

Lower Valley Fire Protection District
January 9, 2025

Jesse Mease made a **motion** to accept the bills for December 2024; seconded by **Mark Bonella**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORTS

Diana reports the total balance in our bank accounts, including cash on hand as of December 31, 2024, is \$3,660,883.23. The interest for the month of December 2024 is \$14,444.95. The YTD interest accrued is \$196,203.22. December's Mesa County Statement of Collections totaled \$33,409.44. **Diana** mentions that the interest rates have declined again for both accounts; Grand Valley Bank (now at 4%) and ColoTrust (now at 4.593%).

Cliff Gray made a **motion** to accept the Financial Statement for December 2024; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

APPROVAL OF AMBULANCE BILLING RESOLUTIONS

Mahea reports that the billing write-offs for December totaled \$174,054.70. Accounts sent to collections in December totaled \$27,862.52. **Chief Katzenberger** explained to the board that although this is the largest resolution numbers we've seen at LVFD, however, we're also bringing in larger numbers whilst maintaining our average ratio of income to debt when compared to previous years and we're still exceeding the state and national ambulance billing averages. **Chief** reiterated the claims distribution disruption that affected our largest payer in October/November. That has since cleared up, thus increasing our write-offs and adjustments. In addition to these considerations - end-of-year cleanup from the Zoll / Image Trend transition from earlier this year, also occurred at the end of December.

Mark Bonella made a **motion** to approve the resolutions and write-offs for December 2024; seconded by **Jesse Mease**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mahea reports that the ambulance billing income for December 2024 totaled \$100,594.05 (money in the bank). **Diana** announces that both **Jesse Mease** and **Mark Bonella** are eligible for re-election positions. Self-nomination forms may be filed between January 1st and February 28th. **Diana** has the self-nomination and acceptance forms for both board members, should they desire to remain on the board. These forms would need to be submitted to the DEO (Designated Election Official) no later than 02/28/2025. LVFD appoints **Diana Manzanares** as the DEO for the 2025 election.

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FIRE CHIEF REPORT

Chief Katzenberger reports on project updates. We received a draft of the contract from T-Mobile regarding the leasing space for the tower. He also received drawings of their footprint plans. The draft will be reviewed by the board for future implementation and final discussion. **Chief** reports that all previous grants have been properly closed out, and confirms that LVFD has received the funds from the DFPC grant from March 2024. **Chief Katzenberger** and **Deputy Chief Mulkey** are actively working on the EMS Provider Grant for the district and the most current DFPC Grant for the current year. Next, the **Chief** discusses the City of Grand Junction annexation. We received notice from the City of Grand Junction has petitioned to have residential property, along the 21 ½ Road corridor, between the highway and H Road, to be removed from our district as a part of their annexation process. That is a high dollar area, which will be a loss for the district of about \$2,000 per year. The **Chief** has sent this petition to LVFD's attorney for review, however, there is nothing we can do to prevent this from happening. More petitions are expected to be filed this year for the area surrounding the 700 and 800 blocks of 21 ½ Road. With that, as the boundary lines continue to adjust, the **Chief** would like to petition the City of Grand Junction to take over the desert area north of 25 Road. This makes sense for both Grand Junction and the Fruita fire districts due to Grand Junction's resources from Station 3, Station 6, and soon to be Station 7 much closer geographically, thus a much quicker response time. Our district will not be losing revenue to give this area to Grand Junction, nor will we be taking resources out of Fruita and away from our tax-paying citizens. Next on the agenda, **Chief Katzenberger** updates the Board on new purchases that were necessary for the district immediately. That included two new computers, one printer, and one washing machine. The washing machine and technology equipment were beyond repair and had reached their functioning capacity. The computers and printer were assessed by our IT company, and the washer was assessed by **Adam Compton** (who had replaced parts and repaired the washer several times over the last 10 years), all items were deemed unsalvageable. These items, however, were included in the budget for replacement. Next, the **Chief** wanted to make the board aware of a generous citizen and a supporter of LVFD. He donated nearly \$23,000 at the end of the year to our district. We spoke to him personally to thank him, and we mailed cards to him and his family as well. That money was unexpected and has not yet been specifically earmarked. **Chief Katzenberger** then discusses the topic of LVFD's Policy Manual, specifically, the Paid Time Off (PTO) portion. The manual is currently under review for legislative compliance and to avoid undue liability to the district. Updates are required to take immediate effect on 01/01/2025 for legislation that took effect back in 2021. Those updates include verbiage that accurately

