VISTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
Board of Directors Meeting *(Special, in lieu of Regular)*
Minutes – October 21, 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 2:154 PM at the Vista conference room located at 200 Civic Center Dr., Vista CA.

a. Roll Call

Directors Present:	Elliott, Hill, Ploetz, Torre-Bueno
Director's Absent:	Miller
Staff Present:	Karlena Rannals, Administrative Manager; Gerard Washington, Fire Chief; and Larissa Fullmer, Workforce Superintendent

FLAG SALUTE
President Ploetz 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 TORRE-BUENO, 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 TORRE-BUENO, 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 September 9, 2026
2. Payroll Register (Ratify)
   a. Payroll paid on October 7, 2026 $7,950.00
   b. Payroll Taxes paid on October 6, 2026 $608.18
   $8,558.18
3. Accounts Payable (Ratify)
   a. Accounts Payable Check 4463 through 4470 paid October 21, 2026 $107,916.07
   b. Auto withdrawals(s) paid September 5 – October 16, 2026 $266.35
   Total $108,182.42
4. Receive and File (Information)
   a. Financial Reports – Quarterly
      i) FY27 Budget to Actual GF – September 30, 2026
      ii) FY27 Budget to Actual FMF – September 30, 2026 (No Activity)

iii) FY27 Combined Balance Sheet – June 30, 2026 (unaudited)
iv) Portfolio Summary Report – September 30, 2026
v) Interest Rate Summary

b. Monthly Reports
i) Fire Chief
ii) Fire Marshal
iii) Workforce Program Superintendent
iv) Effective Response Force Report – August 26
v) Southern Operations Seasonal Weather Outlook – October 2026 – January 2027
vi) Administrative Manager's Report
vii) Correspondence
(1) None

DISTRICT BUSINESS

1. Fire Pathways Vulnerability and Mitigation Prioritization Analysis - Update

Chief Washington and Workforce Superintendent Fullmer presented the findings of the completed Xylo Plan analysis, demonstrating how the technology identifies wildfire spread pathways and prioritizes areas for vegetation management, defensible space, and home hardening. The analysis validated existing fuel reduction efforts, particularly along the Buena Creek corridor, and will help guide future mitigation projects using data-driven risk assessments.

The Board discussed how the Xylo Plan will assist staff in prioritizing high-risk areas, coordinating vegetation management efforts, and identifying additional mitigation needs. Discussion also addressed ongoing fuel reduction projects, workforce development partnerships, funding opportunities, and the importance of community education and participation. Board members expressed strong support for the initiative and commended staff for its proactive, data-driven approach to wildfire prevention.

2. Update: On-Call Grant Research, Writing and Management Consulting Services

Ms. Rannals reported that eight proposals were received in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) for On-Call Grant Research, Writing, and Management Services. The evaluation and interview process was delayed due to the relocation of the District's administrative office. All respondents were notified of the delay, and proposals remain valid for 120 days. Ms. Rannals recommended establishing an ad hoc committee consisting of up to two Board members and staff to evaluate the proposals and present a recommendation to the Board, anticipated at the December meeting. She noted that an evaluation form had been developed to facilitate the review process.

The Board discussed the proposed evaluation process and the potential participation of City of Vista Fire Department personnel. Chief Washington indicated that City staff resources would remain available to assist as needed but recommended that the District take the lead in the selection process.

Following the discussion, President Ploetz appointed himself and Director Torre-Bueno, who volunteered to serve on the ad hoc committee. Staff will coordinate the evaluation process and come back to the Board with a recommendation for consideration at the December meeting.

3. RFP – Access Roads Maintenance

Ms. Rannals reported that the District's contract with Aztec Landscaping for maintenance of approximately 2.7 miles of emergency access roads expires December 1, 2026. The annual contract cost is approximately $30,000. Staff requested Board direction on whether to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP), negotiate a short-term contract extension, or explore transitioning maintenance responsibilities to the Pathways Workforce Development Program.

The Board discussed the ongoing maintenance needs of the emergency access roads, including vegetation management, drainage, and erosion control, as well as the potential cost savings of utilizing Pathways and California Conservation Corps (CCC) crews. Chief Washington supported exploring this option but cautioned that the developing workforce program has limited capacity and that professional contractors may still be necessary for certain maintenance activities.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board reached a consensus to direct staff to negotiate a six-month extension with Aztec Landscaping to allow additional time to evaluate maintenance alternatives, including the potential use of Pathways and CCC crews. Staff will return to the Board in February 2027 for further discussion and consideration of whether to proceed with a Request for Proposal.

4. Review - Vista Fire Protection District Investment Policy

Ms. Rannals summarized the staff report as required by California Government Code §53646, the District has a policy that governs the investment of surplus funds for purposes of generating investment income for the District. A review is required annually and must be conducted at a public meeting per Government Code §53646(a). Since there are no proposed changes, she recommended that the Board acknowledge the review and retain the District's Policy as approved on October 11, 2023.

