

Sonoma County Fire Districts' Association

MEETING MINUTES

Virtual meeting on February 24, 2022

1. Call to Order

President Akre called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

The following members were in attendance.

Name	District		Name	District
Steve Akre	Sonoma Valley		Charlie Lachman	Gold Ridge
Fred Peterson	Northern Sonoma County		Bonnie Plakos	North Sonoma Coast
Sean Grinnell	Bodega Bay		Chris Tachouet	Gold Ridge
Paul Bernier	Northern Sonoma County		Doug Williams	SMART
Matt Atkinson	Sonoma Valley		Mark Hemmendinger	Rancho Adobe
Tony Gossner	Rancho Adobe		Jackie Gardener	North Sonoma Coast
Daymon Doss	Kenwood		Mark Bramfitt	LAFCO
Bob Taylor	Cloverdale		Joe Petersen	Gold Ridge

2. Amend/Approve the Agenda

Director Gardener moved to approve the agenda as presented, 2nd by Director Bernier, approved by all, no one opposed.

3. Treasurer Report

Sec/Tres Grinnell reported that he discovered that our \$2/month fee was a check copy fee. Since we rarely write a lot of checks, the check copy service was removed, and we will see 0 fees going forward so long as we carry the minimum required balance. The current account balance is \$7,207.33.

4. Committee Reports

a. FDAC / FDAC EBA / FAIRA / FASIS

President Akre reported the annual FDAC conference will be held April 5-8 at the Napa Marriot. Always a great conference with lots of info and opportunities to network. FDAC is also offering its Certificate of Achievement program (February 26/27) for fire district leadership, a two-day class that is intended for board members and chief officers. President Akre said that Sonoma Valley was able to host the last event and it was very successful, he encourages participation. FDAC-EBA and FASIS continue consolidation efforts. FASIS is likely to be the parent / absorbing agency. The FASIS JPA allows for many coverage types, whereas the EBA is only able to offer health coverages. Some seats might be up for election in June. We are very well represented with Chiefs Akre, Grinnell, and Heine on the BOD as well as Marin County. Chief Grinnell added that FASIS met last week to grant settlement authority for a couple of cases, our next meeting is on April 8th at the Napa Conference site, and my seat might or might not be up for election-This is something Chief Heine and I are discussing as our consolidation moves forward.

President Akre said of FAIRA, the letter that Bill Adams wrote should have been received by all about the correct process for maintaining your coverages.

b. LAFCO

Executive Officer Bramfitt reported the commission will meet next Wednesday (March 2) virtually. We expect to hopefully start meeting in person the following month. The number one thing on Wednesday's agenda will be the re-consideration of Sonoma County's reorganization with Bodega Bay. I expect the Commission to approve the reorganization and I have recommended the Commission approved a shortened protest period of 30 days. We do not expect a lot of protests. Operational issues have precipitated the shortened period. I have been in conversations with Northern Sonoma County Fire I expect their application for much of the region 6 area to be filed as early as Monday, if not before that. We will move that one ahead on a similarly quick time frame. I will speak with Chief Heine about IRP's in the upper and lower Russian River areas. President Akre thanked Mark for his report and for his moving things along as fast as possible. Director Lachman asked what was going on with the VFC's? A) X/O Bramfitt said he was hoping that Chief Schroth-Cary was on the meeting tonight as we need to talk about that and the plan for South County and Ft Ross. Despite the financial Offer from the County and Supervisor Hopkins to consider other options like the lower river and the North Coast which is a concern so I need to talk to Chief Schroth-Cary very soon. The County is also concerned about the 60-day application deadline in the agreements and more that we will talk about later. Director Lachman said he would make sure Chief Schroth-Cary was aware of the need to talk to X/O Bramfitt.

c. Political Action

The usual plea for much needed help on this subject.

d. FSWG

President Akre asked Director Taylor to start. Director Taylor said they are to be waiting on Terri Wright to avail herself for a meeting, we have not met since our last association meeting. Furthermore, it seems now that the County has solved the CSA 40 problem, they are not in a hurry to talk to us. We did have our ad hoc meeting a while back meeting and I shared all of our thoughts and concerns about the ballot language, but we never got another ballot with changes to talk about. When and if that starts to move again we will set up another meeting.

President Akre added the first couple attempts to meet with Terri had to do with the timing of vacation followed by some family medical issues. Let's hope we can meet with her next Thursday.