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reflects up-to-date wage laws in Colorado, stating that employees are to be paid out 100% of their earned and accrued PTO upon separation from their employers. Legislation prohibits a “use-it-or-loose-it” policy. On page 20 of our current manual, the policy states, “*Employees may accrue PTO from one year to the next for a maximum of 300 hours. Any hours over the maximum annually will be forfeited and will not be eligible for cash out. Upon separation, the employee may cash out up to 240 hours.*” **Chief Katzenberger** has a couple of suggestions for the Board to consider. His first proposal is to revert the policy back to the way it was prior to the 2023 update (the last manual update was under **Chief Cavaliere** in 2023). The old policy allowed employees to bank 240 hours from year-to-year. The proposed policy would also void out the use-it-or-loose-it clause from the current manual (which was also not included in the pre-2023 manual). Employees would be encouraged to take their earned PTO annually to avoid payroll liabilities at the end of the year. Employees may earn more than 240 hours per year; however, they cannot roll more than 240 hours over from year to year; thus, any excess hours must be paid in full by the District by December 31st of that year. Comp time will remain unchanged. Sick time will also be revised, that proposal will be presented to the Board at a later meeting. There are more suggestions listed on the **Chief's** agenda; however, this change would have the least amount of impact to both the employees benefit and to the finances of the District. The Board unanimously agreed to enact this decision, and they are ready to make a motion.

Mark Bonella made a **motion** to update the District Manual to change the annual PTO carryover policy from 300 hours to 240 hours and to annul the use-it-or-loose-it clause; **motion** was seconded by **Jesse Mease**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

DEPUTY CHIEF REPORT

Deputy Chief Mulkey provided the Board with staff training updates. NFA (National Fire Academy) week is the training focus for the month. The new academy started on Monday, 01/06/2025. All the new recruits will also be attending the hazmat class being held in Grand Junction starting on 02/03/2025. Once the hazmat class is completed, they'll be starting their Fire I certifications. Next, **Deputy Chief Mulkey** provides the 2024 Call Data Report. There was a large increase in false alarms and false calls, largely impacted by the new Apple technology. There are numerous Fire Unions across the country that are trying to work with Apple on a solution to these false emergencies. Structure fires also increased in 2024, and overall call volume increased 25% from the previous year, and 48% from 10 years ago. Overall, in 2024, 72% of our call volume was for EMS; 4% was for fire calls; 3% was for hazmat; and 21% of our call volume was “other”.

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OFFICERS REPORT

Captain Adam Compton reports that we are at 72 calls so far for 2025. Crews are seeing numerous calls for Influenza A and Norovirus patients. Hospitals are full of respiratory illness patients resulting in consistent diversions. Next, **Captain Compton** provides the Board with Quality Assurance (QA) updates. He states that LVFD currently has five APP medics - two APP III's, one APP II, and two APP I's. We continue to have the largest number of advanced level paramedics in Mesa County. We are also looking into the possibility of introducing new medications, as well as carrying blood products. **Stacie Dix** has been leading that project. With that, crews are tracking the number of patients that may be eligible for blood products in a pre-hospital setting. **Captain Compton** reports that **John Dawson** is taking the lead in submitting new waivers for new skill trainings, such as ultrasound, amongst other high-level skills, that would be performed at this end of the valley, by our crews only. They're lifesaving, so this program is incredibly beneficial to the district. Next, **Captain Ben Gardner** reports that their Union President, **Kaden Fife** is a new father. Officers joined in congratulating him. **Captain Gardner** reports that the new academy recruits will be spending time at both Station 31 and Station 32 and the crews will be hands-on with them and helping **Deputy Chief Mulkey** whenever they can. Next, **Captain Beau Schmalz** reports on a grant available through the Division of Fire Prevention and Control worth \$20,000. It recently opened for submissions on 01/07/2025. **Captain Schmalz** is tasked with working on this, and reports he'll be focusing on this for the next several weeks. He also mentions the officers discussing the possibility of obtaining a new extractor to clean their structure gear. The new (bigger) extractor would be housed at Station 31, and then the current one at 31 would be moved to Station 32. Each station would then have an extractor, reducing the crew's exposure to toxic carcinogens, both in their personal vehicles, or transporting gear back and forth in the fire apparatuses. This is contingent on the grant **Captain Schmalz** is working on.

UNION 5625 REPORT

Kaden Fife shares the Unions appreciation to the Board and **Chief Katzenberger** for the transparency and the invitation to participate in the hiring panel for the Deputy Chief's position. The Union is thankful for their consideration. Next, **Kaden** invites the Board to participate in the annual department survey that will open on April 1st. He asks the board members to submit their questions to the Union, and those questions will be included in the survey. **Board President Cullen Purser** reflected on the survey that was held last year. He noted the surveys are an effective tool to measure how things are going, and the survey last year incited big changes. The survey was purposeful,

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and the board was alerted of things they were unaware of. **Cullen** encourages the annual surveys to continue.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 1/9/2025-1, calling for the 2025 Board of Directors election and appointing a Designated Election Official (DEO). **Board President Cullen Purser** announces the Board's appointment of **Diana Manzanares** as LVFD's DEO for the 2025 election. **Cullen** read the resolution in its entirety to the other board members and all employees present in the room.

Jesse Mease made a **motion** to approve Resolution 1/9/2025-1; seconded by **Jeff Phillips**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

Jeff Phillips made a **motion** to approve Posting Places for the Year 2025 in Resolution 1/9/2025-2; seconded by **Cliff Gray**. The **motion** was passed with 5 votes.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Cullen Purser made a **motion** to adjourn. All in favor with 5 affirmative votes.










