

Lower Valley Fire Protection District

May 14, 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 of directors: Cullen Purser, Mark Bonella, Jesse Mease, and Cliff Gray. Others in attendance: Fire Chief Matt Katzenberger, Deputy Fire Chief Gary Mulkey, Diana Manzanares, Mahea Rodriguez, Fire Marshal Travis Holder, Kaden Fife, Ben Gardner, Anthony Padilla, and Fruita community member, Angie Wells.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Travis Holder led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS COMMENTS/REQUESTS

Angie Wells begins by introducing herself as a resident of the City of Fruita and is excited to be joining the meeting tonight. She became more interested in the happenings of Lower Valley Fire during the recent measure campaign, which she strongly supported. As a result, **Angie** felt it was important to educate herself further. Her background is in finance, so she states that she's especially interested in gaining a better understanding of the District's financials so she can be a knowledgeable advocate for Lower Valley Fire when speaking with fellow community members.

After an invitation to speak further by **Mark Bonella**, **Angie** further explains that she would welcome the opportunity, at some point, to offer suggestions on how the financial presentations might better resonate with community members. Hopefully we won't be discussing additional tax measures anytime soon, since this measure provides the revenue needed, but if those conversations do arise in the future, she has ideas on how the information could be structured to make the story we're trying to tell clearer and easier for the public to understand. Should the opportunity arise, she'd be happy to share those thoughts.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Jesse Mease motioned to accept the regular board meeting minutes from 04/09/2026; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

APPROVAL OF EXPENSES

Diana rendered the information reporting the expenses from April 1, 2026, through April 30, 2026, totaled \$92,564.15.

Cliff Gray made a **motion** to accept the bills for April 2026; seconded by **Mark Bonella**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS

Diana reports that the total balance in our bank accounts, including cash on hand as of April 30, 2026, is \$3,903,122.87. The interest accrued for the month of April 2026 is \$11,863.67. The YTD interest accrued is \$44,587.12. The Mesa County Statement of Collections for the month of April 2026 totaled \$683,211.16.

Jesse Mease made a **motion** to accept the financial statements for April 2026; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

APPROVAL OF AMBULANCE BILLING RESOLUTIONS

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Mahea reports that the billing write-offs for April 2026 totaled \$87,961.10. There were 12 accounts sent to collections, which totaled \$9,315.29.

Mark Bonella made a **motion** to approve the resolutions and collection write-offs for April 2026; seconded by **Jesse Mease**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mahea reported that ambulance revenue for April 2026 totaled \$65,510.98. The billing financials decreased this month, including both resolutions and income, due to her absence for training in April. These numbers are expected to increase next month as she catches up on outstanding billing activities. **Mahea** informs the board that she successfully passed her Certified Ambulance Coding Certification class in Las Vegas and is now a "CAC" (Certified Ambulance Coder). She thanks the board for the opportunity and support.

Diana reports that **Paul Miller** completed the 2025 annual audit. Unfortunately, due to a recent loss within the firm, he needed to reschedule the audit review presentation for our June 11th meeting. As for COEMS, the follow-up questions related to the audit were minimal, with only a depreciation item needing to be addressed. The requested information has been submitted, and we are currently awaiting completion of the audit review. Lastly, **Diana** informs the Board that **Shannon Currier** will be conducting the first-quarter internal audit between accounting and billing. I recently submitted the January, February, and March month-end reports to her electronically for review, and she will be onsite Friday, May 29th to make any necessary adjustments.

Chief Matt Katzenberger adds to **Diana's** report, stating it ties into both the COEMS comprehensive audit and the District audit. The discrepancy related to depreciation thresholds. For many years, the District's policy was to depreciate any item over \$1,000, but that threshold was increased to \$3,000 a few years ago. In comparison, the Co-EMS threshold is \$10,000. As a result, there are differences between our depreciation schedules and the reporting standards they are asking us to follow. In discussions with **Paul Miller**, one of the recommendations he plans to present next month is to increase the District's capitalization threshold to \$5,000. Given current equipment and supply costs, depreciating items in the \$3,000 range often no longer makes practical sense. This topic will be discussed further during next month's audit review presentation with **Paul**.

FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Matt Katzenberger begins with apparatus updates. He reminds the Board of the email regarding the wire transfer for the F-150 fire marshal vehicle replacement. The vehicle is currently at 2A having the radios, lights, and related equipment installed. We expect to have it back sometime next week, after which it will go to Bud's for striping and decals. Overall, the process has gone very smoothly, as much of the outfitting work was completed prior to delivery. As for the water tender, the current delay involves Gordon Truck Center, the Northwest dealer for the chassis. Ranco completed their portion of the build and returned the truck to Gordon due to a programming issue involving the PTO system. The truck was specified as a "pump-and-roll" apparatus, meaning the PTO should remain engaged while the vehicle is moving below a certain speed and RPM so water can continue spraying. However, the PTO disengages once the vehicle is moving. The truck was returned for reprogramming, but the process has taken longer than anticipated. This afternoon, Gordon informed us they are attempting to bill the District approximately \$3,000 for the troubleshooting and programming work. Ranco has maintained that the truck was built according to the original specifications and has provided supporting spec sheets. At this point, there appears to be disagreement internally between Gordon's service and sales departments regarding responsibility for the issue.

Chief Matt Katzenberger became involved this afternoon after Caleb brought the matter forward. He has not yet heard back from the service manager, but we do not intend to pay the additional \$3,000 charge, as both the truck specification sheet and the original contract clearly state that the vehicle was to meet all specifications required by Lower Valley and approved by Ranco, the outfitter.

