

*Lower Valley Fire Protection District*  
*February 13, 2025*

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**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors with the Lower Valley Fire Protection District was called to order by Board President, Cullen Purser. Advance public notice of this meeting was posted in three separate public spaces. The roll call was taken; the following board directors were present: Cullen Purser, Cliff Gray, Jesse Mease, Mark Bonella, and Jeff Phillips. Others in attendance: Fire Chief Matt Katzenberger, Deputy Chief Gary Mulkey, Adam Compton, John "JD" Dawson, Reese Norton, Skylar Smith, Kaden Fife, Diana Manzanares, and Mahea Rodriguez.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Mark Bonella** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS/REQUESTS**

None.

**DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None.

**APPROVAL OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Jeff Phillips** motioned to accept the board minutes from 01/09/2025; seconded by **Jesse Mease**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

**APPROVAL OF EXPENSES**

**Diana** rendered the information reporting the expenses from January 1, 2025, through January 31, 2025, totaled \$58,400.72. **Jesse Mease** questioned the \$500.00 consulting fee to Frank Cavaliere, asking how long the district would be paying this expense. **Chief Katzenberger** informed the Board that **Travis Holder** is close to meeting his required certifications, thus the consulting fee will no longer be needed. In addition, the **Chief** would like to have this fee negotiated down to \$250.00, stating the district is not receiving \$500.00 worth of time and services. Next, **Jesse Mease** asked for clarification on the expense "New Pig" for \$681.89. **Chief Katzenberger** explained that New Pig is the name of the company that specializes in hazmat and hazmat supplies. No other questions were asked by the Board.

**Jeff Phillips** made a **motion** to accept the bills for January 2025; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS**

**Diana** reports the total balance in our bank accounts, including cash on hand as of January 31, 2025, is \$3,517,236.97. The interest for the month of January

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2025 is \$13,636.05. The YTD interest accrued is \$13,636.05. January's Mesa County Statement of Collections totaled \$138,696.88.

**Mark Bonella** made a **motion** to accept the Financial Statement for January 2025; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

**APPROVAL OF AMBULANCE BILLING RESOLUTIONS**

**Mahea** reports that the billing write-offs for January 2025 totaled \$145,927.43. Accounts sent to collections in January 2025 totaled \$7,169.48. **Mark Bonella** questioned the dollar amount of the resolutions, as he perceived it to be increasing in large quantities over the last few months. **Chief Katzenberger** explained how contractually, we cannot collect on insurance write-offs or adjustments from patients. As an entity that accepts Medicare/Medicaid payment assignments, we are contractually obligated to write off the amounts not allowed by Medicare/Medicaid, and commercial insurance. This is separate from self-pay/uninsured patients, which includes copays and deductibles. Those amounts, if left unpaid, are turned over to our collection agency, AR Services (aka A1 Collections). **Chief Katzenberger** also mentioned that our call volume has increased, thus increasing the resolution amounts. These dollar amounts are still in line with the percentages the district has received over the last few years. **Mahea** confirmed that the amounts listed in the contractual portion on the resolution sheet are contractual obligations that cannot be collected from patients. She also confirmed these amounts are within the current billing cycle of 30-45 days from the date of service.

**Jesse Mease** made a **motion** to approve the resolutions and write-offs for January 2025; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

**Mahea** reports that the ambulance billing income for January 2025 totaled \$92,407.63 (money in the bank). **Diana** provides the Board with an election update. A call for nominations has been posted and published across several different platforms. Currently, LVFD has two applicants. February 28, 2025, is the last day for self-nominations and acceptance forms. If no one runs against the two current applicants, the district will be saving money from not having to hold an official election.

**FIRE CHIEF REPORT**

**Chief Katzenberger** reports that he was invited by the Fruita Chamber to speak at their Coffee & Community Connections Event last month. **Chief Katzenberger** learned that our community is not well informed about our department and there are misconceptions about the structure of LVFD. The attendees that were present at the event were surprised to learn about LVFD's call volume, staffing standards, and the annual budget. As a result of that event,

