

# **LOCKWOOD FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

23141 Shake Ridge Road Volcano, CA 95689

## **Meeting of the Board of Directors Minutes - June 3 - 6:00 p.m.**

**In-person Meeting** at Station 151 - 23141 Shake Ridge Rd., Volcano CA  
95689

### **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2458678782?pwd=A5crm1OURrDYy0bUy9xb01rdplZOUJ.1&omn=84497587881>  
Meeting ID: 245 867 8782  
Passcode: M8SNBf (case-sensitive)

**The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm by Board Director JoAnne McLachlan.**

### **1. Call to order and reading of the mission statement.**

LFPD CREED: The principal purpose of this district is the protection of its citizens through the prevention and extinguishing of fires and the protection of life and property. May each action taken by this board be for the benefit of the district and for no other purpose – self serving or otherwise.

### **2. Establish quorum-roll call**

All present. Quorum established.

### **3. Closed session. Closed session Authority:**

According to the California Government Code 54957, the Lockwood Fire Protection District Board of Directors reserves the right to hold a closed session for consideration of real property negotiations, pending litigation, threats to public buildings or public access and personnel matters. **No closed session.**

### **4. Public Comments:**

**PUBLIC MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA:** Discussion items only, no action to be taken. Any person may address the Board at this time upon any subject within the jurisdiction of the Lockwood Fire Protection District; however, any matter that requires action may be referred to staff and/or Committee for a report and recommendation for possible action at a subsequent Board meeting.

- a. Director McLachlan asked that, in the spirit of keeping the meetings short enough to allow everyone to get back to their evening, those with public comments or questions please limit theirs to 3 minutes. Director Dowell agreed to keep time.
- b. Carla Bowers took the lectern, asked what the Board is doing with regards to initiating the ballot measure to increase the Parcel Tax to keep LFPD independent.

Director McLachlan said this process has not yet been started, to which Carla asked what it would take to discuss getting this moving, and Director Stevens answered that the ballot measure would be rolling out around the same time as the LAFCO process' conclusion. She said that this would be done because the LAFCO process could very well conclude that LFPD, at its current level of financial operation, would not need to consolidate with AFPD to remain independent.

- c. Jackie Vaughn took the lectern. She expressed concern that the ballot would be nixed, because it had been in the past, and was concerned the Board felt the percentages of survey postcard responses were not acceptable to move forward with drafting a ballot measure. She wanted to let the Board know that she spoke with three people about the numbers, which she read aloud, and reminded those present about these being available to read on the website. She said one of the three people she spoke to about the numbers was one of the top political consultants in Northern California and in the US, and he said those were good numbers and there was a good likelihood that a ballot measure would pass. She said she received basically the same responses from a couple other parties in this line of work as well. She added that she talked to Marie Alvarado-Gil's office, who said much of the same as the other parties had, but also told her that the Board had no obligation to do anything about it, but Jackie said that the people have spoken and that the ballot measure is a good idea, and that the ballot measure should come first, and LAFCO could continue if the ballot measure didn't pass. She said the people should be allowed "to keep the fire department" if they want to keep it.
- d. Erik Jones took the lectern, and first wanted to ask when information or instructions would be published regarding submitting names for Board Seat election and re-election ballot. He said he wanted to make sure this information was disseminated to the public, provided it was already available. Director Dowell said he could email this information to Erik tonight, and Erik mentioned it would also be good to put on LFPD's website. Director McLachlan said that 4 Board members will be up for election or reelection starting on July 15th.

## **5. Discussion Items**

- a. Swearing in of new Board Director Lori Mayfield  
Secretary Golightly had Board Director Lori Mayfield take the Oath Of Office, and she was officially sworn in as a Director of LFPD's Board. Signatures of witness were collected from the other Board members.
- b. Discuss LFPD's proposal to reorganize annexation to AFPD and dissolution of LFPD  
Director McLachlan said that notice had been received a few months ago of a Public Hearing on September 12th, 2024, regarding the LAFCO process, and that she had contacted LAFCO Executive Byron Damiani to express concern that this date would be too late, and that she hadn't received an update on what was going on in the process. She and others met up on March 11th in a group that included Supervisors Brown and Oneto, LAFCO Executive Byron Damiani, members of AFPD, and LFPD Directors McLachlan and Stevens. The meeting was for the sharing of general information and updates, and Byron said that he was in the process of obtaining financial information from the county for both LFPD and

AFPD. LFPD had provided budget reports for this purpose. The issue at the time of this meeting was that certain financial records needed completion prior to moving forward with a public hearing. All additional participants of that meeting were in attendance of tonight's meeting to answer any questions the public may have. Director McLachlan added that because LAFCO oversees financial analysis projects for many different businesses, a lot of the waiting for information was the result of LAFCO doing this work for all their clients in equal measure. Byron did indicate he would do his best to speed this up, but is still waiting for information from the county. Director McLachlan made sure to let him know that with the likelihood of the Board elections coming up on July 15th, the sooner the process could reach its analytic conclusion, the better.

