



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

Special Board Meeting Minutes

Of The Board of Directors

April 11, 2024

Location: Felton Fire Station 131 Kirby St Felton CA

1. Convene Meeting:

1.1 Call to Order: Meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Anderson at 6:30 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

1.3 Roll Call: Directors Jim Anderson, Norm Crandell, Mark Giblin, Mark Rose, Mike Shults

Staff: Chief Walters, Laurie Dennis

Absent: None

Guests: Aidan Malmberg, Soren Andersen, Patrick Rosso, Ian Jones, Mike Ayers, Renee Fenker, Nathan Fenker (7:10)

1.4 Considerations of Additions to the Agenda- None

2.0 Public Comment: None

Any person may address the Board at this time on any matter not on this agenda within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Felton Fire Protection District. The Board Chair may request that comments be limited to no more than three (3) minutes. Any matter that requires Board action will be referred to staff for a report and action at a subsequent meeting. The Brown Act prohibits the board from taking action on any item not listed on the agenda. If you would like to comment while using Zoom, use the chat function to express interest in making public comment

3.0 Unfinished Business:

3.1 Review and approve policy manual updates.

Board members had been asked to review the Policy Manual document prior to the meeting. Director Rose noted some references to Zayante and Scotts Valley need to be removed or changed to reference Felton. Director Anderson reiterated that this will be a "living document". Director Shults commented he felt the document was a good guideline to have in place in general, even though some of the sections may never be used. Chief Walters added it is important to have this guideline in place, especially as it relates to the paid staff we have now. Director Anderson asked for a vote. Director Rose made a motion to approve the Policy Manual with the few minor edits. Director Shults seconded and it was passed unanimously.

3.2 Shared Services

Chief Walters stated that the board had asked him for recommendations for both chief candidates and shared services. He has provided those. He presented a document he referred to as "the state of the union" and read through the bullet points listed. He read each of them listing the issues, actions to date, staff status and his recommendations. He reviewed the finances, both current and future. Director Anderson said they met with Scotts Valley again last night and asked that they come back with a suggested dollar amount that we can compare with. CalFire presented a full-service contract that our budget can support. There will be a meeting with Ben Lomond tomorrow to discuss shared services. He feels we will have a compelling case to go for a bond. He further added they want to keep this organization going with some help, until we can get back on track financially. Director Crandell added that the budget carry-over is our savings, and that we are now working on next years budget. Director Crandell explained some details of the CalFire contract, that is for up to 2 years, or any time less if we find ourselves in a better position. Chief Walters stated the Amador contract at \$790,000 is for 3 personnel and a BC, 24/7, 365 days. They would wear their CalFire uniforms, but respond in our equipment. The station door and apparatus would also wear the CalFire logo alongside Felton Fire's.

Director Crandell explained the estimated costs for a study and PR for a bond measure will be expensive. Added costs to bring on new volunteers are about \$10,000 each.

Director Anderson reiterated it's the boards' fiduciary responsibility to provide responses to the districts calls for service. He described the tax parcel process and related to Branciforte and Scotts Valley's failed bond attempts.

Chief Walters added the timing is bad for Scotts Valley as they recently brought on Branciforte, but the upside for us is they are an ALS agency. We have a good relationship with Scotts Valley and they are more acceptable to the crew than CalFire. Their union is not for the concept. They have asked for a dollar amount, but he feels it will be too costly.

Director Anderson stated we have options. He thinks highly of the volunteers and wants to retain them. He is confident the committees plan will help us get there. He thinks we can emerge whole in 2 years and stand alone. The Chief echoed Director Andersons comments. Director Crandell added we still need the volunteers to support the paid people on the first engine. Chief stated with Captain Rosso moving and both Moellers out for an extended time, we need a lot more volunteers. Director Anderson opened the conversation and asked for any public member's comment.

Ian Jones stated he's concerned when we are asking for the public's money, how the shared service relationship with CalFire would affect that impression. He is also concerned regarding there being a clear expectation with CalFire and our volunteer's relationship. There have been issues in the past that could not be brought here. Director Anderson assured him that leadership discussions with Jed and Nate at CalFire have shown they are open to work with our situation. Chief Walters added that is also why he recommended a BC volunteer position to have in-house voice and support our people to work with the Chiefs at CalFire.

Nathan Fenker asked about relationships within the fire department that have been and are making volunteers not stay, that's why he left. Director Anderson responded that has always happened and it's not our only problem with volunteers. Chief Walters added that another purpose of standard policies is to help with employee issues. Discussion followed.

Director Anderson again added that the board is ultimately held responsible and the results of not complying can result even in fines and jail.

3.3 Select interim Fire Chief

Chief Walters said the sub-committee has been discussing and interviewing potential candidates. He reported that Rob Young unfortunately has rescinded his interest and is no longer a candidate. He has contacted 9 potential candidates and has had 8 refusals. Director Crandell reported they have talked to 4 so far. He explained some of the difficulties and requirements.

