

**Woodside Fire Protection District
Board of Directors Meeting
Administration Building
808 Portola Rd.
Portola Valley, CA 94028
January 25th, 2022**

The Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Director Miller.

Directors Present: Miller, Holthaus, Cain

Directors Absent:

Staff: Chief Lindner, Fire Marshal Bullard, Battalion Chief Cuschieri, Battalion Chief Dagenais, Finance Manager Edwards, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator Brown

Other Attendees: Joseph Charles, Mike Wasserman

Public Comment Non-Agendized Topics:

Ellen Vernazza addressed the board and requested they take necessary steps to draw up a strong fire hazard map for Portola Valley as soon as possible and to set strict fire safety building standards. She addressed her concern towards the Town of Portola not adopting the 2008 Cal Fire fire hazard severity maps. She stated that with 600 residents having asked that the Town Council acknowledge its responsibility and exercise its authority to protect public safety and being denied even agendizing that request at a town council meeting. She requested that the Board do what is necessary to protect Portola Valley from a possible wildfire.

Bob Adams encouraged the Board to get the maps up to date and complete as soon as possible.

Consent Agenda:

Items: Director Holthaus motioned to move items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 to the consent agenda; 2nd by Director Cain. Motion passed 3-0.

Item 7: Reorganization of the Board of Directors

Chief Lindner advised the Board that the Board position terms are up for reorganization. After discussion a motion was made by Director Holthaus and 2nd by Director Cain to elect Director Holthaus to President. Motion passed 3-0. A motion was made by Director Miller to elect himself Secretary and was 2nd by Director Cain. Motion passed 3-0.

Item 8: Resolution #307, Delegation of Authority.

Chief Lindner advised the Board that that in the event that we have some type of disability, workman's comp related retirement, this Resolution gives the authority to sign on behalf of the Board so that as it goes to CalPERS.

Finance Manager Edwards stated that what she has on record has expired, and this Resolution is just reinstating it.

Director Cain made a motion to approve the Resolution 307 as distributed. Director Cain 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

Item 9: Seeking board approval to fund a comprehensive wildfire hazard and risk analysis of the Fire District.

Fire Marshal Bullard addressed the Board on the needs of a hazard and risk assessment of the fire district. He stated that highly detailed wildfire hazard maps can assist in the planning of desired land uses that reduce community's wildfire risks. By identifying likely wildfire locations and intensities, hazard maps help prioritize areas of concern and guide decision making efforts. In addition, wildfire hazard maps identify areas where development can take place safely with minimum risk exposure. Wildfire hazard maps can help guide the development review process for proposed subdivisions and existing structures, support education and outreach to homeowners and the public, supplement grant applications and funding requests, and improve regulatory planning with the wildland urban interface. Other benefits of wildfire hazard assessments include:

- providing the ability to stratify land use ordinances and development codes based on low to very high hazard areas.
- support the development of more detailed structural level risk assessments.
- educate the public and support outreach efforts to raise awareness of wildfire hazard.
- provide critical information to community wildfire protection plans, county comprehensive plans, hazard mitigation plans, safety elements and other guiding documents.
- Identify the least hazardous locations for neighborhoods and critical infrastructure like power lines and other utilities.
- Target neighborhoods and communities where enhanced mitigation measures are needed or where socioeconomic vulnerabilities make wildfire.
- And it provides base information for efforts to model effects of post-fire flooding or other rehabilitation and recovery issues.

Assessments of current conditions help land and resource managers better understand how risks are distributed across their landscape, identify which highly valued resources and assets face the greatest expected loss or benefit, and inform decisions relating to preparedness, planning and fuel treatment design.

Assessments of wildfire risk are critical for informing the development and implementation of cost-effective risk mitigation efforts, and comparative risk assessment can be used as a basis to evaluate different treatment options. Designing efficient fire management strategies involves asking:

- where can wildfire risk be best mitigated?
- what treatments and management activities are feasible?
- where can different treatments be implemented and to what extent?
- how will treatments affect various risk factors? Likelihood and intensity of fire.
- how will treatments affect potential impacts to your resources and assets?
- what combinations of activities can most cost-effectively mitigate wildfire risk?