The Board of Directors agreed by consensus to accept the staff recommendation and retain the District's Investment Policy as approved by Resolution No. 2023-10 on October 11, 2023.

5. Community Engagement Improvement

In the absence of Director Miller, President Ploetz introduced the item, explaining that Director Miller had requested a discussion regarding improving communication with District constituents, particularly making it easier for residents to report fire hazards and request inspections. The discussion also included potential improvements to the District's website, use of social media, and other community outreach methods.

The Board discussed existing communication methods, including the District's website and its "Ask the Fire Inspector" feature, which allows residents to submit concerns that staff forwards to the appropriate inspector. Members suggested making the reporting process more prominent and user-friendly, including the ability to submit photographs.

Chief Washington emphasized the importance of tailoring outreach efforts to the District's demographics, suggesting community meetings and other direct engagement opportunities rather than relying solely on social media. He also offered to explore whether the City's part-time communications specialist could assist with website improvements as a contractor. Ms. Rannals noted that funding is available in the District's budget for website redesign. Discussion included transitioning to a .gov domain, updating website content, incorporating wildfire prevention information, and providing links to Firewise resources.

Following discussion, the Board reached a consensus that a comprehensive website update would address many of the identified communication concerns, with an emphasis on improving accessibility, public information, and the reporting of fire hazards.

ORAL REPORT(S)

1. *Fire Chief*

   Chief Washington reported that In addition to the Chief's report, the following information was discussed:

   - He reported continued progress with the Pathways workforce development program and its partnership with the California Conservation Corps (CCC). He highlighted ongoing vegetation management projects and efforts to expand workforce training opportunities while ensuring the program's long-term sustainability. He noted that additional grant funding is being pursued to support continued operations and expand mitigation efforts throughout the District.
   - He discussed ongoing efforts to evaluate staffing and resource deployment strategies to improve operational efficiency and emergency response capabilities. He also provided a brief update on the development of the Mobile Integrated Health Program, identifying Steve Richards as the individual who will lead the initiative.
   - He presented a proposed portable sandwich-board sign to be displayed at locations where vegetation management crews are working. The signs will identify participating agencies and promote public awareness of the District's wildfire mitigation efforts. He explained that portable signage would allow the signs to be relocated as crews move between project areas. The Board expressed support for the signage as a means of increasing public awareness and recognition of the District's ongoing efforts.
   - During discussion, a Board member inquired about a recent fire in the District and the absence of customary incident notification to Board members. Chief Washington explained that the oversight resulted from a recent staffing transition and acknowledged the need to ensure continuity of the established notification process.
   - In response to a Board member's question regarding the distribution of emergency calls, Chief Washington reported that approximately 87% of calls are medical-related, while 13% involve fire and other incidents. He noted that structure fires represent a small percentage of overall calls and that the Department has responded to more vegetation fires than structure fires over the past 18 months. He agreed to provide a more detailed breakdown of incident statistics. Chief Washington emphasized that despite the relatively low frequency of structure fires, maintaining adequate staffing, equipment, and training is essential to effectively respond to major emergencies and minimize potential loss of life and property. He also discussed the impact of traffic-calming measures, particularly speed humps, on emergency response times, noting that a recent study identified an average delay of approximately 18 seconds per speed hump for fire apparatus. The Board discussed the challenges of balancing resource allocation with preparedness for infrequent but potentially catastrophic incidents. Chief Washington emphasized the importance of using objective data and risk assessments to guide operational planning and resource decisions.

2. *Administrative Manager*

   In addition to her report, she added:

   - Ms. Rannals provided a brief update on the District's administrative office relocation, noting that work associated with the move remains ongoing.
   - She also reminded the Board that the November regular meeting will be held on Thursday, November 12, 2026, rather than Wednesday, November 11, in observance of Veterans Day, consistent with the

District's meeting resolution requiring meetings that fall on a holiday to be held on the next business day.

3. Legal
   - Legal Counsel was absent. No report was provided.
4. Board of Directors
   - Ploetz: he informed the Board that a previously proposed residential development near Buena Creek Road, known as the 1050 Ora Avo project, has resurfaced with a revised proposal for 42 residential units. He noted that the District had previously submitted a letter, prepared by Legal Counsel, and signed by Chief Washington, identifying concerns regarding compliance with County development standards and emergency access requirements. The Board discussed potential concerns with the revised proposal, particularly the adequacy of secondary emergency access, increased residential density, and applicable zoning requirements. President Ploetz advised that Legal Counsel has contacted County Planning regarding the project and will continue monitoring its status. No action was taken.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(s)

No additional items were added to the list.

President Ploetz adjourned the meeting at 3:59 pm.

Karlena Rannals
Board Clerk

John Ploetz
President