Erik Jones took the lectern to ask a question to Jackie Vaughn's point. He asked, with LAFCO's public hearing about routes forward for LFPD not until September, *but* the timing window for which to put measure for parcel tax increase on the ballot coming up sooner, what would LFPD do to fund its independence if the Board didn't get such a measure on 2024's ballot, only to find out in September that the parcel tax increase measure was indeed the best way forward. Director McLachlan thanked him for the question and said that was her chief concern voiced to Byron about the hearing taking place in September, and that Byron said he would do what he could to get all the pertinent financial information from LFPD, AFPD and the county, present it to LAFCO's Board and get their approval to move forward sooner than September 12th. Director Dowell added that LFPD was currently looking to be well under budget and with money to put into the capital equipment fund for fiscal year 2024-2025. Erik asked, if this was the case, why there was a need for a parcel tax increase. Director Dowell replied that this forgiving financial situation wasn't guaranteed to be every year moving forward in LFPD's life, that major expenses do crop up that could deplete a surplus, and that surplus years are not a given every year and would not, cumulatively, likely be enough to sustain LFPD alone for the next 20 years. He also mentioned that the current parcel tax rate (\$70 for developed property and \$40 for undeveloped property) hadn't increased in about 20 years, either, and thus was not on par with the cost of living. Director Dowell said this rate should absolutely be raised to keep LFPD financially solvent, and estimated that LFPD could keep operating as-is for 3 to 5 years at most before needing to find an additional mechanism of funding, but that there was no "existential crisis" in LFPD's finances that would absolutely require it to be consolidated into AFPD, and that he extrapolated this data from 3 years of high-spending that was all non-recurring expenses which have been taken care of. He said LFPD's current income is more than sufficient to continue normal operations. Erik then asked, for clarification, if this meant that LFPD then didn't need to urgently draft and roll out a ballot measure, and could instead let the LAFCO process finish over 2024, and operate within budget margins just fine until the next opportunity to put a measure on the next ballot. At this point, a few people talked at once; Director Stevens said "Absolutely", while Director Dowell maintained that allowing the LAFCO process to conclude would result in the end of LFPD, and Director McLachlan's response was hard to hear. Erik Jones then repeated for context that, as Director Dowell had just informed the room that LFPD's current budgetary level didn't prompt urgency in drafting a ballot measure, it did not seem to Erik that the LAFCO process must be paused or canceled to allow for the ballot measure to supersede it. Director McLachlan added that the budgetary information was simply for LAFCO's analysis, which LAFCO was conducting not

only for LFPD but for AFPD, so both parties could decide if the consolidation were mutually acceptable. She said that the immediate needs for LFPD were to find a full-time Chief and to become able to staff the station 24/7 with at least two firefighters per shift, which is an exceptional cost that is very much worthwhile to deliver quality response to this community. She said the agencies that can assist us on mutual aid take longer to reach LFPD than LFPD does to reach mutual aid assignments for them. She added that when LAFCO conducted their last agency review back in 2018 or 2019, the closing to that summary was consolidation or something of the sort would be the way for the smaller districts to go, and would be the most economically and financially responsible. She said this could be seen in the agency review and isn't something that just came out of the blue, but was something LFPD had looked at seriously in the past, and that the previous treasurer had encouraged that a closer look at least be taken at the expense of operation with a full time Fire Chief and multiple responders at both stations, and if this expense could be met with or without consolidation.

LAFCO Executive Byron Damiani took the lectern to speak about the current state of the LAFCO process. He said the process is moving forward and that LAFCO has most of the financial information they need from LFPD, and just received more information from AFPD that Byron is currently analyzing. He said that LAFCO would like AFPD to move forward with a resolution of their own, similar to the one the LFPD Board moved to approve, to explore annexation. This resolution is awaiting AFPD Board action, and if approved, the Commission can move forward with the process further. After the public hearing, which Byron said he is trying to move closer than September, LFPD and AFPD can decide how to handle the situation after public comment. In addressing something Director Dowell had said prior, Byron said he disagreed with the state of LFPD's financial situation, which was part of why LAFCO was involved in financial analyses and wanting things to expeditiously move forward; Notably, LFPD's staffing has reduced by 75% from the prior year, making it hard if not impossible to fully staff both stations, but especially 24/7. This impacts LFPD's ability to respond under mutual aid agreements and to deploy personnel on strike teams, and impacts LFPD's ability to earn other money besides Measure M funds and assessments, and that this wasn't a challenge to address later or in 3-5 years, but to address now. He said that there have already been situations where LFPD has had to respond differently due to staffing constraints than it would if staffing constraints weren't an issue, and that LFPD doesn't have 3 or more years to keep functioning the way it is now, or potentially even a couple years, as in Byron's perusal of LFPD's financial records dating back to 2016, there have been financial problems and hurdles all along the way, and that the majority of these years LFPD ran deficits, not surpluses. He said that this isn't a new problem for LFPD, but has been exacerbated lately by rising insurance, fuel and workers' comp costs. He said that while these circumstances are beyond LFPD's control, they all compound the fact that LFPD operates on limited resources, referring currently only to Measure M and assessment, as strike team income currently is not an option for LFPD. Byron then opened for questions from those attending. Director McLachlan asked if there was any indication as to when everyone could expect a public hearing about the LAFCO process, roughly or exactly, to which Byron replied it would be roughly August or September and said it seemed possible to move it up to August. Zoom attendee Katherine Evatt, a Lockwood resident with involvement in the fire department early on, asked if the public hearing would be held outside of working hours, as she had noticed that the

LAFCO meetings were held earlier in the day when working people can't attend. She also asked if the public hearing would be held at Lockwood Station 151 or at the County Administrative Building. Byron replied that LAFCO didn't currently have any plans to change their 5:30 pm meeting times, but that they could certainly look into doing a special time for the public hearing if that was too little time for working residents to attend. He said that they wouldn't look at doing anything in the middle of the day or in the morning, that they would do them at or near the end of the workday. He said that these meetings happen on Thursdays and that they generally try to hold them later, not earlier. Katherine replied that she's been going to local public hearings for more than 30 years, and that a 5:30 start time isn't enough for working residents to get home and feed their family, and still make it to the meeting in time. She added that residents who commute for work may very well not even be home by 5:30, let alone have their family fed in time for the meeting. She said the ideal time for meetings (including LFPD Board meetings) would be no earlier than 7:00 pm to allow these residents to participate. Byron replied that the Commission would be open to considering that, given the large amount of public interest in the meetings and public hearings. He said that he'd like to be flexible about accommodating everyone without having the meetings run so late that a different group would be unable to attend.