In the aim of the hazard and risk assessment is to provide fire and land managers with a helpful set of guiding principles and tools for assessing and mitigating wildfires. Another important and critical aspect of a comprehensive hazard and risk assessment is the inclusion of the built environment in the hazard and risk assessment. Woodside Fire Protection District will be including the built environment in our assessment of the Fire District, as homes and neighborhoods built in and among the wildlands are not just vulnerable or exposed to wildfire, they are in fact an important cause of catastrophic destruction. Compelling evidence clearly demonstrates that increased density and inadequate separation of buildings from one another can be the most significant cause of home-to-home ignitions and fire. By placing ever more manmade structural fuels on hazardous lands and hazardous locations and in hazardous ways, we are exacerbating and indeed creating the very fire hazards that should concern us the most.

Why the identification and designation of very high fire hazard severity zones is important. According to Cal Fire, identification and designation of our highest hazard fire areas is the first and most important step responsible communities can take to reduce their risk. Such designations are

needed to ensure that we fully comprehend the magnitude and severity of the hazard we confront, have adequate resources in place before a wildfire, and have the critical advance knowledge our fire service needs to anticipate fire behavior and manage both suppression and evacuation; educate decision makers and the public about the hazards we face so they can take appropriate land use, building and emergency response steps to reduce risks. We can't make prudent development decisions without this information; qualify for public and private grant funding to abate the risks, retrofit our homes and neighborhoods, and provide suitable defensible space, evacuation routes and mitigation measures to protect us.

Fire Marshal Bullard mentioned that the adoption of an ordinance by Woodside Fire Protection District that designates all the very high fire hazard severity zones within the district would ensure consistent application of the state's minimum fire safe development regulations throughout the district. While the state's minimum regulations currently apply in the jurisdictions of the district that have designated their very high fire hazard severity zones by local ordinance, they do not apply in jurisdictions which have not adopted such ordinances. Woodside Fire Protection District has both the authority and the responsibility to identify and designate the fire hazard severity zones within the district. Where substantial evidence shows that our hazard areas extend beyond those identified by Cal Fire, the district still has the authority to identify and designate them as well.

Fire Marshal Bullard advised the Board that Public Resource Code 4290.1 requires Cal Fire to establish criteria to identify communities that follow best practices for community risk reduction. Cal Fire is adopting regulations that establish 10 criteria, four mandatory and six optional, and to qualify for listings as a risk reduction community. Communities that make the list receive preferential scoring for Cal Fire grant funding for wildfire mitigation and planning. The very first mandatory criteria for a risk reduction community is adopting the local ordinance identifying and designating all very high fire hazard severity zones within the community's local response area. To get on the list, a community must satisfy all four mandatory criteria and at least two of the six optional criteria.

Cal Fire's risk reduction communities' programs required best practices, number one, town ordinance designating very high fire hazard severity zones. Number two, these are all the required submission of parcel maps for the very high fire severity zones based on regs. Submission, within the past 8 years of an updated safety element that addresses wildfire. And then the fourth is a report on compliance with Cal Fire recommendations.

Fire Marshal Bullard finished by stating the six optional best practices –

- Ordinance adopting minimum safe development, an
- Ordinance adopting defensible space standards that exceed state's minimum.
- Ordinance adopting a WUI code stricter than the state's. Zoning or special district ordinance with fire mitigation requirements that exceed state minimum.
- Ordinance for comprehensive retrofit of existing homes.
- The declaration of wildfire as a high priority hazard.

Director Miller reiterated that the process would be for WFPD to engage a third-party qualified consultant to look at the entire district, use the current standards of defining these zones, identify them as quickly as possible with the District's goal to clearly be a risk reduction community. Director Miller then asked why in the past and in other communities, some residents have fought this effort. He answered his own question by stating it may be the additional requirements put on homes and properties in these zones, and possible negative impact on insurance coverage. Director Miller summarized that he believes the whole district needs to have these zones designated as quickly as possible and we need to be a risk reduction community as fast as possible.

