

The Board of: Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at: 6:30PM
On: Monday, December 19, 2022
For: Regular Board Meeting
Moderator: Mark Curran (Chairperson)
Members Present: Lee Barrett, Kent Creasman, Dan Friday, Lisa McCallister and Carla McLendon
Not Present: Judy Dillingham, Kathy Higdon and Dan Little

1. **Call the Meeting to Order:** Mark Curran called the meeting to order at 6:32PM.

2. **Approval of Minutes:** Draft minutes for the November 21 Regular and Executive Session meetings were emailed to the Board on December 12. Lisa McCallister made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3. **Treasurer's Report:** Financial reports for the month ending November 2022 were emailed to the Board on December 17. Katie Payne relayed we are on track with our Fire Tax, which includes the Ad Valorem and Sales tax. In keeping with the County contract, a copy of our completed/approved audit was submitted to their office. They have confirmed receipt, so we are in compliance.

In response to a question, she clarified the Ad Valorem tax is reconciled at the end of the second quarter of the fiscal year. We did not owe any taxes; the County owed the Department. That payment has been received.

In response to a second question, Katie clarified Lines 6119 and 6120 of the Profit & Loss Budget Performance sheet represent annual and final payments for those two vehicles.

Dan Friday made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Reports. Carla McLendon seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. **Fire Chief's Report:** The monthly Chief's Report was emailed to the Board on December 16, with a hardcopy provided tonight. Chief Kelly provided an overview of the report, noting 146 total calls for November. Over-Lapping Incidents are at 22%. At 9:56, the Average Response Time (ART) remains under the Department's benchmark of 10 minutes. One full-time employee took a job with the Waynesville Fire Department, so he could continue his State retirement. He asked to stay on with Riceville as a part-time employee. E11-3 was out of service the last three days of October and 12 days into November, awaiting receipt/installation of a radiator from CAT. Overall, the Department is tracking 30 to 40 calls more than last year. Fortunately, an increase has not been realized in wildland calls.

A Fire Safety Life Event took place on Saturday, December 3, with Santa making many contacts in the community. There was then an opportunity to visit with Santa at the Department from 1PM to 3PM. There was a larger turnout than last year, with much positive feedback.

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In response to a question, Chief Kelly said he could provide statistics regarding in or out-of-district and EMS vs Fire, specific to overlapping calls.

Discussion took place regarding why the Department is not part of the State retirement system. Katie Payne explained that when non-profits were given the opportunity to join many years ago, it was too expensive for both the Department and the employees. Only three Departments joined at that time, with the County then having 51% fiduciary authority over the Board for two of them (Skyland and West Buncombe). The IRS has not made the offer to non-profits since, and a bill that could have potentially allowed this last year did not pass. While not being part of the system can be seen as an impediment to recruitment and retention, there is a large contribution that would be required by all employees.

Division Chief McEntire provided an overview of the Training Report. The Department has logged 4,052 training hours as of December 1. Congratulations to Paul Gilliam, who completed the first Fire Academy conducted by A-B Tech in a long time, and he did so in three months. The various 2023 training opportunities and dates were noted. Dan Friday asked if a copy of this month's Training Report could be emailed to the Board.

In response to a question, Division Chief McEntire responded we are looking pretty good with the training requirement (36 hours per year). Chief Kelly and Katie Payne clarified not achieving 36 hours does not eliminate the Volunteer from the Department, but does affect their benefits associated with the State Pension Fund for a year. (An employee or volunteer becomes eligible for State Pension Fund benefits after 20 years of service.)

In response to a second question, Chief Kelly and Katie Payne responded the rosters are normally purged at this time of year, when training hours are being reviewed.

5. Old Business:

A. Small Claims Court Issue – The Department has been waiting on a refund from Contractor Phillip Gee (Phil's Tile and Stone) since July. (Mr. Gee began work on the women's dorm bathroom, but the work was not acceptable. As a result, he agreed to refund the Department \$1,620.) Lisa McCallister confirmed we are below the threshold for filing and brought a completed form, which needs the Chairperson's signature. Chief Kelly has provided supporting documentation; Katie Payne will be asked to provide a check for the associated filing fee; and Lisa will file with the Court.

B. Transparency Policy – Katie Payne will contact Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES) after the holidays, asking that he come talk with the Board about where the County/MSFES proposed Transparency Policy originated and why Keith thinks it's a good direction for us to go. (Board members may refer to the email forwarded from Carla McLendon on October 24 for more background information.)

C. Ambulance Purchase – Chief Kelly relayed he continues to work with Southeastern Specialty. (Overall, he relayed he spends between 15 and 20 hours per week on this issue.) He met recently with the Director of Fleet Management and Chief

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Mechanic for Prisma Health in Greenville. During that visit, he evaluated two trucks which he feels can be built to the Department's specs outlined last February. He feels it is worth pursuing one of these vehicles and has been told we should find out this week who gets the vehicles. While the time it will take Ford to produce the truck is unknown (previous reports of two years), he has been told possession of the vehicle may be taken 120 to 160 days after it comes off the assembly line.

