

Aspen Fire Protection District

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Board of Directors Regular Meeting April 11th, 2023

The Board of Directors of the Aspen Fire Protection District met for their regular meeting. The meeting was open to the public in person and virtually via Zoom.

Meeting called to order by John at 5:03pm

Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: John Ward, Parker Lathrop (via zoom), Dave “Wabs” Walbert, Emily Taylor (via Zoom), Steve Wertheimer
- Board of Directors Absent:
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Rick Balentine, Jake Andersen, Nikki Lapin, Jan Schubert, Jan Legersky, Amanda Perusse. Those joining via Zoom: Ben Smith,
- Public/Others: Richard Peterson (via zoom) and Chipper Program intern Agathe

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: Motion by Steve to approve minutes from regular meeting held on March 14, 2023. Parker second.
Discussion: Wabs had a question on the term severity engine, Jake Andersen explained
Vote: All approved.

Public Comment: None

AVFD Inc.: None as Ryan Warren was out of town

Financials

- Monthly Financial Review: Included in the board packet.
 - Discussion regarding that the Colorado Trust is earning 4.859% in interest, which is close to \$200,000 per year that we are earning.
 - Balance sheet for Rick. He is working through the final punch list on Fire Place. Sitting on 1,900,000 in housing fund. \$500,000 will come out of that for Fire Place.
 - Construction total - \$14,252,000
 - Project total including soft costs - \$15,693,922
 - With permits and all fees, total is \$16,694,000 (projection was \$16,500,000)
 - Projection is that at the end of 2023, we will have \$967,885 cash in the account, including interest. We still have COP to pay. Half the interest to pay in May, and the other half of the interest plus principal is due in November. We still owe FCI a few bills, maybe \$25,000 - \$50,000
 - Mill levy of 1.1 million for 2023 is included in the financial numbers given at today's meeting.
 - Rick is still working on ideas for what to do on another property with the extra money

Board Comments & Action Items:

- Board Comments:
 - Steve – Things are going along good and glad that we are wrapping up on Fire Place and preparing for wildfire season. Does anyone know the snow fall impact this year?
 - Jake answered: 130% -170% statewide depending on area, which is great for fire season. We will have a potential issue with swift water season coming early due to run off. Not sure what the dust layer on the snow is going to do to our runoff.
 - Parker – Weather service has predicted a hot, dry summer.
- Adopt Resolution 2023 – 04-01: Updated Mitigation Plan
 - Discussion about need for resolution. Parker explained it is a county wide plan that all districts in the county must adopt in order to receive FEMA relief for any disaster, due for review and update every 5-6 years. This document was created by the Pitkin County Emergency Manager along with a group of people from all over the county. It is due May 1st so that the BOCC can adopt it.

MOTION: Motion by John Ward to adopt Resolution 2023-04-01 updating the Pitkin County Hazard Mitigation Plan dated for the year 2023.

Wabs second

Vote: All approved.

- Richard will make the correction on the resolution and send it to Nikki, who will get it to John Ward for a signature.
- No further action items.

Staff Report:

- Fire Marshal and Prevention:
 - Building permit submittals are increasing, which translates to more site visits, plan reviews, and subsequent construction inspections down the road. It never slows down.
 - I participated in a very good, interagency meeting regarding solar energy storage systems. This was hosted by Roaring Fork Fire, and a primary presentation by Holy Cross. This is all part of the process on getting complete information on solar installations in our respective districts, but battery storage systems in particular. For responding firefighters, it's critical that they know what might be there. It's a learning process, but something all the various agencies are working on together.
 - World Cup has come and gone. While it went relatively smoothly, we did work with the City on a couple issues. Plans submitted did not reflect a temporary structure was built. I received a phone call about this, and Ben followed up with a site visit. We all worked with SkiCo to bring the structure into alignment with what we needed and the City needed. Initial plans had been to install a kitchen under the tent scaffolding. They ended up scrapping the kitchen and cooking off site.
 - **Ben attended the ICC Conference in Loveland. This was a week of mind-numbing fire code education. While participating in a session pertaining to fire investigation, he received recognition from Todd Hedglin, the ex-president of the CIAAI, for the work done on the Slalom Explosion investigation. Well done, Ben!**
 - I attended a virtual ICC conference offered through the Southern Nevada ICC. It definitely exceeded my expectations, and both Ben & I will probably participate in this virtual training if offered again next year.
 - Ben is also working on public messaging for Fire/CO alarms, focusing on radio and social media at this point.