Director Rose asked about getting the word out by advertising and communicating our needs to the public. He asked if the board is willing to set aside funds to do this. Director Crandell responded that we already have a funds shortfall, and that the committee has been trying to do this.

Director Rose questioned the reluctance to spend funds to search for a chief.

Director Crandell responded that he thinks the window has closed already for finding a new chief due to the length of time it would take, in excess of 90 days. He added that going into a holding pattern with a shared service arrangement for a couple of years will get us this time to find the right person. Director Anderson added that Boulder Creek spent about \$25,000 in the search prior to Chief Bingham. Discussion followed regarding the projected budget shortfall. The Chief stated they should have seen this coming years ago and done something. Chief added this is the most critical chief decision in 40 years. There are many challenges. He feels the best way to bridge the gap is to have someone to support the squad as a BC for a few months.

Renee Fenker asked the board members to be mindful and use inclusive language when having these discussions. She also asked if there has been any consideration of 2 people to do this job and share the responsibilities, which could also save on the salary costs.

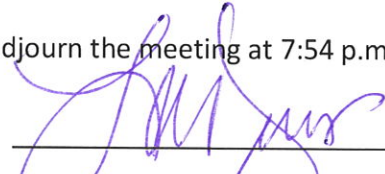
Chief responded the suggestions were appreciated.

Additional discussion followed regarding the need to have another special meeting soon, some time before the Chief leaves. A date will have to be set later.

4.0 Closed Session: None

5.0 Adjourn: Director Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 p.m.



Jim Anderson, Chairman

Attest: Laurie Dennis, Secretary



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

To: Board of Directors

Date: 4/11/2024

RE: State of The Union

Felton Fire District has 4 challenges based on Time, finances, leadership and nighttime response coverage.

Night-time Call response

The facts are;

1. Insufficient volunteer workforce to respond with a sufficient staffing (3 personnel) from in district personnel on a per call basis.
2. Insufficient volunteer workforce to cover station standby shifts (2 personnel + duty officer).
3. 30% of all calls only have a single responder. Often the duty officer.
4. 65% of all incidents lack a 3 person response
5. The district is unable to field a structure fire response, or any multi apparatus request or response in district or to mutual aid calls.
6. The district has failed to respond to mutual aid request for 5 of 11 requests.
7. When an "at home" volunteer response occurs it is usually only 1 or 2 personnel and often outside of the 6 minute response window.
8. Officers are reluctant to request 2nd pages and/or mutual aid requests and take a "I'll go check it out first" attitude which further delays any mutual aid assistance.
9. In the last 30 days, Felton has had 2 "failed to respond" incidents.
10. Increased weekend stipends have not shown an increase in coverage, but resulted in less weekday coverage.
11. We are down to 5 "in district" volunteers.
12. We lack a sufficient number of driver/operators and are often forced to respond in pickups or await arrival of duty officer to drive, operate and command an incident.

Actions Taken to date:

1. Standards applied for "out of district" volunteers for working standby shifts starting January 1. Results: 3 dismissals, 1 resignation and 2 produced improved coverage. No significant improvement.



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

2. Recruited 8 new firefighters. Results: 1 resigned due to family issues. 6 will complete academy in June. 1 continues in house training, but due to family issues is unavailable to respond at this time. Only 1 of the 7 lives in district.
3. Recruited lateral Fire Captain from Ben Lomond. He does not live in district.
4. Started 2nd recruitment for January 2025 Fire Academy. Results; in-process
5. Restarted internal driver/operator training program with 4 trainees. Results; 2 completed, 2 are pending. During this time we have lost 2 operators.
6. Gone "Public" with our shortages in the hopes of attracting local, qualified and trained personnel. Results; no new qualified applicants.
7. Letter send to all County fire agencies requesting assistance and loan of qualified personnel for standby shifts. Results;
 - a. Zayante – No assistance per board decision.
 - b. Boulder Creek- No assistance per board decision.
 - c. Scotts Valley – Unable to loan PCF's. They only have 11.
 - d. Ben Lomond – Possible, but requires more work.
 - e. CZU- Felton Station project crew available Wednesday and Saturday nights only. B/C available on request.

Recommendations

1. Continue discussions with CalFire and Scotts Valley fire for 24/7 service agreements to solve the 14hr nighttime problem.
2. Initiate talks with Ben Lomond to loan firefighters for night-time standby coverage of the station. Minim station staffing should be 2 personnel plus a Felton Duty Officer.
3. Continue recruitment drives thru TV, newsletters, school programs and public speaking opportunities.

Finances

The Facts are;

1. Tax revenues generate approximately 1.1 million with additional revenue and interest adding about another 50k.
2. For FY23/24 we are in a deficient due to the new type 6 purchase and funds required to equip it.
3. Plans for a replacement command vehicle were shelved for the \$1 purchase of an ambulance from Boulder Creek Fire to reduce workload and expenses on Fire Apparatus and to provide opportunities for future revenue streams by transport and 911 surge services.



