

The Board of: Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at: 6:30PM
On: Monday, April 21, 2025
For: Regular Board Meeting
Moderator: Dan Little (Chairperson)
Members Present: Lee Barrett, Kent Creasman, Merel Johnson,
Butch Laughter, Lisa McCallister, Carla McLendon and
Steve Wickham
Not Present:
Guest(s):

1. Call the Meeting to Order: Dan Little called the meeting to order at 6:36PM. He relayed that Steve Wickham was on his way. (Steve joined the meeting at 6:42PM.)

2. Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer: Dan Little opened the meeting in prayer and 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 17 Regular meeting were emailed to the Board on April 15. Lee Barrett made a motion to accept the March Regular minutes as written. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report: Financial reports for the month ending March 2025 were emailed to the Board on April 18. Katie Payne relayed we are 75% through the fiscal year and are on track with the budget, doing better than expected in some areas. In response to a question, she relayed how much has been received from Insurance (\$823,000); how much is expected from FEMA (\$132,000); and how much has been paid for repairs/replacements to date (\$225,000). Many payments remain to be paid, as well as much repair/replacement of equipment. Katie will send a document outlining the hurricane-related income and expenses (as of April 21) to the Board. Kent Creasman made a motion to accept the March financials. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

5. Fire Chief's Report: The Chief's and Training Reports were emailed to the Board on April 16. Division Chief McEntire gave an overview of the Training Report, which included 960 total training hours for January 1 through April 7; move of EMS CE offerings from May to June; annual hose testing; and Rural Water Supply/Tanker Ops training, which took place last month, with five East-end Departments participating.

Chief Kelly provided an overview of his report, noting there were 174 Total Calls for March. Over-Lapping Incidents were down from 45/32% in February to 39/22%. At 9:00 and 7:59 minutes, the Average Response Times (ART) for Fire and EMS remain below the National benchmark. Seven new staff applications were received in March, which Chief Kelly attributes in part to the Department's social media presence.

For the FLSE Report, Chief Kelly noted one parent/child tour was conducted. There were no car seat or smoke detector installations. For the third year in a row, the Department applied for and received the Annual Smoke Detector Grant. Receipt of

these smoke detectors will allow the Department to participate in “Smoke Alarm Saturday,” which is the first Saturday in June.

6. Old Business:

A. Administrative Policies Review Committee – Kent Creasman has received feedback from Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES). He will next share that feedback with Chief Kelly, with plans to present to the Board at next month’s meeting.

B. 1110 Review Committee and Metal Building Quotes – Dan Little relayed the Committee has not been able to meet, so these topics are deferred until next month’s meeting.

C. Building Repairs Update – Dan Little provided an update on the status of repairs. Much progress has been made, with trim work remaining in the kitchen near the administrative offices; molding (possibly) on the stairs; doors need to be installed; electrical work needs to be done (primarily in the Staff Kitchen); and remediation of “razor sharp” edges in the Auxiliary Building. Katie Payne relayed workers are supposed to be on site tomorrow.

D. Bylaws Amendment – Board members reviewed a handout containing the recommended wording from Judge Noble and Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES), for Bylaws Section 3.3, Terms of the Members of the Board of Directors. The recommended verbiage provides direction should no applications be received to fill annual/upcoming vacant Board seats. Lee Barrett made a motion for the recommended wording to be added to Section 3.3 of the Bylaws, in accordance with Section 8.11, Amendment or Repeal of Bylaws. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. A second vote on this amendment will take place at next month’s meeting.

