

Lower Valley Fire Protection District

April 9, 2026

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The regular board meeting of the Board of Directors with the Lower Valley Fire Protection District is called to order by Board Vice President Mark Bonella. Advance public notice of this meeting is posted in three separate public spaces, and online at www.lowervalleyfire.com. In attendance are the following board of directors: Mark Bonella, Jesse Mease (tardy), Jeff Phillips, and Cliff Gray. Others in attendance: Fire Chief Matt Katzenberger, Diana Manzanares, Mahea Rodriguez, Kaden Fife, Ben Gardner, Adam Compton, and Cullen Purser.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Jeff Phillips led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS COMMENTS/REQUESTS

None.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Jeff Phillips motioned to accept the regular board meeting minutes from 03/12/2026; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with three votes. Of note: **Jesse Mease** was tardy to the meeting and not present at time of motion.

APPROVAL OF WORKSHOP / COMMUNITY Q&A MEETING MINUTES

Jeff Phillips motioned to accept the workshop community Q&A meeting minutes from 04/02/2026; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with three votes. Of note: **Jesse Mease** was tardy to the meeting and not present at time of motion.

APPROVAL OF EXPENSES

Diana rendered the information reporting the expenses from March 1, 2026, through March 31, 2026, totaled \$284,994.71.

Cliff Gray made a **motion** to accept the bills for March 2026; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. **Motion** was passed with three votes. Of note: **Jesse Mease** was tardy to the meeting and not present at time of motion.

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APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS

Diana reports that the total balance in our bank accounts, including cash on hand as of March 31, 2026, is \$3,904,701.20. The interest accrued for the month of March 2026 is \$11,718.91. The YTD interest accrued is \$32,723.45. The Mesa County Statement of Collections for the month of March 2026 totaled \$349,584.94.

Jeff Phillips made a **motion** to accept the financial statements for March 2026; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with three votes. Of note: **Jesse Mease** was tardy to the meeting and not present at time of motion.

APPROVAL OF AMBULANCE BILLING RESOLUTIONS

Mahea reports that the billing write-offs for March 2026 totaled \$128,176.10. There were 8 accounts sent to collections, which totaled \$11,392.00.

Cliff Gray made a **motion** to approve the resolutions and collection write-offs for March 2026; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. **Motion** was passed with three votes. Of note: **Jesse Mease** was tardy to the meeting and not present at time of motion.

Mark inquires about the NSure company that was discussed last month. **Mahea** informs the Board that the contract was signed on April 7, 2026. We chose the contingency, pay-per claim option. The 60-day trial period will begin after a training demonstration takes place next month.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mahea reported that ambulance revenue for March 2026 totaled \$88,770.66. She reminds the Board that her Certified Ambulance Certification exam is next week in Las Vegas.

Diana reports that an audit of the district's Fire and Police Pension Association (FPPA) accounts was conducted. The audit results came back outstanding. Next, she informs the Board that Paul Miller has conducted his annual audit. The audit began on Monday, 04/06/26 and was concluded this afternoon. Mr. Miller will present his audit findings to the Board on May 14, 2026, during our regularly scheduled board meeting. Lastly, LVFD was selected to respond to an audit regarding the CO EMS Supplemental Payment Program. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** adds that this is a routine comprehensive audit in which participants must participate every three years to continue in the program. He states that this is the first audit we've had with them since we entered the

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program in 2020 or 2021. They will be specifically looking at our capital assets and depreciation values. The discrepancy is due to differing capitalization thresholds. Their policy does not allow depreciation for items under \$10,000, while our capital policy threshold is \$3,000. As a result, we are depreciating assets that they do not recognize as depreciable. Once this is updated in their system, the audit will be complete.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Matt Katzenberger begins with apparatus updates. The water tender is nearly complete. Wiring the lights is the last step, otherwise is fully assembled. The Type III truck is still sitting at 55% completion. The photos and updates have remained essentially unchanged since the first week of March. They make incremental progress, which gives us some hope when projected completion dates, such as the end of April, are discussed, but based on the current progress shown in the photos, there is no realistic way the truck could have been completed by that timeframe. At this point, the body has not yet been mounted to the chassis, and significant assembly work remains. It does appear that the pump has been installed, along with most of the plumbing and wiring, but there is still substantial work left to complete before delivery is possible. This unit was ordered in March 2022, so the four-year mark has passed while still operating under 2022 pricing. Essentially, the manufacturer is prioritizing projects with a higher return, while this truck generates less profit for them under the older contract pricing. That is likely to contribute to the continued delays and lower priority being placed on completion. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** states that unfortunately, based on the language of the contract, there is little recourse available regarding the delivery delays. He has reviewed the matter thoroughly and had our attorney examine the contract terms, and there do not appear to be enforceable remedies related to the delayed delivery timeline. Regarding the ambulance, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** informs the Board that there have been no updates on the ambulance, although we know the chassis has been received. At this point, no news is generally considered good news, as the project is still operating within the grant timeline. Because of that, he is not currently concerned about delays with this unit. Based on the expected schedule, we anticipate delivery sometime around September or October, which aligns with the grant requirements. Regarding Water Tender 32, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** would like to discuss with the Board the possibility of moving forward with listing Water Tender 32 for sale, given how close the replacement unit is to completion. Based on the research completed so far, it appears the truck may realistically be worth approximately \$80,000; however, no final value has been determined at this time. He was recently contacted by a broker who offers complimentary appraisals for apparatus sales.

