

Sonoma County Fire Districts' Association

MEETING AGEDNDA

Virtual meeting on July 22, 2021, at 1900 hours

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87012348845?pwd=bzQzbTljb0RKUExpME9WK2NnU3pydz09>

1. Call to Order

President Akre called the meeting to order at 7:02

The following members were present:

Name	District		Name	District
Steve Akre	Sonoma Valley		Paul Barry	Cazadero
Fred Peterson	Northern Sonoma County		Bonnie Plakos	North Sonoma Coast
Sean Grinnell	Bodega Bay		Marti Campbell	North Sonoma Coast
Charles Lachman	Gold Ridge		Ernie Lovelace	Schell Vista
Sheply Schroth-Cary	Gold Ridge		Michael Gadoua	Rancho Adobe
Tonia Bello	Gold Ridge		Daymon Doss	Kenwood
Chris Tachouet	Gold Ridge		Marshall Tuberville	Northern Sonoma County
Mark Hemmindinger	Rancho Adobe		Leslie	
Rob Stewart	Northern Sonoma County		Bob Gloeckner	Gold Ridge
Jackie Gardener	North Sonoma Coast		Joe Petersen	Gold Ridge

2. Approve/Amend the Agenda

VP Peterson moved to approve the agenda as presented, 2nd by Director Gardener, approved by all present, none opposed.

3. Treasurer Report

Sec/Tres Grinnell reported a balance of \$6,970.08 with 7 agencies that have paid their dues so far. Director Gloeckner asked how many agencies are left to pay? A) About 15 was the initial est. 8 was the final number left to pay, answered later in the meeting.

4. Committee Reports (As available)

- a. FDAC / FDAC EBA / FAIRA / FASIS

President Akre reported that FASIS and the EBA have not met since our last meeting but there is a meeting next week. No report from FAIRA, but Sonoma Valley did receive its new invoice and it was significantly higher than last year, up by 50%. The insurance market is upside down and I would encourage district to share any of their efforts with the group, especially if they can find cheaper rates. Sec/Tres Grinnell asked if anyone remember if “Manny” said he had done any work in Sonoma County agencies? None could recall. VP Peterson asked if anyone could explain the reason for the rate hikes? A) No one single event could be cited. Director Hemmendinger said the industry paints with a wide brush-his agency was hit with a large increase last year even though he is with a different carrier.

b. LAFCO

No report. Director Hemmendinger said he met with Mark Bramfitt recently and he said the election to replace Ernie Lovelace were still up in the air as not enough votes had been received. No August meeting.

c. Political Action

No Report, but President Akre is still looking for a rep from our group to replace Director Treanor.

d. FSWG

Director Taylor was not on the meeting, so President Akre asked Chief Schroth-Cary to speak. Chief Schroth-Cary reported that invites for the Measure G 2.0 discussion have gone out. Some Zones have spoken already, and others await the meeting date. Elected officials were invited this time around as well to accompany the agency chief. Critical needs and “wants” are being address. President Akre added the previous meeting with zone 7, which now only consists of Sonoma County Fire and Santa Rosa Fire (not ready yet). Zones 5 and 6 will meet with FSWG next week and then 8 and 9 the week after. And finally, Santa Rosa. It appears we are going to have more needs than we have funding for which is going to be the big challenge, but it will allow us to put more pressure on the Board of Supervisors. President Akre then extended the offer to report out on todays meeting to those that were there: Daymon, Marshal, Bonnie, Jackie, and Marti. Director Doss said he appreciated being offered the be apart of the process as an elected official. It helped me understand the complexities even in zone 3. What was very clear we are short 30 million. Chief Plakos had one question left over from today. Who is exactly writing the ordinance-The county will but it will have a lot of input from the FSWG answered Chief Akre. Furthermore, our subcommittee from this group has expressed our concerns as well. Chief Tuberville added the supervisors approved the allocation of \$500k to do some polling, so it looks like the county is supporting putting the measure on the ballot in March 2022 or November of 2022. FSWG is not solely focused on the measure. President Akre added the step is to hear from the community meetings and polling results to see where they are at.

e. Measure G 2.0

President Akre said this item was covered with the previous fswg report.

5. Program.

President Akre reported that he would ask retired Chief Mark Brown if he could present the Marin County’s vegetation management program.