In response to questions raised during the discussion that followed, it was relayed we are back to the original bid/spec sheet (Chief Kelly); that we do not have to go through the sealed bid process again, as this Vendor is part of the Sherriff's Association contract (Chief Kelly, Katie Payne); there will need to be another approval of the contract (Katie); and no one is putting a price on contracts, due to ever increasing costs (Division Chief McEntire).

Lee Barrett made a motion the Chief be given authority to spec out an ambulance with this company, bringing a contract/price back to the Board, hopefully within 30 days. Kent Creasman seconded the motion. Lee and Kent voted Yes; Mark Curran, Dan Friday and Lisa McCallister voted No; Carla McLendon abstained. The motion did not pass.

Mark Curran clarified that Board members are not opposed to moving forward. It was just felt a motion was not needed tonight, as Chief Kelly was previously given the authority through an approved motion some months back. Mark went on to relay the Board is not dragging their feet, even though this has been a long process. There are issues nationwide with finding chassis, which is something over which we have no control. Mark also felt it important to put a limit on the maximum increase for the cost of the vehicle from the date we sign a contract to the date we take possession. The contract also needs to contain an option to back out if needed.

6. New Business:

A. Room Rental/Outdoor Area Use Policy – Mark Curran forwarded a draft document entitled "Community Room Policies and Procedures" to the Board on December 12. Board members expressed concerns about the document, to include the need for equal access and fees for everyone and ensuring the location is not used for profit. After some discussion and due to the length of/concerns with the document, Lisa McCallister made a motion a committee be formed for the purpose of developing a comprehensive policy to be brought to the next meeting. Dan Friday seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

After asking for volunteers to serve, Dan Friday made a motion that a committee be formed comprised of Lee Barrett (Chair), Madeline Dillingham, Peter Laine (offered to sub for Eric), Lisa McCallister, Jason McEntire, Eric Naimark and Danny Tipps. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Lee Barrett relayed plans are to schedule a meeting the first week of January.

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B. Front Marquee Sign – This item was placed on the agenda at the request of Dan Little. Kent Creasman made a motion to table the discussion until Dan is able to attend. Dan Friday seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

C. Yoga and Farm Stand - Dan Friday made a motion to allow Yoga back in [the Community Center] immediately three times a week and approve the farm stand. There was no second, so the motion failed.

7. Announcements: Mark Curran announced the next Regular Meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, January 16, 2023 at 6:30PM.

8. Public Comment: The meeting was opened for public comment after Lee Barrett read the associated guidelines.

Terry Duckworth, Department Chaplain, asked if the Community Center is a not-for-profit or profit organization. Katie Payne responded the Community Center is not separate from the Fire Department. Chaplain Duckworth responded that would make it not-for-profit, so it would be illegal for an individual to use the Center for profit. Lisa McCallister relayed the Committee formed this evening will include this in their review.

Emili Fonteneau, Yoga Instructor, provided background on how yoga classes began at the Community Center, to include their benefit to the community and the Department. She stated the classes had been voted in as part of the Department's mission statement and cautioned that the right energy (non-prohibitive) needed to be in place when making the decision about continued use of the Center.

John Christopher Kaiser expressed his support for the invitation around food collaboration and access to healthy foods (proposed farm stand), relaying he looks forward to a possible opening/solution.

Peter Aronchick expressed his support of the yoga classes and associated clean up. He relayed the group does not have food, uses mats, moves tables and chairs and sweeps if needed, so they don't mind contributing.

Peter Laine relayed he had heard about issues with use of the Community Center. He questioned what policies/procedures have been in use for this building and why use of the building has suddenly become so complex.

Eric Naimark questioned why Yoga and other approved activities couldn't continue as previously approved and until such time as a new policy was put in place. He expressed his support of the yoga classes, relaying he would hope they would be mandatory for all firefighters to help their bodies heal.

Lisa McCallister relayed old policies regarding use of the Community Center are still on the Department's website and asked for the location of the mission statement. Division Chief McEntire responded it is posted in the bay and on the website. He further relayed the mission statement has not changed; that it is a matter of interpretation.

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Lee Barrett relayed the intent of the Board was to ensure a fair policy is developed for use of the Community Center, asking those present to give the committee 30 days to develop such a policy.

9. Move to Executive Session: Lisa McCallister made a motion to move to Executive Session at 8:05PM to discuss personnel and legal matters. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:38PM.

10. Personnel Issue: Lee Barrett made a motion to approve the personnel issue discussed in Executive Session as written. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

11. Adjournment: Kent Creasman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:39PM. Dan Friday seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.