



VISTA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes – July 08, 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, Miller, Ploetz

Director’s Absent: None

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

Note: Director Makebakken participated via video conference from 2020 Front Street, Ste 105, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221 and Director Miller participated via video conference from Holiday Inn Express, Breakfast Room, 433 Wave Street, Monterey, CA 93940

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 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 MILLER, CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve the consent calendar as submitted:

1. Board of Directors Minutes – APPROVE

a. Regular Meeting June 10, 2026

2. Payroll Register (Ratify)

a. Payroll paid on July 7, 2026	\$7,650.00
	<u>\$585.23</u>
	<u>\$8,235.23</u>

3. Accounts Payable (Ratify)

a. Accounts Payable Check 4429 through 4440 paid July 8, 2026	\$172,075.13
b. Auto withdrawals(s) paid May 9 – June 6, 2026	<u>\$ 952.95</u>

Total	<u>\$173,028.08</u>
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4. Receive and File (Information)

- a. Monthly Reports
 - i) Fire Chief
 - ii) Fire Marshal
 - iii) Effective Response Force Report – May 26
 - iv) Southern Operations Seasonal Weather Outlook – July – October 2026
 - v) Administrative Manager’s Report
 - vi) Correspondence

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Fixed Charge Special Assessment for Weed Abatement Unpaid Charges

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

DISTRICT BUSINESS

1. Resolution No. 2026-08

The Board continued the consideration of the appeal of nuisance abatement charges assessed against the property owner for vegetation management work completed by the District’s contractor in 2025.

Ploetz called the following speaker:

Ms. Liping Gu, Osborne St, Vista, CA: Ms. Gu stated that she had previously completed vegetation clearing but had also received fines from the County for performing work on the property. She expressed concern that complying with the Fire District’s vegetation clearance requirements could conflict with County restrictions related to protected habitat and open-space easements.

Legal counsel clarified that the County’s land-use and environmental requirements are separate from the District’s fire prevention requirements. The property owner remains responsible for completing required vegetation management outside protected areas and for obtaining any necessary County permits before performing work. Counsel further explained that prior permits were limited in terms of duration and scope and may not authorize work in subsequent years.

The Board reviewed the notices issued in 2025, including courtesy, reinspection, and final notices directing the property owner to correct the violations and advising her of the opportunity to appeal. Notices were mailed to the owner’s address of record and posted on the property. Because the required work was not completed, the District arranged for the abatement work, paid the contractor, and sought recovery of those costs.

The Board determined that the County permitting matter did not alter the District’s right to recover the 2025 abatement expenses. Board members emphasized that the charges before the Board related only to whether the required fire-hazard reduction work was completed and whether the associated costs were valid.

To prevent future confusion, staff offered to coordinate with the County and the District’s Fire Marshal or fire inspector regarding future vegetation management requirements. The property owner advised that she had

a County meeting scheduled for July 21 and agreed to provide advance notice of any future on-site meeting so a District representative could attend. Staff agreed to provide the property owner with the Fire Marshal's contact information.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR MILLER, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and ADOPTED Resolution 2026-08 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, Miller, Ploetz
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

Staff advised Ms. Gu that the unpaid charge would be placed on the property-tax roll if payment were not received by July 31, 2026.

2. Fuels Mitigation Workforce Program

Staff summarized the agenda reported included with the meeting material. Staff recommended that the board ratify the contract with the California Conservation Corps for fuel reduction and weed abatement projects and authorize the Administrative Manager to implement project work within the program budget approved by the Board acknowledging that some projects will exceed the \$30,000 limit; however, the overall project will not exceed \$200,000 as previously approved by the board.

Chief Washington also provided an update on the California Conservation Corps workforce pathway and vegetation management programs. The program is designed to recruit up to 15 recent Vista Unified School District graduates and provide training, certifications, uniforms, materials, and work experience that may lead to employment with the California Conservation Corps, Vista Fire Rescue, CAL FIRE, or other fire and emergency medical services agencies.

Chief Washington introduced Larissa Fulmer, the Workforce Program Superintendent. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to join Vista Fire Rescue and stated that the team had warmly welcomed and supported her.

She reported that she had visited the project site and observed the crews' progress. The crews had worked approximately seven days and had 11 project hours remaining. Following the day's scheduled bin pickup, approximately 80 cubic yards of vegetation and combustible material were expected to have been removed, representing an estimated six tons of fuel. Approximately one acre had been treated.

The Fire Chief explained that the program remains a work in progress and will continue to be refined based on observations and coordination with the California Conservation Corps. Certain large-scale work, including removal of substantial trees and heavy vegetation, may exceed the CCC's capabilities and could require a private contractor.

Staff discussed the City's successful use of Rancho Tree Service for vegetation management along Hacienda Avenue and at Brengle Terrace Park. The contractor completed approximately 1.5 miles of work along Hacienda Avenue within four days under a contract capped at \$115,000, despite prior estimates of up

to \$800,000. The contractor also coordinated biological reviews and other regulatory requirements. The Board requested that staff keep this contractor and similar options under consideration for future projects requiring specialized equipment or accelerated completion.

The Board requested regular updates identifying project priorities, anticipated work areas, schedules, benchmarks, and before-and-after photographs. Staff confirmed that the current project is located in Buena Creek and that future work will be guided by established plans and risk-assessment tools. Board members expressed appreciation for the work completed and emphasized the importance of using qualified professionals to ensure compliance with environmental, right-of-entry, and regulatory requirements.

