels for separate handling, allowing Ms. Gu additional time to meet with the County and better understand the biological and easement requirements. Ms. Gu was informed that this matter will be continued to the July 8, 2026 board meeting.

2. Implementing (AB) 2561 – Notice of Job Vacancies

President Ploetz opened and closed the public hearing. Ms. Rannals reported that there were no written comments submitted.

DISTRICT BUSINESS

1. Consultant – Grant Writer

Cari Dale of Hoch Consulting introduced the firm and noted its experience with grant writing for public agencies and fire districts, including North County Fire Protection District and Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District. Hoch Consulting presented two potential wildfire-related grant opportunities for the District's consideration. The first was a Proposition 4-funded California Climate grant opportunity with approximately \$70 million available statewide and individual project awards capped at approximately \$950,000. The application deadline was noted as July 8. The second opportunity involved a Wildfire Resilience and Landscaping Concept Proposal, which would require an initial letter of interest/concept proposal by the end of June.

During discussion, Fire Chief Washington advised that the City of Vista, Vista Fire Protection District, California Conservation Corps, and City departments had already applied for the first grant opportunity. The Board expressed concern about creating duplication or competition with the existing joint application. Consensus was reached that the District should not pursue a separate application for the first grant.

The Board discussed whether Hoch Consulting could assist with evaluating the second grant opportunity. Chief Washington stated he would speak with the City's grant staff and the Assistant City Manager to determine whether the City was already pursuing that opportunity and whether District participation would be appropriate. The Board expressed support for collaboration with the City and Fire Department to ensure any future grant application is coordinated and does not conflict with existing efforts.

The Board provided direction that, if City staff determines the second grant opportunity is worthwhile and appropriate, the District Manager may proceed with engaging Hoch Consulting to review and assist with the concept proposal in an amount not to exceed \$7,680. A formal motion was not required, as the work falls within the District Manager's contracting authority.

2. Resolution 2026-06

Following discussion of public comment from Ms. Gu the Board revised the resolution with action on four parcels deferred until the next Board meeting on July 8 meeting at 1pm. Ms. Rannals reported that the remaining parcels on the list, the property owners have until July 31, 2026, to reimburse the District. If the invoices remain unpaid, staff will deliver to special assessment to the County of San Diego by August 10.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR HILL, SECOND BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, and ADOPTED the amended Resolution 2026-06 in removing four parcels owned by Ms. Gu from the list *entitled* A Resolution of the Vista Fire Protection District Approving and Confirming a Report and Account for Abatement of Weeds, Shrubs, Dead Trees, and Waste Mater for Fiscal Year 2025-26, and Ordering the Assessment of Unpaid Charges:

AYES: Elliott, Hill, Makebakken, Ploetz
NOES: None
ABSENT: Miller
ABSTAIN: None

3. Resolution 2026-07

Ms. Rannals reported that the resolution is a part of the compliance procedures in noticing job vacancies. She confirmed that there are no exceptions to the requirements since the District has only one employee.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and ADOPTED Resolution No. 2026-07 *entitled* A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Vista Fire Protection District Implementing Assembly Bill 2561 Relating to Public Employment Vacancy Reporting Requirements on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Elliott, Hill, Makebakken, Ploetz
NOES: None
ABSENT: Miller
ABSTAIN: None

4. Facility Use Agreement – Fire Station 3

Mr. Cardinale reported that the Facility Use Agreement between the City and the District is substantially complete and reflects the same terms and conditions previously discussed in closed session. The primary outstanding issue was the amount the District would contribute toward refinishing the space if the District voluntarily vacates the space prior to 2056. Following negotiations, Legal Counsel recommended a contribution amount of \$15,000. The full estimated cost is approximately \$20,000, resulting in shared responsibility. Other terms to highlight are:

- The agreement provides for rent of \$1 per year and includes parking, utilities, and mailbox setup.
- Access to meeting space within City Hall.
- The term of the agreement is consistent with the District's existing service agreement with the City and may only be terminated under the same terms.