E. Window Replacement for Community Center – Lisa McCallister emailed three quotes to the Board on April 18: Asheville Window and Door (\$23,759.91); Blue Ridge Glass (\$18,600); and Window World (\$12,327.84). The quotes were projected to the overhead screen and discussed by the Board. Kent Creasman made a motion to accept the Window World bid as shown on the screen. Steve Wickham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

F. 2025-2026 Proposed Budget – Katie Payne gave an overview of the proposed budget document last month. There has been no update from the County, nor any changes from what was presented last month. (The proposed budget keeps the tax rate the same as last year, which is 16.6 cents.) Lisa McCallister made a motion to keep our tax rate the same and to approve the budget recommendation as proposed last month for the 2025-2026 year. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

G. Property Deed Research – In reviewing the County website, Lisa McCallister found reference to a property survey, but the County confirmed one is not recorded. After discussion, the Board agreed to have Katie Payne reach out to Keith Bost,

Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES), and ask for guidance on next steps. Based on Keith's feedback, Dan Little, Lisa and Steve Wickham will most likely meet with the owner of Asheville Roofing to discuss the matter further. Their discussion may result in the owner being invited to a future Board meeting.

7. New Business:

A. Forest Service Community Meeting Request – The US Forest Service would like to convene a public meeting to discuss mitigation of the fire load in the game lands area of Shope Creek. This project, which will be contracted out, will focus on removing downed timber only and from the game lands area only; not from private property. The DOT will be consulted due to the potential impact on the two bridges on Shope Creek Road. The Forest Service would like to convene the meeting on Monday, May 12, from 6:00PM until 8:00PM. Kent Creasman made a motion that the Forest Service be allowed to use the Community Center for a community meeting. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

B. Septic System Repair – Dan Little relayed specifics from the Buncombe County Environmental Health Department for repairs that need to be made to the septic system as a result of Hurricane Helene damage. The new drain field, complete with alternating valve, will allow for a dual system. Until the repair is complete, the County advises input to the system should be kept to a minimum. As a result, only work-related items may be washed at the Department. (Note – As soon as the issue was discovered, Brian Johnson came on site and put a temporary fix in place.)

In response to a question, Katie Payne relayed a claim will be submitted to insurance. If they will not cover the cost, a request will be submitted to FEMA. She will obtain three quotes for repair. Due to the urgency of this matter, Kent Creasman made a motion that once three quotes are obtained, the Board agrees to vote electronically in order to move this project forward. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

C. Creek Restoration – Dan Little has been in discussion with the Contractor doing the work for FEMA, who is the same one who did the work at Warren Wilson College around the creeks. He is to meet with the Contractor in the morning, as two other meetings were not able to take place. The Contractor needs signed permission for them to cross Department property to get to the creek to do the work (i.e., pull stumps, restore creek banks). There is no charge to the Department for this work, and the Contractor is certified through the Army Corp of Engineers to perform the work. Lee Barrett made a motion to give permission to enter, cross and use Department property as needed to restore the creek. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

D. Board Member Resignation – Kathy Higdon was not present at last month's Regular Meeting. The next morning, Dan Little found she had sent him an email just prior to the meeting, resigning from the Board effective immediately. Merel Johnson made a motion to accept the resignation of Kathy Higdon. Steve Wickham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

8. Executive Session: Kent Creasman made a motion to move to Executive Session for personnel matters at 7:55PM. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:14PM.

9. New Business (Continued):

E. Board Vacancy – Dan Little asked the Board to consider appointment of Heidi Hensley to the Board position vacated last month by Kathy Higdon. This appointment would be until the Annual Meeting, at which time Heidi would have to run for election again if interested in continuing to serve. Lisa McCallister made a motion to proceed and accept Heidi's application, after confirming with Katie Payne that a background check had been conducted. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Chairman Little asked Heidi to join the Board at the table.

F. House Bill 675 – Chief Kelly provided Board members a copy of House Bill 675: EMT Personnel Credentialing Modifications. This bill would require every EMT in NC to be on the National Registry and require re-certification every two years rather than four. Chief Kelly feels the adverse effects on Municipal and Volunteer Fire Departments are greater than the benefits. He will be in attendance at the annual meeting with State Legislators on April 30 and plans to vote against this bill.

10. Announcements: Dan Little announced the next Regular Meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, May 19, 2025 at 6:30PM.

11. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

12. Executive Session (Resume): Lee Barrett made a motion to resume Executive Session for legal and personnel matters at 8:26PM. Lisa McCallister seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 9:16PM.

13. Adjournment: Merel Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:16PM. Lisa McCallister seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.