



Riceville Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

2251 Riceville Rd, Asheville, NC 28805

Phone: (828) 298-2456 / Website: www.Ricevillefire.org

August 28, 2023

Asheville Citizen Times
Mitchell Black
P.O. Box 2090
Asheville, NC 28801

Re: Dan Friday & Your Request

Dear Mr. Black,

We received an email from Mr. Dan Friday requesting documents on your behalf. Our fire department is a private nonprofit organization. We are an independent contractor. We contract with our County to provide fire protection and emergency services. We have been advised that a non-profit corporation does not have to comply with Chapter 132 of the North Carolina Statutes. We do, however, believe in transparency:

We post minutes of our Board meetings on our website for the citizens of our community. Currently, the posted minutes go back to 2020. Earlier minutes are not posted because the provider who houses and updates our website passed away a few weeks ago. That company was used by at least seven fire departments within this County, and all of us are working to determine the best way forward. At one time, minutes going much further back in time were posted. You are more than welcome to download the minutes currently posted on the website, and we will continue to upload new ones. We are also willing to meet with you and allow you to review old minutes of our open meetings.

There is indeed a lawsuit pending in Buncombe County Superior Court. The file in that case is a public record. Anyone can get a copy from the Clerk's office. We are represented in that case by attorney Perry Fisher of Asheville and attorney Jake Stewart of the Cranfill Sumner law firm in Charlotte. We believe our community deserves to know as many details of the pending litigation as possible. We have asked for the advice of our attorneys, and we will rely on their advice in providing information about the case.

Our present Board of Directors and our staff members are spending considerable time fixing issues that occurred when past boards were in charge. Our Board of Directors, our officers and our staff are required to make decisions and act in the best interests of the corporation and the community. As a result, we hope that our Board continues to have broad representation from all parts of our community. Unfortunately, we believe that has not always been the case. In recent memory, the issues now pending, along with two other situations, occurred when Mr. Dan Friday and several members of the Dillingham family comprised a number of seats on the Board of Directors.

Some of the processes that were implemented by the current Board to ensure that such things do not happen again are:

1. All mail is received at the Fire Station.
2. Our Fire Chief typically receives the mail, approves payment of the bills, and gives the statements to the Department's Bookkeeper, who enters everything into QuickBooks.



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3. Our Chief can sign checks only with a co-signer who is a member of the Board of Directors.
4. Two Board members cosign all checks for purchases over \$5,000.00.
5. Our Bookkeeper answers directly to the Board and does not have signature authority.
6. The Treasurer of the Board, a retired IRS agent, the Fire Chief, and the Bookkeeper review and discuss all expenses weekly.
7. Each month, all members of the Board receive a profit/loss, balance sheet, and budget line-item comparison for review and approval at the Board meetings.
8. The monthly Board meetings are open to the public.
9. The Department hires an outside CPA firm to complete the annual IRS filings Form 990, which are then made public.
10. The Department also completes an annual financial audit. The Board reviews it and provides a copy to the County for their review. This document is also made public.

Our management consulting company and the County Manager's Office have reviewed these processes. Our current Board is seeking to begin other programs to ensure that Riceville Fire is operated for the benefit and protection of our community. We are a community-based organization that should be led by people throughout the community, not people of one family and their friends. In trying to repair damage from the past and to shape our future, we want to remove the drama and put good business practices in place. We want to ensure that the Fire Department and the Board is comprised of members that represent the whole community.

We respond to help community members in their worst times. Our emergency staff are amazing people doing dangerous work, and we are proud of them.

We ask that the community get involved and ensure that we achieve our goals. Our annual meeting of all members of the community will be held on October 9th, 2023. We have 4 open board seats that we would love to fill with open-minded citizens who want to help achieve these goals. Please see our bylaws for details of how and when to apply for an open seat on the Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Dan Little
Chairperson of the Board
Riceville Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.