Director Holthaus asked Fire Marshal Bullard if there was evidence of what's happening in other communities outside of our district, that may be going through these same tough challenges and decision points.

Director Miller then asked which about which portions of the District took the Cal Fire maps and adopted them. Fire Marshal Bullard responded that Woodside and other areas of unincorporated San Mateo County have adopted the maps in their entirety. Portola Valley elected not to adopt the maps, in favor of applying Chapter 7A standards throughout PV.

Director Cain asked who would be paying for the analysis. Chief Lindner advised the Board that the intent will be to reach out to all the different jurisdictions within WFPD to see if they want to share the cost, but that lack of financial support would not prevent this project from moving forward.

At this time questions were addressed from the public.

Bruce Roberts stated he is a longtime resident and greatly appreciates what the district does to protect us. He stated that California has listed several priorities for running our government, and one of them is in government code 51179, that authorizes WFPD to issue the maps and also to designate by ordinance, high fire risk zones, if a local agency is not willing or able to do so, as in Portola Valley's case. Recently, bill SB9 was passed, which forces rural communities like PV to permit or allow a substantial increase in the housing stock. He stated that places like Portola Valley that do not have a map in place are very susceptible to very dangerous development, and the only protection they have, which is provided for specifically in SB9, is for areas that are designated very high and high fire zone and the town is able to control development size and layout of the improvements. He requested that WFPD force Portola Valley to be under the very high fire zone standard unless they adopt the current map. He stressed his concern about how the Town of Portola Valley has been handling the situation.

Robert Younge stated to the Board that he strongly supports and encourages the Board to fund a comprehensive hazard and risk analysis for our fire district to identify and designate the very high fire severity zones within the fire district, as well as adopting the state regulations implementing minimum fire safety standards for these designated zones. He mentioned he is a resident of Portola Valley for over 30 years, and he is very concerned for the safety of his community. He also pledged his significant support in personal work and financial assistance to this work. He also thanked the Board for all the efforts Fire Marshal Bullard has put forth helping the community.

Bob Turcott thanked Fire Marshal Bullard for bringing this forward and thanked the Board for responding so positively and promptly. He made the following points – Right now, the FEMA Multi-jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is being finalized for the county. Each municipality provides its own data. Woodside and Portola Valley rank their natural hazards precisely identical. They are numerically the same risk rankings score for all hazards, all natural hazards, except for wildfire. Woodside ranks that as its highest risk by far. Portola Valley gives it about a third of the score, well below earthquake, well below landslide, significantly lower than whether, barely above flood, and barely in the medium risk range. He stated that it's just not plausible. He stated that it is critical for the fire district to give objective professional advice and analysis, independent and uninfluenced by town politics.

He mentions there are many approaches to housing risk assessment; Cal Fires' approach, the district's approach, and the approaches in 2008, neglect the biggest source of fuel on the landscape, and that structures. A 3000-square foot home has the latent heat of combustion that's more than 23 times greater than that of an acre of vegetation. In these modeling approaches, he stated that it's okay to neglect structures if the area that you're dealing with is like the continental divide, where the density is so low. But mentions that in a place like Portola Valley that has significant structures, structural fuel can't be neglected. He states that it is the highest source of fuel and heat and the fire on the landscape. He urged the Board to incorporate the right information to do the study. He also

mentioned that if financial support was needed from the community, he was sure it would be provided.

His final point is that by the end of the year Portola Valley will have to finalize both its safety element and its housing element. The data that WFPD provides will be critical for guiding, where and how PV plans for a 15 percent increase.

