

The Board of: Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at: 6:30PM
On: Monday, December 13, 2021
For: Regular Board Meeting
Moderator: Mark Curran (Chairperson)
Members Present: Paul Campbell, Mark Dillingham, Judy Dillingham, Dan Friday, Kathy Higdon, Lisa McCallister and Carla McLendon
Guest(s): Perry Fisher (Attorney)

1. Call the Meeting to Order: Mark Curran called the meeting to order at 6:35PM. He announced the Board would need to move into Executive Session to meet with our attorney once he arrived. In the meantime, he requested we proceed with the Public Comment portion of the agenda at this time.

2. Public Comment: The meeting was opened for public comment after Carla McLendon read the associated guidelines.

Emili Fonteneau, Yoga Instructor, expressed gratitude from herself and those who participate in the yoga classes. She said the participants feel welcomed and like seeing all the heroes that work at the Department. Ms. Fonteneau brought a home-baked rum cake as a sign of her appreciation.

Terry Duckworth, RVFD Chaplain (for over 20 years), voiced his personal observations and opinion on matters of concern to him relating to the Board, the Department (to include personnel) and how both could best serve the Community. He reminded those present of the Department's mission statement; encouraged Board Members and employees to do the right thing (ethically, morally and truthfully) at all times and as representatives of the community; and relayed he feels it is time to bring healing to the community.

Frances Rice Schaeffer said she feels the comments made by Terry Duckworth are correct. Members of the community appreciate the Department so much, but cannot understand why Fire Chiefs appear not to be accepted. Community speculation is there must be something more wrong than the people who come to work here.

Lee Barrett asked about an alleged incident between a Board member and employee. He asked if the Board had called in law enforcement and why the Board member had not been suspended pending investigation. Mark Curran responded that the Board has contracted with a consultant to conduct an investigation on this matter as well as a few others. The Board expects to receive the results of the investigations within the next two weeks. The Board will consult with Attorney Perry Fisher to see if the results can be shared with the community.

Bill Mills, former Fire Department employee and Board member, expressed his concern about the Board and the Department (to include personnel), relaying it is time for them to come together and work together for change for the better.

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George Barnwell expressed his concern about the Board, encouraging them to identify and address the source of poor morale, as well as the need to step up and do what needs to be done to prevent the Department from becoming defunct.

Paul Campbell, Board Member, relayed the Board needs to function as a community. He personally is going to do what is right for this Department, the community and in accordance with policy. He asked that community members come to him directly and ask him to step off the Board if they feel he is not serving in this manner.

Mark Curran, Board Chairperson, thanked everyone for their comments, ensuring them they had been heard. Mark shared he has been trying very hard to get the Board working together again and will continue to do so.

3. Adjournment to Executive Session: Dan Friday made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session to consult with Counsel at 7:10PM. Lisa McCallister seconded the motion, which carried. The Board returned from Executive Session at 7:57PM and moved back into the Regular meeting at 8:01PM.

4. Treasurer's Report: A Treasurer's report was not available due to the change in meeting date from December 20 to December 13. November's financials will be presented at the January meeting.

5. Approval of Minutes: Draft minutes of the Regular and Executive Session Meetings held on November 15 were sent to the Board on December 6, and an abbreviated version of the draft minutes was then sent on December 8. After a brief discussion, Dan Friday made a motion to approve the minutes sent on December 6. Judy Dillingham seconded the motion, which carried.

6. Fire Chief's Report: Chief Kelly provided an overview of the call statistics and status of hiring contained in his handout. Response times remain well within National standards. Staffing levels are improving, with applicant interviews, testing and job offers made the same day, in an attempt to keep the individual from going elsewhere.

Public education of chimney fires continues, and is also part of the ongoing distribution of smoke detectors received last year as part of a grant. Dan Friday asked if the chimney clean logs work well or if it is best to consult a professional. Chief Kelly responded it is best to consult a professional. Dan also asked if the fire/burning indicator sign posted out front could be repaired. Chief Kelly responded they would certainly look into doing so.

Lisa McCallister expressed her thanks to Chief Kelly, the Auxiliary and whomever else worked on the holiday dinner held last Monday evening. It was very nice, very much appreciated, and enjoyed by all. Lisa further commented that based on photos, it appeared the recent Santa and blood drive events were successful. Mark Curran also thanked everyone who helped with the holiday dinner for their hard work, stating he only heard positive comments about the event.

7. Old Business:

A. Dorm Remodel – On November 17, Katie Payne advised Mark Curran she had contacted the Buncombe County permit office as requested by the Board and learned the Department can pull its own permit(s) and oversee the work. There are no requirements on who does the work. As a result, Mark Dillingham has talked with one of the residential contractors from whom we previously received a quote. He still needs to see if the other two want to bid. Dan Friday has learned from his insurance company that he cannot be involved in the project.

B. Concrete Pad – Dan Friday relayed the contractor (Travis of Countryside Landscaping) said the small trucks can be driven on the concrete pad now and the large trucks after 30 days, which will be later this week. Remaining work (near auxiliary building) will be done when the contractor gets the concrete.

Discussion took place on how this contractor received payment; the need to keep Lisa McCallister (Treasurer) and Katie Payne in the loop; and the need to have a policy in place which outlines the process for future contract work/payment (to include having a signed agreement/contract). From an accounting and recordkeeping standpoint, the invoice and payment amounts need to match.

In this instance, the invoice did not match the estimate, nor has all the work been completed, yet the Contractor has received full payment. This contractor also conducted the septic tank decommission, so Dan Friday speculated payment received may have included that work, even though it was not part of the invoice. Regardless, Dan relays he will cover any loss the Department encounters if the Contractor does not complete the concrete work.

Discussed but not included on this invoice was interior bay concrete work, which was estimated at \$1,600 per bay. This work needs to be completed during warmer weather and per the County, interior work requires a permit.

C. Septic Tank – The septic tank for the Department-owned training house has been decommissioned (pumped, lid crushed and tank filled). No further action is required.

D. Meeting Attendance – Katie Payne relayed the equipment is in; has been tested briefly; and is ready for testing by the Board. This means of remote meeting attendance (through Microsoft Teams) will be available to both the Board and members of the community. It is not a replacement for in-person meetings. Rather, it is an option for participation by those who are unable to attend in person (i.e., bad weather, illness).

E. Ambulance Committee – Division Chief Jason McEntire shared the Ambulance Committee is close to finalizing the spec sheets, which will then be sent to the Board for review and approval, prior to being sent out for sealed bids. The current specs are generic in regard to the make of vehicle and written to where the ambulance can be a spec and/or a demo, as long as it is compliant.

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Katie Payne relayed the Committee hopes to have the spec sheets finalized within the next week and would like to forward them to the Board for review and approval prior to next month's meeting. Dan Friday made a motion to discuss and approve the spec sheets for an ambulance via the internet/online. Lisa McCallister seconded the motion, which carried. Mark Curran asked Katie to send the spec sheets to the Board when the Committee is ready.

8. New Business: There was no new business.

9. Adjournment to Executive Session: Kathy Higdon made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session to discuss personnel issues at 8:26PM. Lisa McCallister seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. The Board returned from Executive Session at 9:17PM and moved back into the Regular meeting.

10. Motion Amendment: Lisa McCallister made a motion to amend the vote made during a Special Meeting held on April 5, 2021, per Counsel's advice this evening. Dan Friday seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

11. Adjournment: Mark Curran made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:18PM, to which there were no objections.