



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

FIRE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION

LOCATION: CAL FIRE/Santa Cruz County Fire (virtual)
DATE: November 18, 2020
TIME: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM
PUBLIC ACCESS: Microsoft Teams Meeting

LINK: Click here to join meeting: [Join Teams Meeting \(FDAC\)](#)
CALL IN: 916-318-9542 Conference ID: 214 539 297#

DRAFT MINUTES

I. ROLL/CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting called to order at 4:03

Present:

Volunteer Firefighters Representative/Chair:	Doug Aumack
First District Representative:	Alex Leman
Second District Representative:	Carey Pico
Third District Representative:	Janet Webb
Fifth District Representative/Co-Chair:	Arnie Wernick
Office of Emergency Services Manager:	Rosemary Anderson

Absent:

Fourth District Representative:	John Walker
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II. ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA

A. Motion: Anderson to allow correspondence from Ms. Steinbruner added, and to move discussion about grand jury report moved to next meeting.

Motion Seconded: Pico

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Absent: John Walker

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 16, 2020

A. Motion: Anderson to approve draft minutes.

Motion Seconded: Aumack

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Absent: John Walker

IV. PUBLIC INPUT/ORAL COMMUNICATION (ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA)

(3 minutes per person) *Due to connectivity issues there were no members of the public who initially spoke during public comment. After announcements, commissioners voted to re-open public comment.

A. Motion: Anderson to re-open public comment.

Motion Seconded: Pico

In Favor: All
Opposed: None
Abstained: None
Absent: John Walker

- i. Ms. Steinbruner expressed that she supports transparency suggestions made by Aumack and Pico regarding the County Fire budget, and also protested public comment guidelines again.

V. PUBLIC INPUT/ORAL COMMUNICATION (ITEMS ON AGENDA)

(3 minutes per person)

A. None

VI. CORRESPONDENCE:

A. Email from Ms. Steinbruner protesting public comment guidelines.

VII. BUSINESS MATTERS

A. "Budget Oversight"-how the FDAC can become more integrated into the budget process. (Pico)

- i. The 20/21 budget was approved with less oversight than usual due to COVID, fires, and other interruptions to communication.
- ii. Suggested that there be bi-monthly meetings between County Fire and Commissioners to monitor status of budget in its cycle.
- iii. Expressed that County Fire operates on 20% of what other similar fire protection districts in neighboring counties budget, expenses that he has seen seem reasonable, and that the contract between CAL FIRE and County Fire seems to be a "good deal."
- iv. Chief Larkin briefly explained the budget process, outlining current measures in place that ensure accountability/transparency. However, Chief Larkin stated that he supports additional oversight for the benefit of the FDAC, the Board of Supervisors, and the public in general.

B. "Lessons Learned from the CZU Lightening Complex Fire"-a CZU perspective (Webb).

- i. Chief Larkin explained what valuable insights were gained from County Fire's experience with this most recent fire.
 - a) There were issues using "Reverse 911" due to connectivity.
 - b) This fire behaved more aggressively than anticipated moving at an alarming speed.
 - c) Learned that some landlines operate off batteries.
 - d) Not enough resources available because of statewide fires that put us in 3rd place on a priority scale.
 - e) CAL FIRE was unable to fight fire from the air at times due to smoke/visibility issues.
 - f) In the event of a future fire the goal is to evacuate earlier, and to use a more advanced evacuation tracking program called Zonehaven that will be made available through a grant.
- ii. Captain Aumack explained that in his experience, the mountainous terrain that has a vertical incline adds an extra challenge to firefighters.
- iii. Commissioner Webb requested a public meeting to "debrief" public on debris flows plans.
 - a) Chief Larkin explained that preparedness for a debris flow is limited compared to fire due to the unpredictable nature but would be willing to provide what information and support we have available.