Board Director Lori Mayfield asked if there had been any kind of financial study conducted to determine if the assessment increase would accomplish what everyone wanted it to, or any research into how much the assessment would need to increase to operate LFPD the way everyone wanted and the way it should ideally be run. Director Dowell replied that there hadn't been, but that the Board had wanted to do this should the Parcel Tax Increase Survey results prove favorable. Director McLachlan reminded those present that, with a fleet of aging fire apparatus needing regular repairs and some needing replacement in 3 to 5 years, expenses totaling \$700,000 were on the horizon, not including the costs of replacing fire hoses. She said it had been indicated at prior meetings that in the next 3 to 10 years a stable and predictable funding mechanism would need to be secured to ensure the aging apparatus not needing retirement could continue to adequately respond to incidents. She said that applying for a loan to help cover this would be wise, and that AFD had informed her that the LFPD Auxiliary would not be terminated if LFPD consolidated into, or were annexed by, AFD.

Director Stevens shared a couple concerns she had as a resident. She mentioned she was driving by the LFPD stations and seeing them empty too often, and that a lack of both Driver Operator certified personnel and two personnel per shift meant that Seth, the firefighter most available to staff Station 151, couldn't respond to incidents in the larger engines, and that by the time a second firefighter could arrive to respond in a larger engine, AFD or CAL FIRE would likely already have responded to the incident. She said that this was a very big concern to her with wildfire season right around the corner.

Director Mayfield asked why the staffing levels were so low, if there was turnover, and if LFPD was actively looking for more personnel. Interim Chief Randy Binz replied that it was difficult to find people who could staff the stations in the middle of the day, let alone every day, 7 days a week. He said that Seth was most able to do this as he was pursuing a career in the fire service, but still needed his Operator license. He said that LFPD has Operators who respond from home, but that they did have to come to Station 151 to pick up an engine. Director Stevens pointed out that in 2023 LFPD didn't have that problem, and Director Dowell

mentioned that this was because LFPD had 17 or more volunteers. Chief Binz said that of the 20 volunteers, 4 of them were the main people responding to calls, and that those 4 people are still with LFPD. He said this has been the case with LFPD for years. Lura O'Brien stressed that people should remember LFPD's staff were all volunteers who still needed to maintain day jobs while helping their community, and that Rich Fugere had just worked a 75 hour straight shift in addition to being employed. She said that someone like Rich, who has a very good job in tech and volunteers at LFPD out of the goodness of his heart and love for his community, could not realistically be expected to be part of a 24/7 staffing scenario for volunteer work, and that Rich and 3 other people spend their home lives waiting by their radios and staying in-district. She said that with the mostly elderly and retired population in the district, a lot of the best candidates to be LFPD firefighters would also be the portion of the population who still needed to work day jobs to support their lives. She said she doesn't understand who everyone expected would be doing the work of fully staffing both stations 24/7 at the expense of being able to support themselves, and she found it very frustrating to hear the Board talking about this in abstract while she as a firefighter's family member knew what it entailed. She said she didn't want to sound rude, but it really felt like the group doing all the talking was living on another planet. Sylvia Schofield said it sounded like the discussion was circling how to generate enough money to properly run and increase staff at LFPD, and that it should really be determined quickly whether doing this would quickly deplete LFPD's money and necessitate another funding mechanism, and if so, to at least move forward with drafting a Parcel Tax Increase ballot measure before time to do this ran out. Director Dowell stated that he seriously doubted the ability of AFPD to staff Station 151 24/7, saying that they hadn't been able to do that with the Fiddletown station.

AFPD Battalion Chief Justin Yelinek took the lectern to speak. He said Amador Fire had had 2 staff in the area in the past, sometimes more depending on their budget, and have discussed doing this again recently, including at Station 152, now that they have more personnel for that purpose. With regards to the Fiddletown station, he said that while AFPD would love to staff all of their stations fully, the lack of priority for Fiddletown is due to the area's low emergency call volume, and the comparatively higher call volume in Willow Creek. He said that as AFPD has been able to send personnel to staff LFPD in the past, he isn't sure where the concern is coming from that AFPD would not be able to staff the Lockwood stations should a consolidation or annexation occur. In regards to Seth getting Driver Operator certified, BC Yelinek said that AFPD had reached out to Seth about coming to take his Driver Operator courses with them multiple times, as well as emailed him to invite him to training, to no avail yet. He said that, as a long-time firefighter, he had fear for this community after a recent escaped control burn a couple months ago where Seth was the only LFPD firefighter able to respond and was first on scene, and the only vehicle available that he could drive – Chief Binz's command truck – didn't have any water or tools. He said that, even had Seth had the certification to drive the bigger apparatus, driving a large apparatus alone is a very terrifying event even for someone of BC Yelinek's experience, without someone to clear you on the right before turning, or to act as a backer. He said the idea of someone showing up alone to a structure fire and hoping that their colleague, who works full-time elsewhere, happened to be responding from home that day and would still even be in-district to come help, was concerning, and commended Rich Fugere for his 75 hour shift, saying it was a phenomenal feat he