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After receiving a marketing email from him on Monday, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** responded and provided photos of the truck for review. He has not yet received his appraisal or feedback. At this point, he is not prepared to commit to a sale price but wanted to make the Board aware that we are approaching the point where planning for the sale makes sense. There is no immediate urgency to sell the truck, but obtaining the appraisal, regardless of whether we ultimately list with that broker, will provide a clearer understanding of the truck's market value and help guide future discussions.

Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** provides some personnel updates to the Board. Within the last month, **Derek Campbell** was promoted into the Captain position that had remained vacant for approximately a year and a half. The position was intentionally left unfilled until a candidate successfully completed the mentorship process and demonstrated readiness for the role. **Derek** completed the mentorship program in December. Following that, several additional steps were added to further ensure both his readiness and the department's confidence in the promotion decision. He performed well throughout the process and successfully completed the same assessment center previously required of current captains. As a result, **Derek Campbell** was officially promoted to Captain effective last Sunday. We held the badge pinning ceremony last Friday evening. Five new members who recently completed their one-year probationary period were recognized, all of whom completed their required training and qualifications ahead of schedule. As a result, they were officially pinned during the ceremony. We also recognized **Tim Struble** for his Engineer promotion, which he received last year, although we had not held a badge pinning ceremony since that time. **Derek Campbell** was also pinned following his recent promotion to Captain. In total, seven members were recognized and pinned during the ceremony.

Engine 32 recently sustained a cracked windshield. While the damage is not severe enough to place the apparatus out of service, the crack extends the full length of the passenger-side windshield section. The windshield is a specialized curved, two-piece style like RV glass, which increases replacement costs. Current estimates place the replacement cost at approximately \$2,000, with the glass itself estimated to be around \$1,700. Staff are still obtaining formal quotes, as the damage was only identified within the last couple of days. Currently, the recommendation is likely to proceed without filing an insurance claim. With a \$1,000 deductible and the potential for increased insurance premiums, it may not be financially beneficial to involve insurance for repairs of this size. Funding for the repair is available within the vehicle maintenance budget, so formal Board action is not necessarily required. However, the expense was brought forward as an out-of-the-ordinary maintenance item for Board awareness

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Lastly, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** discusses the Operations Policy Manual. The original goal was to have it submitted to the Board prior to this meeting. That timeline has now shifted to May due to competing priorities, particularly the sales tax matters, which delayed completion. However, the project has not been forgotten and is very close to being finalized. **Chief Mulkey** has completed his revisions and contributions to the manual. At this point, the remaining work primarily involves final formatting tasks, such as updating and aligning the table of contents and other organizational details before it is distributed to the Board.

DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF REPORT

In **Deputy Chief Mulkey's** absence, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** provides the Board some grant updates. On the provider grant, we have advanced to the SEMTAC grant level, which is the state-level review following the regional process. **Captain Adam Compton** and **Deputy Chief Mulkey** participated in the virtual grant hearing, which was held on 04/02/2026 via Zoom, as there is no in-person option and it is conducted out of the Front Range. We are currently awaiting final feedback following the hearing. However, reaching this stage is a positive indicator. We also received comments from the RETAC review, which were favorable overall. Feedback highlighted that the presenters were highly knowledgeable, particularly Adam, and commended the team's ability to clearly articulate and justify the need for the grant. That point is especially significant, as a lack of clear justification is commonly cited as the primary reason applicants are not successful at this level. Currently, we are simply awaiting final notification. We were notified either yesterday or today that we were not awarded the Division of Fire Prevention and Control PPE grant, which we had applied for in the amount of \$20,000 to support partial funding of the Tech Gym firefighter gear that was already budgeted for replacement. We did not receive detailed feedback on the application. However, this outcome was not entirely unexpected, as we have been awarded this same grant three times over the past four years, and it appears there was likely a broader distribution of funds in this cycle. This is in no way reflective of the quality of the application, which was well prepared by **Captain Thomas Creel**. Rather, it seems to have been a matter of balance allocation among agencies this year.