Chief Plakos asked if FSWG was going to address the issue of all of the County money going to a few agencies in large chunks, it is good and I am happy about that, but now that means we do not have any money going to emergency services to other agencies for routine things like dispatch. Director Taylor said the whole thing was a global plan that came from the County Administrator and presented in such a way to FSWG that it was a done deal because they were in such a hurry to get rid of CSA 40 that they took every dollar they had to encourage three fire districts to annex the adjacent CSA 40 areas that would get them out of the fire business. You are right, they used the enhanced services money, the upstaffing and REDCOM money to make it work. We do have an issue coming up for there not going to fund it all. Chief Plakos asked if there was any organized opposition to this? President Akre answered the priority is to address the funding shortfall when we meet with the county. As a REDCOM director, we discovered the contract for REDCOM is with the county and runs out in 23/24 and cannot be vacated by either party until it terms out. REDCOM Cost have gone up, the contract only covers \$900k so we will see an increase in short term. FSWG will address the three issues of REDCOM, Lexipol and upstaffing. Director Hemmendinger asked if there was a meeting date- A) Nope, but we will continue pushing for the meeting. VP Peterson added I do not think it is too early to start putting political pressure on the supervisors as they are the ones who have to free up this money. I also want to second what Mark said, our experience with our negotiations, the CAO and some supervisors are fixated on this new county center so every time they could segregate is used to fund the \$50-55 million project. It's about priorities, we do have a little bit of time. We want to make sure

they earmark the funds during the next budget cycle. We stood together before the REDCOM fees, Lexipol and upstaffing are just things to try and to divide us again. President Akre added that sales tax monies were expected to make up those differences, with the measure off the table right now, they need a plan B. We need that meeting to talk about plans B and C. Director Petersen asked about the others who signed contracts with the county that had language that said we could not go back and ask for more money. Do the other agencies have the same language in their contracts? VP Peterson said the North County agreement is a straight tax exchange so no similar language, however no extra monies coming from those areas to be annexed and of course the county is holding onto Geysers' money for the next 5 years which equates to quite a bit of money. Director Doss said that Kenwood has two provisions: about \$180k of the \$300k is in perpetuity and 120k for 10 years guaranteed for two years, but future years will depend on the financial audit of the district.

e. Measure G 2.0

President Akre said most of this report was just covered. However, we continue to work on the most immediate need, which is to bridge the gap left by the new contracts. We will continue to work with the consulting group, especially with messaging-our ask is to have the County continue the service contract with the consulting group (Props and Measures) and work on the public education program that explains the continued need for additional funding in both the cities and rural areas.

5. Program: None

6. Old Business

a. Approve Past Minutes – January 27, 2022

Director Lachman pointed out that he appears twice in the minutes. Director Gardener moved to approve the minutes with the correction noted, 2nd by VP Peterson, approved by all, none were opposed.

b. EMS EOA RFP Update – Chief Heine

President Akre said the county has pulled the existing RFP and has signed a contract extension of 18 months with AMR and will issue a new RFP in the near future. While Sonoma County Fire led the legal challenges to the RFP, many potential bidders had also expressed their concerns over the RFP language. President Akre also informed the association the letter in support approved last month was held back at Chief Heine's discretion during the various legal challenges and negotiations with the county, in the end the letter was never sent. We stand ready to continue our support of a public provider model for the next RFP. Director Doss asked about the press article and the City of Santa Rosa's ambulance service, was it an adjunct to this or something wholly different? A) They were discussing services in EOA 1 that covers Santa Rosa and if they City had options or desire to exclude themselves from EOA 1.

c. Sonoma County Vegetation Management/PG&E Settlement Funds update – VP Peterson/Chief Tuberville

VP Peterson said there is money from the second tranche of PG&E funding and word is being spread among those agencies that had made earlier requests in Northern Sonoma County. It also sounds like the folks who were working on veg management proposal are beginning to come together and who are trying to get out of being a part of a funding package for fire. Editorially speaking, on Measure G, I do not think we ever got the new language because I do not think they ever re-drafted the language, trying to throw everything in the same pot was never going to work. Chief Tuberville has been successful in getting a few more grants for fuel reduction and in my opinion, it really does need its own governance. President Akre thanked VP Peterson for his report and providing a path forward for others to follow, and told the association that Sonoma Valley voted on a policy direction change and approved there being more involved in prescribed burning on more than just a training and support level but to plan and to conduct burns and a chipper program modeled after north county.

d. Funding Needs for 2022 and Beyond – See New Business Item

Under new business item below.

e. Attendance at Meetings (VP Peterson)