held in high regard. He said that as Randy, Rich and the other volunteers all have lives they're trying to live in addition to volunteering, but that as volunteers they can't give their entire lives to volunteering for LFPD and abandon other responsibilities. He said that fires double in size in minutes, and it wouldn't be enough to hope that one of four volunteers were available; CAL FIRE were far enough away and sometimes an extra hour or two out when performing Vegetation Management Projects, and that the closest agencies to assist LFPD were AFPD and Sutter Creek. He said he viewed this, and the fact that sometimes the only person responding to 911 calls was not yet qualified to do that, as a crisis situation for this district. He said that AFPD works very hard to ensure they get personnel qualified with the state of California to do that, and that AFPD has discussed and determined that they could staff this station 24/7 and plans to do exactly that if a consolidation or annexation occurs. He added that even if the Parcel Tax Increase went through, without sufficient personnel to outfit, train and get certifications for, the money wouldn't serve its purpose. BC Yelinek said most of the people moving to this area are not the demographic who want to, or are able to, volunteer as a firefighter; He added that even if offered career opportunities and pay, many people looking for a firefighting career won't stay in a district like this one, and that AFPD has experienced this in the past. He assured everyone that AFPD did currently have the ability to move additional resources and personnel up to the Lockwood area as they had in the past.

Director Mayfield asked where AFPD was on their part of the LAFCO Resolution that Byron had mentioned. BC Yelinek said AFPD are waiting for Byron to send some documents to their administrator. Director Mayfield asked if the Resolution addressed staffing of Station 151, should consolidation or annexation occur. BC Yelinek replied that he could not confirm, as he had not yet seen the Resolution. Director McLachlan said that before, with a higher number of LFPD volunteers, our volunteers had greater freedom to go train with AFPD in their free time with the knowledge that they wouldn't be doing it at the expense of staffing their own stations.

Erik Jones said that he agreed with an earlier point by Jackie Vaughn, that we can't even get as far as putting anything on the ballot because we don't know what to put on the ballot. He said that, setting aside whether the survey response numbers or vote percentages were good or bad, there was insufficient information on the surveys to give people a proper idea of what they were voting on, and the numerical range estimations of the parcel tax increase would not be sufficient to put on a ballot, an actual amount of increase would need to be settled on. He said that even if the public hearing date is moved to sooner than the LAFCO verdict, and even if LFPD does remain independent, the Board, regardless of which side of the LFPD/AFP argument they're on, needs to do the necessary research to determine how much money would be needed to run LFPD the way everyone wants and the way the community needs. He said that with the financial information at their disposal, he doesn't understand why the Board needs to wait for LAFCO to do a cost analysis themselves. He said he thought it seemed negligent to wait around and not at least try to figure out what they could for themselves.

Director Mayfield asked BC Yelinek if AFPD charges property owners an assessment. BC Yelinek replied that AFPD has a Benefit Assessment, which is currently \$64 per parcel per year, and after reassessing it they may raise it to \$66 per parcel per year. He added that different parcels may also have different fee structures depending on their distance from their nearest AFPD station, or whether

they have a water source on their property that firefighters can use to supply apparatus during response. As an example, he said that he pays \$64 per year and lives 10 miles from the nearest AFPD station, and is anticipating this cost would be raised by 2.64 percent to \$66 per year. He said this is tied to annual inflation by way of CPI. Director Dowell said that the equation for calculating benefit assessment and CPI is complicated.

Jackie Vaughn said she expects the LAFCO process to turn up a lot of the information regarding what amount of funding LFPD needs to generate and what the community would need to pay, and that she knows benefit assessments are often for larger properties. She said she agreed with earlier points about looking at additional funding mechanisms to increasing the parcel tax, and to do it soon, while the chance was still there. She said she'd be happy to help with volunteer recruitment, and has a background in marketing. She asked if the Joint Operating Agreement LFPD was still in with AFPD allowed for AFPD firefighters to come up and help. Director Dowell said this agreement covered joint trainings, and Director McLachlan added that AFPD pulled out of this agreement after criticism of Chief Withrow being an AFPD Fire Chief led AFPD to consider it was a bad decision to continue this involvement. She said LFPD and AFPD still had a mutual aid agreement and would still receive help from AFPD with fires, but that it wasn't feasible for AFPD personnel to come staff LFPD stations for full shifts instead of serving their own community while these entities are separate. Jackie said she thought it was too late to draft the ballot measure in time for November, and said that having run ballots and campaigns and knowing the time a financial analysis would take, it would be better to aim for June of 2025 unless this could be done as a Special Election.

Katherine Evatt suggested the staffing levels of LFPD over time be looked at, to see what level of personnel at what level of training have been present at what times, and how that has fluctuated over time. She said she had some understanding of what happened in the early days of LFPD when her husband was the Fire Chief and Training Officer, as well as what happened when LFPD nearly went away and was down to 1-2 volunteers. She said she thought it was important to understand that good marketing alone will not guarantee recruitment just based on faith. She said that as an aging person in an aging district, she didn't see very many people of response fitness and age in the district who are able to do this work as volunteers.

Byron said that one thing LAFCO will look at when deciding whether or not annexation is a good idea or not, is whether or not AFPD will be able to extend well into this area and provide a good level of fire protection. He said he thought they probably would, and noted that opposition so far has come from people concerned AFPD will close the LFPD stations and take all their equipment and apparatus, which there is no precedent for whatsoever.

