

The Board of: Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at: 6:30PM
On: Monday, February 16, 2026
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: Mark Siler
Guest(s):

1. **Call the Meeting to Order:** Dan Little called the meeting to order at 6:32PM 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 January 19 Regular and Executive Session meetings were emailed to the Board on February 7. Kent Creasman made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. **Treasurer's Report:** Financial reports for the month ending January 2026 were emailed to the Board on February 13. Buncombe County paid us twice for our December sales tax, so the overage received in January (\$55,304.90) will be deducted from our February payment. The Department received a memorial benefit (Violet Caramella) from VFIS in the amount of \$5,000. We are seven months into the budget year and remain on track financially.

In response to a question from Lee Barrett, Katie Payne explained Line Item 5402 (Fuel) is in the negative because an audit by the State revealed the Department was being overcharged some fees, resulting in a credit.

Lee Barrett made a motion to accept the January financials. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

5. **Fire Chief's Report:** The Department is in the process of transitioning to a new reporting system, with the generation of reports remaining a work in progress. Division Chief McEntire gave an overview of the Training Report, which included 183.5 total training hours for January 1 through February 10, 2026. Training hours are down some due to the two winter storms. The face-to-face EMS CE dates have been set for February; the Driver/Operator Program is scheduled to start in May; burn date for the Training House has not yet been determined; a few members are participating in the Fire/Rescue Instructor night classes at Upper Hominy; and two members are registered for the McDowell Fire and Rescue College in March.

Chief Kelly provided an overview of his report, noting Total Calls were up slightly (120 in January; 108 in December). There were three weather events (ice, snow and wind),

RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 16, 2026)

with nothing significant to report. The annual requirement to certify the State NCFSA and the Rescue Association rosters is complete. There were three new hires – two part-time Paramedics and one part-time AMT.

Lee Barrett relayed the first bridge on Shope Creek is in the process of being replaced. He is concerned about the path created for use until the bridge is complete being wide enough for a fire truck to use. Chief Kelly will follow up on this concern tomorrow. Dan Little also noted the first bridge on Bull Creek was recently surveyed.

6. Old Business:

A. Administrative Policies Review Committee – Nothing to report; tabled until next month.

B. Building Repairs Update – Doors are still needed between the foyer and the Community Center. Additional staff were on duty during the ice and snow storms, during which time a slight backup of the septic system was noticed in the restrooms. The issue resolved itself, so Dan Little recommends it continue to be monitored at this time. Chief Kelly relayed the Asheville Water Department has provided a means to monitor water consumption, and the data did reveal an increase in water usage during the time of the backup. The Department is scheduled to switch from the new septic system to the old in July and then switch between the two every six months thereafter.

C. Acoustics in Community Center – Nothing to report; tabled until further notice.

D. Department Vehicles – TAC 11 is at Dan Little's house as of last Friday. His initial review today found one of the two batteries fully charged; the second at only two volts. Two of the three cables for both were not tightened; Dan was able to turn the nuts by hand. He is currently charging the one and will resume testing as soon as possible.

E. UTV/ATV (Draft Policy) – Dan Little relayed we are still waiting on the final report to be released publicly by OSHA.

F. Buncombe County Flat Tax Proposal – Chief Kelly provided a handout from Buncombe County announcing a Community Information Session on this topic at Koontz Intermediate School on Thursday, February 26, from 6:00PM to 7:30PM. He also displayed a slide from the County outlining proposed funds distribution (last year's budget with about a 3% increase, plus the Capital Improvement Plan from last year). Per Chief Kelly, the Department will not be able to function on this proposed amount.

Katie Payne relayed a draft County Contract is expected to be given to the Departments at the next meeting with the Chiefs on February 25th. This contract will be good for one year and will let the Departments know what they have to do, thus giving a better idea of what is needed from a budget perspective to support the County requirements.

The Board discussed the matter at length again, to include the need to inform the community (i.e., hold a meeting) and the impact on the Department (i.e., ability to house required number of staff; adverse effect on current septic system; potential adverse

RVFD Regular Board Meeting (February 16, 2026)

effect on ISO rating). The Board agreed to post a notice on the Department's website regarding the upcoming County Community Information Session. Chaplain Duckworth will share information about the upcoming session with his congregation and members of the Board will follow up with the Pastors of the three remaining churches in the area, in way of asking they inform their congregations as well.

G. Conflict of Interest Statement Policy – Katie Payne relayed an updated policy was received today from Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services. She will email the policy to the Board in preparation for discussion at next month's meeting.

H. Asheville Roofing Property Request – Ray Whitson, owner of Asheville Roofing, sent Lisa McCallister a copy of the flood plain map associated with his property, which she sent to the Board on January 31. He remains very interested in purchasing a portion of the Department's property.

7. New Business: Dan Little has received two calls from Dr. Tom Kuhn who owns the pastures/property near the Department. Dr. Kuhn has found 18 golf balls in the pasture behind the Department (in the direction of the multi-colored barn), and the balls pose a choking hazard for cattle. In relaying this information at tonight's meeting, it was learned that Ray Whitson, owner of Asheville Roofing, hits golf balls from his property in that direction. Dan Little will advise Dr. Kuhn that he should speak with Mr. Whitson.

8. Announcements: Dan Little announced the next Regular Meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, March 16, 2026 at 6:30PM.

9. Public Comment: There was no public comment.

10. Executive Session: Merel Johnson made a motion to move to Executive Session for legal and personnel matters at 8:07PM. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 9:39PM.

11. Recess of Executive Session: The Board agreed to recess Executive Session until a date to be determined, pending receipt of additional information on one matter.

12. Adjournment: Lisa McCallister made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:39PM. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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