

**The Board of:** Riceville Volunteer Fire Department  
**Met at:** 6:30PM  
**On:** Monday, February 17, 2020  
**For:** Regular Board Meeting  
**Moderator:** Judy Dillingham (Chairperson)  
**Members Present:** Mark Curran, Lisa McCallister, Carla McLendon and Dean Reed  
**Members Excused:** Mark Dillingham, Dan Friday and Dereck Lindsey  
**Guests:**

**1. Call the Meeting to Order:** Judy Dillingham called the meeting to order at 6:32PM, and declared a quorum. In the absence of the Secretary, she asked Carla McLendon to take the minutes. She further explained that Mark Dillingham and Dereck Lindsey had work conflicts and might be able to join the meeting late. (Mark Dillingham was able to join the meeting, just as the adjournment was being announced.)

**2. Approval of Minutes:** Judy Dillingham relayed Board members had received the minutes from last month's meeting and called for an approval of same. Lisa McCallister introduced a motion to accept the minutes for the January meeting as printed. The motion was seconded (Dean Reed) and voice approved unanimously.

**3. Treasurer's Report:** Financial Reports were not available for review. Chief Coffey explained that Katie Payne had not received word that the Board had reversed the announcement to meet every other month. He took responsibility for this oversight and brought it to Judy Dillingham's attention last week. While Katie relayed she would try to get the report prepared, a personal issue arose which placed her out of town. Chief Coffey will make sure the reports are emailed to the Board members as soon as they become available.

Judy Dillingham explained that the Board had considered meeting every other month, with the "off month" used to work on/with Committees. The Board subsequently decided that with the community growth and increase in activity, we want to be sure we stay on top of things and are not comfortable meeting every other month. The up side is this is an actively engaged Board who wishes to continue to meet monthly.

#### **4. Fire Chief's Report to the Board:**

**A. Training Statistics:** Chief Coffey reported year-to-date training statistics, which were 494 hours of training; 48 seconds average response time and 711.26 for both total personnel hours month and year-to-date.

#### **B. General Business/Community Programs:**

**(1) Community Yoga Classes** – Classes continue on Wednesday (AM and PM) and Friday (AM).

**(2) Weekly Community Social** – The social continues every Tuesday (9:30AM until 12N).

**(3) Air Packs and Bottles Regional Grant** - We are currently participating in a regional grant process that will assist with the purchase of air packs and bottles. Our current stock of bottles is five years away from approaching their life expectancy or expiration date and must be replaced. If we are not awarded the grant, we will budget for replacements over the next five years and have the bottles on a replacement schedule. Depending on the size of the bottle, they can only be hydrostatically tested so many times. According to NFPA and State guidelines, the bottles are then finished; they can be used for training but not for actual firefighting.

Are the air packs Scott (Dean Reed)? Yes (Chief Coffey).

Hopefully, we get the regional grant. Other participants are Black Mountain, Broad River and I believe Fairview, but don't quote me on that. Most government programs like to see regional grants because that means we are working together as a region. If we get the grant, we will get new bottles and packs. Our packs are fine; it's the bottles that need replacing. We have 25 bottles and would increase that number to 30. If we don't get the grant, we would budget replacing six (6) per year for five (5) years. This would be better than buying 30 at once, when the least expensive is \$800 per bottle.

The grant is for 20 (Mark Curran)? We have 25, and I want to go to 30 packs and bottles because there is a need for five more packs. We have a couple of trucks, like the tanker, that don't have them. When helping with mutual aid calls, all trucks should have all the equipment they're supposed to have when responding to a call (Chief Coffey).

Is there a place on the truck for them (Mark Curran)? Yes (Chief Coffey).

When will you know about the grant (Dean Reed)? I don't know; should be by April (Chief Coffey).

Is there a negative to getting five to six per year in regard to expiration dates (Judy Dillingham)? No, because these are 30-year bottles (Chief Coffey).

Who tests the bottles (Mark Curran)? I'm drawing a black on the name, but it's a fire equipment company in Asheville who is certified to test.