District 5 Supervisor Brian Oneto took the lectern to speak. He said that 8 or so years ago, when LFPD was looking into possibly merging with AFPD, people were then concerned that AFPD would be the one hurt by the merger, and he had advocated for AFPD helping out LFPD if they were struggling and if it wouldn't structurally damage AFPD; He had cited that most of the residents had moved here to retire and relax, and their tastes in volunteer work did not include the kind that was essentially a job. He said he didn't think merging would be a bad idea as long as both parties agreed to it and it didn't hurt either party, and still didn't think it would, but that he otherwise didn't feel he had much of a dog in this fight. He said that AFPD doesn't want to take LFPD's equipment, as they already have potentially



too much of their own, and that he wasn't here to push for either side of the argument, but simply didn't want to see anyone get painted as a boogeyman. Director Mayfield asked if the AFPD Board was only the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Oneto confirmed that it was. A member of the public asked if the plan was currently to staff LFPD stations 24/7. Supervisor Oneto replied that he saw no problem with that, and that they would likely be better staffed more frequently than they currently are now, and that new volunteers applying to volunteer in this area would certainly be placed where they asked to be, and that Station 151 would likely be staffed as much as possible, but that AFPD would not destitute dense population areas with higher call volume just to staff LFPD's two stations 24/7, as that wouldn't be fair for the rest of the county, and that BC Yelinek could provide additional context. He confirmed that AFPD would not be coming in and closing LFPD stations, and that AFPD would no sooner destitute their current service areas to focus solely on LFPD as the inverse. A member of the public asked if one of the stations would be staffed 24/7. Supervisor Oneto said they would try their best to. Director Dowell said that situations may change year-to-year for AFPD in the same way as they could for LFPD. Supervisor Oneto concurred.

BC Yelinek said, with regards to staffing, when AFPD sent their personnel to help staff LFPD prior to the ending of the JOA Addendum B, they were working really hard to have Station 151 staffed 24/7 with multiple people. He said they could comfortably do that right now with their current funding, and he said that although Director Dowell was correct that staffing levels could change, AFPD was working hard to retain staff and would continue to. He said that Chief Withrow and Public Information Officer Kayla Dale work very hard to keep volunteer numbers up, and AFPD has about 25 volunteers who respond from home at the moment, as well as some apprentice firefighters. With regards to Fiddletown, he said fully staffing it would be ideal, but that there are 10 or so volunteers there who are at the station often and take great pride in it and in their community. He said AFPD would like to get full-time staff to Fiddletown without throwing off the local volunteers' team dynamic, and that overall AFPD has a wider area to pick from when accepting volunteers, and has actually had to cease accepting new volunteers because they're at their limit of how many people they can train. He said he feels a fire station can never truly be overstaffed, and that he didn't think it made sense to hear people say that LFPD had too many volunteers in prior years, and said he would ideally love 70 volunteers. He said that, at a recent 8 acre fire in AFPD's service area, AFPD had volunteers staffing engines and water tenders and providing lots of help in covering stations during the fire response. He said that AFPD's paid staff are always there, and in summer are often there way more than they likely should be, and that everyone is very dedicated to the agency. He expressed a desire to bring that level of commitment back to the Lockwood area as it had been in the past so LFPD's 4 dedicated volunteers don't have to shoulder responding and working with so little support. He said that AFPD does still respond in the area as part of their Chief Officer coverage, and he assured all present that AFPD plans to work very hard to take good care of the stations and keep them as well staffed as possible, as well as get personnel trained to drive the larger apparatus needed for quality fire response. He stressed that having one firefighter staffing a station alone all day who isn't certified to operate large apparatus, nor can do so safely alone, should scare everyone in the room. He said that he meant no disrespect towards the volunteers present, but that a wildfire or structure fire out here would need faster and more thorough response than even the very admirable and dedicated 4 LFPD volunteers

could currently provide.

Katherine Evatt said, as a 44 year district resident with LFPD history and who has benefitted from the emergency medical aid services, she wanted to urge everyone to pay as much attention to the medical side of things as to the fire protection side, as out of LFPD's 4 volunteers, only 1 was a qualified EMT. She said that speaking personally, she wasn't interested in paying more for 24/7 staffed stations if only 1 qualified EMT was present, but that she would be happy to pay more to either LFPD or to AFPD if it meant a guarantee that qualified medical personnel would respond and provide quality care until ambulance services arrived, whether they were paid or a volunteer. She said that it was important to discuss local control vs. Board of Supervisors control, but that ultimately this was about the quality of care provided to residents, which was what necessitated the creation of LFPD in the first place. She said that she lives closer to Station 152 and wished to remind everyone that Station 152's immediate response area extends quite a bit further to the west, so any ideal outcome for LFPD would result in both stations being staffed. She thanked everyone for their arduous work on trying to find the best solution, but added that as someone with a long history with the department and as a recipient of services, she hoped nobody lost sight of the most important thing: To take care of the health, wellbeing and property of the people living in the district.

AFPD Public Information Officer Kayla Dale took the lectern to speak. She said that she had been attending LFPD's Board meetings for the last 2 to 3 years, and had served as Board Clerk for a few of the meetings to help out during Chief Withrow's time here, so she had seen the transitions and the ebb and flow of LFPD over time. She said that with that in mind, she urged everyone to consider while in this process that there would be people with personal agendas who have a lot of time to spread misinformation, and that she has seen a lot of uncharitable behavior on social media, primarily on Nextdoor, as monitoring social media is a huge part of her job. She said that the sentiment of AFPD wanting to come in, take all the money and get rid of LFPD is a fear tactic, and without diving too far into what she'd touched upon in past meetings, she urged LFPD to perform outreach to engage with potential new volunteers if they only had the workload falling on the same 4 people's shoulders, such as in the past when a yearly letter would be sent out to the community to tell them about the opportunity and that their local fire stations depended on volunteers. She said she'd heard enough vacillation between there being 4 or 10 volunteers, or excitement about a skilled new EMT coming from somewhere else, but questioned where these people were. She said that a lot of the draw for new volunteers is not only cherishing their community, but valuing a department's leadership enough to volunteer the time they would either be spending with their family or working, and that not giving potential volunteers that assurance harms the community. She said that AFPD just spent the last 9 weeks in a row holding community events and town hall meetings, in addition to receiving dozens of phone calls from Lockwood residents, requesting services, town hall meetings or property inspections, which they have had to refer back to LFPD. She wanted to encourage LFPD to serve and engage transparently with the community, and said that if we are going to tell people there are lots of volunteers and EMTs, then the community needs to see that those people are present, urging LFPD to serve and be honest with the community and put all this first. She asked those attending and listening in to be critical of the misinformation and fear tactics circulating around social media, and said that AFPD has remained open to answering questions and

being transparent, and has had multiple LFPD residents come down to ask them questions because they've seen this kind of climate in the past.