- b) Commissioner Wernick suggested that ham radios could be a useful resource for those in debris flow areas.
- C. Budget topics
 - i. Budget vs. expenditure (Aumack)
 - ii. Outlook on capital and expense (Aumack)
 - iii. County equipment reimbursement (Aumack)
 - a) Commissioners Aumack and Pico agreed discussed making an effort to understand the details better “as they happen,” and reinforced that they want to increase transparency for the above lines i-iii, and the budget as a whole in general.
 - b) Chief Armstrong suggested an existing system used for reporting budget information that will be further explored.
- D. Updates from Commissioners:
 - i. Recruitment Subcommittee (Aumack)
 - a) There have been three walk-ins and several messages expressing interest in volunteering for County Fire.
 - b) The academy that will start in January 2021 is full.
 - c) Commissioner Webb suggested a new class of volunteer firefighters that are only minimally trained and called on only in extreme circumstances.
 - 1. Chief Larkin and Chief Armstrong weighed in stating that the training standards cannot be decreased due to liability, safety, and jurisdictional issues.
 - ii. Volunteer Company Officers Representative (Aumack)
 - a) Commissioner Aumack discussed how many volunteers struggle with juggling personal/work life with volunteer obligations.
 - 1. Chief Larkin stated that County Fire is actively considering “expedited” training periods to alleviate the struggle for volunteers to balance multiple roles.
- E. Santa Cruz County Fire Chief’s Report (Armstrong)
 - i. Moving toward ordering new apparatus for County Fire.
 - ii. County Fire looking to purchase two Type 1 engines this fiscal year for companies 37 and 41.
 - a) Due to significant rise in cost, different competitors are being considered as well as scaling down outfitting specifications.
 - iii. Pajaro Valley and Pajaro Dunes are receiving new engines.
 - iv. A new water tender is being purchased for Company 32.
 - v. A new rescue vehicle is being purchased for Company 37.
 - vi. New fuel vaults ordered for Stations 34 and 36.
 - vii. Company 29 is in the process of completing a new garage.
 - viii. Stations Big Creek and Jamison had water issues and therefore shared a facility with Company 37.
 - a) Issues have been resolved and staff has returned to assigned stations.
 - ix. There has been substantial public outreach and preparedness education in the event of a debris flow.
 - a) High risk zones include the areas of Laguna Creek, Swanton, and Boulder Creek up 236.
 - x. Seasonal down staffing to take place starting on November 23, 2020.
 - a) 2nd engines will leave Corralitos and Saratoga Summit in 1st phase.
 - b) The 2nd phase scheduled to begin on December 7, 2020 but may start early will transition us into Amador staffing.
 - xi. The state has defunded 6-8 inmate camps, but the one located in Ben Lomond that is within County Fire’s area

- xii. Fuel reduction has traditionally been comprised of breaks and burning, but County Fire plans to soon bring back a community chipping program.
- xiii. Commissioner Pico requested that Chief Armstrong create a summary of his Chief's report with more detail and provide it after this meeting.

F. Announcements

- i. Commissioner Anderson reports that:
 - a) a staff of 75 people have been actively working on debris flow teams to prepare for the upcoming rain season.
 - b) The Office of Recovery and Resiliency has been created to provide support to potential victims affected by debris flows.
 - c) Experts have been tracking rain fall and running various tests to gauge threat.
 - d) All preparedness measures are being planned with a "COVID lenses" to account for those unique challenges that COVID contributes currently.
 - e) A virtual meeting will be held this Saturday from 11:00 am-12:30 pm that will provide more information on current debris flow preparedness efforts.
 - f) This will be her last FDAC meeting, as Michael Beaton will be taking her place.
- ii. Commissioners voted to re-open public comment, see lines IV-V.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT AT 5:47 PM

Motion: Wernick to adjourn.

Motion Seconded: Leman

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Absent: Walker

**A. Set next regular meeting – Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 4:00 pm,
location TBD.**

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs or activities. This meeting is located in an accessible facility. If you wish to attend this meeting and you will require assistance in order to participate, please contact the ADA coordinator at 831-454-2210 (TDD number is 831-454-2123 or 831-763-8123 from Watsonville area phones) at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting, to make arrangements. As a courtesy to those persons affected, please attend the meeting smoke and scent free.