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Currently, Ranco has been unable to retrieve the truck because Gordon is claiming there is an outstanding balance owed and will not release the vehicle. Hopefully we will be able to resolve the matter with the sales manager tomorrow so the truck can move forward for shipment, as it is otherwise essentially complete. Following the final virtual walkthrough and review videos, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** did request one additional modification: an extra set of stop, tail, and turn lights mounted higher on the vehicle. The current lights are positioned low on the bumper, and for highway and interstate responses, he believes additional elevated visibility is important for safety. This was not included in the original specifications, but it will be a relatively minor change order and will remain well within the project budget. We've decided that the truck will be shipped here rather than having personnel travel to retrieve it. Once we compared the costs of airfare for two employees, hotel accommodations, meals, wages for multiple travel days, and overtime needed to backfill their shifts, it made far more financial sense to arrange transport instead. The freight quote for shipping the apparatus is approximately \$4,200 to \$4,300. Considering the vehicle is coming from Washington State, transporting it avoids several days of travel time and staffing complications. Ranco has already coordinated the transport arrangements and is simply waiting for confirmation that the truck has been cleared for release.

Regarding the Type III, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** updates the Board that we have received photographic updates confirming that the body has been mounted onto the chassis and that the pump has been installed, along with portions of the associated plumbing. The most recent update was provided on April 27th. Communication with the vendor, however, has not improved. **Travis** continues to send emails and leave messages regularly with little to no response, though we are at least seeing visible progress on the project.

There are no significant updates on the ambulance currently, other than the grant timeline. The State's fiscal year for the grant process closes in June, and since we will not have taken delivery of the ambulance by then, we will need to file for an extension. This was anticipated. The extension period opened on May 15th, and the paperwork will be completed tomorrow. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** will likely just need **Cullen's** signature, as he is listed as the Board's authorized representative on the original grant application submitted last year. Once signed, we will forward the extension request to the State. Currently, we are still generally on track for an estimated September delivery.

Regarding Water Tender 32 (WT-32) that LVFD is selling - **Chief Matt Katzenberger's** recommendation is to set the listing price at \$99,900, just under \$100,000. There is a very wide range in comparable listings, anywhere from approximately \$40,000 to \$180,000 depending on condition, mileage, and configuration, so pricing has been somewhat variable across the market. Based on discussions with the appraiser, this is the price point he believes positions the unit well to generate interest while still being fair to both the District and potential buyers. In terms of listing and commission, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** has reviewed several brokers we have used previously, including Brindley and Fire Truck Mall, and most operate at approximately a 10% commission on the gross sale price. If we move forward with listing it at \$100,000, there will likely be some negotiation, but we should anticipate that net proceeds after commission and negotiation would likely be closer to the mid \$70,000 range, approximately \$75,000. There are quite a few similar units across the country in that 2,500 - 2,800 gallon range with comparable builds, thus **Chief Matt Katzenberger** is not necessarily expecting it to move very quickly. That said, we also don't need it to sell immediately. Worst case is, once the new unit arrives, we can drain the water, move the equipment over, and park it outside. There's no urgent need to get rid of it today. We just don't want it to sit unused for too long, drying out and developing issues with seals or other components from lack of use and exercise. If the Board is comfortable with that approach, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** seeks to initiate the listing at the beginning of next week at that price point. The Board agrees to list WT-32 for sale at an initial asking price of \$99,900, with room for negotiation.

Jesse Mease made a motion to sell WT-32 for no less than \$75,000; seconded by **Mark Bonella**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

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Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** refers to a previous discussion regarding the lightweight rescue gear and included it in the 2026 budget with an allocation of \$55,000. We had also applied for a grant that would have covered approximately \$20,000 of the expense; however, as discussed last month, the grant application was not approved. He states that we have since completed final sizing, obtained bids, and received quotes. The total cost for the 40-set order comes to approximately \$30,150. For comparison, the retail value of those 40 sets would have been around \$55,000, so it is still a very favorable price. The current sale pricing is scheduled to end in mid-June. Although the purchase is already budgeted, due to the size of the expense, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** wanted to confirm that the Board is still comfortable proceeding with the approximately \$30,000 purchase. A motion is not required for this purchase as it's already allocated in the budget.

Next, **Chief Matt Katzenberger** informs the Board of two legislative initiatives currently being discussed that could significantly impact workers' compensation, not only for the Fire District, but statewide in general. The first initiative involves separating Pinnacol from PERA. Currently, Pinnacol operates under the state umbrella, and the proposal to privatize it is largely being considered as a way for the state to generate additional general revenue through the transaction. However, if Pinnacol becomes privatized, agencies like ours would ultimately be subject to the decisions and pricing structure of a private insurance company rather than a state-supported entity. We are continuing to monitor that proposal closely. At this point, we still do not have a definitive answer on whether it will move forward. Our Pinnacol representative has been following up on the matter and is expected to provide additional information tomorrow. The second initiative was introduced during the final day of the legislative session and has already passed both the Senate and the House. It is currently awaiting the Governor's signature. There have been numerous requests for agencies to submit letters supporting a veto, largely because of how the legislation was introduced and advanced through the process. The intent behind the legislation is entirely understandable and supportable. The bill expands presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters by adding approximately nine or ten additional cancers to the list of presumptive conditions. In practical terms, if a firefighter is diagnosed with one of those cancers, it is presumed to be work-related for workers' compensation purposes. Given the studies and research that continue to emerge regarding firefighter cancer risks, the concept certainly makes sense.

The challenge **Chief Matt Katzenberger** has with this legislation and still undecided on whether he would recommend sending a letter to Governor Polis, is that while the bill is clearly trying to do the right thing, he believes there may be unintended consequences that could have been addressed had the legislation been introduced earlier in the session. Introducing it on the final day left very little opportunity for meaningful discussion or for stakeholders to work through potential impacts and mitigation measures. When the state initially completed its fiscal analysis of the bill, the projected financial impact was estimated at approximately \$2.1 million in increased state expenditures during the first year and roughly \$4.1 million annually thereafter. However, the only amendment **Chief Matt Katzenberger** has been able to identify that was ultimately adopted excluded the state from having to participate in the expanded coverage requirements. As a result, the revised fiscal note reflected zero cost to the state. That significantly changed the perception of the bill, because it allowed legislation to be viewed as doing something positive for firefighters without creating any direct financial impact to the state itself. The legislation ultimately did not create any cost to the state because the state exempted itself - including firefighters employed through the Department of Fire Prevention and Control and the Department of Public Safety - from participating under these guidelines. In other words, state-employed firefighters would not be covered under the same expanded presumptive cancer regulations because the state determined the cost would be too significant. That is where many of my concerns begin. **Chief Matt Katzenberger's** concern is that this shifts a substantial amount of control back to workers' compensation providers. Approximately nine years ago, the State Firefighter Heart and Cancer Trust were established because firefighters were routinely being denied benefits, medical coverage, and compensation for work-related cancer claims. In response, legislation created the presumptive cancer law and established the Cancer Trust at the state level. The trust was initially funded by the State, and participation remains voluntary for