It was noted that the City Council may consider the agreement at its June 23 meeting, which would allow the District to begin planning for notice and relocation. Staff also clarified that the \$45,000 referenced in the fiscal impact relates to prior overpayments for fire inspector services, which will be offset as part of the agreement.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and APPROVED the Facility Use Agreement between the City of Vista and Vista Fire Protection District that allows for the relocation of the District's Administrative office to 1962 E. Vista Way, Vista, CA 92084:

AYES: Elliott, Hill, Makebakken, Ploetz
NOES: None
ABSENT: Miller
ABSTAIN: None

5. Preliminary Budget – FY 2026-27

Ms. Rannals delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the District's FY27 Preliminary Budget. Staff explained that the preliminary budget is required to be adopted by June 30, even though final property tax revenue estimates will not be available until mid-July. The Board will have another opportunity to review and approve the final budget in September.

A recap of FY26 was provided. Total revenues were originally budgeted at approximately \$5.3 million and are now estimated at approximately \$5.7 million, primarily due to higher property tax revenues and increased ambulance fee reimbursements from the City. Operating expenditures remain generally on target. Net operating income is projected to exceed the original estimate, increasing from approximately \$536,000 to about \$850,000.

Staff also reviewed the District's commitment to the Wildfire Protection Plan and vegetation management efforts, noting that the Board previously committed up to \$1 million over three years. Approximately \$60,000 has been spent to date for the Xylo plan and aerial services.

The presentation included discussion of the Fire Station No. 3 replacement project. Staff explained that the District's \$4.5 million obligation was completed in December 2025 and that the remaining FY26 impact is a one-time expense. As a result, FY26 financials are expected to show a loss due to the station payment, but future years will return to normal operating levels without that expense.

For FY27, staff projected total revenues of approximately \$5.77 million and operating expenditures of approximately \$5.1 million. The budget includes the annual \$333,333 vegetation management commitment and reflects a projected positive year-end cash increase of approximately \$300,000 after accounting for that commitment.

Staff reviewed the Fire Mitigation Fund, explaining that those restricted funds may only be used for capital improvements or capital assets related to growth, such as fire stations, fire equipment, or vehicles. Staff further explained that a portion of the District's fire station contribution can be reimbursed to the General Fund through eligible fire mitigation funds over time.

She also provided an overview of the District's current cash position and responded to questions from the Board.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR MAKEBAKKEN, SECOND BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, to approve the Preliminary Budget for FY27 as presented on the following roll call vote:

AYES:	Elliott, Hill, Makebakken, Ploetz
NOES:	None
ABSENT:	Miller
ABSTAIN:	None

President Ploetz announced that the District will schedule a public hearing for adopting the Final Budget on September 9, 2026, and he further requested that the Board Clerk notify the public of the hearing according to all applicable codes.

ORAL REPORT(S)

1. Fire Chief

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

- The Assistant Fire Marshal applied on behalf of Vista Fire Protection District the Fire Risk Reduction Community List designation. They are awaiting official notification; however, this designation is expected to strengthen the District's position for future Cal Fire Wildfire Prevention Grants.
- Staff are moving forward with vegetation and fuel reduction work in the District, including a proposed project at Buena Creek involving approximately 1.7 miles of evacuation road clearing. A quote is being obtained from the California Conservation Corps (CCC) for the Buena Creek work. The project is expected to be completed at a discounted rate compared to standard vendor pricing. He noted that the Verona Hills HOA has been a strong partner in supporting the Buena Creek project, including coordination for access, dumpsters, and restroom use for CCC crews.
- He provided an update on the upcoming organizational reorganization, which is expected to take effect on July 1.

2. Administrative Manager

In addition to her report, she added:

- In coordination with Director Elliott, she reallocated \$2 million from the current CA CLASS investments to a new product through CA CLASS called CLASS Term Series 2. This is equivalent to a CD, and the rate was locked in at 4.03% for one year.
- The Emergency Access Road gate at Paso Alto needs repair. The Vista Fire Rescue staff is obtaining quotes for the repair as it is the District's responsibility for repair and maintenance pursuant to the grant easement.
- She distributed a one-page flyer for the CSDA Annual Conference August 25-27 and would like to get any board member interested in attending registered as soon as possible.

3. Legal

- Nothing to report.

4. Board of Directors

- Ploetz: he reminded the board that the grand opening for Deer Springs Station 2 is Saturday, June 13. He encouraged attendance if possible.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(s)

No additional items were added to the list.

CLOSED SESSION

There was no need to recess to closed session.

President Ploetz adjourned the meeting at 2:51 pm.



Karlena Rannals
Board Clerk



John Ploetz
President