The Board of:	Riceville Volunteer Fire Department
Met at:	6:30PM
On:	Monday, June 15, 2026
For:	Regular Board Meeting
Moderator:	Dan Little (Chairperson)
Members Present:	Lee Barrett, Kent Creasman, Merel Johnson, Lisa McCallister, Carla McLendon and Mark Siler
Not Present:	Butch Laughter (Medical/Dental) and Steve Wickham (Boy Scout Camp)
Guest(s):	

1. Call the Meeting to Order: Dan Little called the meeting to order at 6:34PM and asked for a moment of silence in recognition of the one-year anniversary of the passing of Violet Caramella.

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 May 18 Regular and Executive Session meetings were emailed to the Board on May 28. 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 May 2026 were emailed to the Board on June 11. We are 11 months into the budget year and remain on track financially, currently at 95% for total expenses.

Lisa McCallister asked if the Department would still receive the "balancing funds" from the County in August as in the past, in light of the flat tax rate. Through "word of mouth," Katie Payne has heard Departments should receive this money in August for the fiscal year that is about to end. Future disbursements are to be equal distributions to the Departments. Reports have been received in the past, outlining how the disbursement was calculated. It is unknown if a report will be received this year since the Finance Office has undergone a lot of changes.

Lee Barrett asked if having funds on hand would adversely affect the Department in the future. Katie Payne relayed she has spoken with Avril Pinder (Buncombe County Manager) a couple of times about this, and her interest is that Departments be able to explain the purpose for which such funds are designated. Katie feels we have good documentation to support our position.

Lee Barrett made a motion to accept the May financials. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

5. Fire Chief's Report: The Fire Chief's and Training Reports were emailed to the Board on June 11.

Division Chief McEntire gave an overview of the Training Report, which included 1255.0 total training hours for January 1 through June 11, 2026. The annual hydrant testing is taking place this month through July. Face-to-face EMS CE training classes were completed on May 14, May 15 and June 6. The NC Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) will use the training house to conduct a Fire Investigation Technician (FIT) class burn on June 22. The house will not be burned down and will be boarded up and no trespassing signs posted afterwards to address any liability/safety issues. A date for the Training House Burn has not yet been scheduled but could potentially occur late summer/early fall.

Chief Kelly provided an overview of the FLSE report, noting there were a couple of car seat checks. The Department applied for but did not receive a grant from the NC Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) for smoke detectors. This is most likely due to the lesser amount of funds available to the OSFM, who relayed their office only received half of what was requested. Work on the Santa Christmas Project will begin in August.

Chief Kelly provided an overview of his report, noting Total Calls were up slightly (140 in May; 133 in April) and Overlapping Calls were down (23/17% in May; 37/28% in April). At 91% (117/128), the Department is above the County average for IVs. The average fire response time was 9:45 minutes; EMS was 11:32 minutes. No data was available for in-district and out-of-district calls, but Chief Kelly continues to work on a means to gather this information. In regard to staffing, there are two pending employment, one per policy review.

6. <u>Old Business:</u>

A. Administrative Policies Review Committee – No update at this time.

B. Building Repairs Update – No update at this time.

C. Department Vehicles – Dan Little relayed the decision was made last month to not spend money on repairing Engine 11-3 at this time, as consideration is being given to replacing that truck. He continues to troubleshoot electrical issues on TAC 11 as time allows.

Chief Kelly presented two proposals (down from the original 12 received) to the Board on behalf of the Committee regarding replacement of TAC 11. The proposals are from OnPoint ($96,806.84) and Brooks Public Safety ($89,096.67), both of whom have a good history in the community. Both proposals are for 2026, three quarter ton, gas motor, black chassis, 6.4 V8 392 engine, Dodge vehicles. The turnaround time for OnPoint is three months; Brooks is four to six months.

The Board discussed color schemes (to match the Engines); light packages (included); gas vs. diesel ($12,000 more for diesel); one-half vs. three-quarter-ton truck (needed to pull support trailers to scene); specifications (slight difference in brands and method of wiring used); and purpose (first responder).

Lee Barrett made a motion to proceed with purchase of a vehicle from OnPoint to replace TAC 11, with the Board to determine method of payment (i.e., cash or finance) at a later time. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried. Kent Creasman abstained from the vote since he served on the Committee.

D. Budget/Flat Tax Rate Update – Katie Payne relayed the County did approve an additional $80,000 for the Department, which brings total allocated funds to $2,738,092. (Note – the additional $80,000 was in support of ambulance services, mostly salaries and wages.) Of note in the updated budget provided to the Board is that it does not include a building payment as it has in the past. Katie will edit the column headers to reflect the approved County flat tax rate of 11.96 cents rather than 16.6 cents. Lisa McCallister made a motion to approve the budget based on the $2,738,092 allocated funds from the County. Mark Siler seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

E. UTV/ATV (Draft Policy) – Dan Little relayed no changes are needed to the policy based on the contents of the OSHA report. He requested "brake fluid at weekly check off" be added to Page 3, Item 6 of "EM or other Buncombe County Gator General Operation Procedures." It was agreed the two instances of the word "Gator" should be changed to UTV/ATV; the number four under the Equipment heading found on Page 2 should be removed, as it has no content; and the implementation date should reflect today's date if approved by the Board.

Merel Johnson made a motion to approve the policy with the addition of the brake fluid comment; changing of Gator to UTV/ATV; removal of the number four found on Page 2; and editing the implementation date to reflect today's date. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Katie Payne will follow up with Keith Bost, Management Solutions for Emergency Services (MSFES), regarding combining this policy with Department Policy A-20, Apparatus and Privately-Owned Vehicle (POV) Operation.

7. New Business:

Buncombe County Contract – On April 21, 2026, the County consolidated 20 fire protection and ambulance rescue services districts into a single Fire Protection Service District. Under the Contract, the County recognizes there are 20 different Insurance and Response Districts now. The Board discussed their concerns with signing the contract, noting there really isn't a choice in the matter. The Contract must be signed in order for the Department to receive an appropriation of funds from the County for providing emergency services. Lee Barrett made a motion to sign the contract as currently written. He stipulated should any changes be made by the County to the contract in the future, it will have to come back to the Board for approval. Kent Creasman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

8. Announcements: The next Regular Meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, July 20, 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 8:09PM. Mark Siler seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The Board returned from Executive Session at 10:13PM.

11. Executive Session Discussion(s):

A. UTV/ATV Manual Brake - Kent Creasman made a motion to approve a resolution that all future UTV/ATVs be required to have a manual brake. Mark Siler seconded this motion, which carried unanimously.

B. Ambulance Service Billing - Kent Creasman made a motion that the Department's mileage rate and cost per trip equal that being charged by the County. Merel Johnson seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

12. Adjournment: Kent Creasman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:13PM. Lee Barrett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

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