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fire districts and departments. For those that participate, including our district, there is a corresponding credit applied to workers' compensation premiums because the liability shifts from the workers' compensation carrier to the trust itself. To his knowledge, we have had at least two employees or former employees utilize the Cancer Trust benefits. In both cases, the claims process was handled very quickly and efficiently. Once the diagnosis was verified and confirmed to be one of the presumptive cancers, benefits were issued within a matter of days. One of the concerns with this legislation is that it appears to move much of that process back into the workers' compensation system, which could become significantly more complicated and difficult for firefighters navigating a diagnosis. While the intent of the bill is clearly to simplify the process and make it easier for workers' compensation carriers to approve claims, the reality is that workers' compensation providers are still insurance companies, and their financial incentive is often to limit or deny claims whenever possible. Workers' compensation carriers are insurance companies, and ultimately their objective is to avoid financial loss. That often means denying claims, delaying claims, or tying claims up in litigation because, financially, it can be less expensive to pay survivor benefits than to cover long-term treatment and care for someone who is still living with the illness. That is why **Chief Matt Katzenberger** is still undecided on whether he would recommend supporting the veto initiative. The legislation is clearly attempting to do the right thing, but there are concerns that the unintended consequences could make it more difficult for firefighters to access timely benefits and support. There is also a very real possibility that this could significantly impact workers' compensation rates. Currently, the discount we receive for participating in the Cancer Trust is approximately \$10,000 annually, while our participation cost is about \$11,000 per year, so it nearly offsets itself. What we do know is that if this bill is signed into law, the cost of participating in the Cancer Trust is projected to increase by approximately 50%. Statewide projections estimate an increase of roughly \$144 per firefighter due to the expanded presumptive cancer list and the anticipated increase in claims. For our district, that would raise our annual participation cost to approximately \$16,000. The Cancer Trust itself is voluntary, and one of the concerns expressed directly by the Trust, including in an email requesting support for a veto, is that some departments may decide they can no longer afford participation if insurance-related costs continue to rise. If enough departments withdraw, the long-term sustainability of the Trust becomes uncertain. If the Trust ultimately fails, we could end up right back where we were nine years ago, with firefighters relying entirely on the traditional workers' compensation system for cancer-related claims. When these concerns are combined with the separate initiative involving Pinnacol privatization, it creates even more uncertainty. If Pinnacol were privatized, there would likely be less state oversight and regulation than currently exist under the state-supported structure. Taken together, those two initiatives could compound the challenges and risks surrounding firefighter cancer coverage and workers' compensation. That is one of the primary reasons organizations such as SDA of Colorado are requesting support for a veto. Their concern is that, while the legislation is intended to accomplish something positive, the long-term outcome could unintentionally create greater barriers for firefighters seeking benefits and care. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** wanted to make the Board aware of these ongoing discussions and concerns. The bill number for the legislation is HB26-184 if anyone would like to review it further. They are requesting responses by Monday at the latest. To put that timeline into perspective, it has been less than two weeks since this bill was first introduced on the floor to the point of reaching the Governor's desk for signature consideration.

Chief Matt Katzenberger continues, stating if we look at the potential impact these changes could have on our premiums, particularly if Pinnacol becomes privatized in addition to the expanded presumptive benefit requirements, the financial effect could be substantial. It could potentially consume much of the additional revenue anticipated from the new sales tax. It could impact future staffing positions we have discussed and ultimately affect the District's ability to continue supporting employees at the level we have worked hard to maintain. That includes the ability to add staffing to better support current employees, as well as continuing to provide the health insurance benefits we have been able to sustain. At some point, we may be forced to evaluate reducing benefits or implementing employee cost-sharing measures because the funding must come from somewhere. We cannot continually return to taxpayers asking for additional revenue. That uncertainty is what concerns me the most. Our Pinnacol agent is concerned enough about the situation that she has

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already started exploring alternative insurance options for all of her Pinnacol clients, even though renewals do not occur until the end of the year and the formal renewal process does not typically begin until November. The level of uncertainty surrounding these initiatives has prompted her to begin planning well in advance. One of the additional concerns she raised is that lower-risk employers are already beginning to move away from Pinnacol because they want to avoid the uncertainty associated with potential privatization. The challenge is that police and fire agencies fall into some of the highest-risk workers' compensation categories. Many insurance companies will not even underwrite those types of policies because of the level of exposure involved. If lower-risk employers continue leaving Pinnacol, it could leave the company with primarily higher-risk entities such as public safety agencies. Without that broader balance of lower-risk policyholders, there is concern that premiums could rise even further. According to our agent, that shift is already beginning to happen, as some lower-risk clients are choosing to move now simply to avoid the uncertainty of what may come next.

Chief Matt Katzenberger states his hesitation with recommending that the Board support a veto is how that decision could be perceived. He does not want staff or firefighters to feel that we are not supportive of expanded presumptive cancer benefits or that we do not recognize the importance of those protections.

His concern is not with the intent of the legislation itself. The concern is whether the long-term unintended consequences could ultimately make it more difficult for firefighters to access benefits and whether the financial impact could negatively affect the District's ability to continue supporting employees in other meaningful ways.

Kaden Fife adds this initiative was largely pushed forward by the CPFF state union. He states that he and **Chief Matt Katzenberger** had an extensive conversation about it today, and he raised several valid points worth considering. **Kaden** also received an email from CPFF that he asked to share with the Board outlining their perspective on the issue. At this point, his main hesitation is that we have not yet been provided with a substantial amount of detailed information explaining their rationale or addressing some of the concerns that have been raised regarding the broader impacts of the legislation.

