

The Board of: Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at: 6:30PM
On: Monday, September 15, 2025
For: Regular Board Meeting
Moderator: Dan Little (Chairperson)
Members Present: Lee Barrett, Kent Creasman, Heidi Hensley, 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 6:30PM and determined a quorum was present. He welcomed Katie Payne back and congratulated her and John on the recent birth of their son.

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 August 18 Regular and Executive Session meetings were emailed to the Board on September 4. Lee Barrett made a motion to accept the August Regular and Executive Session meeting minutes as written. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. Treasurer's Report: Financial reports for the month ending August 2025 were emailed to the Board on September 14. An updated hurricane-related income and expense document was handed out to all Board members. Two months into the fiscal year, we are on track with the budget and remain in the black in regard to hurricane-related income and pending expenses.

Katie noted the audit is in "full swing" and on target to be completed so the report may be presented to the Board in November, as has been past practice.

Kent Creasman made a motion to accept the August Treasurer's Report. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

5. Fire Chief's Report:

A. Training Report - Division Chief McEntire gave an overview of the Training Report, which included 2,294.5 total training hours for January 1 through September 10; completion of August EMS CE; annual equipment testing pre-plans to be completed today; successful facility burn on September 6 with Black Mountain and Swannanoa; and wild land training completed by three members in the last month.

Division Chief McEntire provided estimates for burning of the Department's Training House, with the burn being run through AB Tech, who will also bear a portion of the cost. The estimates include asbestos inspection (\$600 or less), air quality burn permit (\$200), and site cleanup following burn (\$2,500 or less). The Department will bear the

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cost for these three items. A one-month notice must be given to the State prior to the burn and a two-week notice to the community.

The Board discussed the estimates and asked about the likelihood of asbestos in the structure (minimal due to age) and discussion about the property with neighbor Asheville Roofing (Division Chief McEntire will follow up). Kent Creasman made a motion to proceed with the burn/demolition of the building. Steve Wickham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

B. FLSE Report – Chief Kelly relayed there were two child passenger safety seat inspections conducted. Safe Kids will be holding their annual luncheon for Buncombe County. Anyone interested in attending should speak with Chief Kelly for details.

C. Chief's Report - Chief Kelly provided an overview of his report, which was emailed to the Board on September 10. He noted Overlapping Calls were down slightly at 20%. At 6:33 and 9:45 minutes, the Average Response Times (ART) for Fire and EMS remain below the National benchmark. EMS Transports were up slightly, and Cancelled in Route and Refusals were both down slightly. The Department is anticipating two new hires, with one pending the Assessment Center and the second, Orientation. Ambulance 1110 remains out-of-service, pending repair of the lift system, which has been scheduled.

In evaluating EMS out-of-district calls canceled in route or refusals as requested by Dan Little last month, the following statistics for completed calls were provided: August – 66/72 (91.7%) and January through August – 547/607 (90.1%).

Chief Kelly further relayed:

- The Department received \$50,000 today of a \$100,000 Disaster Relief Grant from the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The funding is intended to support “Equipment, Wildland PPE and items that will enhance wildfire response and preparedness” and must be spent by the end of the year.
- A U.S. Forest Service sponsored Shope Creek Community Meeting will be held at the Fire Department on Wednesday, October 1, from 6:00PM to 8:00PM. Public safety updates on the impacts of Hurricane Helene and information on ongoing recovery work in the Shope Creek area will be shared.
- Chief Kelly provided an update on Elora Allen and Veronica Hanks, both of whom are doing well and looking forward to returning to work.
- Four new home sites are planned for an area behind Scenic Mobile Home Park, in between there and River Knoll. Road access/considerations are still under discussion.
- OSHA training is scheduled for next month.

- DOT Engineers plan to replace the Riceville Road culvert near the Department and Parker Road next year, rather than the originally planned next two to three years. Railcar-type bridges may be put in place for egress use only by the Department; they would have to use the 5.5 mile detour (required for use by the remainder of the community) to return to the Department. It is expected the project will take a couple of months to complete.

6. Old Business:

A. Administrative Policies Review Committee – Kent Creasman plans to meet with Chief Kelly next week to discuss the recommendations.

B. 1110 Review Committee and Metal Building Quotes – A technician from Northwestern Emergency Vehicles evaluated the malfunctioning hydraulic lift system on Ambulance 1100, resulting in a quote of \$3,285 for parts/repair. Atlantic is owed between \$1,500 and \$1,800 for their prior evaluation. (A motion is not needed to proceed with payment and repairs, as this is a maintenance issue.)

Based on the amount of money 1100 is costing in repairs, Dan Little asked if it is time to spec a new ambulance, which is known to be three years in the making. The Board discussed this question as well as how to fund a future purchase. The Board also discussed the age and mileage of 1120, Engines 2 and 3 and what that meant in regard to replacement.