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the owner of Fruita Living Magazine would like to run a series of articles that would allow us to educate the community and residents of Fruita about our department. This would serve as a marketing platform, laying the foundation of information about our district for the taxpayers on what exactly our department and our staff do for the community. Then, when the need arises to increase taxes or mill levies, the community is aware of how their tax dollars impact our district. The owner of the magazine, Rick, will be here on 02/18/2025 to meet with **Chief Katzenberger** for their first interview and that will include a station tour and applicable photos. In the first article, **Chief Katzenberger** desires to list dates for community meetings, for both the Fruita and Loma stations for community members to attend and learn about the ins and outs of what we do. **Jesse Mease** inquired about direct mailings in addition to community meetings. **Chief Katzenberger** stated he is looking into that as well. He would also like to investigate options for hiring a consulting firm to assist with these concerns. He states that Clifton Fire and Plateau Valley Fire have been using consulting firms for a few months and they're already seeing many benefits. Hiring a firm would ensure the process is done correctly and is not taking time away from the department to work on a project of this scale – writing and compiling of surveys, direct mailings, gathering population data, call densities, etc. All of this goes into a 20-year plan for our district. Next, **Chief Katzenberger** provides an update on the T-Mobile tower. T-Mobile would like to continue with their plan, however, they pushed back their original date until 2027. Thus, discussion will resume at the end of 2026. Next, Xcel Energy has their transmission lines running underneath our building, which is a code violation. This was discovered by FAA as they were looking to replace their communication power poles and incidentally, they located our transmission lines as a result of doing their pole locates. **Chief Katzenberger** found several documents relating to this, as well as documentation in board minutes from January and February 2014; however, neither he nor Xcel could locate written documentation allowing or disallowing this to happen. The representative from Xcel was initially saying that the building would need to come down, however after holding an in-person meeting at the station, two alternative solutions were discussed. 1) Xcel will remove the dead pine tree and replace it with a pole. They will run a line down to access the transformer, through our legal easement and Xcel would bore from Mulberry back to the transformer, and then they can tie it around the building. 2) The City of Fruita discussed with Xcel about putting all this through the alleyway underground, which would tie it back around to the Mesa St side. Either way, the current lines will be abandoned, and new ones will be rerouted. This is considered resolved. Next, **Chief Katzenberger** discusses the implementation of LVFD's fitness policy that includes annual physicals and follows the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) guideline standards. Throughout 2025, the physical will be

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optional to staff. This allows ample time (1 year) to practice, prepare and measure their current fitness levels for when the physical becomes mandatory in 2026. In 2026, there will be ramifications if they do not pass. Failing the fitness standard becomes a liability to the department, however, employees that fail the assessment will be granted an opportunity to remediate. They will be on modified duty for 90 days while the remediation is taking place. If they're still unable to meet the standard requirements after the 90-day remediation period, they would no longer be employed with LFVD. This is a treadmill test called The Bruce Protocol, which is used to assess cardiovascular fitness and diagnose potential heart conditions. It involves gradually increasing the workload on a treadmill over a predetermined period. This will establish baselines every year that will start to build individualized trends. This is for the employee's protection through the Cardiac Trust and designed to detect cardiac issues while those issues are still able to be treated and resolved in the early stages. From a financial standpoint, **Chief Katzenberger** has reached out to our workman's compensation provider and inquired about potential medical events that may happen during the testing, specifically to our part-time providers, as full-time employees are covered under their medical plans. He also reached out to the district's lawyer, Michael Santos, regarding what a modified duty shift would entail - will there be different levels of failure which would result in different levels of modified duty? Next, **Chief Katzenberger** announced that **Greg Reynolds** resigned due to personal matters, and he has relocated to the Front Range to be near family. His last day was February 7, 2025. We had 3 internal applicants apply for the open full-time position and testing was held on February 11, 2025. **Anton Knepprath** was selected to fill the position with a start date of March 11, 2025. **Anton** has previous BLM experience and was recently selected as LVFD's Rookie of the Year for 2024. Lastly, **Chief Katzenberger** discusses a federal law that went into effect in July of 2024 for all governmental agencies regarding ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance for our website postings. The law requires all online interactions to be 100% ADA compliant. One of the challenges for our district is having signatures obtained (on the board meeting minutes, for instance), and then scanning those documents and finding that scanned documents cannot be edited. We're currently about 60% compliant with our website. **Thomas Creel** and **Travis Holder** are continuing to work on the remaining 40% to get us to full compliance. With that, there will be two changes starting next month. 1) The budget update will be a report out of Quickbooks, which will look much different than the current format from Excel, and 2) We'll be obtaining e-signatures using an electronic DocuSign function. There will most likely be a fee involved with this, so **Chief Katzenberger** is looking for the best financial option. The district does not have a choice but to go this route to avoid potential fines, which we are currently at risk for. Also, **Chief**

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**Katzenberger** states there is a company called Civics Plus that utilizes AI tools to convert documents much more quickly and ensures documents are ADA compliant. The AI tool would be built for our specific website, so any future uploads to the website would be automatically converted to ADA compliancy. Civics Plus has a lot of government clients, so this route looks like the best option for us. **Chief Katzenberger** has not yet received a quote, however, their base pricing is expected to be around \$2000 a year.

**DEPUTY CHIEF REPORT**

**Deputy Chief Mulkey** reports on training updates. In 2024, there were 166 training days and 2,200 training hours that staff completed. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** is also working on training consistency and compliance within the department by tracking all the training that is required, as well as capturing and recording their completions. He reports that staff are looking forward to the physical fitness changes and they're already setting goals for improvement. Next **Deputy Chief Mulkey** states that we responded to 246 calls in January last month. That is a 26% increase from January 2024. A large part of that is the number of illnesses afflicting the valley right now. Lastly, **Deputy Chief Mulkey** updates the board on the EMS Provider Grant. He and **Chief Katzenberger** submitted that grant today. The grant is worth \$139,000 and that is their portion of the 50% match that we will receive.