Regarding next steps for the Tech Gen firefighter gear, we are currently coordinating a demo and completing sizing to support bringing a formal proposal to the Board at the upcoming May meeting. The manufacturer is currently offering a limited-time promotion, reducing the cost from approximately \$1,500 per set to \$750 per set through June 19th. If we can place

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the order within that window, the total cost would be approximately \$37,000 to just under \$38,000, compared to the originally budgeted \$55,000. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** will include this proposal on the May agenda for consideration so we can evaluate taking advantage of the discounted pricing opportunity.

Chief Matt Katzenberger provides training updates to the Board. We are pleased to report that our High School Academy has achieved its first fully certified student, with one participant successfully passing all required state certifications. The remaining students are partially certified, with a few needing to complete retests after narrowly missing the passing threshold. The Recruit Academy also began last week, with three participants currently enrolled. To support the schedule, **Chief Mulkey** is operating on a modified work schedule, with instruction occurring Wednesdays and Fridays from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and all-day sessions on Saturdays. His schedule has been adjusted accordingly to accommodate these training demands. Additionally, a small group of staff will be attending the National Fire Academy (NFA) "local weekend" training in Loveland during the first week of May. **Fire Marshal Travis Holder** will be attending a course that directly aligns with his role in community risk reduction and mitigation efforts, further supporting his work in that area. **Chief Mulkey, Anthony Padilla** and **Thomas Creel** will also be completing the final module of their Chief Officer Certification program, bringing that credentialing process to completion.

Lastly, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** reports on call data. The call volume for March rebounded significantly. After being down approximately 6% in February compared to the previous year, activity increased sharply in March. For the month, we responded to 282 calls, which represents a 21% increase for both the month and year-to-date comparisons. This effectively erased the earlier deficit and brought us back in line with - and now ahead of - last year's pace, with roughly a 27% swing in overall trend within a single month. At the end of March, year-to-date call volume stood at 757. As of today, we are now approximately at 815 calls year-to-date, indicating a continued upward trajectory in overall demand.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

In the absence of **Fire Marshal Travis Holder**, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** will provide the Board with the updates. We have seen an increase in vegetation fires compared to 2025. Based on current trends, we are anticipating a busier-than-normal season moving forward. The YTD fire prevention activities and associated data numbers are included for the Board's review.

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Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** displays **Travis's** presentation on the mitigation plan, with the slides included in the packet for reference, although they have been condensed to keep the overall packet manageable. The plan is the finalized vegetation mitigation strategy funded through a \$50,000 annual allocation over the next three years, administered through the Two Rivers Wildfire Coalition in partnership with the City of Fruita. **Travis** has developed the phased zoning approach that will be used to structure the RFP and bid process, and the project is currently out for proposals. Initial work will focus on Sections 1 through 3, located in the area behind the ballfields along Salt Wash. This area has been identified as the highest priority due to both fuel load and public exposure. Two contractors have submitted responses, and one proposal would allow completion of all three priority sections within the first year. The project includes a mix of public and private property. The City and **Travis** have been coordinating with impacted homeowners, and the grant structure requires matching funds through in-kind contributions rather than direct financial cost. In practice, this means contractors may perform the mitigation work while property owners contribute labor, such as staging and stacking material for later removal and processing by the City. The overall goal is to ensure continuity of mitigation across property boundaries, as untreated parcels would continue to present a hazard regardless of treatment on adjacent lands. Each phase includes vegetation thinning followed by mulching, with material either reused by the City or made available to the public where feasible, to avoid accumulation of waste and maximize beneficial use. This is a structured three-year plan designed to complete mitigation across all nine identified zones. The funds are administered through the Two Rivers Wildfire Coalition, which is a 501(c)(3) organization, and are paid directly to the selected contractor rather than flowing through the City's budget. In previous mitigation efforts, funds were received directly and then managed and paid out by the City, which resulted in the expenditures being reflected in our budget. Under this model, however, the Coalition serves as the fiscal agent, allowing the funding to be administered externally. As a result, neither the City nor the department budget is directly impacted, even though the funding source remains federal in origin. The Coalition's role is specifically designed for this purpose, facilitating community education and wildfire mitigation projects while providing a mechanism to manage and distribute grant funds outside of municipal budget constraints. From an operational standpoint, this is a more efficient approach and avoids direct budget impact while still delivering the intended mitigation work.