Director Mayfield requested a head count of current active LFPD volunteers and their level of training. Interim Chief Binz said he had a full status report prepared, and said that the reason for the numbers fluctuating was that not everybody responds, and that the number 4 came from how many were the most consistent and dedicated about responding.

Byron took the lectern to answer someone's question from earlier about rates. He said that there is some variation and the formula was complicated, and that not everybody was paying \$64 per year, and that the information he had stated that about 80% of the people in AFPD's service area are paying \$100 or less per month, by which meant per year as per a later correction, for services. Director Mayfield asked if LAFCO would conduct some sort of study to see what it would take financially to keep LFPD staffed 24/7. Byron replied that he would have to consult AFPD for help with this, as it was not something he would be able to personally do independently. Someone began speaking simultaneously to Byron, and that person could not be heard clearly, but Byron continued on to say "they were close to that level last year, with the amount of people that you had, and they would be able to respond to that" and have been in that situation before. In addressing questions about ballots and getting a measure on a ballot, Byron said that raising the rates fell under the area of Proposition 218, and would require  $\frac{2}{3}$  affirmative votes to approve, and it was not clear to him that LFPD would be able to get that. Se said that another question was, if they were able to get that, suppose people are paying \$200 or \$300 per month (which he corrected to per year) to keep LFPD independent; he said the people would likely begin asking themselves why they are paying 2 or 3 times as much for LFPD's level of staffing, resources and response quality, when they could be paying less to have AFPD's level of these things instead. He said it was also hard to get  $\frac{2}{3}$  approval, and that when the surveys were sent out, they received 22% of people voting in favor of theoretically increasing the parcel tax; He reminded those present that they did not receive affirmative responses from 67% of the resident population, they received 67% affirmative response only from the 32.42% of the total resident population who responded, so the idea that a ballot measure would do well and be worth the time and money expended on it was a projection, and perhaps a good projection, but still a projection.

Director McLachlan shared an observation that in LFPD's district, there may be circumstances where an LFPD resident on one side of a road paying \$70 per year for their parcel, and another resident on the other side of the road paying \$80 per year to AFPD for their parcel, and that these neighbors would potentially be able to see a disparity in the response quality and level of care received over a mere \$10 per year if LFPD couldn't find a way to retain and train more volunteers. She said she thinks we can certainly do a quick analysis of "what would be needed to continue" in the form of a rate comparison. She rephrased or re-presented the \$70 vs \$80 example a few times to clarify. She added that this district has grown to this size from "nothing" and that back in the 80s when residents came together to build a fire department out of necessity, circumstances were different and the service area population was smaller.

PIO Dale said that AFPD's assessment rates are all calculated by a third party engineering firm compliant to Prop 218, and said anyone curious about what their assessment rate with AFPD might be, the information regarding such is all on

AFPD's website under its own tab, as well as in Board Meeting minutes. She said that the engineering document factors in things like property size and what is on the property, but is not something AFPD created themselves and assigned dollar values to, and is determined by and pursuant to Prop 218.

A member of the public asked what the process would be for putting the Parcel Tax Increase measure on the ballot. Jackie Vaughn replied at length, but this was not spoken into a microphone, and the Secretary could not record this response in the minutes due to fielding Zoom functionality questions from a resident.

A member of the public expressed concern that if LFPD was having trouble getting and retaining volunteers to run the stations, if they would also have trouble getting volunteers to help run an election. Director Dowell replied about the difficulty in retaining volunteers, but as he was not close enough to the microphone, the Secretary was unable to make this audio clearer even with artificial amplitude, and was still helping a Zoom attendee figure out how to make an account so they could provide their commentary.

Secretary Golightly agreed to read the Zoom attendee's comments out loud since they were unable to make a Zoom account to meet LFPD's requirement that anonymous Zoom accounts not be allowed to access audio in meetings. The resident asked people to consider (*copied and pasted from Zoom chat; Some punctuation added*): "What was Lockwood Fire prior to Robert Withrow? Shambles? Please read this. Robert Withrow CREATED a volunteer Fire Department. He did that because people believed in him. Because he trained us to be FIREFIGHTERS. HE got volunteers because they believed in him and what he taught, simply because it was valid. I received a letter in my P.O. Box to volunteer and I did it. I would not be where I am today without the specific training from Chief Withrow. We were trained by multiple different professionals to do our jobs as Firefighters and Emergency Medical Responders." Secretary Golightly asked the resident if they would be willing to share their name. "Tom Tomlinson (*context added: Tom is a former LFPD firefighter who almost constantly staffed Station 151.*) Sylvia, we are NOT in a little area. (*context added: Response to earlier comment from Sylvia*) Lockwood has appx 22 sq miles of territory vs. Sutter Creeks 2.2mi. That's a LOT of coverage."