The Fire Chief requested that Board questions or concerns regarding field operations be directed through the Administrative Manager and Fire Chief rather than directly to crews. Staff also discussed promoting the District's partnership with the CCC through the District's website, public information materials, photographs, and project signage.

The Board expressed strong support for fuel-reduction efforts, particularly along emergency evacuation routes. Staff reported that a grant application had been submitted for vegetation management along approximately 114 miles of roadways within the City and District, with a maximum potential award of \$950,000. Staff will use available mapping, planning, and risk-assessment tools to prioritize work and maximize the benefit of available funding.

The Chief also advised that current vacancies and absences within the Fire Prevention Division, including the Assistant Fire Marshal and inspector positions, may affect email or phone response times. Residents may submit vegetation management concerns and photographs to info@vistafpd.org, which staff will forward to the appropriate personnel. A response within approximately one week was identified as a reasonable expectation, although residents may need to follow up due to current staffing limitations.

The Board reiterated its support for the program and acknowledged the progress being made despite staffing shortages.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and APPROVED the following action items:

- a. Ratify the District and CCC Sponsorship Agreement – signed June 18, 2026 by the Administrative Manager;
- b. Ratify the CCC Contract for Buena Creek Fuel Management, Project No. R25-3804-17454 – signed June 19, 2026 by the Administrative Manager;
- c. Acknowledgement that the MOU between District and City for Superintendent Cost is pending at \$1,000 per month and within the approved project cost; on the following vote:

AYES: Elliott, Hill, Makebakken, Miller, Ploetz

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

3. Vista Fire Protection District Conflict of Interest Code

Ms. Rannals summarized the staff report. She recommended that the Board receive and file the 2026 Conflict of Interest Code Biennial Notice; and authorize the Administrative Manager as the Chief Executive

Officer to execute the form and authorize the Administrative Manager to certify to the County of San Diego Clerk of the Board no later than October 1, 2026 that no amendments will be made to the District's code.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR MILLER, and CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve staff recommendations as presented.

4. Vista Fire Protection District General Election – November 3, 2026

Ms. Rannals summarized the staff report. She recommended that the Board approve the following items for the upcoming general election:

- a. Establish the maximum number of words, 200, to be permitted in a Candidate's Statement of Qualifications for the offices of Member of the Board of Directors on November 3, 2026, General Election; and
- b. Require candidates to obtain candidate papers from the Registrar of Voters in San Diego County; and
- c. Require candidate to pay the cost of publication to the Voter Registration and Elections office at the time the candidate files nomination papers.

MOTION BY DIRECTOR ELLIOTT, SECOND BY DIRECTOR HILL, and CARRIED 5 AYES; 0 NOES; 0 ABSENT; 0 ABSTAIN to approve staff recommendations as presented.

ORAL REPORT(S)

1. Fire Chief

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

- He provided an update regarding the proposed repair of the District's gate. The original estimate of approximately \$6,900 increased to \$13,600 after further inspection determined that replacing the lock alone would not correct the underlying structural deficiencies. The revised scope includes reinforcing and realigning the support posts and improving the footings to prevent the gate from continuing to sag or collapse. The Board agreed that additional work was necessary and noted that the expenditure was within the Administrative Manager's purchasing authority.
- He reported on emergency response performance. Current rural response times were generally meeting or exceeding established standards. Clocks have been installed in all fire stations to track turnout times, and monthly station performance reports are reviewed by battalion chiefs and company officers. Staff emphasized that turnout time is the portion of the response process personnel can directly control and that increased monitoring and accountability have already resulted in improvement.
- He reported that the *Ignite Your Potential* event was successful, with all participants completing the three-day program. Feedback was positive, although attendance at the associated family night remained low despite substantial staff preparation. The department will evaluate alternative approaches to increase family participation. Several participants expressed interest in the new workforce pathways program, and the California Conservation Corps participated in the event as a recruitment partner.
- He further discussed continuing fuel-reduction efforts through multiple methods, including mapping and planning tools, mechanical vegetation removal, contractors, youth workforce programs, and potential grazing projects. Staff will continue evaluating available options and bring future recommendations to the Board as appropriate. The Board acknowledged the District's inclusion on the Fire Risk Reduction Community list. Staff stated that the designation may support future grant applications and could benefit property owners in discussions with insurance carriers. The Fire Chief

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credited District and City staff for the work required to obtain recognition and noted that other fire agencies have requested information about Vista's programs and practices. He reported that representatives from neighboring agencies have expressed interest in Vista's vegetation management and wildfire preparedness initiatives. He emphasized that the District's continued progress depends on sustained support from the Board, City leadership, staff, and the community. The Board reaffirmed its support for the department's ongoing efforts to establish Vista as a regional leader in wildfire risk reduction.

2. Administrative Manager

In addition to her report, she added:

- In coordination with Director Elliott, she committed \$1 million from the current CAMP investment to a new product for a 365-day term locking in at the rate of 4.19%.
- The El Paso Alto Gate Repair started on June 29.
- She reminded the board members of the CSDA Conference in Palm Desert.
- She demonstrated the new translation layer added to the District's website. This annual service complies with the accessibility requirement.

3. Legal

- Mr. Cardinale reported that the facility lease agreement approved by the board at the June meeting did not make it to the City Council June 23rd consent agenda. It will not be approved by the City Council until August 11. Upon approval the District will be able to provide notice after receiving a schedule to complete the work.

4. Board of Directors

- None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(s)

No additional items were added to the list.

President Ploetz adjourned the meeting at 2:18 pm.



Karlena Rannals
Board Clerk



John Ploetz
President