6. Old Business

a. Approve Past Minutes June 24, 21

VP Peterson moved to approve the minutes, 2nd by Director Gardener, approved by all present, none were opposed.

b. EMS EOA RFP Update – Chief Heine

No report

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

VP Peterson reported as part of the Measure G 2.0 there is an allocation for veg management, which is controversial as it is yet another ask from a finite pot. I am interested in a very robust vegetation management program that actually gets the work done in a prioritized manner. So I hope the county comes up with a framework to deal with this. They did a grant for another \$37 million for various projects but I do not have any word if they plan on fire input of public input before it all disappears into the county budget, we should keep our eye on this. Chief Tuberville added, I think this agenda item started with the 2017 PG&E settlement funds that were being dispersed via Ag and Open Space. I know several fire districts put in successful applications and awarded some money but I do not know if that means there will be another round of openings for applications for money through Ag and Open Space, and I am hearing that some of the entities that got money are having issues with implementation so we will need to watch that. Regarding the 37 million, I spoke to one of my contacts at Permit Sonoma – in general the county has no plan yet for the money, so I recommend let's get everyone to the table. As an example I was lobbied by a group is weighing in on fire ecology who feels they have the solution from a non-fire department point of view. We need to start working together on vegetation management. So I suggested to Permit Sonoma that we spend some money on planning, and whether or not it based on the CWPP or some new set of guidelines, but in the end there is no current plan for the money. No idea how the County got the money. We all need to be at the table. Chief Tuberville will try and get us a seat at the table. Stay involved.

President Akre added the new Marin County alliance for community wildfire protection. A JPA of all the taxing agencies, it also has taxing authority in the county. A recent meeting Mark Brown is keenly interested in what Sonoma County will be doing. He was asked to present info to the City Managers. He will be presenting at the County Chiefs and I would also like him to give us a presentation to our association. In Marin the fire dist/dept are the primary drivers. Our concern here is that we have been largely left out.

Director Lachman asked what three areas Chief Tuberville was referring to as eligible for funding? A) Lower Russian River, East side of Santa Rosa, and Sonoma Mountain said Chief Tuberville. VP Peterson said he was happy to hear that President Akre had the conversation with Mark Brown, because he tried to present during the BOS meeting and got the door slammed in his face. I will be talking to the wine industry to see if we can get some movement there. Measure G 2.0 is not the right place for funding. President Akre added in brainstorming with Mark Brown, he felt there was enough PG&E money plus the other grants to form an alliance without having a funding source (very preliminary). With the current amount of money is there to get things started. Mark Brown with President Akre and/or Chief Westrope will be make a presentation to the Sonoma County Alliance (business community) very soon.

d. Northern Sonoma County FPD Update – VP Peterson

VP Peterson reported that the BOS last Tuesday, we support the consolidations and funding requests, but we did protest the term sheet because we did not feel it was a proper tax exchange agreement. We are taking what Bodega Bay did and are mounting a public campaign to put pressure on the Sups, to give us what everyone else got which is a proper tax exchange. It will help get us to the next steps. We hope we will prevail. You will likely see us in the press a lot in the future. Chief Tuberville added that North County Fire District has been trying since 2014, well before any of the big fires, to annex the Geysers, Sotoyome, and Fitch Mountain, and the County said it last week they do not want to give us the property tax money, about 1.5-1.6 million, instead they brewed up a special formula using TOT, Prop 172, which comes out to about 1.2 mil and they have placed a tremendous value on Sotoyome but a lot less on the Geysers which is about \$55k to protect over 2 billion in assets. As a District we disagree with the concept, this is not property tax that is coming to the district, we are arguing about \$400k, it's the principal of where these