Chief Matt Katzenberger further informs the Board that this legislation essentially allows firefighters to choose whether they seek benefits through the Cancer Trust or through workers' compensation. However, there is nothing in the language that clearly prevents an individual from attempting to pursue benefits through both systems. One of the arguments CPFF is making is based on situations where firefighters were diagnosed with cancer, attempted to access the Trust benefits, and then discovered that their department did not participate in the Trust - resulting in a denial of benefits. In his view, that issue is not necessarily a flaw in how the Trust is structured, but rather a breakdown in communication at the departmental level regarding participation status and available benefits. Participation in the Trust is voluntary, and departments do make the decision whether to enroll or not. That is part of his concern with some of the examples being used. It places the issue on the Trust itself, when it may be more reflective of departmental decisions and employee awareness. At the same time, he also recognizes the seriousness of what happens if the Trust is no longer viable. Before the Trust was fully established, LVFD had a situation involving a former employee attempting to navigate a cancer claim through the workers' compensation system alone, and the process was extremely difficult and burdensome. No one in that position should have to deal with delays, denials, and extensive administrative hurdles while also managing a serious cancer diagnosis. By contrast, when we have used the Cancer Trust, the experience has been significantly more efficient. Once eligibility was confirmed, the process was straightforward and benefits were issued quickly. That difference in experience is a key part of why this issue is so important to consider carefully.

Kaden read aloud a letter he received from the CPFF in its entirety to the Board. He concludes by informing the Board that he will be calling several of the higher-level stakeholders tomorrow to better understand the potential long-term impacts of this legislation. At this time, the proponents are stating that there is no data indicating an increase in premiums or related costs; however, he would like to verify that independently. If able to obtain any concrete data or additional information, he will bring it back to the Board for review tomorrow.

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Chief Matt Katzenberger will draft a letter tomorrow and email it to the Board for review, since it will be issued under the District's name. He will also keep the union informed throughout the process. At the state level, he believes there is a strong argument that this legislation was advanced in a way that bypassed meaningful discussion and should be reconsidered or vetoed. However, at the local level, his concern is to ensure that this is communicated clearly and appropriately. We have invested significant effort through our strategic planning process, particularly around cancer prevention initiatives and supporting our firefighters. Because of that, he wants to be very intentional about how this position is perceived. He does not want it to appear that we are opposing expanded benefits or not supporting our employees. The intent is not to limit or block firefighter benefits. The intent is to ensure that, in the long term, firefighters remain protected under a system that is sustainable, fair, and effective.

DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Deputy Chief Mulkey begins with good news - we received the EMS Provider Grant from the State Public Health Department in the amount of approximately \$54,000. This is a matching grant that will allow us to move forward with purchasing critical care equipment for our frontline ambulances. With this funding, we will be able to outfit all three frontline ambulances with Lucas Devices, ventilators, ultrasound units, and IV pumps. Staff is already in place to operate this equipment. The ultrasound system will primarily be used by APP-level providers for a range of assessments, including internal injury evaluation and other on-scene diagnostics. In addition, we will be integrating this equipment with tablet-based systems and data applications that align with our recent implementation of the county's crew force application. This will enhance real-time tracking of unit status, response times, and overall system performance, from dispatch to arrival and transport. This investment also supports one of our strategic priorities around improving data collection and operational transparency, allowing us to accurately track response intervals and system efficiency in ways we have not been able to before. Overall, this grant significantly strengthens our clinical capabilities and enhances both patient care and system accountability. Kudos to **Captain Adam Compton** for his work in helping secure this funding.

Next, **Deputy Chief Mulkey** informs the Board that our part-time academy recruits are scheduled to complete their program on May 30th. They have spent a significant amount of time training with the Chief and various crew members throughout the process. During the course of the academy, we started with seven recruits and are currently down to six, as one accepted a full-time opportunity elsewhere. Of the remaining recruits, three still need to complete fire certification requirements and are currently working through that process with our staff. **Deputy Chief Mulkey** will be sending out an email with details regarding their graduation ceremony.

In other areas of training, he states that the crews recently completed swift water rescue training, with a focus on entrapment scenarios due to the low water levels this year.

Lastly, **Deputy Chief Mulkey** shares the call volume data, stating that we're continuing to track closely with last year's levels, which were historically high for the District. As of April 30th, we are approximately 1% below last year's total for the same period. On a year-to-date basis (January 1 through April 30), call volume is approximately 2% higher than last year, and still about 13% higher than in 2024. The overall call mix remains consistent across service types, with a slight increase in out-of-control agricultural burns compared to prior years.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Fire Marshal Travis Holder informs the Board that growth continues to accelerate, with more apartment-style developments beginning to come online.

We are also seeing additional development activity in the area, including projects such as the Muse complex near Monument Ridge, which is moving forward at approximately a 2.0 scale. The UC Health project in the Kokopelli area is also progressing, with construction underway across from the pediatric dental offices and surrounding parcels. Additional construction activity is anticipated near the high school and Rimrock area once school is out for the summer. From an inspection standpoint, we will likely see increased presence at the high school to ensure compliance with construction documents and safety requirements.

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On the operational side, **Fire Marshal Travis Holder** states that he will be teaching CPR at Highline tomorrow, and fire mitigation efforts are scheduled to begin on Monday. If anyone is interested, you can observe the new air curtain burners in operation at Little Salt Wash Park during the upcoming burn operations. **Chief Matt Katzenberger** adds that the media blast from the City regarding the mitigation efforts has gone out, and **Travis** has also spent considerable time going door-to-door in the affected neighborhoods to ensure residents are aware and informed. He has put a significant amount of effort into community outreach on this issue.

