



**VISTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
**Regular Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Minutes – March 8, 2023**

*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.*

**REGULAR AGENDA**

President Elliott called to order the regular meeting of the Vista Fire Protection District Board of Directors at 10:00 AM at the “Smart Space” conference room located at 450 South Melrose Drive, Vista CA.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Director Elliott led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Directors Present: Elliott, Fougner, Gomez, Miller, Ploetz  
Directors Absent: None  
Staff Present: Karlena Rannals, Administrative Manager; Roy Palmer, Fire Chief; Craig Usher, Deputy Chief, and Fred Pfister, Legal Counsel

3. Open Discussion with the Board (Public Comment)

Barry Willis Pike, Director, Alpine Fire Protection District spoke to the board seeking support for his candidacy for LAFCO as a representative to the 57 special districts in San Diego County. He summarized his experience serving as a board member not only to Alpine Fire Protection District, but also his service as a current special district representative to LAFCO.

4. Consent Calendar

MOTION BY DIRECTOR FOUIGNER, SECOND BY DIRECTOR PLOETZ, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve the consent calendar, with the removal of 4. a. Minutes:

- b. *Payroll Register*
  - i. Payroll paid on March 7, 2023 \$4,496.25
  - ii. Payroll taxes paid on March 7, 2023 343.97
  - Total \$4,840.22
- c. *Accounts Payable*
  - i. Accounts Payable Check 4031 thru 4041 to be paid March 8, 2023 \$12,254.77
  - ii. Auto withdrawal(s) paid on Feb 01 – Mar 2, 2023 1,691.06
  - Total \$13,945.83
- d. *Receive and File*
  - i) Fire Department Reports
    - (1) *District Fire Inspector*
    - (2) *Fire Marshal*
    - (3) *Fire Chief*
    - (4) *Fire Department Performance Report – January 2023*
- e. Ad Hoc Committee Reports
  - i) *Community Wildfire Protection Plan*
- f. Administrative Manager’s Report

g. Correspondence

- i) Barry T. Willis, candidate for San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission
- ii) Ross Pike, candidate for San Diego County Local Agency Formation Commission

At the request of Director Fougner, he requested that the following language amend or be added to the minutes:

Item 8(a): Strike “sale price” and replace with “appraised value”; and

Item 8(b). Insert the following language as the second paragraph to the topic:

“After extended discussion concerning past incidents of noticing property owners to clear alongside roadway easements owned by the San Diego Water Authority, Deputy Chief Usher assured the Board the Department will put procedures in place to notify the San Diego Water Authority when necessary to clear brush without noticing or demanding abatement by the adjoining property owner.”

MOTION BY DIRECTOR FOUIGNER, SECOND BY DIRECTOR GOMEZ, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve, as amended 4. a., Board of Directors minutes of February 8, 2023.

5. Oral Report(s)

a. *Fire Chief/Deputy Chief* – Deputy Chief Usher welcomed Chief Palmer to the meeting. Chief Palmer informed the board the following:

- John Conley was selected to fill the City Manager’s position effective March 8
- An Executive Search firm will be retained to assist in the recruitment and selection of a new Fire Chief

Chief Palmer gave the board members an overview of his experience, highlighting that most of his career was working for a fire district in Oregon. He has also been in the role as an elected official for a Fire District, so he is keenly aware of the difference in the roles. His goal is to ensure that the contract between the City and District are meeting the expectations of the board, and that the board is strategic in their direction. He extended to the board his offer to help in the development of a strategic direction.

Director Miller requested that the Fire Chief look at the “Response Time” report provided each month to perhaps modify to make it more meaningful to the board. The current format does not provide enough information to explain the challenges that the emergency response personnel may be experiencing for response times that are greater than 10 minutes. The Board may be interested in assisting financially if there is something that could be done to improve and reduce the response time. Chief Palmer agreed to work with Chief Usher and Ms. Rannals to explore another format.

b. *Fire Marshal – Chief Usher reported the following:*

- Three new fire inspectors have been hired, with the most senior being five (5) months;
- The former assigned District inspector has left city employment. Fire Inspector James Kozakiewicz has been assigned as the new District Fire Inspector.
- The recent rains will create additional work during the weed abatement season.
- FireStats update: he reached out to Mr. Rottenberg and informed him that the Board desires to spend the money approved on a one-time report. He will work with FireStats to get the report completed.