All the bottles you have now are done (Mark Curran)? No, they are on their last five years (Chief Coffey).

The grant writer has a 98% success rate with fire departments; so hopefully, we will get the grant. Is this a matching or 100% grant (Mark Curran)? It's a 100% grant (Chief Coffey).

**(4) Chiefs' Conference** – I attended a Chiefs' Conference a couple weeks ago with two goals in mind.

**(a) Future Building Expansion Plans** - The first goal was to speak with someone about renovating/updating this building or building a new station over the next 10 years. We're outgrowing this building. New fire trucks are not made to fit into a building built in 1972. Currently, there is a 9'3" clearance, and most trucks are now 10'

## RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 2020)

tall. We could not just go out and buy a truck, because it would not fit in this building. We would have to have one built from the tires up, which is costly.

Unfortunately, this happened recently (pointed to ceiling). What happened to the ceiling in here (Lisa McCallister)? There was a leak in the roof, which caused the sheetrock to fall. From the previous hail damage, they went from saying we needed a whole new roof to just replacing a few shingles. Who recently fixed the roof (Mark Curran)? Storm Guard, and they are coming back to fix this one spot that they should have repaired previously. Hopefully, free of charge. We did have a few people come and look at it, but this company was highly recommended by the community, so I listened to our tax payers and went with Storm Guard.

Unfortunately, the first goal was somewhat of a dead end, as the representatives at the conference were just there to hand out brochures. There was no one to speak with about the actual construction of a department. I was invited to an Architecture Conference specific to public buildings; this conference will take place in June in Greenville, South Carolina. There will be several companies who specialize in fire department construction. Hopefully after speaking with them at the conference, someone will come on site and give options.

The main concern I have already heard about the current building is the foundation, since the structure was built in 1972. (Dean Reed commented that he thinks the building is sitting on a rock bed. He remembers his father worked on the project and recalls they used dynamite after grading all they could.)

A second concern is that any remodeling would require bringing the building up to code (i.e., expel exhaust out of building, sprinkler building). I am not opposed to this; it's just a matter of figuring out how to pay for the work. Mark Curran commented and Chief Coffey confirmed that this would cost a lot of money. He is keeping an eye out for grants that could be used to help with the cost of remodeling. Mark asked the square footage of the building, and Chief Coffey responded that he is not sure.

**(b) Vehicle Leasing** – the second goal was to discuss leasing vehicles. I received good feedback on leasing small support vehicles (i.e., SUV, pickup truck). It was recommended to purchase rather than lease ambulances, as no one wants a used ambulance, and you would end up paying more in leasing costs than purchase. An ambulance is a hard item for a bank to move, so they basically end up selling it to you for \$1. We need to look at options, as you don't have to go through a bank (Dean Reed).

If leasing is not viable, we need to look at remounting/refurbishing the ambulances. I have already talked with a few people about remounting the older ambulance. They say it is in great shape, but needs redesign of the cabinetry and replacement of the chassis. The black and white ambulance does not fit our needs. The cabinetry does not flow well for the way we have to work as paramedics. This was expressed at the time of purchase under previous leadership, but fell on deaf ears. Is there any way to address (Judy Dillingham)? No, unless we can trade it in on something else, because we are still paying on it. We actually spent more money in buying a slightly used demo truck

## RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 2020)

than designing/building the red truck, and it flipped over. I will continue to research options (Chief Coffey).

**(5) Acoustic Update** – I spoke with someone who knows the gentleman, who explained he is frequently out of the country, as he installs acoustic systems in stadiums all over the world. He has not forgotten about us and is trying to work it so he can provide us this service for free. He is a member of the community and would like to give back.

Can I go back and ask the timeframe in which we need to address the ambulance issues? Are they functional, and you are just looking forward to the next 12 or 18 months (Lisa McCallister)? The older one should have been replaced a couple years ago. As much as we run our ambulances, they have a five-year life expectancy, and it is a 2007. We've kept it alive and in good condition, but it is costing us more than it is worth. It is becoming a money pit to keep it functioning (Chief Coffey).