OFFICERS REPORT

Captain Anthony Padilla informs the Board that he, along with **Captain Thomas Creel, and Deputy Chief Mulkey** recently returned from a COTC (Chief Officer Training Course) held in the Denver/Loveland area. The course is designed for current officers and fire chiefs and runs as a five-day training series focused on leadership and command-level development. **Chief Mulkey** completed all five parts of the series and graduated from the program. **Anthony** and **Thomas** have completed two classes so far and still have additional coursework remaining. Overall, it was a valuable experience that provided an opportunity to network with officers from other agencies, compare operational practices, and better understand the shared challenges across departments. He was able to take several beneficial leadership and operational takeaways from the training.

Next, **Captain Ben Gardner** informs the Board that a couple of weeks ago, LVFD responded to a structure fire. Fortunately, everyone made it out safely, including a dog that was rescued from the home. The dog was unresponsive when we brought it outside, and we immediately began CPR and administered oxygen therapy. At the time, they didn't think the dog was going to make it, but it slowly began to respond. Law enforcement then transported the dog to the emergency veterinary hospital on North Avenue in Grand Junction. **Chief Katzenberger** updated us yesterday that the dog was still alive, which was fantastic news. Even better, the dog came by to visit the crew last week, healthy, energetic, and doing remarkably well. Seeing that outcome after everything that happened was incredibly rewarding. This was truly a team effort by the entire Lower Valley organization. **Chief Katzenberger** coordinated the incident, **Chief Mulkey** managed other EMS calls, and personnel from multiple crews stepped in to assist and provide coverage. It was a great example of everyone coming together to support one another and serve our community. In the end, it was a feel-good outcome for everyone involved and a reminder of what can be accomplished when the whole team works together.

Next, **Jesse Mease** asked **Captain Padilla** about his observations from the Chief Officer Training Course (COTC), specifically whether there were areas in which Lower Valley was performing particularly well compared to other agencies. **Captain Padilla** responded by explaining that one of the recurring themes when speaking with other agencies is staffing. Regardless of their size, staffing challenges seem to be a common concern across the fire service. Those conversations have given him a greater appreciation for what we accomplish at Lower Valley. He states that he's always taken pride in how effectively we operate with the resources we have. Our personnel consistently find ways to adapt, maximize available resources, and provide a high level of service. Many agencies are genuinely surprised when they learn how much we accomplish with the staffing levels we have on our apparatus. It's also easy to take for granted how progressive we are in EMS. After working here for a while, our approach can start to feel normal, but when you discuss our practices with personnel from other departments, many are impressed by the level of medicine we provide and the capabilities of our crews. It's a good reminder that we have something special here and that we're continuing to move in the right direction. A big part of that success comes from having supportive administration and a Board that is willing to invest in its people. Not every department has that level of support, and it makes a significant difference. One of **Captain Padilla's** biggest takeaways wasn't necessarily the formal curriculum or textbook knowledge. It was an opportunity to share real-world experiences with other agencies, compare perspectives, and gain a renewed appreciation for the strengths of our own organization.

Jesse Mease followed up by asking whether other agencies viewed Lower Valley's practices positively, particularly regarding advanced EMS initiatives such as the APP program, or whether they struggled to understand how those responsibilities fit within traditional job roles. **Captain Padilla**

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responded that perceptions varied depending on the type of agency. Some departments are city-operated, others are volunteer-based, and some, like Lower Valley, operate as special districts. As a result, attendees often had different perspectives and operational experiences, which influenced how they viewed various programs and practices. He noted that not every firefighter is particularly interested in EMS, so advanced EMS initiatives do not resonate equally with all personnel. However, many attendees were interested in learning about Lower Valley's approach and the capabilities available to its crews. One discussion focused on the implementation of LUCAS mechanical CPR devices. A representative from another agency shared that their department had previously dispatched two ambulances to cardiac arrest calls but had improved efficiency and resource utilization after implementing mechanical CPR devices, allowing them to achieve similar outcomes with fewer resources. **Captain Padilla** also shared that several attendees were surprised to learn that Lower Valley ambulances are equipped with technologies such as ventilators and ultrasound devices. Some indicated that they had never considered implementing similar capabilities within their own organizations. While he could not speak definitively to every attendee's opinion, he observed that many agencies are not utilizing the same equipment or approaches, which highlighted Lower Valley's commitment to innovation and progressive EMS practices. Overall, the discussions reinforced that Lower Valley continues to pursue innovative solutions and remains ahead of many agencies in certain areas of EMS delivery.

LOCAL 5265 - UNION REPORT

Union President **Kaden Fife** discusses the recent employee surveys. Overall, the survey results were similar to those received last year and showed continued improvement compared to results from three years ago. Following the survey, the Union met with both Chiefs to review the responses, discuss trends, and assess overall employee morale and organizational well-being. The survey continues to serve as a valuable tool for gauging how employees are doing and identifying opportunities for improvement. **Board President Cullen Purser** stated that he appreciated the positive feedback reflected in the survey results. He also noted that, like last year, several respondents provided specific and constructive suggestions for areas where the District could improve. He expressed a willingness to meet with the Union to discuss those suggestions in greater detail and ensure he has a clear understanding of the concerns being raised. He emphasized his confidence that employee feedback is being heard and carefully considered by District leadership and the Board. **Cullen** further stated that suggestions deemed practical and beneficial to the organization will be evaluated for implementation, with the goal of continuing to improve operations and the employee experience.

Chief Matt Katzenberger added that if individuals and the Board would like to discuss the survey feedback in more detail, and that his involvement is not required for those conversations. He noted that if a group discussion is preferred, it may be beneficial to structure it as a formal workshop to ensure transparency and consistency. He encouraged anyone interested to reach out so appropriate arrangements can be made.

NEW BUSINESS

Vice President Mark Bonella opens with the discussion of Resolution 5/14/2026-1, a resolution to amend the Officers of the Board of Directors. **Mark** noted that he is flexible regarding the voting method, whether verbal or written, and emphasized that the format can be adjusted based on the situation. He explained that he has experience serving on multiple boards where different approaches are used depending on the level of consensus and the nature of the decision. He added that in situations where there is clear agreement, a simple verbal process may be sufficient. However, for more sensitive or potentially divisive matters, a written ballot can sometimes help reduce pressure or discomfort and allow members to vote more freely. His intent in raising the point was to support transparency and ensure members feel comfortable expressing their true preferences. **Mark** clarified that he has never experienced issues with conflict or division on the current board but wanted to provide perspective based on experience. He suggested keeping the process flexible so the board can decide in advance how to proceed based on the agenda item. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining annual elections, noting that this structure provides opportunities for

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rotation and allows other members to step into leadership roles if they choose, while still allowing continuity if the board wishes to re-elect the same individuals.