Erik Jones said that he is an EMT and a volunteer firefighter with LFPD, and is approved to drive all the apparatus. He said he hasn't been at the station as much, which has nothing to do with Chief Withrow or with the JOA Addendum, but wanted to point out that one of the reasons why he did over two dozen shifts last year alongside FFs Tomlinson, Clark, Fugere, Binz and others, was that he had the opportunity to learn from people with far more experience than he had, and that was really what inspired him to be at LFPD. He said he was blessed in that his work and business allowed him the time to physically be at LFPD at all, and that most volunteers' work structure doesn't allow that. He said that unfortunately, and with no criticism towards Interim Chief Binz or any of the active volunteers, the ability to learn and to be challenged to become a better firefighter has been diminished. He said he would allow the public to draw their own conclusions as to the reasons, but just wanted to clarify that this was one of the reasons why he was not spending as much time at the station. He said he has always stepped up to help when Chief Binz requested it or when Seth called him for help at the station, but that things simply weren't the same as when there were two career firefighters here to help train, adding that the firefighters didn't necessarily need to be career as long as they had a wealth of knowledge to impart. He said that if two people were at the station,

suddenly Engine 6520 or Water Tender 6540 were options to respond with again. He said that with only one person at the station, response necessitated use of Engine 6526, which could easily and safely be operated by one person, rather than wait for another responder to drive to the station to load into Engine 6520. He said this lack of personnel has diminished LFPD's ability to respond with larger equipment. He had just wanted to share that, as Tom had pointed out, it had been Chief Withrow who inspired Erik and his husband Brian to start volunteering, and added that at the time he had not been an EMT, but that volunteering with LFPD inspired him to pursue that certification to give back to his community. He said he would continue to do so to the best of his ability whether or not LFPD merges with AFPD or remains independent, but he doesn't know how successful LFPD would be with the headwinds it was facing in volunteer recruitment with the lack of thorough volunteer training program and access to experts that LFPD had under the JOA Addendum B, and given that the few very dedicated volunteers have volunteer experience and not a career background, which Erik had access to when AFPD was still coming up here to help with trainings. He said he did so many cool training sessions at LFPD that he wishes could come back, however that needs to happen, as the most important thing is that this community is protected. He said that, as someone who lives in a zone of horrible cell phone signal coverage who lives in the vacant Station 152's district, up on a hill 2 miles down a private road, with 160 bordering 1800 acres of BLM land that could go up in a second, the fear was very real and visceral for him that his lifeline, LFPD, was underprepared to serve that area should a disaster happen, and the nearest AFPD station was very far from him. He said it was very critical for him that the LFPD stations were successful and staffed with well-trained personnel and reliable equipment, whether or not they remained independent or merged with AFPD. He added that one of the things he loved about the fire service in general was one is always learning and always needs to be; There was always something to do and always something to train on, every single day, and that in this area he actually received more fulfillment from AFPD than from LFPD during the time of the Addendum B partnership. Erik had loved that he could go to any AFPD station and find sufficient personnel there to make time to train him in a remarkably disciplined way while still sending people to respond to their own calls, and to deliver thorough trainings that would "kick [his] butt" and equipped him to become a better firefighter, and better able to bring those lessons back to LFPD and empower himself and other volunteers to protect their community and home. He reiterated that it was not about who Chief Withrow was as a person, but about the experience in leadership, teaching ability, commitment and access to resources that comes with that kind of a fire service career.

Secretary Golightly shared another comment from Tom Tomlinson on Zoom. Copied and pasted (some punctuation added): "I'd like to mention the Pine dr E. Fire and the Cad Clara Fire, without the assistance of Amador Fire, we would have had no chance on either of those devastating Residential Structure Fires. Granted they were both a loss, without the additional manpower provided by the mutual aid of AFPD we would have been in a world of hurt. (I hate to say this) but the NFPA standard for fire apparatus is 10 years. The newest apparatus LFPD has is 10 years old. The eldest being a 1991 apparatus, E6530, is a 1991. The budget hopefully includes this. Oh, new item - Can we please have the 2022 treasure report posted to the website? Last I saw was when Tim left. I'm not trying to be a jerk, sorry Z (*context added: Z refers to Secretary Golightly*) But I live here just like you do. can we please hear numbers from the budget report overall?" Secretary

Golightly attempted to find and paste links to the Treasurer’s Reports for Tom that had been posted to LFPD’s website as supporting documents, but was unable to divert too much additional time from taking minutes, or to delay the deliverance of the Budget Action Item as its scheduled time.

## 6. Action Items

- a. **Consider and adopt a Preliminary Budget. When adopted, the Preliminary Budget will be made available for review on the bulletin boards at both LFPD stations, as well as on LFPD’s website.**

Secretary Golightly had handed the printed Preliminary Budget out at the beginning of the night for everyone’s review. The final edition of this Preliminary Budget would be adopted at the next Board meeting of June 24th, 2024. Director McLachlan said there would be opportunity for public comment on the budget at this future meeting, and that additions or subtractions can be made to it or from it. A notice would be required to be posted in the local newspaper for the date, time and placement of the final budget. The Preliminary Budget, public notice, and thereafter the final budget, would also be posted at both LFPD stations as well as on the website. Director McLachlan reiterated that the public would be permitted on June 24th to share their comments and opinions on the budget. Director McLachlan said the Board had obtained copies of the Preliminary Budget they had been given ample time to review, and asked for any Board comment on the subject. Director Dowell said that overall it looked “pretty close to reality”, but some of his comment was inaudible due to distance from his microphone, and could not be repaired by the Secretary using audio post-processing. Director McLachlan informed all present that Director McGee, attending over Zoom, had submitted a written notice of No Comment in advance. After no additional comments, Director McLachlan suggested the Board entertain a motion to approve the Preliminary Budget.