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

4. Expected deficits in the amount of \$350-400k will continue due to daytime staffing demands, PPE expiration and hiring of new volunteers and PPE purchases.

Actions taken to date;

1. Increased evaluation of equipment needs of like vs need.
2. New apparatus response matrix to reduce load on expensive to fuel, repair or replace apparatus.
3. Applied for AFG grant to reduce expenditure on PPE.
4. Applying for SAFER grant to reduce expenses on daytime staffing.
5. Recommended to Fire Board to investigate alternative staffing and/or shared services.
6. Recommended to board to re-evaluate healthcare benefit expenses and offer program similar to neighboring agencies to reduce expenses and contain future increases.
7. Applied for grant for recruitment program of volunteer firefighters.
8. Evaluated a PERS buy-out opportunity.
9. Increased paid/benefited positions to reduce employee turnover and avoid 960 limitations and staff workload.
10. Evaluated additional CEPS fund investment for un-funded PERS liabilities.

Results to date;

1. AFG Grant application accepted. Should know by beginning of fiscal year.
2. SAFER Grant, submittal by end of month, will not know results until last quarter 2025, funding to follow if approved.
3. Changed to a fixed dollar amount healthcare credit program for benefited employees. Reduced district liabilities and future costs.
4. Received grant for volunteer firefighter recruitment program materials.
5. Solved daytime response shortfalls with paid 2/0 staffing but put additional pressure on budget to solve lack of volunteer response.
6. Shared service/ service delivery contract discussions started with Scotts Valley and CalFire to solve lack of night-time volunteer response problem.

Recommendations;

1. Continue to monitor grant applications for approvals. Evaluate why, if not approved, and re-apply the following year.
2. Place a parcel tax measure or benefit assessment on the June 2026 ballot.
3. Hire a professional company to evaluate proper assessment amounts and design a campaign around the needs of the district.



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

4. Inform the public of our financial challenges and staffing shortfalls. Improved awareness will increase chances of a successful campaign.
5. Sign a services agreement with Calfire or Scotts Valley fire to avoid market rate fire chief (who can meet our leadership, prevention and training needs).
6. Appoint a "Budget Sub-committee" to work with future leadership to identify future budget needs and evaluate expenses and opportunities for savings. They should also work to explore additional revenue opportunities.

Time

The facts are;

1. Felton needs 18-20 months to advertise, recruit, train and deploy minimum of 18 additional volunteers to handle our existing call load.
2. Felton needs time to evaluate shared services opportunities for Fire Administration, Prevention and Training.
3. Felton has no consistent, sustainable volunteer response for 14 hours every day. On multiple occasion we have failed to respond to emergencies and mutual aid requests.
4. Felton fails to respond to calls within the 6 minute maximum reflex time standard for volunteer agencies more than 50% of the time.
5. Felton needs time to look for additional revenue opportunities.
6. Felton has a limited window of opportunity to solve the response problem before LAFCO comes in and dissolves the district for failing to solve the problem.
7. Felton needs time to develop a 3-5 year plan to become self-sustainable and plan for future needs such as apparatus and station repair programs.

Leadership

The facts are;

1. Felton can not attract the Fire Chief leadership we need due to PERS PEPPRA limits placed on prospective chiefs.
2. Felton can not afford the market rate for Fire Chief.
3. Felton pays it's Fire Chief less than what a Fire Captain makes in the City of Santa Cruz.
4. Out of the area candidates cant afford the cost of living and relocation housing costs to our area.
5. Felton needs a Chief with strong leadership skills, excellent financial skills and experience in development of revenue, development of tax measure campaigns,



FELTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
131 Kirby Street, Felton CA 95018 831 335-4422

strong training, fire prevention and fire investigation credentials. A charismatic individual with a good understanding of the volunteer workforce and ability to develop good working relationship with local public officials and elected leaders in the community.

6. In a shared services environment, we need someone who can hold together the volunteers and organize a successful extrication from outside services in 2027 so that we are fully staff and prepared to meet the community needs as a stand alone organization. An organization who can provide proper 24/7 service.
7. In a shared services environment, Felton needs a leader at the board table to represent the interests of the volunteer firefighter and provide additional support to outside staff and the fire board.
8. Felton needs an leader who the squad can support, who can produce the positive environment for volunteers and encouraging them to remain with the agency during the next 24 months.

Recommendations;

1. Create and appoint a Battalion Chief to represent the volunteer organization during board meetings and to support the shared services chiefs during significant events. The B/C would also hold staff assignments to support the operational aspects of the agency and other related duties as assigned.
2. Sign a shared services agreement to resolve the incident response issues.
3. Invest in our volunteer leaders to culture middle level, and eventually upper level management, training and prevention leaders during the next 24 months.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Walters
Interim Fire Chief