President Cullen expressed support for using a paper ballot process, noting that discussions around leadership selection can often feel awkward or uncomfortable regardless of the setting. He stated that in many cases, when decisions are discussed openly, the default outcome tends to be maintaining the status quo, rather than exploring change. He indicated that in this instance, he is comfortable moving away from simply keeping things as they are and would support creating opportunities for others to step into leadership roles. He suggested that using a paper ballot could help formalize the process and reduce the discomfort that sometimes arises during open discussion, allowing members to vote more freely and without pressure. He also agrees with **Mark** that a paper ballot could be an effective way to address that awkwardness and support a more open process. **Cullen** further emphasized that there are no concerns about hurt feelings within the current board, and that the approach would simply provide a structured and fair way to encourage participation and potential leadership turnover when appropriate.

Mark Bonella made a motion to adopt Resolution 5/14/2026-1: a resolution to amend the "Officers of the Board" elections to take place annually in the month of May by paper ballot; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

Next, the adoption of the Operations Policy Manual was discussed. **Chief Katzenberger** explained that there have not been substantial changes to the document, but rather a transition to a more streamlined and organized format compared to the previous district manual. He noted that employee-specific content has been separated into a dedicated handbook for clarity. He highlighted that one of the primary updates involved the fee schedule. He explained that the last formal board resolution updating fees was in 2019, and over time there had been inconsistencies between the district manual and the resolution, particularly regarding fire prevention fees. In addition, several fee structures have become outdated or no longer aligned with current operations. To address this, all fees will now be consolidated into the operations manual to improve transparency, consistency, and ease of access. This structure will also allow fees to be reviewed and updated annually as part of the regular policy review process, rather than going multiple years without adjustment. He noted that ambulance fees largely remain unchanged, except for the addition of Medicaid billing authorization for treat-in-place services. This includes a defined reimbursement rate intended to align with regional practices and reduce write-offs while recovering costs that were previously unbillable. He also addressed changes to event standby services. The previous structure included multiple staffing categories, including single-provider standby options. He expressed concern about the safety and practicality of assigning a single EMT to standbys and recommended eliminating that option. The proposed model simplifies standby coverage into ALS and BLS rates, ensuring at least two personnel are assigned. Staffing assignments would be based on the type and location of the event, such as using a UTV for bicycle races or an ambulance for rodeos. He noted that the previous fee schedule had not been updated since 2019 and was significantly outdated, resulting in rates that no longer covered labor and operational costs. In many cases, standby events were not generating revenue after accounting for staffing expenses, including overtime.

Chief Katzenberger explained that Country Jam utilized a different billing structure compared to standard event standbys. He noted that this event required detailed justification of all charges and was billed based on actual costs rather than a flat rate. He stated that the billing model accounted for personnel hours, including wages and benefits, as well as apparatus usage. In practice, this approach was similar to billing for a federal deployment or assignment, where costs are itemized and reimbursed based on actual resource utilization. He also noted that most contracted partners have been informed in advance that rate adjustments are forthcoming. He indicated that, to date, there has been no significant pushback, as most stakeholders understand the rising costs of doing business, including fuel, staffing, and operational expenses.

Chief Katzenberger noted that cost recovery fees, hazardous materials fees, and copy fees remain unchanged. Fire prevention fees were updated to better reflect current operational practices and align with today's cost structure, as well as regional fee standards, including closer alignment with

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Grand Junction in certain categories, though not at the same higher rate in all areas. He also explained that a new section was added to address requirements under the Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code, which introduced responsibilities and associated fees that were not previously included. Out-of-district response fees and inclusion fees were not changed. He further stated that all fees were consolidated into a single resolution to ensure consistency and provide a clear, centralized reference point for all district fee structures moving forward.

He explained that several additions were made to the district manual that were not included in the previous version. One of the key updates is a formal, written policy outlining job injury procedures, including a step-by-step flow chart to guide employees through the reporting and response process. The updated section also includes revised and standardized forms, replacing outdated documents that had not been consistently used in recent years. A new clearance form has been added for both on-duty and off-duty injuries, along with a clinician-directed form that allows medical providers to define an employee's restrictions and ability to return to work or transition into modified duty. This change is intended to reduce liability by ensuring medical professionals, rather than the department, determine work limitations. In addition, a formal temporary modified duty assignment policy was established. Previously, light duty was addressed only in a brief statement granting discretion to the Fire Chief. The updated policy creates a consistent, structured process for assigning modified duty based on physician recommendations, while also acknowledging that assignments may not always be available for every restriction. The intent is to support employees by providing work opportunities whenever feasible until they can return to full duty. **Chief Katzenberger** also noted that many items previously found in the SOP manual were relocated into the policy document to eliminate ambiguity and clarify which items are enforceable policy versus operational guidance. Additional updates include revisions to the uniform policy, including requirements such as maintaining a tucked-in uniform shirt. While some of these changes may seem minor, they were standardized to ensure consistency and clarity across all personnel's expectations. Overall, he emphasized that the updates are intended to reduce gray areas, improve clarity, and create a more consistent and legally sound policy framework. He also acknowledged that additional policies may still be developed as needs are identified, but the goal is not to over-regulate, rather to ensure necessary expectations are clearly documented. **Chief Mulkey** contributed significantly to the development of the document, including much of the SOP content and related procedural sections.

Chief Mulkey states that he added several provisions to ensure consistency in how training requests, trade shifts, and related approvals are reviewed and processed. These updates were designed to clearly outline expectations and create a standardized approval process. The intent, as noted, is to ensure fairness and consistency in decision-making, so that all requests are evaluated under the same criteria each time. This helps eliminate ambiguity and supports a more transparent and equitable process for employees.

