



**MINUTES of the Regular Meeting of the
Pliocene Ridge CSD Board of Directors
Date: Thursday September 19, 2024 Time: 6:30 pm
Location: Alleghany Firehouse Station 2**

1. ESTABLISH QUORUM, CALL TO ORDER, FLAG SALUTE: The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Vice President Bruce Coons. **Flag Salute.** Present: Board members, Pam Davis, Bruce Coons, Chris Mills and Burns Tenney. Director Grace Lundeen was absent. Also in attendance: District Fire Chief Chris Dorn, Alleghany Assistant Chiefs David Arbogast (by phone) and Ned Cusato. Public: none Pliocene Ridge CSD Secretary Rae Bell Arbogast attended by phone and took the minutes.

Prior to the adoption of the agenda an urgency item was brought to the board's attention. A motion was made to add the USDA Vehicle Grant to the agenda for discussion and to provide staff with direction. **The motion was made by Chris Mills and seconded by Pam Davis Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.** It was decided to discuss the issue before the consent calendar was addressed. [Last spring, after the district applied for help with the purchase of the Water Tender and a rescue truck USDA had said that no funding was available for this fiscal year] Treasurer Rae Bell Arbogast explained that she had received an email the previous day (Sept. 18th) from our USDA rural development representative stating that some funding had come through unexpectedly for the vehicle funding and that Pliocene Ridge CSD's application had made first place out of 50 applications submitted state-wide. The email stated that a grant amount of \$46,800 was available with a list of hoops to jump through including requesting loans from 3 different banks, financial documentation, a letter regarding reserve funds. The email stated that they needed all this no later than the next day (Sept. 19th). Rae Bell did not see the email until 4pm [and she was in Montana where it was 5pm]. She responded immediately stating that she could work on everything in the morning. She "hit the ground running" the next morning, provided the letter, requested financial information and contacted 3 banks with a loan request based on a template provided by USDA. A few hours later at 11 am she got an email stating that the amount wasn't as much as they were told originally and that we could only get \$22,300! The USDA rep. apologized for the confusion and said that our option was to take that amount or wait until the next funding cycle to try again for the larger amount. She needed an answer right away. Rae Bell told her that she needed to consult with the board and that by coincidence a board meeting was already scheduled for that night. Staff did discuss amongst themselves and felt that we should take the lower amount rather than bank on possibly getting a larger amount later. We were told that the application would be re-ranked if we applied again on the next cycle. Then at the end of the day and shortly before the PRCSD board meeting we got another email from USDA saying that they might be able to honor the full amount of \$46,800 after Sept. 30th when their fiscal year ends. They stated that other states usually have left-over money that can be tapped into. **After a discussion the board instructed staff to move forward with getting whatever money they could, even if it is the lower dollar figure and to fill out the necessary paperwork. This was agreed upon by consensus.**

2. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Approval of current Agenda (with modification above), Minutes for regular meeting held June 20, 2024, and the Treasurer's reports for June, July and August 2024. **A motion was made to approve the consent calendar by Chris Mills and seconded by Pam Davis Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.**

3. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

4. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) *Correspondence Incoming.* Conflict of Interest Code docs from Sierra County Clerk Recorder **Outgoing** Letter to the IRS explaining why form 944 was filed for Calendar Year 2023 and requesting a refund for the penalty and interest that was paid in May 2024, Letter of intent to participate in Golden State Risk Management Authority's Risk Management Assessment Program (RMAP) for fiscal year 24-25

b) *Committee/Member/Business Reports:*

1. *Chief's Report* ~ Chief Dorn commented that it has been quite a while since there was a board meeting. They have been very busy; it is a banner year for the district with over \$150,000 in income expected for a combination of Strike Team assignments and Standby assignments. So far there have been 6 Standby assignments with more expected. Having local firefighters on standby during extreme fire weather makes sense because they know the terrain best and have the quickest response time for nearby incidents. The standby crews have been working on cleaning up the firehouse while on duty. Chief Dorn and Firefighter Ethan Esch took Water Tender 67 to the Park Fire in Butte County for 12 Days. That assignment alone is expected to bring in around \$62,000 gross with a payroll expense of around \$30,000. The net revenue will essentially pay for the cost of the Water Tender purchased last year.

He reported having to turn down some strike team assignments because of low staffing levels. He can't leave the district without coverage. A standby that started on September 1st ended up rolling into initial attack on the Bear Fire near Sierra Brooks. They were on that call for a full 24 hours and performed structure protection in Sierra Brooks. Luckily the wind cooperated, and the fire moved away from the community.