What is the cost of a remount (Dean Reed)? It depends on our wants. There are a lot of factors involved (i.e., type of suspension system, chassis). I am not a Ford or Chevy guy, but the Fords designed for ambulances we have had have been nothing but trouble – lots and lots of trouble (Chief Coffey).

**Note 1** – A call was received to which the Chief needed to respond. The call was for Sunset Drive in Bee Tree, which is Swannanoa. Chief Coffey explained that if Swannanoa is already on a call, Riceville is the next available. He excused himself from the meeting at 6:53PM.

Chief Coffey returned at 6:55PM, relaying that only a five-man crew was needed. Since a Chief was already on site at the call, he was not needed. During his absence, the Board covered Old Business. Please see that section for specifics.

Do you have anything else to report (Judy Dillingham)? You have the stats, so I think that's it (Chief Coffey).

Are both the rescue vehicles diesel or gas (Mark Curran)? Both are diesel (Chief Coffey).

Dean Reed relayed that he had spoken with two counties who take care of their own ambulances and have a multitude of dealerships (i.e., Ford, Chevy, Dodge). He was not able to get a recommendation from either as to which make/model of vehicle was the best. Chief Coffey said he is not advocating, but in his 23 years of experience as a paramedic and having been in multiple different vehicles, he feels Chevy seems to have the wear and tear of most ambulances, especially for this area. He said the Ford 6.0 motor we had was a piece of junk.

**Note 2** - A gentleman stepped into the meeting, requesting assistance after hitting a pothole on Riceville Road. Chief Coffey excused himself at 6:57PM to help the individual.

## RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 2020)

Board members continued to discuss rescue vehicles. Dean Reed asked Mark Curran what vehicles they used in Florida. Mark responded they bounced around, but used Freightliner. Dean commented a problem would be they would not fit in the current building. He then asked why the trucks could not be relocated to the other building, changing where they come from. Mark responded that you could, but that the employees sleep in this building, which would mean them having to go out in the weather when calls are received. Lisa McCallister responded that it might be worth it to get a newer quality vehicle.

Dean Reed commented you could go into a Chevy, Dodge or Ford dealership and find two to three ambulances. If you ask for a recommendation from the dealership, you will not get one. All have an equal amount of different problems. Mark Curran responded that all do have problems. In Florida, they had 12 to 15 rescues and their own fire mechanic. The problems were consistent, so they knew what to expect. It's harder to know what to expect with only one or two rescues. Dean relayed his suggestion would be Freightliner, as they are framed up and heavy duty.

Mark Curran commented they first went with the Kodiak 45/6500 model, which was good, but their department had a very high call volume. When determining what to buy, you have to factor in volume of calls (which was higher in Florida) and road conditions (which are worse in North Carolina).

### **5. Old Business:**

**Employee Policies Handbook:** Previously requested changes were made to the draft handbook and emailed to the Board members late this afternoon. Chief Coffey relayed that the segment regarding the 401K needs to be addressed, as he and Katie Payne feel it is confusing and does not meet the intent. Chief Coffey said we match up to 5%, and it is not written that way. He also said it does not match the State Plan and needs rewording so that it does. Judy Dillingham suggested that she and Chief Coffey address the wording and then bring it back to the other Board members.

For clarification, whatever we discussed two weeks ago has been funneled back to Keith Bost? I thought we would make our own corrections (Lisa McCallister). I think Keith Bost did the original, so Chief Coffey is sending revisions back to him since he has the master (Mark Curran). Is there a cost (Lisa McCallister)? No, the County has already paid x number of dollars to have it done (Mark Curran). We need time to look at it again (Lisa McCallister).

### **6. New Business:**

**A. Bylaws:** Judy Dillingham expressed appreciation to the community for their comments, concerns and input shared about the bylaws. She relayed that the Board agrees they need to be looked at and are in the process of doing that.