Chief Katzenberger explained to the Board that the district's board policies and bylaws needed to be formally documented in a centralized location, and the policy manual was determined to be the most appropriate place for them. He noted that the first two sections of the manual - Core Policies and Bylaws - directly govern the Board and the overall operation of the District. He further clarified that any changes to these two sections require official action by the Board. He explained that policies below that level may be implemented through administrative notification from himself or **Chief Mulkey**, depending on operational needs. A question was raised regarding whether the Board historically maintains final approval authority over the district policy manual. It was noted that, in contrast, the employee handbook operates differently, where changes can be made through HR direction without requiring the same level of Board action.

Chief Katzenberger asked whether the Board wished to continue maintaining final approval authority over any policy changes within the district policy manual. The Board responded affirmatively, confirming that they want to retain final approval for all policy changes contained in the manual.

Jesse Mease made a motion to adopt the Operations Policy Manual; seconded by **Mark Bonella**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

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Cliff Gray made a motion to adopt Resolution 5/14/2026-2: a resolution to update LVFD's Charges and Fees; seconded by **Jesse Mease**. **Motion** was passed with four votes.

The officers of the Board were elected by paper ballot in a private vote. The ballots were tallied and the results were read aloud by the District's Designated Election Official (DEO), **Diana Manzanares**. The results are as follows:

- President – **Mark Bonella**
- Vice President – **Jesse Mease**
- Treasurer – **Cullen Purser**

These newly appointed positions are effective immediately.

OLD BUSINESS

Fire Chief Matt Katzenberger states there are no new updates regarding the Loma Hall. Next, **Chief Katzenberger** provided an update on the sales tax arrangement with the City of Fruita, noting that he met with City Manager and Assistant City Manager, **Shannon and Dan**, last month to work through the details. He explained that he drafted an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) intended to align with the prior MOU while ensuring all key provisions were fully incorporated. He stated that the draft was forwarded to the partner agency, which opted to submit it to their city attorney for review. Currently, they have not yet received feedback from legal counsel. **Chief Katzenberger** also noted that the District's legal review is still pending, and both sides are currently awaiting responses. He confirmed that the draft was shared with questions to ensure liability protections and budget considerations are clearly addressed, and that the agreement cannot be unilaterally altered by either party. Both legal teams are aware of the timeline, as the agreement is intended to be presented for signature at the June 11th board meeting. He emphasized the importance of receiving legal feedback in advance, so the Board has sufficient time for review and consideration. At present, both parties are awaiting legal input before moving forward.

Mark asked what would happen in the event an impasse is reached regarding the sales tax agreement, specifically if the parties are unable to come to terms by the June 11th meeting. He raised concern that if the agreement is not mutually accepted, one party could seek to modify the intent of the original arrangement and negotiations could stall, resulting in a lack of agreement at the time of board consideration.

Chief Katzenberger responded that, if necessary, an extension could be filed. He explained that the timeline is driven by the original MOU, which established a 90-day window to finalize the IGA. Any extension of that timeline would require agreement from both governing bodies, the Board and the City Council, as they are the parties that created the original MOU. He noted there is currently no intent to extend beyond the 90-day period but emphasized that an extension would be a straightforward option if additional time is needed to continue negotiations. He further explained that if a true impasse were reached, the agreement would ultimately default to the ballot language, which governs how the funds must be used. As long as expenditure remains consistent with that language, compliance would still be maintained. He added that the agreement must align with the ballot language as filed with the Secretary of State and expressed confidence that an impasse is unlikely given those clear parameters. He also noted that during prior discussions, he emphasized the importance of keeping the language specific to avoid ambiguity in how the funds are ultimately governed.

Chief Katzenberger explained that he took the original MOU, which closely followed the ballot language, and used it as the foundation for developing the IGA. He stated that his primary additions focused on defining the administrative process for how the sales tax would be received, calculated, and distributed. He emphasized that the intent of the IGA is not to change the substance of the ballot language, but to clearly outline the operational procedures, including timelines and responsibilities for processing and distributing the funds. This ensures both entities have a clear, agreed-upon framework for implementation while maintaining alignment with the voter-approved language.

Chief Katzenberger provided an example to explain the timing of sales tax distributions, noting that there is typically a delay between when taxes are collected by the state and when they are ultimately

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distributed to local governments. He explained that, for instance, January sales tax revenue is collected by businesses, submitted to the state by mid-February, and then distributed to municipalities such as Fruita by mid-March. He stated that it is not realistic to expect the District to receive its portion of sales tax revenue on the same timeline as collection, given these inherent processing delays. To address this, he proposed a quarterly payment structure in which the District would receive funds on a one-quarter lag. Under this approach, revenue earned in the first quarter would be received by approximately July. He explained that this delay helps account for potential state processing lags and allows time for reconciliation before funds are distributed, reducing the likelihood of errors or the need for reimbursements. He noted that, while this approach results in the District receiving funds a few months later than ideal, potentially beginning in April 2027 for the first distribution, it provides a more practical and reliable system overall. He emphasized that the short delay is a reasonable tradeoff for improved accuracy and administrative simplicity in the long-term process.

Chief Katzenberger reviewed the draft language currently under legal review, specifically Section 5 regarding quarterly distributions and the distribution calculation methodology. He explained that the draft outlines that each quarterly distribution would be calculated based on the total gross revenue collected during the preceding calendar quarter, minus any administrative costs if applicable, with a cap not to exceed 1% of the distribution. He noted that the inclusion of “if applicable” was based on feedback from **City Manager Shannon**, who indicated that administrative costs may not ultimately be incurred in the process, as the distribution could be as simple as receiving funds and splitting them according to the agreement. However, **Chief Katzenberger** emphasized that even if administrative costs are unlikely, he felt it was important to include a “not to exceed” provision to establish a clear upper limit and provide financial protection within the agreement. He noted that the discussion regarding administrative costs and the proposed structure was made without yet receiving formal input from the City’s finance on what the actual operational impact would be.