- Hydrant information was transferred from the Emergency Reporting to First Due to better assist crews while responding to incidents. He is also continuing with planning tours of target hazards in our district with firefighters.
- Ben also had a couple meetings with firefighters who are part of the Operations prevention track for prevention related topics.

Discussion battery fires/Photovoltaic fires/solar panels on roof:

Question from Steve: How do you fight a battery fire? Are we equipped to deal with this? Do we have a map stating where these might be located? Important to know where they are so our response team is prepared before they arrive on scene.

Jan attended a solar storage meeting recently, which was an interagency meeting to discuss what will lead up to procedures to identify where things are at for emergency response so they know where things are at when they arrive on scene. It is an ongoing process. We keep a copy on file of any solar reviews and sprinkler systems that we do for pre-planning and storage system identifications. Also keeping a spreadsheet of addresses where batteries have gone in. She also pull plans from the City and County.

Our training division is also doing research on fire suppression blankets for electric vehicle fires etc as we will see more and more of this in the future.

Ben Smith: We can preplan our Photovoltaic and our battery systems in our First Due System. He is working on how we can broadcast a fire call as a possibility of an Electric Vehicle or battery fire to let all first responders know what to expect on scene. Also working on getting Jan's info of batteries and electric storage systems as well as our curbside assessments into our software so responders can see it before they arrive on scene. Also working valley wide we are working on putting this issue into our computers and our Wildfire Risk Mitigation software app, so that it will be available when the call comes /on the way to a call. It will take some time.

Parker - I requested that the HEPC (committee that tracks chemical storage and other hazards in the county as required by the Fire Code and Building Code) have a conversation to find out where they are located for this exact reason. Holy Cross energy is offering incentives for people to put batteries into houses and structures, so we now have an ever increasing number of large hazards in commercial and residential areas. It is important to create this hazard map, regardless of jurisdiction, and share that knowledge so that first responders can anticipate when a call is not just a regular fire. There is now a lithium sulfur battery that will replace lithium ion, that does not overheat, but it has half as many charge cycles, so not a complete replacement yet.

- Operations Overview:
 - Roaring Fork is at 146% for snow water equivalent, and is out of drought according to US Drought Monitor. However, this is not necessarily the state of our ground water. We are 46% above average but will need years and years above average to get back to average.
 - Gearing up for Swift Water season, don't know if it will peak early due to dust on snow, but not a lot of moisture relief in the upcoming forecast.
 - Wildfire:
 - Wildland refresher course this week for redcard, due every year. There is a certain number of hours of classwork, you are required to deploy a fire shelter in a practice scenario and do a pack test to be certified and able to go to a wildland fire. Redcards

are required for our team to be able to stay on a fire and continue to help after the mutual aid period is over. With the supervision of Wildfire Battalion Chief Jake Spalding and myself, LT Will Shoemsmith and Firefighter Will Hardenbergh put together the material and presented the training.

