

The Board of: Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at: 6:30PM
On: Monday, April 20, 2026
For: Regular Board Meeting
Moderator: Dan Little (Chairperson)
Members Present: Kent Creasman, Merel Johnson, Butch Laughter,
Lisa McCallister, Carla McLendon, Mark Siler
and Steve Wickham
Not Present: Lee Barrett (Out of Town)
Guest(s):

1. **Call the Meeting to Order:** Dan Little called the meeting to order at 6:34PM and determined a quorum was present.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer:** Chaplain Terry Duckworth opened the meeting in prayer. Dan Little then asked everyone to stand if able and join him in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. **Approval of Minutes:** Draft minutes for the March 16 Regular and Executive Session and April 6 Special meetings were emailed to the Board on April 8. Lisa McCallister made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. **Treasurer's Report:** Financial reports for the month ending March 2026 were emailed to the Board on April 17. We are nine months into the budget year and remain on track financially. Big ticket items included the building repairs payment to Service Master that crossed years from prior year. Interest Income (Line Item 4201) is looking better than projected, as a result of moving money into the Money Market with Civic. EMS Income (Line 4215) at \$26,368.92 is up from budgeted and may be a reflection of when billing actually occurs. Kent Creasman made a motion to accept the March financials. Steve Wickham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

5. **Fire Chief's Report:** The Fire Chief's, FLSE and Training Reports were emailed to the Board on April 17. Division Chief McEntire gave an overview of the Training Report, which included 786.0 total training hours for January 1 through April 14, 2026. Hose Advancement (April 28) and Extrication training (week of May 11) are scheduled with Swannanoa. Annual hose testing is almost complete. EMS CE dates for May are being coordinated with the Instructor. Several Fire/Rescue training opportunities exist, with one Riceville member pre-registered for the Driver/Operator Pumps program and a few members rotating through the Fire/Rescue Instructor classes/program.

Chief Kelly provided an overview of the FLSE report, which included installation of one car seat and 215 people being reached through four different FLSE events.

Chief Kelly provided an overview of his report, noting Total Calls were up slightly (162 in March; 142 in February). Overlapping Calls were up at 41/25%. There were 72 calls in-district; 90 calls out-of-district. The average fire response time was 9:19 minutes; EMS was 10:20 minutes. Success rate for IV Attempts was 88%, and 45 ALS medications were given. Total Man Hours were 177 hours and 59 minutes.

6. Old Business:

A. Administrative Policies Review Committee – Tabled until next month.

B. Building Repairs Update – Dan Little relayed installation of a pump system and associated electrical work (not included in the pump system quote) was completed by T.P. Howard's Plumbing. As previously discussed, installation of this system was recommended to resolve the septic backup issue being experienced occasionally. The commode in the foyer bathroom is still pending installation of a flange, so remains out of service.

C. Department Vehicles – TAC 11 remains out of service (since September 2025). Dan Little will resume troubleshooting efforts when time allows. In response to a question about replacement plans for the vehicle, Kent Creasman relayed the Committee is waiting on one more quote before bringing their recommendations to the Board.

D. UTV/ATV (Draft Policy) – Tabled until next month.

E. Conflict of Interest Statement Policy – Tabled until the Annual Meeting.

F. Property Survey – Merel Johnson relayed the property survey is complete, with the boundaries marked by stakes at the corners. (It would have cost an additional \$1,200 to \$1,500 to have the property lines painted.) It is expected the associated report will be received in the near future. The property is currently recorded under two separate PINs with the County, so the parcels were surveyed separately. The County can combine and file under one PIN upon request. Dan Little requested we proceed with filing under one PIN. The question was raised as to whether this would interfere with any possible future plans for the property.

G. Community Center Use – As the Community Center remains closed for public use, Lisa McCallister noted the importance of the Board discussing and documenting approval of any events held therein to avoid any confusion. Chief Kelly noted a follow-up meeting with the U.S. Forest Service on the status of/plans for Shope Creek is scheduled for next Monday, April 27. He has requested the Forest Service provide traffic control, and Dan Little reminded him of the need to not allow parking on the drain field.

7. New Business:

A. Retirement Accounts – Katie Payne relayed the Department currently participates in the NC State Firefighters Association Pooled Employer Plan, offering a 401(k). This provider is not able to offer investment/personal advice to the employees. There is also an interest in offering employees a 457 account, which can be accessed by the employee at any age, following separation of employment. Katie reached out to Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES), for possible options and was referred to Madison Financials, Retirement Plan Specialists.

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Doug McCarthy and Palmer McCarthy of Madison Financials were present and provided an overview of services offered by the company (pamphlet), as well as a 401(k) versus 457(b) retirement plan chart and cost comparison between Madison Financials and the current provider. The Madison Financials plan would be covered by a total fidelity bond (\$500 annually), and the plan documents could be complete within 45 days, allowing for an effective date of July 1, 2026.

Katie Payne relayed the Department currently offers 5% for the 401(k). The plan is to contribute 3% to the 457 and match up to 7% for the 401(k), for a total of 10%. The goal is to be able to contribute/match up to a total of 15% next year. In response to questions, she relayed this offering is for fulltime employees only, based on the way the current plan documents are written.

Kent Creasman made a motion to move the current 401(k) plan to Madison Financials and establish a 457 plan with them, with an effective date of July 1, 2026. Steve Wickham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

B. 990 2024 Exempt Tax Filing – DMJPS sent the Department’s draft 990 to Katie Payne this afternoon, and she forwarded it on to the Board. This document will need approval prior to the next Board meeting.

C. Engine 11-3 Repairs – Dan Little relayed a quote of over \$23,000 had been received for repair of the foam injection system on Engine 11-3, which is a 2000 4WD International Truck. The issue has been evaluated by three different entities. Chief Kelly relayed this vehicle is scheduled for replacement in 2028 and that there are alternate means to address the need for foam. Dan asked that this issue be tabled until next month, with options being evaluated in the meantime.

D. Proposed Budget and Buncombe County Flat Tax – Dan Little relayed he, Chief Kelly and Katie Payne attended a meeting today with the County Manager, where the budget proposals were discussed. The proposed budget submitted by RVFD included a column for needs with the new County standards (two additional firefighters) and a column for needs without the standards (one additional firefighter). RVFD was asked to submit another budget without the standards and without the one additional firefighter. They were advised to submit a budget that would “keep the lights on.”

The Flat Tax proposal will be presented to the County Commissioners during a Public Hearing tomorrow evening and will be voted on by the Commissioners that same night. The proposed ordinance will remove each individual District’s tax rate, resulting in one District and one tax rate.

The Fire Chiefs have asked the County Manager to delay requesting implementation of this plan until next year. They were advised it has to occur this year, as this is a property reevaluation year, although the reasoning behind this response is unclear.

Public comment was opened at this time, to allow others to join in the conversation.

8. Announcements: The next Regular Meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, May 18, 2026 at 6:30PM.

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9. Public Comment: In response to questions regarding the proposed budget and flat tax rate, Dan Little, Chief Kelly and Katie Payne noted that the County Manager advised their new staffing standards will not be implemented this coming budget year and that the County Manager will determine who gets what in regard to the budget, as well as the division of any “excess funds.”

10. Executive Session: Merel Johnson made a motion to move to Executive Session for legal and personnel matters at 8:08PM. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:51PM.

11. Adjournment: Steve Wickham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:52PM. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Note: Chairman Dan Little only votes in the event of a tie.