



SONOMA COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Nov 8th 2017 at 9:30 AM

Hosted By Rancho Adobe

Attendance:

James Colangelo
Steve Akre
Chris Lebadoux
Dean Anderson
Jack Piccinini
Bill Braga
Tony Gossner
Doug Williams
Bill Bullard
Randy Collins
James Salvante
Loren Davis
Mike Wink
Bob Norrbom

Sonoma County
Sonoma Valley
Verihealth
SLS/AMR
Windsor/RV
Sebastopol
Santa Rosa
Retired
Graton
SRJC ARTP
CVEMS
Mountain
CALFIRE
SVFRA

Ron Lunardi
Aaron Abbott
Pam Tarango
Max Ming
Jeff Schach
Todd Derum
Ray Mulas
Leonard Thompson
Michael Palacio
Dave Kahn
Sean Grinnell
James Williams
Joe Petersen

Occidental
REDCOM
Petaluma Elks
Forestville/RR
Petaluma
CALFIRE
Schell Vista
Petaluma/RA
CHP
Petaluma
Bodega Bay
Sonoma County
CALFIRE

Call to Order: Chief Derum called the meeting to order at 0935 and asked Chief Thompson to lead the pledge.

Host Chief Intro/Pledge: Chief Thompson welcomed the group on behalf of Rancho Adobe, thanked Jennifer Ober for the food, shared logistics and the lunch arrangements.

President's Report: Chief Derum spoke to the changes to the agenda asked the group to use this opportunity to share our experiences in a positive manner and hopefully identify some goals for next year.

He also asked for self-introductions since there were some unfamiliar faces.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: Motion was made by Chief George & seconded by Chief Braga. Unanimous vote.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's report as submitted by Hans showed the following balances.

Chiefs General Fund:*	(\$445.59)	Survivors Checking:	\$2,872.26
OP's/TO's Fund:	\$18,098.22	Survivors Savings:	\$110,210.50
FPO General Fund:	\$2,877.21		
FPO Safety Trailer:	\$6,106.90		
FITF	\$1,720.09		
Career Education:	\$4,424.28		
Safety Pals:	\$7,484.22		
Safety Pals Trailer:	\$2,500.00		
	\$42,583.33		\$113,082.76*

* Note: Survivors Fund owes Chief's Fund \$6,000

Move by Chief Braga to approve, second by Chief Akre. Unanimous vote.

Correspondence: None

Presentation: Pam Tarango of the Petaluma Elks spoke briefly to their Firefighter of the Year program and her interest in our group helping identify suitable candidates. Chief Derum welcomed her and she began by sharing how their club agreed last year to add a FF of the Year (to their Police Officer of the Year). She spoke briefly to the nomination form (see attachment section in the minutes section of our webpage). The recipient will be recognized at their awards dinner on Feb 15, 2018 (social hour at 6, dinner at 7). She identified that they have two awards (a Medal of Valor and a Medal of Service). The Medal of Valor is for those who go above and beyond the call of duty. She spoke to the importance of the program to their organization and encouraged this group to contact her at any time. She ended by extending an open invitation to their ceremony but did ask for an RSVP by January 15 at: ptarango@comcast.net. She also welcomed the group's help if we wish to act as servers for the Police Officer of the Year dinner on January 18. Chief Derum reinforced the importance of this group helping our counterparts on the law side and encouraged the membership to let Pam know if interested.

Old Business:

- **By-Laws Revision:** Randy provided a brief explanation for the proposed changes. He also indicated he has not received any feedback since they were introduced at the September meeting. He added that because we did not have a meeting last month, there is an incentives to conduct the vote today so the changes can be made before the first of the year when we have to conduct our filings. To that end, Chief Derum called for the vote and a motion to accept the changes as presented was made by Chief Braga, with a second by Chief George. The vote was unanimous.

After Action Discussion: Chief Derum began the discussion by sharing the intent of this item was to promote an honest discussion to not only help us move forward but to also come up with some potential goals for the group in 2018. Chief Braga inquired if this will substitute as our planning session. Commander Palicio shared that if there are any issues regarding CHP, he would like to hear them, good or bad.