- Wildland Certification audit from the state
 - They are looking for information that doesn't exist for all members from the past, so we will have people lose their certifications and have to go through them again.
 - To mitigate this issue moving forward, we have developed a partnership with the Kansas State Forest Service for certification. They do a planned prescribed fire, ran as a type 3 incident, every year.
 - BC Jake Spaulding and FF Will Hardenbaugh were sent there for training and had a great experience with leadership and team dynamics
- Questions:
 - Wabs: Are the 35 Emergency and medical calls on the operations report mostly medical?
 - Yes
 - Steve: Does the City of Aspen have a code that your house alarms and system has to get checked?
 - Jan: Yes, this is in the Fire Code. If the person has a monitored system, it should be checked annually, however, the policy on this has been a challenge.
 - Parker: The APD has spent a lot of time on this and there is no good solution so far.
 - Ben Smith is working to help to get the false alarm system down to a minimum and has a focus group on it to try to keep reducing them.
- Training Update: Scott Arthur was absent, Jake walked through notes from Scott Arthur
 - The March fire training was on Forcible Entry with hands on experience using our forcible entry training door as well as the one belonging to RFFR which they have generously allowed us to borrow for the week. The medical training was Focused Patient Assessment
 - The April fire training is our annual wildland fire refresher which is required of any member who wishes to maintain a "Red Card" to be allowed to fight fire out of county on federal fires. This will be taught by Lt. Will Shoemsmith and FF Will Hardenbergh. The medical training will be on Pediatric Emergencies and will be taught by Volunteer Capt. Jason Lasser
 - Recruiting:
 - The Recruit Class of 2023 are well into their program and doing great. They are getting more involved in hands on evolutions at the training towers in Carbondale, Rifle and Dotsero. They recently took their Firefighter I written test and all passed but one. Their Firefighter I practical exam is on April 14th and they will be moving on to Hazmat soon. The recruit who is going to attend the fall academy has had his task book expanded and is working diligently to progress ahead of going to the academy
 - With wildland fire season approaching we have a number of firefighters taking multiple wildland courses including tree felling, portable pumps and numerous classes to move from basic to advanced wildland firefighter. We also are sending a number of personnel to Kansas for various advanced classes that include incident command and burning operations

- Our Fire Prevention Track Firefighters are all taking the Public Fire and Life Safety Instructor I class to advance their abilities to educate the public
- Some of our members who weren't able to get into our last academy and are planning on attending the next one, are attending the 13190 Basic wildland Fire Training, so that they can be wildland firefighters this summer.
- We have a large number of firefighters who are advancing themselves through multiple outside training programs. Here is listing of the classes that we have firefighters enrolled in over the next few months:
 - Anatomy & Physiology – 1 firefighter, 1 Lieutenant (4 month class)
 - Biology – 1 firefighter (4 month class)
 - Fire Officer I – 4 firefighters
 - Fire Officer II – 1 Battalion Chief
 - Fire Instructor I – 1 firefighter
 - Our Community Listens – 1 firefighter
 - Chief Officer Training Curriculum – 2 Battalion Chiefs (18 month class)
 - Roaring Fork Leadership – 1 Battalion Chief (9 month class)
 - Colorado Public Manager – 1 firefighter (1 year class)
- Our Community Listens – pushing to get the entire officer core through this class and even the rest of the organization. A very interpersonal communication course that was given to us as a gift, the founder lives in the valley. It can be helpful in personal and professional life to communicate better. More of a listening class and a chance to be reflective in how you approach conversations.
- Wildfire Risk Assessments – Start on May 1st. It has been updated on the website so that people can start signing up.
- May 15th is hard stop for prescribed burns due to snow pack melt and animal migration routes.

Wildfire Community Action Fund: Read through by Jake as Ali was absent.

- Grants:
 - BLM Grant was finally approved. 33 acre field break off at the end of Willoughby. Several potential operational delineations (PODS) that converge right at that point. This is very helpful as it is a critical point of Red Butte and into town. Having a field break there, where we can put a line through is a big deal and a very strategic position. Also, having this work done ahead of time to tie essentially the Rio Grande Trail almost all the way up to that meadow, and to carry that to the ditch is very helpful.
 - Laura Jones Musser Grant – to be determined in July 2023.
 - Colorado State University Wildfire Mitigation Incentive for Local Government: This comes through Colorado State Forest Service, same as FRWRM grant was through, but more catered to what we are doing here. This is due early April, not limited to donations or tax revenue. We should find out in May if we will receive this.

- **Introduction by Rick Balentine:**
 - New intern Agathe from Bordeaux, France, to help Ali Hammond with the Chipper program. She will be with us for the next two months. Ryan Warren and Wendy Whitman donated their place for her to stay in. She did the wildland refresher this morning. Ali has her lined out while she is away. Welcome.
- Wabs question on Red Mountain 2025 burn from last meeting minutes.
 - Answered by Rick: The full burn won't take place until 2025, but we are preparing for the Sunnyside area burn ahead of time by talking to HOA and homeowners in the area to see if we can mitigate into their neighborhoods (which past the forest service boundaries).
- Steve: What is the cost to do a burn?
 - Answered by Jake that it is variable based on equipment and personnel – maybe \$50,000. Burning is by far the most cost-effective way to do this.