OFFICERS REPORT

None.

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LOCAL 5265 - UNION REPORT

Union President **Kaden Fife** reports that Local 5265 is beyond excited for the passing of the 2026 Public Safety Tax Measure. On behalf of the Union, he extended a thank you to everyone involved, and especially to **Chief Katzenberger** for working closely with them throughout this process. His transparency, responsiveness, and collaboration have been instrumental in helping move things forward and ensuring they had the information they needed in a timely manner.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice President Mark Bonella opened by addressing a misunderstanding regarding the appointment of Cullen Purser to the office of the Board of Directors in 2023. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** explains the deficiency stemmed from an incorrect assumption made by the prior administration that, because **Cullen Purser** was an incumbent and had previously completed an oath of office, a new oath was not required upon re-election. As a result, a new oath was not filed. However, that assumption was incorrect. State requirements specify that an oath of office must be completed and filed within 30 days following each re-election. Additionally, we learned through this review that these filings are also required to be submitted to the County Clerk and Recorder, not solely through DOLA as has been the longstanding practice in alignment with SDA guidance. Historically, documentation has been sent to DOLA without issue, and this gap was not previously identified. As part of the review, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** also reached out to the County Clerk and Recorder to verify records, but they did not have the documentation on file, which highlighted the need to include them moving forward as an additional checkpoint. After a thorough review of multiple years of board packets, minutes, and supporting documentation, including handwritten notes, there is no indication that any documentation was intentionally withheld or lost. Rather, this was a procedural misunderstanding rather than an intentional oversight.

Chief Matt Katzenberger requests to note the record that we do have documentation supporting the appointment, including the resolutions regarding the cancellation of the election and documentation confirming that **Cullen** ran unopposed and was duly appointed to the Board. Should any questions arise in the future, it is important to clarify that this was not a situation where he was improperly occupying a seat, but rather an administrative issue related to the filing process for the oath of office. **Cliff, Jeff,** and **Cullen** will all be up for election next year. Accordingly, this appointment

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will remain in effect through May 2027, when the next regular election takes place.

Jesse Mease made a **motion** to reappoint **Cullen Purser** from District 3 to the Lower Valley Fire Protection District's Board of Directors where he will continue serving as the Board President; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**.

Motion was passed with four votes.

The Oath of Office was stated and signed by **Cullen Purser**; witnessed and notarized by **Diana Manzanares**.

OLD BUSINESS

Chief Matt Katzenberger updates the Board regarding Loma Hall. The positive news is that testing identified only a limited amount of asbestos-containing material. However, even small amounts of asbestos remediation can be costly. Based on the evaluator's experience in the industry, he estimated the mitigation work would likely fall in the range of approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000, which is significantly less than originally anticipated. The evaluator also provided recommendations for three contractors he frequently works with and trusts for this type of work. **Chief Katzenberger** has since reached out to those contractors and explained that, depending on final pricing, the project may not occur within the current budget year, so there is no immediate urgency for turnaround. While we do not yet have formal quotes, current expectations remain within the estimated \$20,000 to \$30,000 range for the mitigation work. The asbestos-containing material was identified in a limited number of locations within the building. The most significant area involves wiring connected to the old boiler system in the basement. Some of that wiring runs through the concrete from the boiler room back up to the electrical panel, which contributes to the projected remediation cost. Additional asbestos-containing material was identified in a small number of panels located in the main portion of the building. However, the evaluator noted that the affected areas are relatively minimal overall, with only three identified sites of concern. Importantly, much of the building's electrical infrastructure, such as the gym lighting and associated switches, appears to have been updated at some point after the original installation, meaning those components were likely previously removed and replaced. As a result, the asbestos exposure is not widespread throughout the facility. According to the evaluator's report, the identified asbestos is limited in scope, with the boiler-related wiring representing the primary remediation concern.

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ADJOURNMENT

Mark Bonella made a **motion** to adjourn the Regular Board Meeting.
All in favor with four affirmative votes.