What Went Well:

- Chief George speaking for the OP Area began by saying Sonoma County stepped up to respond to the enormity of the incident and it never ceased to amaze him at the level of commitment provided by everyone.
- Chief Deum shared that he was grateful that despite all the fire activity there were no LODD's and very few injuries. He was also impressed at cooperation he saw with the Unified Command between the County and SR and personally thanked Chief Gossner
- Director Abbot spoke to the unprecedented level of activity in dispatch. From his perspective, there were hundreds of events occurring in the county and referred to the graphic that was in the PD that illustrated this. At one point they were handling 350 calls an hour and taking another 200. He also spoke to some problems including staff working 36 hours straight, losing water, HVAC as well as the logistical needs (food, water, etc) they faced. Given the proximity of the fire to REDCOM, they established a trigger point for evacuating the facility (which they did not have to pull). He added this has also created a new sense of urgency in terms of securing a mobile comm unit. He spoke a bit to the evacuation notification issue and the need to investigate it in more detail. He ended by thanking everyone in the group for their assistance. Chief George added that we may want to look at establishing some draw down protocols and how we deal with resources responding to incidents well out of their jurisdiction when this occurs. Chief Kahn applauded REDCOM's efforts, shared his own experience and reinforced Chief George's suggestion on draw down protocols (he had one engine left in the City).
- Chief Williams spoke to the level of coordination everyone gave was very impressive.
- Chief Thompson spoke to the level of collaboration as well as an unprecedented level of independent action that occurred with staff making decisions they would not have done under normal circumstances
- Chief Akre spoke to the incredible level of commitment he saw from everyone in Sonoma Valley that extended for many days and how as the incident progressed, saw it at a greater level throughout the County and in Santa Rosa. He lauded Local 1401's assistance for their peer support program (which was reinforced by Director Abbott and Chief Derum).
- Chief Kahn spoke to how this incident also impacted our families
- Chief Piccinini shared how impressed he was with the professional level of service he witnessed at REDCOM and the outstanding job they did. He added that when we refer to our staff, we should not forget the unprecedented level of commitment from all the volunteers in his organization and throughout the county. He ended by adding that he was not surprised at the level of cooperation he witnessed as it has been his experience we have always stepped up under extraordinary circumstances.
- Chief Braga thanked Chief Piccinini for that recognition and shared the level of commitment Sebastopol provided as a volunteer agency.

- Director Cleaver reflected on the medical side of things how impressed he was with the level of health services that were provided given 12 facilities and over 800 patients were re-located during the incident.
- Chief Schach shared how impressed he was observing the incident from an EOC perspective.
- Chief Davis spoke to his experience being hunkered down in Mark West Springs and watching one of his staff lose their home. He added that much of what they did was now only a blur given the overwhelming nature of the incident.
- Chief Mulas spoke to swapping engines like candy and apologized to Director Abbott about turning down the request they received to respond to the Hwy 37 incident. He was amazed and lauded how everyone stepped up and worked positively with the resources they had.
- Director Abbott speaking to Chief Mulas' remark said that by Monday morning there were 400 events that did not have resources available to respond. He added that as the incident progressed, they were able to get a PG&E rep in REDCOM to help coordinate their response. Chief George spoke that when a NIXLE alert was issued, it added to their call volume.
- Chief Thompson reminded the group that most of those present here also deserved recognition for their/our efforts.
- Chief Wink shared Lake County perspective that centered on their commitment to reciprocate after the mutual aid they have received from us over the years.
- Chief Gossner thanked our law enforcement and EMS partners who did a tremendous job and cautioned that as we move forward, we need to be respectful of their needs.
- Chief Derum closed the discussion with his perspective comparing it to a blind date (you don't have any idea how it will go) and that in many ways it should serve as a wake-up call for our next major disaster (I.E. earthquake).

What could be Improved:

- Chief Schach spoke to the need to define what is an acceptable level of draw down which was also echoed by Chief's George and Gossner
- Chief Williams reflected that now is a time to be strategic and deliberate with our thinking and ask what the fire service model in the County should look like now that we have experienced an event like as well as what strategies we want to use from a fire prevention perspective.
- Chief Akre spoke to their use of a "Pre-Attack" map that they had developed for the valley 10 years ago and how it was by far the best resource they had at their disposal in dealing with this incident. To that end, he suggested creating one on a larger basis for use county-wide. He also spoke to the merger and consolidation issue and the subsequent level of equipment we maintain.
- Chief Kahn added that the level of drawn down was unprecedented and there is a need to realistically look into this issue (Randy offered up his engines for any future events).
- Director Anderson shared that during the REDCOM briefing they identified the need for a County-wide single tone to alert everyone in the county (rather than have dozens of tones to accomplish the same thing). He added that Monday morning, they had four S/T's of ambulances available to free up local fire resources from medical calls (Chief Norrbom indicated he had made such a request for these resources but did not receive assistance). An extended discussion on this topic evolved which included an identified need to improve communications between Fire, EMS, and health as an area for improvement.
- Director Cleaver spoke to some of the challenges they experienced moving patients, especially with non-ambulatory resources and transit vehicles (a city bus can only accommodate 2 wheelchairs and an ambulance cannot carry any).
- Chief Schach indicated he learned a lot on the operation of care facilities and the need to evacuate them based on smoke issues alone. Several added that this could be a useful topic for a future presentation.
- Chief George spoke to the need to be more involved from the EOC perspective
- Chief Piccinini while enjoying the discussion asked to move forward with some more specific goals. They included:
 - EA Programs
 - Having Fire better represented in the EOC
 - Playing an active role in the review of the emergency notification system.
 - Re-visit the Re-population process for impacted fire areas
 - Developing draw down protocols (a task for the TO's/OP's section)
 - Having the FPO's develop some prevention measures
 - Establishing evacuation protocols as this will become an issue as soon as we start getting smoke checks from traumatized residents next fire season.