CEO/Fire Chief and Good of the District:

- Several prescribed burns are coming up. Collins Creek is in May. More down valley as well. Great opportunity for training.
- North 40 Fire Place:
 - Info as mentioned in financials section.
 - Still some stuff that is slightly covered by snow that is coming out during thaw. Rick reminded them to clean it up.
- Housing Other
 - Still no news on the lot
- Wildfire camera
 - Rick spoke to an Aspen fire friend who bought the Redstone Castle, and he is going to fund a new wildfire camera system for Carbondale 100% for 5 years at the Elephant Site at \$40,000/year. Should go in around June.
 - Our wildfire cameras system software and features are constantly updated based on our suggestions. This year they will monitor smoke and now fire as well.
- Roaring Fork Wildfire Collaborative
 - Collaboration is going really well, energy is very good and exciting, move forward.
 - Currently interviewing for a coordinator, also going well
 - Working with Ali and the Roaring Fork Collaborative to bring more documentaries on wildfire to the community.
 - Recently watched “Wildfire”
 - The National Forest Foundation is committing to \$2-\$3 million to the White River National Forest for this area of the forest, so maybe be some funding coming in.
- Food and Wine
 - Terra Mana interested in working with Aspen Fire again this year
 - They raised \$25,000 last year for Wildfire
 - Want to serve Tequila this year along side food truck
 - Haven't heard back from them since last week
 - Jake - we have a member working on an impaired driving program prevention program called Back Track with a personalized breathalyzer. Trying to get them to have a booth at F&W and at Aspen Fire for community care driving prevention initiative.

- Video shown by Rick – video by Peter Yoakum – created a documentary about America’s volunteer firefighters, sponsored by John Deere in association with the National Volunteer Council. It will premier at Kansas State Fire Fighters Association annual banquet on April 15th. The objective is to greatly raise awareness about the critical role that volunteers play all across the county. His goal is to generate at least 25,000 new volunteer recruits. Distribution plans are to provide this film to local departments at no charge for a local screening event. We should discuss how and where to create this event, maybe in conjunction with the Wheeler?
Trailer - [https://www.dropbox.com/s/oq819vsyrdd4dfw/odd_hours_no_pay_cool_hat_trailer%20\(1440p\).mp4?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/oq819vsyrdd4dfw/odd_hours_no_pay_cool_hat_trailer%20(1440p).mp4?dl=0)
- Personal note: Been here for 34 years and I am more please right now in the direction of the direction of our volunteers, careers, admin etc – the progress internally and for our community to make this the best Fire Department that we can, so happy to be a part of this. We put it out there that we want to do different, to do better, and we are. Thank you.
- Going on vacation 4/12-5/8

Old Business:

- Woody Creek Project update:
 - Rick mentioned another housing unit built on our property, maybe get another firefighter or volunteer out there. We will wait until we have Fire Place complete and then look into other alternative for housing in the future, or maybe how to help people obtain housing.
 - We are 6 months into our Fire Place leases right now and trying to figure out how to house our people. There will always be a need for housing and we want all the people in Fire Place housing to be firefighters.
 - The goal is to give current lease holders as much notice as possible about their lease renewal (specific to APD). We are trying to accommodate everyone for as long as we can and we knew it would be hard to ask people to leave.
 - We have a housing committee working on this right now. Had one meeting to get the conversation started and will be having another meeting soon.
- Upcoming Election: New board members will be sworn in at or prior to June meeting. UOCAVA ballots go out March 17th.
 - We need a board member for the Canvass board. (DEO, 1 Board of Director member, 1 registered voter). They will certify the election results once it has been completed
 - Emily volunteered

New Business:

- Staff Member Handbook is being reviewed by attorney and updated.
 - Several people have put in a lot of work on this (Jake, Nikki and Parker). We expect to send the current draft to the board via email by the end of this week (April 14th, 2023). Please review in the next two weeks and send any questions to Nikki as soon as possible. The goal is to have the handbook ready for approval at the next board meeting on May 8th, 2023.

MOTION: Motion by John Ward to adjourn at 6:10.

Steve second.

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved.

***** A full recording of this meeting can be requested by contacting the District Administrator at nikki.lapin@aspenfire.com or by calling 970-925-5532.**