Rusty Day thanked Fire Marshal Don Bullard for a superb presentation on why this is so important and necessary. He expressed his hope that the presentation can be made and structured into an educational program for residents and town officials as well as the building department. He thanked Board for taking the initiative and acting on it. He thanked the men and women of the district and informed the Board that the residents deeply respect and appreciate what WFPD does for the community, and that the community is in full support of WFPD and offered to step up and support the district's effort. He emphasized the importance of doing this quickly. Currently, both Woodside and Portola Valley are in the midst of updating their housing element and their safety element, and those must be completed by year end. He posed several open questions - Where can we place new housing? What does the future development look like? He mentioned how he feels it is important to go beyond the state minimums. He stated that Woodside recognized the extent to which the district's local knowledge, competency and familiarity with the land and that the risk trumped the state's, and they adopted Woodside's recommended delineation of very high fire hazard severity areas. He stated They Woodside on the local competency, expertise, and professionalism of the district to establish their standards. He told the Board that they have the authority and you've got the responsibility to do that again now and have the responsibility and authority to do that for the entire district. He expressed his confidence in the District.

Ronald Eastman thanked the Board as well as Fire Marshal Bullard. They expressed that they felt that without doing this, they could imagine the chaos that would ensue if catastrophe struck, if the very high fire hazard areas were not identified and the risks and hazards were not fully inventoried.

M Jones stated that they were a resident of PV. They expressed feelings of helplessness in the face of some of the discussions at the town council level. They stated that they are grateful for Fire Marshal Bullard and others, and they are grateful. Stated they have been a resident for 22 years and they used to keep their horse in Woodside. They rode all through the trails in Woodside and Portola Valley and didn't see a significant difference from their untrained eye, between the two districts or the two towns, and yet, Woodside is evaluated completely differently from Portola Valley. They expressed their frustration and confusion. They are looking forward to having a professional assessment of the dangers that Portola Valley faces.

Ellen Vernazza expressed how thrilled they were and thanked Fire Marshal Bullard for spearheading the work. She mentioned the loss of her sister's home in the Santa Rosa fire, and how traumatic it was to have to evacuate repeatedly. They thanked WFPD and mentioned that her husband's life was saved by WFPD a while back.

Director Miller made a motion to approve the funding for a comprehensive wildfire hazard and risk analysis of the Fire District. Director Cain 2nd. Motion passed 3-0.

Item 10: Amendment #1 Agreement between Woodside Fire Protection District and Vance Brown, inc.

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Item 11: Station 7 and Station 8 Project Updates

Project Manager Mike Wasserman presented on the Station 7 and Station 8 projects.

Mike Wasserman advised the Board that interim Station 7 is coming along, with all the necessary permits now in place. They have obtained the primary building permit, as well as the special gate project permit to replace the gate at Sandhill and Whiskey Hill Street. This is to allow automated access for security control. They have obtained the deferred approval for the modular buildings and have obtained the encroachment permit with the County for the off-site work that's happening along Sandhill. Vance Brown construction has mobilized and completed all the underground work, the apparatus garage. Pacific Modular is constructing the buildings in Phoenix. They are ahead of schedule and expected to be delivered in late February and installed by the end of February. Vance Brown's updated construction estimate is 2.9 million dollars for the interim fire station, and the project will be complete and ready for occupancy in mid-April. It is being funded by the District in addition to the \$15 million.

Mike Wasserman advised the Board that Station 7 rebuild plans have been approved by the planning department. The anonymous donors, architects, engineers, and contractors have submitted the plans for building permits to the Town of Woodside. During that process, they have engaged CJW Architects, Stepford, which is the district's I.T. company, and TEA (which does all the emergency alerting and communication for the Fire District). The project is technically scheduled to be constructed from May through November 23rd. Vance Brown's estimated construction cost is \$24 million for this facility. That includes the demolition cost of the existing Station 7.

Mike Wasserman then updated the Board on Station 8. They have obtained planning department conditional approval and have now submitted for the building permits. We are still working with the neighbors in the Town, with the ASCC, to approve the landscaping screening design. He mentioned that they just need to get the ASCC to approve the design, to satisfy that condition of approval of the overall project. This project is scheduled to start construction in March and to be completed a year later in March of 2023. The estimated construction cost for Station 8 is \$6.5 million.