**B. BOD Workshop:** Judy Dillingham relayed Board members will be participating in a Workshop sponsored by the County for Fire Department Chiefs and Board members. This Workshop is being offered to all Fire Departments in the County and is designed to help the Boards conduct business. The Workshop will take place this

## RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 2020)

Thursday at 6:00PM (dinner at 5:00PM) at the Swannanoa Fire Station in the Bee Tree area.

### **7. Public Comment**

Judy Dillingham opened the meeting for public comment.

Lisa McCallister asked if once Chief Coffey makes his decision about which make/model to go with, he will run his decision by the Board for our input/review. Judy Dillingham responded that he would, and both commented this needs to be worked into the 2020/2021 budget, which means looking at it now. Dean Reed said he feels we need to look at remounting the old vehicle, as he feels that would be the most cost effective.

Mark Curran commented the lesson learned in Florida was to time your decision right and not wait too long; otherwise, there will be no trade-in value. Judy Dillingham commented that perhaps the vehicle that does not meet their needs could be traded in. Mark said it seems like a good truck, and Dean Reed commented it has done well.

Dean Reed commented that he knows diesels are expensive to operate and fix. The cold weather is not good for diesels, since you have to go from “zero to wide open” in a matter of seconds. Dean said he does not care what make/model we get, but he would like to look into going back to gas vehicles. He knows the mileage is not as good, but you have to look at the whole maintenance schedule when making this decision. Judy Dillingham said it is something to look into.

Kirk Saunders, Reed Road, asked how many ambulances there are. Dean Reed responded that there are two, with the 2007 vehicle serving as a backup to the newer one. He said on average, the newer ambulance is running 14 hours per day (seven calls per day, with a two-hour turnaround time each).

Mr. Saunders also asked if there are statistics as to how many ambulances are recommended based on the population. Mark Curran responded that there is a recommendation once a community hits a certain level. If North Carolina goes by NFPA, it is based on population. There was some discussion between Dean Reed, Lisa McCallister and Mark as to whether or not the standards take tourists into account. Regardless, all agreed this is a population that needs to be served.

Mr. Saunders asked if the majority of the coverage area consisted of privately owned homes or businesses. Lisa McCallister responded she thought the vast majority were privately owned homes. Dean Reed agreed, estimating the number to be 95% to 96%, with very few businesses in the coverage area.

Lisa McCallister asked if our coverage area stops at the (Parkway) tunnel. Judy Dillingham responded it is just past the tunnel, at the Folk Art Center and Bull Mountain Road. Lisa asked if we cover the Folk Art Center, and Judy responded that we do. Lisa relayed that she knew we do not have the Summit.

RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 2020)

Mark Curran spoke to the Chief's statistical report, which reflects 80 calls (Mutual Aid Given) outside of our district. While we get some revenue for this assistance, he wonders if it is enough to cover such things as wear-and-tear on the vehicles, personnel insurance and pensions. Mark feels we should be talking with someone about compensating us for covering their area.

Dean Reed commented that he thinks this is part of a County agreement. He further speculated that the future direction may find all fire departments under Buncombe County, with Riceville serving as a substation.

Lisa McCallister commented there are a lot of unknowns, especially since we don't know the direction Jerry Vehaun's replacement will take. That's why it's scary to make a big purchase when anything budget-wise can happen with the County.

Dean Reed relayed he understands where Chief Coffey is coming from regarding plans for the building, but has budgetary concerns since it is not known if we will be under Buncombe County in the future.

Judy Dillingham said there are always unknowns. She feels that if we set aside a budget for future needs but not actually spend it, we will be in a better position no matter what happens.

**8. Adjournment:** Dean Reed introduced a motion at 7:13PM to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded (Lisa McCallister) and voice approved unanimously. There being no further business, an Executive Session was not convened.

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JUDY DILLINGHAM, Chairperson

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MARK DILLINGHAM, Vice Chairperson

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DAN FRIDAY, Secretary

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MARK CURRAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
DERECK LINDSEY

\_\_\_\_\_  
LISA MCCALLISTER

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CARLA F. MCLENDON

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DEAN REED