

Lower Valley Fire Protection District

January 8, 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 President Cullen Purser. 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 directors: Cullen Purser, Mark Bonella, Cliff Gray, Jesse Mease, and Jeff Phillips. Others in attendance: Fire Chief Matt Katzenberger, Deputy Fire Chief Gary Mulkey, Diana Manzanares, Mahea Rodriguez, Thomas Creel, Stacie Dix, Anthony Padilla, Travis Holder, and Cooper Lovern.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Stacie Dix led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS COMMENTS/REQUESTS

None.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Jesse Mease motioned to accept the regular board meeting minutes from 12/11/2025; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. **Motion** was passed with four votes from the attending board members present on 12/11/2025.

APPROVAL OF EXPENSES

Diana rendered the information reporting the expenses from December 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025, totaled \$169,873.15.

Mark Bonella made a **motion** to accept the bills for December 2025; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with five votes.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS

Diana reports that the total balance in our bank accounts, including cash on hand as of December 31, 2025, is \$3,757,510.76. The interest accrued for the month of December 2025 is \$12,603.77. The YTD interest accrued is \$181,412.35. The Mesa County Statement of Collections for the month of December totaled \$31,746.57.

Jeff Phillips made a **motion** to accept the financial statements for December 2025; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with five votes.

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APPROVAL OF AMBULANCE BILLING RESOLUTIONS

Mahea reports that the billing write-offs for December 2025 totaled \$171,422.11. There were 12 accounts sent to collections in December 2025, which totaled \$14,042.00.

Cliff Gray made a **motion** to approve the resolutions and write-offs for December 2025; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. **Motion** was passed with five votes.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mahea reports that the ambulance income received in December 2025 totaled \$117,159.53. Next, **Mahea** informs the board she will be meeting with Captain Adam Compton on 01/09/2026 to review the 2025 report writing data to discuss where we can improve in our report writing to therefore increase our overall income. Lastly, the Medicare audit from April 2025 is still pending with no updates.

Diana informs the board that **Mark Bonella** has been added as an approved signer on our ColoTrust bank account to serve as a backup when the president is unavailable. Next, **Diana** states that W-2's should be completed and submitted ahead of the IRS release deadline of 02/02/2026. She is hoping to have these dispersed electronically this year. Lastly, **Shannon Currier** will be conducting her next internal audit on 01/19/2026.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Matt Katzenberger reports that the Type III is now at 50% completed in the production process as of 01/07/2026. Regarding the water tender, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** had several communications today and received a few photos. They're in the final fabrication stage, which includes fitting the storage boxes and adjusting placement as needed based on how everything lines up. Some minor plumbing changes were required due to the chassis rails. We're working through those adjustments with them now. Regarding the ambulance, Braun received the chassis and a payment was wired to them on 01/06/2026. The Ford chassis is projected to be here no later than Q1 2027.

Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** reports on the breathing air compressor. It has arrived, though it has not yet been assembled. It is currently staged in the bays. He is hopeful that installation will begin next week. The process will require some coordination, as the vendor will assemble and place the unit into service but will not handle moving it. As a result, we will need to remove the existing compressor and position the new unit prior to commissioning.

All station upgrades have been completed. The beds were received and assembled by the crews last week, which was the final remaining item. The tables were delivered just prior to Christmas. Overall, the cost came in

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approximately \$1,900 under the requested amount for these additional amenities. The beds are solid and heavy-duty and should have a significantly longer service life compared to the lower-cost frames we were previously replacing.

Regarding the surplus list discussed back in November, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** states that we now have several items available, including steel bed frames, collapsible bed frames, and miscellaneous furniture that had been stored at the station. **Captain Thomas Creel** documented all available items with photographs to allow for the compilation of a complete inventory. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** will distribute the list via email to all active employees and the Board for sealed bids, enabling us to review the photographs. For any items that do not sell, we will evaluate whether they have resale value and attempt to list them accordingly. Items with little or no value may be offered at no cost through outlets such as Facebook Marketplace to facilitate removal and avoid disposal fees.

DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Deputy Chief Mulkey updates the board regarding the strategic planning process. The final session is scheduled for February 23. He states that at this point, the content is largely complete, and the focus is on drafting and organizing the plan into a formal document. The plan will be reviewed during the February 23 session, with the goal of presenting it to the Board during the regular board meeting in March. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** acknowledges and thanks everyone who served on the committee for their hard work, leadership, and commitment to developing a thoughtful and forward-looking plan. Having this strategic direction in place will be highly valuable moving forward.

The high school academy is beginning its HazMat curriculum this week. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** will be instructing HazMat through the end of Spring Break. On Saturday, the students will travel to the burn tower training site in Whitewater to participate in a fun competition against the Palisade High School Fire Academy students. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** will be accompanying them.

Next, he informs the board that we are also working on implementing the new training and scheduling software. We are targeting a February 1st launch date and are currently focused on completing the necessary data entry to support that rollout.

Regarding crew training updates, ice rescue training is scheduled for this month; however, due to limited ice conditions, portions of the training will be conducted on smooth concrete to simulate movement techniques. In addition to ice training, required BLS skills and CPR training will be completed. The newly hired recruits will be participating in an EMS orientation, which is instructed by **Stacie Dix** and **Cody Ciotti**. There are currently eight new recruits. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** states that these recruits just completed the

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CMU college program, and he believes they are the first we've received from that program. This is a great outcome, thanks in large part to **Thomas Creel's** efforts in attending career days and engaging with the program.

Regarding call volume, December ended 5% below the previous year; however, overall, LVFD experienced a 12% increase in calls from last year, finishing with call number 3,007 just before midnight on December 31st. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** clarifies that the 12% increase refers to growth compared to 2023, not a compounding increase, so 2023 and 2024 were relatively flat. 2025's volume is 12% above both of those years. Call activity continues to be high, with the first nine days of the year already accounting for 68 calls, indicating no signs of slowing down.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Fire Marshal Travis Holder included and discussed his December and 2025 Year-End report for the board's review.

OFFICERS REPORT

Captain Thomas Creel states that two interns will be starting next week. Two high school academy graduates were interviewed and have been offered the opportunity to intern with us for the remainder of the semester. Both students selected are seniors and they will hopefully become strong candidates for future part-time employment. They'll be participating after school and on weekends to gain hands-on experience and learn more about the day-to-day life of a firefighter. As part of their program, they will be assigned various tasks, including helping to prepare meals for the firehouse. This is our first year running this internship; it'll be a learning opportunity for the interns and a chance for us to engage with them. They are expected to complete a minimum of four hours per week, with the potential to reach 12-16 hours weekly depending on scheduling.

LOCAL 5265 - UNION REPORT

Union representatives are absent tonight. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** speaks on their behalf stating the Colorado Professional Fire Fighters (CPFF) delegation meeting is scheduled for tomorrow in Denver. Both **Kaden Fife** and **John Dawson** will be in attendance. During the meeting, they plan to request a matching grant for campaign funds. The local union has allocated \$6,000 from their local account and is asking the Colorado Union to match that amount. The funds would be used to hire or work with a campaign manager, cover associated materials, and support distribution costs, including door hangers, printing, yard signs, and billboard advertising. **Kaden Fife** asked **Chief Matt Katzenberger** to pass this information along to the board, as he was not present at tonight's meeting.

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NEW BUSINESS

Chief Matt Katzenberger presents Resolution 01/08/2026-1, regarding the adoption of LVFD's four designated public posting locations and one alternate location for board meetings in 2026.

Cliff Gray made a **motion** to accept Resolution 01/08/2026-1, the adoption of the board meeting posting places in 2026; seconded by **Jesse Mease**. **Motion** was passed with five votes.

Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** addresses the engagement letter requiring the Board's approval. The letter is included behind the packet rather than within it. The reason for this placement is that the engagement letter is not intended for public distribution, as it contains confidentiality provisions with the auditor. The letter is substantially the same as last year's. The fee disclosure appears on page 3, under "Engagement Administration Fees and Other." The prior fee was \$6,800, and the current engagement reflects an increase to \$7,200. This amount is disclosed as the maximum fee to be billed. If the terms are acceptable, we will return a signed copy to the auditor, **Paul Miller**, with Blair and Associates. The audit is scheduled for the second week of April 2026. **Mark Bonella** asks if we've looked at any other accounting firms for the audit and/or compared pricing. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** responded, saying it can be challenging to find firms that are familiar with special district requirements. Several firms decline to submit proposals because they do not have the necessary experience, which limits our options. The firms he is familiar with are generally in the same price range, or at least they were the last time prices were reviewed. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** and other administrative staff last evaluated other firms about three years ago, shortly after a previous office manager retired. If fees continue to increase beyond reason, he is agreeable to obtain additional quotes.

Mark Bonella made a **motion** to approve the Annual Audit for FY 2025 Engagement Letter with Blair and Associates; seconded by **Jesse Mease**. **Motion** was passed with five votes.

OLD BUSINESS

Chief Matt Katzenberger begins with future funding initiatives, specifically the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). He notes that the only substantive changes are that the City of Fruita has added its resolution number for reference and included the exact language that will appear on the ballot, rather than the placeholder language used previously. Otherwise, the document is consistent with the draft we provided last month. That draft clarified the 50/50

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cost-sharing arrangement, less minimal administrative fees, along with a few additional administrative details. The MOU largely restates the provisions already adopted in both our resolution and the Fruita City Council's resolution. At this point, **Chief Matt Katzenberger's** understanding is that this is primarily a formality; approval to enter into the MOU, followed by execution and return of the signed document. Unless there are questions or concerns, he does not see any changes needed. The accountability and reporting requirements outlined are all reasonable, manageable, and will be handled on our end. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** confirms that city employees are subject to the same fair election laws as we are. This means they may provide factual, informational content, but they cannot produce materials that advocate for or against the measure. They can explain the rationale for the initiative, how the funds would be used, and present historical metrics that support the identified need. At the same time, they are also required to disclose potential negative impacts. With respect to outreach, police officers, if permitted by the City, may participate on their own time alongside our union representatives. The union has agreed to manage the campaign efforts. On January 28, 2026, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** will be attending a Community Connections event with the Fruita Chamber as a guest speaker. Fruita City Manager, **Shannon Vassen**, will also be participating as one of the speakers. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** plans to include this topic on his agenda that day as an initial opportunity to begin educating Fruita voters. The discussion will be strictly factual and based on the white paper previously provided, which serves as a summary of the supporting information. The goal is to be as transparent as possible. This event will be the first of several outreach opportunities that **Chief Matt Katzenberger** has planned over the next four months. If the City is interested, he would also like to host at least one town hall meeting at Station 31, structured as an open question-and-answer session for the public. These activities represent the extent of how the District can distribute information under the limitations.

Jesse Mease made a **motion** to accept and approve the Sales Tax Initiative MOU; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with five votes.

Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** addresses the status of the Loma Hall. We received an asbestos inspection proposal from GRE (Grand River Environmental) for \$1,925. This is the only proposal we have received to date. At nearly \$2,000, it was not something we specifically line-itemed in the budget. Although it was not individually line-itemed, the cost would fall under building maintenance, for which we have a \$16,000 budget allocation. As such, it would not require a budget amendment if we chose to proceed. That said, the proposal amount came in double what **Chief Matt Katzenberger** had anticipated. His question for the board is whether a cost in the \$2,000 range

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for an assessment is acceptable to continue pursuing, or whether we should hold off and/or seek other options. **Jesse Mease** states that he believes we need to complete this project so we can begin future planning and better understand what needs to be budgeted for in fiscal years 2027 or 2028 to address the issue. The board agrees. Formal approval is not required; however, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** will pursue additional quotes and proceed with the option that provides the best value and customer service. Once the assessment is completed, he will bring the report back for review, at which point we can determine the next steps. We will also ensure that at least \$14,000 remains available in the building maintenance budget for the remainder of the year.

ADJOURNMENT

Cullen Purser made a **motion** to adjourn the Regular Board Meeting.
All in favor with five affirmative votes.