Mike Wasserman advised the Board that back in September, the board approved the Vance Brown's agreement for the \$15 million, and in that agreement, it was disclosed and discussed that there's a cap on how much money the donor is willing to participate with, which is \$10 million. In addition to that, there are certain things that the donor would not be paying for. They have just received these cost estimates on Station 7 and 8 from Vance Brown, as well as the updated one for interim Station 7. He stated that they broke up their costs between, the shell and the interiors and what the total budget is. There is about \$4.1 million of excluded items from the necessary scope, from the new Station 7 and 8. He also stated that when you combine and add in Interim Station 7 costs, exceed the donor's maximum contribution. This all totals to about \$8.4 million of additional funding. The amendment is allowing pre-authorization (Board's approval) of this additional expenditure of \$8.4 million, in order spend the money (aside from the \$15 million). He then opened for questions.

Chief Lindner advised the Board that they formed a committee that met with the architect and the build team, and they've been meeting on a regular basis. Early in the process, there was confusion as to what's not included. Nevertheless, this team has been going through with the desires. If they didn't have that information ahead of time, it was taken back to them to figure out if it was going to be excluded or not. Now, it's been figured out as to what's excluded and what's not excluded.

Mike Wasserman advised the Board that they have been coordinating all this through Bluebeam sessions. They have all the plans and are getting everybody's comments and collaborating on it. It's been ongoing for months. He mentioned another important piece to consider are construction cost inflation. In his firm, Capital Program Management, they are working on projects throughout the state and are being hit with unbelievable escalation or inflationary costs of construction. He stated that they are reflecting current costs from Vance Brown. But it is not fully bid out and locked in

numbers. At this point they are finally at that place, and just very recently received these estimates from Vance Brown. This is the way it calculated out, it showed \$8.4 million of additional funds will be necessary to implement these three projects.

Chief Lindner advised the Board that if they exceed the Amendment amount, they will have to come back to the Board. He stated that they do have the capital reserves. As well The Fire Foundation is being reached back out to, now that they have concrete numbers with the concrete designs.

Mike Wasserman advised the Board that currently the construction market is very volatile with costs. Vance Brown has been very open book about pricing. But they have not yet formally bid the project out so far, but they will be locking in all the trade costs soon. Once that is done, then we will know a lot better how firm the price is. Vance Brown included in their cost estimate, estimating contingencies, as well as some allowances and some other items to try to help ensure that this number doesn't go up. He mentioned that it is his job to ensure that any rise in costs is warranted.

Director Holthaus opened the floor for questions from the public.

Bob Adams addressed the Board and mentioned his hand was overlooked during Fire Marshal Bullard's presentation. He stated that he is appreciative of FM Bullard making sure to put in buildings as a fuel source. He also had read that in the Marshall Fire there were high winds, and he has heard people say that Portola Valley does not have high winds. He stated that even 20 mph winds can be cause for concern. He thanked FM Bullard for doing a great job and addressing the biggest issue that they have. He also reiterated that they would be glad to give physical help and administrative help. They are more than glad to assist and/or find people to assist.

Director Miller made a motion to approve Amendment #1 between Woodside Fire Protection District and Vance Brown Inc. Director Cain 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

Re-direct back to Financial Report:

Chief Lindner asked Finance Manager Edwards if she had would like to address the Board.

Finance Manager Edwards mentioned the ERAF money the District is receiving, which will cover much of the pay for the interim, but based on the 19/20 and 20/21 year, we've received approximately 85 percent of the ERAF amount that the County has deducted from our revenues. With that said, in August, the previous year, 50 percent balance. Then in January, the current fiscal year, 50 percent. It is estimated on that, the total amount the District will receive this fiscal year will be \$3,948,000. She informed the Board they will be receiving \$1.4 million this month, which will be reported to you in February.