Motion to adopt Preliminary Budget: Director Dowell

Motion\_2<sup>nd</sup>: Director Stevens

Vote: Yeas   5   No        Absent        Abstain       

- b. **Consider hiring a Board Treasurer**

Director Dowell said the Board had been discussing this, and whether or not to hire Chief Binz’s contact in-district, who was a CPA, but that no additional outreach had been conducted. He asked if the Board thought it would be wise to cast a wider net. Director McLachlan said that the decision had ultimately been Director Dowell’s, as he had been the one to take on the Treasurer duties; Director Dowell mentioned he had taken on doing the monthly reports, but not the full load of Treasurer duties. Director McLachlan said a Treasurer could be hired if Director Dowell didn’t want to continue doing the select Treasurer duties. Director Dowell and Director Stevens agreed that an actual Treasurer should be hired, and Director Stevens said she thought interviewing 2 or 3 candidates would be a good idea, or potentially hiring a company to do it, but that either way the Board should start collecting resumes from applicants after advertising the open position. Director McLachlan said there had been some questions from the public about why LFPD didn’t move forward hiring a Fire Chief or a Board Treasurer; She said their term may be 2 months or 5 years, and that it was hard to tell applicants how long they would be functioning in these positions. Director Dowell said he would take it upon

himself to get some suggestions and ideas, and that 3 choices sounded ideal, with one of them being Chief Binz's CPA suggestion. Director Mayfield suggested putting the open position on LFPD's website, with a contact email address for resumes to be sent to, which everyone agreed was a good idea.

No motion made or action taken at this time.

Some attendees left at this time. Byron was thanked for coming to speak.

## **7. Approval of corrected Minutes from Board Meeting of March 25, 2024**

Motion to approve minutes as submitted : Director Mayfield

Motion\_2<sup>nd</sup>: Director Dowell

Vote: Yeas   5   No        Absent        Abstain       

## **8. Approval of Minutes from Board Meeting of April 22, 2024**

Motion to approve minutes as submitted : Director Mayfield

Motion\_2<sup>nd</sup>: Director Dowell

Vote: Yeas   5   No        Absent        Abstain       

## **9. Budget report**

Director Dowell shared the newly acquired Budget Report for April 2024, and said LFPD did pretty well and received the second installment of the assessment, and that Measure M funds came in at about average. He said that LFPD operated \$139,000 under budget for the fiscal year ending in 2 months, with a surplus of \$24,841, and with total income of \$57,909.

## **10. Chief's Report**

Interim Chief Binz reported a total of 27 calls run last month, with distribution as follows: 15 medical aids, 2 escaped debris burns, 1 smoke check, 3 alarms (2 of which were canceled en route), 2 traffic collisions and 4 public assists (3 of which were lift assists).

He also reported 2 new volunteer candidates. The first is an EMT from Sutter Creek who currently works on an ambulance in Sacramento. She has been attending Thursday night trainings and is interested in learning how to perform fire ground operations. The second prospective volunteer is in school for EMT and Firefighter 1 and intends to begin training with LFPD during this time.

He said that he was still getting emails from AFPD notifying him of, and inviting LFPD to, joint training opportunities. He said the Wildland Urban Interface and Incident Command communication exercise conducted alongside Quartz Mountain Firewise Community's evacuation exercise the month prior had been very good practice for those who attended. This was a joint training alongside AFPD, CAL FIRE and ACSO. He said he always looked forward to opportunities like these. Director McLachlan asked if he was able to coordinate this training with the surrounding areas, to which he responded that this particular training was organized by AFPD and LFPD had been invited to participate. He said that it was true that trainings at LFPD had diminished since Chief Withrow had left, and that LFPD continued to do their best to train when volunteers were available, and that AFPD were always very inviting when LFPD came to train with them.

## **11. Committee Reports:**

Grant Committee

Fiscal and Planning Committee

Policies and Procedures Committee

Director Stevens said she plans to update who the Board Directors are, presumably on the OPM or on some kind of document, removing Jan Hewitt's name and adding Lori Mayfield's. Secretary Golightly also encouraged Lori to write a short bio about herself to place on her page on the website under Board Directors.

Building and Maintenance Committee

Although Director McGee was out of town, Directors McLachlan and Dowell met at Station 152 to look over the helispot to take note of what could be done to improve it. Director Dowell made a call about the Department of Transportation Aviation Division's suggested upgrades. Director McLachlan said there was a pile of gravel and a pile of sand there, along with a CAT used for moving the materials; Director Dowell said this was still used by the county Public Works, especially in winter. More information to follow as it arrives.

Communications and Outreach

Secretary Golightly shared that some pictures she took of LFPD's participation in the Quartz Mountain WUI and Incident Command simulation will be posted soon to social media as part of AFD's post on the event, collecting photos of each agency's participation in one place. Most recent work has been focused on keeping the public aware of Board Meetings so nobody feels they were not given an opportunity to attend and make their voice heard.

## **12. Auxiliary Report**

Secretary Golightly reported that supplies had been purchased to rebuild the Cluster Boxes, and Jackie and Gary Vaughn were thanked for taking on this project alongside Bobbie Crowell. The Auxiliary would be taking a two month break to allow members time to spend the summer with family, but Auxiliary members would be representing LFPD and the July 6th Cannonball Run parade in downtown Volcano. Additionally, a second Clothing Drive would be held in September, with Auxiliary members accepting donations at the Pine Grove Market parking lot every Saturday of the month from 10 am to 2 pm.

## **13. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn: Director Stevens

Motion\_2<sup>nd</sup>: Director Dowell

Vote: Yeas   5   No        Absent        Abstain       

**Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.**

**Next Board Meeting: Monday, June 24th.**