funds come from. If this formula does come about, or if we agree its going to set a bad precedent for any other fire district trying to do any kind of annexation and internally for the district its going to be a wired situation where we want to do a lot of work in the Geysers but we will not have any funding from the Geysers and so it will create a wired dynamic that is why in concept we are not agreeing to the term sheet at all. Hopefully the negotiations go correctly. But just as North Sonoma Coast has ERAF battles, we all have our battles with the County. Gold Ridge is going to be entering into negotiations, as is Sonoma Valley, Sonoma County and Bodega Bay-its important we all stick together as best we can knowing we all have individual issues with the county, but that we are not being pitted against each other. VP Peterson added at the Supervisors meeting Hopkins made a big deal over why does it matter what color your money is? She gave a folksy story about her child wanted milk, but it was delivered in the wrong-colored glass, she used that analogy on us, but its not applicable to us. I am going to come to the association in August to ask for a letter of support for our district moving forward on a proper tax exchange agreement. Keep in mind we are all independent districts and once the county controls all the purse strings we are no longer independent, we become dependent on the County. Not trying to sound cynical or paranoid but for us having control over the property taxes in these areas is what we expect and if we do not get that control, we are forever dependent on the county and that is not where any of us should be. Director Stewart added we seem to be the only fire district that is singled out as being the only district that is not capable of achieving a 100% tax exchange for the taxes that are paid by our constituents every year for fire protection services. I do not thing its fair they would single us and not give us those monies. I know the Geysers is a little bit different as the area is sparsely populated but generates a lot of tax revenues for the county, and the county has been using those monies for the last 25 years to support the VFC's. But the county can backfill those funds with TOT and Prop 172 funds. We need those guaranteed funds every year because we cannot budget without knowing those funds are coming in. By saying that you can have TOT every year, but they cannot promise those monies. Director Gloeckner added that Gold Ridge is in a little bit of the same situation as Northern Sonoma County in that the terms they have proposed in their term sheet provides no growth factor, in fact we could end up receiving less than what we are getting now to manage the VFC's. As we move forward into the negotiations something has to give here. I think the County ahs to step up to the plate, as Rob and Fred both said and dig deeper into their pockets because we are the people that put boots on the ground. Its important, we will have a tough time ahead if they don't help. Chief Schroth-Cary added they are telling us there is one pie and its worth roughly \$8 million to accomplish all the things they have set forward in that board item. They have essentially told Chief Heine, Tuberville and myself that we must negotiate amongst ourselves to find a way to slice the pie and make it work, they pit us against each other. They offered \$2.9 million and currently Gold Ridge and North Bay receive collectively \$3.3 million, so what they proses is less than that and they hope our tax overlay would make up the difference and it does to some extent but it does not allow us to increase the level of service. Which means an increase in taxes and no corresponding increase in the level of service which is an unacceptable plan as far as Gold Ridge is concerned. In order to feel comfortable going forward the increased tax should have a corresponding increase in the level of service to the annexed areas. They have pitted us against each other for example if North Sonoma County does not get the correct tax exchange agreement, then that takes away from our piece of the pie. We support every districts needs and I want everyone to achieve what they trying to achieve, but there is a limit or they (county) needs to find more revenue. It's a tough spot for us all to be at and I agree with Marshall in that we all need to stick together because it does set precedence and it is a distraction for what we are trying to get us to do is work together to pass a tax measure, its poor timing. President Akre added it's a nasty situation we find ourselves in. On the one hand the county has found additional funding to put toward the fire service and when they do that for it to go to four fire districts, that's something positive and we need to acknowledge that. At the end of the staff summary the county acknowledges the funding is not adequate. This is key to the four districts going in to negotiations, but if they could find \$2 million more why cant you find \$1 million more, or whatever the dollar amount is to make everyone whole to meet the needs and I will advocate for. All four districts needs to be met, not just one or two. The County needs to dig deep to meet the needs. The divide and conquer mentality has not been in our fire service since 2017. We have more unity now than ever before. I encourage the four districts to stick to what you need, and county needs to meet all there needs. Then we build on that with Measure G 2.0. VP Peterson added if the county meets the funding shortfall, we will do everything we can to knock on

every door we need to. Let us craft the language for it. Previous polling already told the county that no one trusts them.

7. New Business

a. None

8. Good of the Order

President Akre asked those in attendance to please forward their ideas for future meeting items to him. Director Doss said that Kenwood fire will be moving ahead with a tax measure for the November ballot. Polling looks favorable. It should raise an extra \$250k. Up from \$40 to \$198 per residential parcel, no raise for 25 years. President Akre asked if Kenwood had decided on a replacement for Director Kempers who recently passed. A) Mr. Gochacka was appointed to fill his spot.

VP Peterson said Northern Sonoma County was able to put together their "Wine Country to the Rescue" with 10 days' notice. It was a causal event that had 300 people attend who enjoyed themselves. Senator McGuire helped them raise about \$75k for their fuels crew.

Director Hemmendinger said Rancho Adobe had received recognition from CSDA for transparency for what they publish on there website. Special thanks to our administrator for this accomplishment.

Director Lovelace said Schell-Vista is going holds its chicken BBQ on August 15th.

President Akre thanks Northern Sonoma County for all their work on setting the example and breaking ground for their fuels crew and for there help with helping Sonoma Valley's efforts to establish a chipper program.

President Akre said his firefighter's association was able to put on the 4th of July fireworks show without any ill effects or fire starts and community support after the fact.

9. Next Meeting August 26, 2021, via Zoom.

10. Close

Meeting closed at 8:00pm.

Minutes prepared by Sec/Tres Grinnell, August 11, 2021

Minutes approved on: _____

President Steve Akre