Finance Manager Edwards advised the Board that the Strike Team money received has been \$382,000. She expects another \$300,000. As well, November-December, the District's expenditures were a higher than expected. \$280,00 was paid out in retirement, vacation and sick leave. She placed \$500,000 in the 115 account that was set-up. She then closed by asking if there were any questions.

Staff Reports:

There were no further questions or comments from the Board regarding staff reports.

Fire Chief's Report:

Fire Chief Lindner advised the Board on COVID-19 updates. Stated that based upon meetings at the County level, the County has hit the peak. As far as numbers that have tested positive, WFPD numbers are going down. If you look at the San Mateo County Health website, they have that reinfection factor. He posed the question - how many people can that person reinfected? It peaked two weeks ago at 1.6-1.7. It showed that for every infection, it was doubling somebody to get reinfected. They saw so many people getting infected with the virus. As of Monday, going into today, that number has gone down to 0.76. It has gone below one, which is a really positive sign. Secondary to that is the hospital, either as hospital admissions or entries into the hospitals via the emergency room, urgent care, advanced type of care or intensive care. The ICU admissions have been stable. The number of people in acute care has gotten significantly higher, but they're not seeing the numbers of people being in there for extended stays being intubated. Certainly not seeing deaths like last year. They're still there, but not to that level. He mentioned the positive in that those numbers seem to be going down. It is expected the rest of January is going to be bleak; and that once January passes, the County should start seeing those numbers become more and more tolerable with the possibilities of opening back up.

Fire Chief Lindner advised the Board that the State has asked all the counties to give numbers of line personnel, either EMTs or paramedics, to gauge how many people, they have out at every given agency, to try and project. There are jurisdictions within the county that got hit hard. More than 20+ percent of the workforce was out. The Fire District has not been affected to that level. Currently, WFPD COVID cases are at one. Personnel have been getting hit with other illnesses such as cold, flus, secondary illnesses, within themselves, their spouse, or their family. These people haven't been able to come to work because they've been asked to stay away. It's been multifaceted and our sick leave has raised for the month of December into January. They have received information today that the Governor is passing a sick leave compensation, meaning that the State will compensate for those that are sickened secondary to COVID related issues. That was done last year, expired at the end of September. They went and reinstated that, but they are unsure if it's being retroactive to a specific date or whether we just heard that today.

In November boosters were offered to all WFPD personnel because the District had hit the 6 month plus time frame where people get their second vaccine. The County once again asked WFPD for assistance from WFPD to administer boosters and assist the children that were getting their vaccinations.

Fire Chief Lindner mentioned that WFPD is fully stocked with supplies. He also advised the Board that the District's staffing program, Kronos was taken down due to a breach. Many agencies within the County utilize this system as well. It tracks scheduling, the distribution of overtime time, the accruals of vacation, sick leave, people building trades, et cetera. The system was completely down for the month of December, and it is just now starting to come back up.

Fire Chief Lindner advised the Board on new hires and future hires. Since last month, the four people that have been hired graduated December 17, they are all online. In the meantime, there are openings, secondary vacancies that were created through retirements at the end of the year, whether it be their disability retirements or just retirements. WFPD will be hiring anywhere from two to three for the next academy, which starts in March.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

There were no written communications to present to the Board.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:16 P.M. and entered closed session.

Closed Session:

Chief Lindner advised the Board of ongoing legal issue with cell tower at station 7 site. Process is ongoing and continuing to progress. No further action was taken by the Board.

Chief Lindner advised the Board on personnel issues, related to disability retirements. The Board was also advised of other retirements and future hiring(s). There was no further requests or actions taken by the Board.

Return from Closed Session: The Board returned from closed session at 9:15 P.M.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 P.M.

The next scheduled meeting will be held February 22nd, 2022, at 7:00 P.M at the WFPD Administration Building, 808 Portola Rd. Portola Valley, CA 94028. (Or virtual or a combination of both depending on Covid-19 related concerns).

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Miller – Board Secretary