Jesse asked whether oversight between the two entities is addressed within the agreement and how that oversight structure would be defined. **Chief Katzenberger** responded that the agreement retains all reporting and collaboration requirements carried forward from the original MOU, including provisions related to transparency, oversight, and reporting back to the public regarding how funds are used. He explained that an additional reporting requirement was added to strengthen accountability. Under the updated language, the District would receive a quarterly statement of collections at the time of each distribution. This document would be similar in format to reports provided by Mesa County and would serve as supporting documentation for the funds received. He noted that this reporting requirement was not included in the original MOU. The quarterly statement would outline gross sales and use tax revenues collected for the applicable period, providing a clear basis for calculating the District’s share of the two-tenths of a percent. He emphasized that this added transparency ensures the distribution is supported by documentation rather than simply issuing a payment without accompanying financial details. He emphasized that the reporting requirement is essential and non-negotiable, noting that there must be clear accounting and documentation to support all distributions. He stated that without proper reporting to verify the funds received, the agreement would not be acceptable. **Chief Katzenberger** further explained that the agreement includes provisions to ensure accountability, transparency, and operational autonomy consistent with the original MOU. This includes a “no sub planning” clause, reinforcing that the revenue is intended to supplement, not replace, existing funding sources.

He also noted the inclusion of a termination clause, which specifies that the agreement would only terminate upon repeal of the public safety sales tax by the voters, as that is the sole mechanism by which the funding authority itself could be eliminated. **Chief Katzenberger** stated that the IGA is currently pending legal review, with the District awaiting feedback from their attorney and the City awaiting response from their legal counsel. Currently, there is limited action to take until both legal reviews are completed. He notes that, depending on timing, the agreement may be ready for Board consideration and potential vote, but that remains uncertain until legal input is received. If legal feedback is not received in time and the timeline becomes constrained, he indicated he would request that the City provide a formal document approved by Council allowing for an extension of the original

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90-day timeline established in the MOU. He explained that such an extension would require Board consideration and approval as well. He added that the original timeline was intentionally structured to be realistic and to avoid unnecessary delays in finalizing the agreement, ensuring there was sufficient time to complete the IGA well before year-end deadlines and avoid last-minute pressure. Lastly on the Sales Tax initiative, **Chief Katzenberger** states that, throughout the initial discussions beginning in September, he repeatedly requested detailed data regarding the City of Fruita's sales tax revenue. He noted that he was often directed to review city council packet materials, which contained high-level financial summaries rather than detailed breakdowns of revenue sources.

He explained that the city's general fund includes a combined line item for tax collections, which encompasses property tax, sales tax, use tax, and lodging tax, but does not initially provide a clear breakdown of each category. He indicated that he specifically requested a more detailed accounting of these individual revenue streams to better understand the underlying figures used in calculations. He stated that it was not until a later city council meeting that he was provided with a more detailed breakdown of revenue categories, including sales tax, use tax (including vehicle and building materials), and lodging tax. After reviewing this information, he began analyzing the data further to reconcile the figures. **Chief Katzenberger** further explains that he developed a spreadsheet using the city's reported data, focusing on the 2% general fund portion of sales tax, which he noted is the relevant baseline for calculating the public safety sales tax share. Based on his analysis of 2025 figures, he found that the 2% general fund sales tax generated approximately \$4.04 million, motor vehicle use tax generated approximately \$823,000 and use tax on building materials generated approximately \$690,245.

When combined, these categories totaled approximately \$5.56 million for 2025. He further explained that over a four-year average, the annual total for these categories is approximately \$4.94 million. Applying two-tenths of one percent calculation results in an estimated annual distribution of approximately \$494,467, or roughly \$247,233 for a 50% share. He noted that this figure differs significantly from the projected first-year estimate of approximately \$975,000 that was presented during the ballot process and referenced in voter materials.

Chief Katzenberger stated that, throughout the initial process beginning in September, he repeatedly requested detailed breakdowns of the City's sales tax revenue data. He explained that he was initially directed to general budget documents and council packet materials, which only provided high-level tax collection figures rather than category-specific breakdowns.

He noted that a more detailed breakdown was eventually provided during a City Council meeting, including separate figures for sales tax, use tax, and related revenue sources. After reviewing the information, he developed a spreadsheet analysis using the City's reported data, focusing on the 2% general fund portion of sales tax and related use tax categories tied to the public safety tax.

Based on his calculations, he identified a significant difference between the estimated revenue derived from historical averages and the projection presented during the ballot process. He stated that his analysis indicated an estimated annual distribution in the range of approximately \$494,000 based on historical data, compared to a projected first-year figure of approximately \$975,000 referenced in ballot materials.

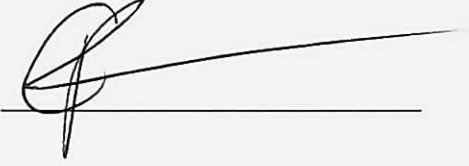
He indicated that he sought clarification on how the higher projection was developed and what assumptions were used. He reported receiving verbal feedback indicating the numbers were not incorrect and that projections are inherently estimates, but he did not receive a detailed written explanation of the methodology used to arrive at the original estimate.

Chief Katzenberger further expressed concern that the projection methodology may have relied on simplified assumptions rather than detailed revenue breakdowns. He stated his belief that there is a discrepancy between projected and actual figures and raised concerns about how that information was communicated in relation to voter expectations. He also noted that he has not received further clarification from legal counsel regarding related questions and expressed frustration with the lack of detailed response to his inquiries. He stated that he continues to seek clearer documentation and transparency regarding the basis for the original projections and their alignment with actual revenue collections.

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ADJOURNMENT

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



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'C' followed by a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a horizontal line.



A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop followed by a horizontal line, positioned above a horizontal line.



A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large loop on the left and a horizontal line extending to the right, positioned above a horizontal line.



A handwritten signature in black ink, with the word 'Cullen' clearly visible at the beginning, followed by a large loop, positioned above a horizontal line.