He stressed that while this income is great, we can't count on it every year. His thought is to put it into reserves to use to improve the stations and upgrade apparatus. There are some expenditures that he will be making immediately to keep the district in the position to take advantage of these opportunities. Specifically for necessary radio equipment that is quite expensive.

Next year he is hoping to become a strike team leader for Sierra County. He isn't quite qualified but intends on taking the necessary training this winter. All this work is making the district part of the bigger group which is very important. These connections are mutually beneficial.

2. *Assistant Chiefs' Report:* Ned Cusato reported that things have otherwise been pretty quiet since the last board meeting with a couple of medical calls.

3. *Alleghany Fire Department Auxiliary:* ~ No report

4. *Pike Community Support Foundation* ~ There was a moment of silence for PCSF President and long-time Pike resident Roland Roberston. Everyone voiced appreciation for his community service work and stated that he will be missed. Chris Mills reported that a Celebration of Life for Roland was scheduled for September 21st at noon at the Pike Firehouse. It will be a potluck.

5. *Board Member/Staff Reports* ~ Secretary/Treasurer report provided in writing.

6. *Firewise Community Projects* ~ Report Provided in writing.

7. *Firehouse Projects & ADA Compliance:*~ Chief Dorn talked about the work that the crew has been doing at the Pike Firehouse during the standby assignments. Besides cleaning and hanging sheet rock they removed the walls on the bathroom stall in the engine bay with an eye towards making it ADA Compliant. This will provide a ground-level space for board meetings. All measurements indicate that this can be done with minimal effort. A larger rescue truck was taken into consideration when taking the measurements. (action item under “new business”)

8. *Pending Grants* – See USDA item above, still no word on the Rural Capacity 50/50 grant for radio equipment.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a) Unfinished Business

1. *Appoint Officers.* After discussion the following slate of Officers was selected: Chris Mills President, Bruce Coons Vice President, Rae Bell Arbogast Secretary/Treasurer. **A motion was made to appoint this slate by Bruce Coons and seconded by Chris Mills Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.**

2. *Discussion re: use of new Command Vehicle* Chief Dorn explained that on high-fire danger days when he will be on duty as Officer In Charge (OIC) This will be on days when he will not be working outside of the district for the County. He wants to drive the command vehicle from his home in Pike to the County Yard in Alleghany for a faster response time in the event of a fire. The board decided by consensus that this is a good idea but were concerned if it might raise any insurance issues. The Secretary is to investigate this further and report at the next meeting.

b) New Business

1. *Biennial Review of Conflict of Interest Code:* A copy of the code was posted with the meeting documents. It was decided by consensus to authorize the President to sign the form provided by the County.

2. *Establish Rae Bell Arbogast terms of employment* Copies of Rae Bell’s compensation terms as an independent contractor and her hours for the last two years were provided in the packets. A summary of her compensation was also provided. After a discussion it was decided to end the payment terms as listed in the contract that ended on June 30th and switch her compensation to an hourly rate paid at minimum wage. Additional money was incorporated into the draft final budget to accommodate this change. She explained that she will continue to donate some hours. There was a question about if a job posting was required. [Secretary was having a hard time communicating via phone and did not fully understand the question, thinking this was in reference to splitting her job into two positions. Topic added to October agenda for further discussion.] **A motion was made by Chris Mills to change the Secretary/Treasurer’s rate of pay to minimum wage seconded by Pam Davis Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.**

3. *Approve including district’s property in Alleghany and Pike in planning grants for fuels reduction.* It was explained that the Sierra County Firesafe Counsel has hired a forester to work on planning grant proposals for Pike and Alleghany. It was decided by consensus that both the Pike Firehouse property and Alleghany Firehouse Station 1 property should be included. If a grant is awarded there will be documents to sign.

4. *Adopt Final Budget for Fiscal Year 24/25* **A motion was made by Chris Mills to adopt the budget as presented and seconded by Pam Davis Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.**

5. *Appoint project manager for engine bay bathroom remodel.* After discussion: **A motion was made to appoint Ned Cusato as the project manager and to authorize staff to apply for a building permit to build an ADA compliant bathroom by Burns Tenney seconded by Pam Davis Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.**

6. *Remove Item #15 "Complaints" from Article II of the Bylaws* **A motion was made to Remove Item #15 of Article II from the bylaws by Burns Tenney seconded by Chris Mills Ayes: Davis, Coons, Mills, Tenney Noes: none Absent: Lundeen Abstain: none ~ Motion carried.**

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEXT MEETING DATE & AGENDA ITEMS: The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2024 in Pike. Director Tenney explained that he cannot make the 17th and suggested moving the date to October 16th since there have been problems with getting a quorum together. Secretary to work on this. Next Meeting Agenda items:

7. ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rae Bell Arbogast, Secretary