VP Peterson commented that we have less than half of the districts in attendance tonight. If we want to be informed, have solidarity, have honest discussions, and if we want to move forward as a fire service organization it is hard if we do not have participation. If each district has five directors, you would think that at least one of them could attend. I want to meet with some of the past presidents and others and do some outreach and see if we can brainstorm some ideas and perhaps even engage the districts directly and ask a couple of questions-first what do you want from your association, 2 and what will it take to get more districts involved? President Akre said this an important topic for all of and as an association. Mark Bramfitt said that CSDA is in the process of establishing a Sonoma County Chapter and there are others such as Marin County. Imagine working in zoom with districts of all shapes, sizes, and types. The point is this format is such a great format for me to be able to get to talk to you directly, as a member of the public, please do what you can to make this as strong as possible. President Akre agreed and said he supports doing what we can to improve involvement. Furthermore, and perhaps Mark was to humble, but he told me his suggestion, which was to ask each member agency to elect a representative and an alternate to attend each of our meeting and then report back to your home agency SCFDA. Director Lachman offered his suggestion even though it also encompasses the next item but some kind of information system or even an information officer that could be used to help us. In the near future if we are going to reach out the general public, we need some sort of organization to it and we need to reflect our views as to why additional resources are needed. President Akre said that encompasses a lot of the ideas we expressed and what FSWG was working on as well as the work we hope that Props and Measures will assist us with. That contract was in the neighborhood of several hundreds of thousands of dollars. Director Lachman said he was not thinking of something that big, simply to educate the public and our Boards. President Akre thanked Director Lachman and added the other ideas expressed were the reports section, perhaps a pre-prepared report that can be read ahead of time. Another idea for when we move to quarterly in person meetings, we should keep in between meetings in the zoom meeting format. The final item is to complete the survey monkey, we need to drill down in to the specifics for a valid set of questions or we can just put out a general overhead question like what would help you become more active in the special district meetings? Director Hemmendinger offered that we have about ¾ of the districts represented tonight if my count is correct. I guess the question becomes do we want all the districts or a percentage of districts represented? President Akre did a count and said we have 7 of 15 represented tonight. A couple of the districts are represented by their chiefs and that's a different question too. Are we looking at encouraging chief officer participation as well as elected represented? I think if we include both we are short and can do better. VP Peterson thanked Mark Bramfitt for his recommendations and thinks inclusion of chief officers and elected officials. I think the district should appoint the representatives. We need to get more to the districts to believe the value in attending the meetings. Frankly, those that do not show appear to be in greater need. Let's get the word out and I will work on getting word out to the districts. In terms of the survey monkey, you should only have no more that 4 or 5 questions. I would be willing to work with you Pres and any other that are interested in the project. Chief Plakos said she like the idea of written reports where possible because people do not get inspired about going to meetings that go on and on. The quick report can make the meeting more useful and if you can't attend, an easy way to catch up. I also like the structure, the official representative being a board member, its boards talking to boards. To reiterate, President Akre reviewed the direction given: VP Peterson and I, with Chief Grinnell and Director Hemmendinger will develop the questions to be asked for the survey and get them sent out. I really like the idea of asking each district to designate a primary and alternate representative to attend these meetings. All agreed with the direction, and I will put out the request on behalf of all of us and I will ask Sec/Tres to send it out. We will meet up and discuss the survey questions and get those out as well.

7. New Business

a. Form an Ad Hoc to address Future Dues and Assessment Needs

President Akre reported this is something we have been discussing this for several months now. I would like to create an ad hoc to review our dues structure and we have a unique opportunity to go further than we can with our own Boards in our ability to advocate instead only being able to inform the public. But that cost money. Since we have not reviewed our dues structure in some time including reviews after many consolidations, we have opportunities to put in assessments when needed ahead of time would be really good and now is the right time to do that. Being able to put these mechanisms in place before they are needed before the Countywide sales tax measure is drafted and we start campaigning, we don't want to be behind the curve. Any volunteers? Sec/Tres Grinnell, Director Lachman, President Akre, and Director Petersen. Director Peterson asked about the dues structure of the Chief Association A) Sec/Tres Grinnell explained the Chief dues also account for the FPO's, Training/Ops, FITF, Safety Trailer and one or two more that escape me, they all operate under the Chief 501(c)3. VP Peterson also suggested the ad hoc can address the need for a sliding scale if needed for the smaller agencies. President Akre also mentioned other examples that we can use.

8. Good of the Order

President Akre asked the group for suggestions for future presentations, please let me know. Director Hemmendinger said he received an email suggesting that Rancho has already consolidated with Sonoma County, we have not. We are in discussion with them to explore different options as well as working Sonoma Valley and we are also conducting a chief search. We are evaluating many options openly. Last year we negotiated a \$5.2 million pension obligation bond. It went out to market at about 3.9%, we are willing if other agencies are interested, we will help. President Akre thanked Director Hemmendinger for his offer and for allowing Chief Gossner to be a part of the discussion. Chief Plakos asked that we consider a presentation from Northern Sonoma County on their fuels management program and sadly long-time former chief Dan Levin passed away last January, his celebration of life will be this Saturday at the Forestville Youth Park, all are welcome. Director Lachman asked if President Akre would organize the meeting of the new ad hoc, yes said President Akre. VP Peterson added that he would like to resurrect the tax ad hoc to help create a better measure going forward. President Akre said this where the ad hoc is headed. FSWG is considering the idea of an initiative driven tax measure instead of a supervisor driven measure. There are a lot of variables. I want to reassure everyone that we are looking at the problem through the same lenses. Director Hemmendinger said he has conducted research and cannot find any proposed law that will place a sunset clause in any new taxes. President Akre said the Governor did sign the covid leave bill that is retroactive back to Jan. 1, requires 40 hours more sick time and if they test positive, they get 40 more hours, no longer a work comp issues again. And lastly, Sonoma Valley is getting two new type ones for Glen Ellen and Agua Caliente- Rosenbauer Warriors.

9. Next Meeting March 24, 2022, via Zoom

10. Close 8:40pm

Motion to adjourn made by Director Gardener and 2nd by Director Petersen, approved by all, none were opposed.

Minutes approved on: _____

Signed: _____