Board members requested that with all the staff changes, that the new inspector continue the work that was being performed by the previous inspector. Examples included:

- Emergency Access Roads – continued evaluation of the emergency access roads. Director Ploetz

- offered to participate in a ride along with the new inspector to assist;
- Director Fougner requested that the inspector continue the project on mapping the “Fire Lane” signs, so that the district knows exactly where they are located;
  - Director Miller requested that the staff consider a change in the report format. The report should include only tasks of the “additional services”. It should not include weed abatement activity, as that responsibility is included within the basic contract. He would also encourage seeing any recommendations that the staff may have.
  - President Elliott summarized the board comments that the district desires to ensure that they are getting the additional services that they are paying for. Chief Palmer reported that he will work with Chief Usher and Ms. Rannals to address the board concerns and potentially modify the reporting information.
- c. *Administrative Manager – Ms. Rannals*
- The tours of North County Dispatch JPA are scheduled for March 14 & 15.
  - She reminded all board members to complete the ethics and harassment training and provide her a copy of the certificate of completion.
  - She has a meeting planned with County staff to discuss the Fire Mitigation Fee program on March 9<sup>th</sup>.
- d. *Legal - Mr. Pfister* – there are no pending issues to report
- e. *Board of Directors* –
- i. *CSDA Chapter Meeting*: Director Ploetz reported that he attended the meeting with Ms. Rannals on February 16th. The presentation was from healthcare experts from special districts discussing the perspectives, benefits, challenges, and needs in the healthcare industry after a pandemic world. He also met other Fire District Chiefs and board members. He encouraged his fellow board members to attend in the future.
  - ii. *Special District Leadership Academy*: President Elliott reported that he, Director Ploetz and Ms. Rannals attended the training February 26 – March 1. He reported that it was well organized and the content was well done. He believed that the best session was the session on good governance, which included the role of the board and the role of staff. CSDA also has numerous resources available to assist both board and staff.
  - iii. *Administrative Manager Annual Performance Evaluation Process*: President Elliott informed the board members that a big “take away” from the training was the importance of evaluating staff and managing expectations. The Administrative Manager will have been employed with the District one year on April 1. He inquired how the board desired to proceed with an evaluation. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board by consensus agreed that the President and Vice President should develop the process and meet with the Administrative Manager. Chief Palmer offered to assist in developing a process.

*10-minute recess*

6. Continuing Business

a. *Sixth Supplemental Agreement*

Chief Usher informed the Board, that due to illness he was unable to attend an appointment to look at space; however, he is still working on it. In the interim, there is still an office planned in the reconstruction of Fire Station 3.

*b. Sale of Surplus Real Property*

President Elliott reports that all but one contingency has been released from the buyer. The sale is still on target to close escrow on March 15.

7. New Business

*a. Financial Audit Services*

Ms. Rannals summarized the staff report provided. She reminded the Board that the district distributed a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in 2020. Upon review of all RFQ's received, the Board of Directors selected Fedak & Brown for a three-year contract, with the option of two additional years that may be exercised. The audit fees for each optional fiscal year does not exceed \$8,100; however, the Administrative Manager added in 2022 that the auditors file on behalf of the District the State Controller's Report for an added cost of \$500. She responded to questions from the Board.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR MILLER, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to exercise the contract option of two additional years (FY23 & FY24) an agreement with the C. J. Brown & Company CPAs (formerly Fedak & Brown) for audit services and authorize the Administrative Manager to execute the contract extension.

*b. Fire Chief Interview Panelist*

Chief Usher requested that the board members select a primary and alternate representative to serve as an interview panelist for the upcoming Fire Chief recruitment process. No dates have been given; however, he will provide the names to the Human Resource Department for inclusion in the process.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR FUGNER, SECOND BY DIRECTOR MILLER, CARRIED 4 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 1 ABSTAIN (Gomez) to select the President as the Primary and the Vice President as the alternate to serve as the District's representative for the recruitment of the City of Vista Fire Chief.

*c. Local Agency Formation Commission Election*

President Elliott informed the Board that the district has an opportunity to cast a ballot to elect a regular and alternate special district member on the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The board members discussed the candidates in consideration.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR PLOETZ, SECOND BY DIRECTOR MILLER, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN authorized the President to cast a ballot on behalf of the district to elect a regular and alternate special district member on the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) uninstructed.


8. Directors' Announcements & Written Communications

*Director Fougner:* 1) inquired as to how the district was noticed of the Bonsall Oaks Project. In the documents obtained from the County of San Diego, the project is a re-subdivision of two previously approved tract maps. The purpose of the re-subdivision is to reduce the lots size from large 1-acre plus size lots to more conventional lot sizes ranging from 4500 square feet to about 10,000 square feet lots. This project proposes a re-subdivision and re-design to be consistent with the conservation subdivision policies of the county. The redesign reconfigures the conservation open space into large manageable lots, clusters development onto less environmentally sensitive areas of the property, reduces impacts and increases the amount of open space.

The project proposes 89 single family residential lots, which is the same number of lots as previously approved. He expressed his concern about increased response time and traffic. While the District does not have land use authority, he asked staff what mitigation is involved. Staff agreed to provide an analysis on the project at a future meeting. 2) He will be absent from the April meeting.

9. Motion for Adjournment

MOTION BY DIRECTOR GOMEZ, SECOND BY DIRECTOR FOUIGNER, and CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to adjourn at 1:06 pm.



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Karlana Rannals  
Board Clerk



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James F. Elliott  
President