Katie Payne noted that a Vehicle Fund exists and is available for use if needed. A second planning option is to include a payment in the next couple of budget years. She feels the Department can present the Board with a schedule of replacement once appropriate maintenance has been addressed/established for all vehicles. Katie also recommended the Buncombe County Flat Tax Proposal be discussed before forming a Spec Committee.

C. Building Repairs Update – Dan Little relayed the countertop templates are to be made on September 22. We will need to find someone locally to provide/install fire-rated doors, as Service Master is unable to do so.

D. Property Deed – No update. Lisa McCallister suggested this conversation take place with the owner of Asheville Roofing when he is apprised of the burning of the Training House.

E. Acoustics in Community Center – No update. Katie Payne will follow up with the Contractor who did the sheetrock work in the Staff Kitchen, as he was going to provide a quote for acoustic work in the Community Center.

F. Department Vehicles – Last month, Dan Little relayed Car 11 is in rough condition and may need to be replaced. The Board discussed this matter, as well as the purpose of the remaining vehicles. As all Board members are not familiar with all the vehicles, Chief Kelly was asked to develop a list of Department vehicles for further discussion at next month's meeting. He was asked to include each vehicle's description and purpose.

G. Board Applications – Four applications were received within the timeframe outlined in the Bylaws.

7. New Business:

A. Annual Meeting (Logistics and Newspaper Notice) – Carla McLendon emailed the proposed newspaper notice to the Board on September 1. The notice was the same as used last year, except for the change in meeting date. The Board agreed to have the notice run in the Asheville Citizen Times on Sunday, September 28, Thursday, October 2, and Friday, October 3.

Lisa McCallister has served as Chair of the Logistics Committee for the past two years and offered to serve in that capacity again.

B. Cadet Firefighter, Dash Camera and UTV/ATV Draft Policies – These draft policies were sent (in three separate messages) to the Board on August 27 for their review and in preparation for discussion at tonight's meeting.

(1) Cadet Firefighter - In response to a question, Chief Kelly noted this policy was received from Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES). Chief Kelly changed the Fire Department's name to reflect Riceville and added VFIS mandatory requirements received from Dennis Pressley.

Lee Barrett made a motion to accept the Cadet Firefighter Program policy, with the curfew for all Cadets changed from 10:00PM to 9:00PM, and the two references to East Bend Volunteer Fire Department changed to Riceville Volunteer Fire Department in the first paragraph of the Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Prevention Policy. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

(2) Dash Camera – In response to a question, Chief Kelly noted his vehicle (for the past six to seven months), Engine 11-2 (antiquated system) and Ambulance 1120 (no audio) have dash cams. Ambulance 1110 used to have a camera. He noted the cameras he has purchased are forward facing with side view and do not track speed. The Board discussed the pros and cons of various data retention periods.

Since the policy came from Keith Bost (MSFES), Lee Barrett made a motion to change the retention period noted on Page 1 from 90 to 30 days, pending input from Keith. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

(3) UTV/ATV Team – Lee Barrett had concerns about the statement, "Completion of formal UTV/ATVs for use in Fire/Search/Rescue course ***within one year.***" It was explained that someone could drive the UTV/ATV prior to completing the training, ***providing they were with a qualified individual.*** (The example was given of someone with a learner's permit needing to drive a vehicle in order to gain experience must do so only with a licensed individual.)

Chief Kelly noted this policy is "straight out of VFIS." Katie Payne noted this policy is an appendix to an existing policy. It was decided to table this topic until next month's

meeting. Dan Little asked Chief Kelly to send the “parent policy” to the Board prior to next month’s meeting and for their review.

C. Buncombe County Flat Tax Proposal – The Fire Chiefs were recently informed that Buncombe County is proposing a flat rate tax for all Departments. The proposed tax rate is unknown at this time. If approved, the Boards of 501(c)(3) Departments would have to relinquish their current tax rate for their District and agree to what the County proposes. The budgeting process would be removed from the Departments, and the County would tell them what they need to budget for in regard to capital improvements. The County would like to have the flat tax rate/process in place by June 30, 2026. Chief Kelly and Katie Payne will be attending a meeting downtown tomorrow at 9:00AM on this matter. Information obtained at that meeting will be sent to the Board.

8. Announcements: Dan Little announced the Annual Meeting of the Corporation will be held on Monday, October 13, 2025 at 7:00PM. The Regular Meeting of the Board will immediately follow the Annual Meeting.

The Boy Scouts Annual BBQ Fundraiser is scheduled for Saturday, October 11, from 11:00AM until 4:00PM (while supplies last) at the Fire Department.

9. Public Comment: There was no Public Comment.

10. Executive Session: Kent Creasman made a motion to move to Executive Session for legal and personnel matters at 8:15PM. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:58PM.

11. Adjournment: Merel Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:58PM. Steve Wickham seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.