**OFFICERS REPORT**

**Captain Adam Compton** congratulates **Kaden Fife** on passing his recent DOT engineering certification. **Adam** also congratulated **Reese Norton** on her recent graduation and obtaining her BS degree; she is now a Registered Nurse. Next, **Adam** discusses alternative funding that the officers are exploring. There are devices that can help progress and expand the in-house services that we would be able to offer in the field for EMS patients. Some of the devices are CPR related, and others are for basic needs such as reliable thermometers.

**UNION 5625 REPORT**

**Kaden Fife** reminds the board of the upcoming survey. The board would like to see most of the same questions included in this year's survey to measure the responses from the previous year's responses. This will help determine if good changes were made and what may still need improvement. **Kaden** agreed with the board, and confirmed that the questions will be the same, with the possibility of a new question or two added in addition to.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

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**OLD BUSINESS**

**Chief Katzenberger** discusses the old business of the 2015 GMC Ambulance that is for sale. He states the ambulance was moved from Loma Station to Station 31 to have it exposed to new traffic. Mr. Brach has offered to include it in their auction next month. He would sell it as-is and has agreed to not take commission on the sale. **Chief Katzenberger** would like to agree on a reserve price for the ambulance. Previously, it was listed for \$19,000.00 which was initially the low end. **Chief Katzenberger** reminds the board of their previous discussions regarding the vehicle parameters (without a cot) and how that price was determined. He does not believe \$19,000 is a realistic price for the auction. Another option would be to list the ambulance on eBay. An additional thing to consider is the batteries are several years old and would need to be replaced. Right now, it's plugged into the maintainer. We're also still paying for the insurance. **Chief Katzenberger** researched some sale comparisons last week as well, which ranged from \$5,100 to \$16,800 with similar specifications. The board agrees to reducing the price and listing it in Mr. Brach's auction for a sale between \$8,000 and \$12,000.

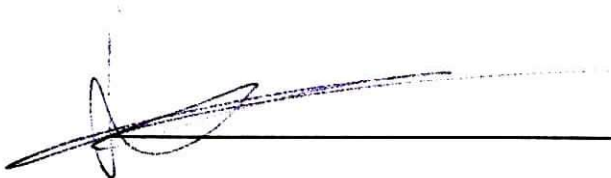
**Jesse Mease** motioned to amend the sale price of the 2015 GMC Ambulance for a minimum of \$8,000; seconded by **Mark Bonella**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

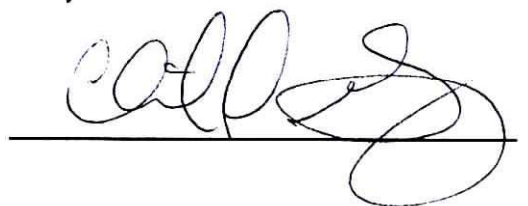
**ADJOURNMENT**

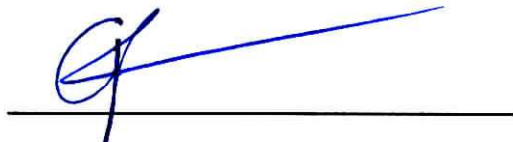
**Jesse Mease** made a **motion** to adjourn. All in favor with 5 affirmative votes.

  
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**Lower Valley Fire Protection District**  
**Special Session Meeting – March 5, 2025**

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**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The Special Session Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Lower Valley Fire Protection District was called to order by Board President **Cullen Purser** at 6:00pm. Advance notice of the meeting was provided. The role call was taken, the following directors were present: **Cullen Purser, Mark Bonella, Jeff Phillips, and Cliff Gray**. Others in attendance: **Chief Matt Katzenberger, Thomas Creel, Beau Schmalz, and Jesse Stocking**.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Cullen Purser** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS/REQUESTS**

None.

**DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Chief Matt Katzenberger** discusses with the board new business regarding mechanical concerns on the Green Brush Truck. He presents options for its replacement, including quotes in a separate document. Of the three options presented – 1) Repair options; 2) Re-Chassis option; or 3) Sell as-is option. He recommends the re-chassis option. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** states this makes the most financial sense long term and it's an inexpensive way to get a brand-new truck versus ordering a new truck. There are also no reliable used trucks on the market right now, and fixing the truck is a short-term solution. **Kaden Fife** has researched and called many dealers looking for a chassis that fits our specifications. He found one available in American Fork, Utah. It's an extended cap, 4-wheel drive chassis. The dealer agreed to hold it for us until Tuesday, 03/11/2025, therefore urgently holding this special meeting tonight. Anticipating the approval of this option, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** arranged for pick-up of the new chassis for later this week (weather pending), and Pine Country is prepared to start on the new chassis on 03/10/2025. He is still working on scheduling the new decals and striping. With the crews' help, including stripping the equipment out of the green truck, all the details are in place so ensure the truck is back in service by end of next week. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** states that \$95,000 will cover all the costs associated with the re-chassis option. Next, he presents the finances for supporting