- Chief Bullard inquired about REDCOM notifications and asked the group what their experience was. Chief Piccinini suggested any future notifications could be tied to the draw-down topic. Director Abbott shared that given the call volume experienced, it was difficult to stay ahead of them as they emerged.
- Chief Colangelo suggested implementing a tax measure for County Fire Services and referred to the San Diego experience. He cautioned that it would have to be well coordinated
- Chief Gossner indicated he felt an aggressive Public Education should be made as a goal even if we take some criticism during the process.
- Chief George shared that because of the magnitude of the disaster it should help us receive priority for future grants
- Director Abbott indicated the need for a mobile Comm unit has become very apparent and should be made a priority.
- Chief Gossner spoke to the need to having tactical channels being repeatable
- Commander Palacio added from the CHP perspective that while in the Command centers, he observed a gap in communications that occurred between CALFIRE and the local agencies. Chief George reinforced this observation. The Commander said he has also never seen a group of first responders come together as well as ours did during the incident. He added on Nov 12, there is a fundraiser being put on for those first responders who lost homes in the fire.

Potential Topics for 2018 Planning Workshop: Chief Derum summarized what he had on his list which included:

- EA Programs
- Having Fire better represented in the EOC
- Playing an active role in the review of the emergency notification system.
- Re-visit the Re-population process for impacted fire areas
- Developing draw down protocols (a task for the TO's/OP's section)
- Having the FPO's develop some prevention measures
- Establishing evacuation protocols as this will become an issue as soon as we start getting smoke checks from traumatized residents next fire season.
- Evaluations of care facilities
- Securing a mobile comm unit

Shared Experiences from the Valley Fire: Chief Mike Wink from CALFIRE in Lake County where they provide schedule A services spoke to what has occurred since the Valley Fire when 76K acres of their district were impacted and shared some of the things they have experienced since the fire:

- Calls in the Black: (that pose no threat) will need to be investigated because of the sensitivity of the reporting party and their perception anything may be a precursor to another devastating fire regardless how the report appears. These same traumatized populations will result in other calls that are "not scalable" to the reality and because of their trauma, they will not come across as rational.
- He cautioned that uniformed personnel will also be approached by these persons who will need to tell their stories and of the importance of actively listening regardless of how insignificant their story sounds.
- Also expect to go from "the Hero to Zero" and that while today you may be receiving praise, tomorrow you will be criticized as letting homes and other properties burn.
- They have had to install safety glass at front counters to protect staff (usually office personnel) from angry residents who have suffered frustrations especially with the recovery and rebuilding process.
- Fire suppression repairs to private property (dozer lines, gates, etc.) were significant and you need to be prepared to deal with citizens who approach you seeking a remedy. He added they are usually covered under their insurance.
- Trees removal is problematic. Some want them removed and other do not. Given the level of subjectivity the public has, it can quickly become contentious as well as who ultimately will pay for it (average cost is \$1500 per tree). You can later expect to deal with the tree's root ball
- Debris clean-up is a prolonged issue and residents in Lake county are still receiving bills they are responsible for which speaks to the importance of making sure residents carefully scrutinize contracts they enter into for this service
- Insurance cancellations skyrocketed after their fires. Insurance companies tend to use NFPA Fire Severity maps (that tend to be congruent with the State's) but result in denied coverage. Even if a resident meets all code & LE 100 requirements, they can still be declined. In response to this, the Insurance Commissionaires office has the "Fair Plan" (link is: <https://www.cfpnet.com/>) to provide coverage if denied.
- Recovery will vary significantly. The quickest they saw someone rebuild was 14 months but 18-24 was normal. Of 1300 residential losses experienced in the Valley Fire, only 313 families are back in their homes today.
- Flood Preparedness took on an entirely different meaning with the vegetation gone so they ramped up their Swift water Rescue training but did not see any measurable increase in incidents.

- During the rebuilding process, meeting current code requirements (bridges, sprinklers, access, WUI regs) generated a lot of questions and angst.
- Be aware of the 404 & 406 grant plan that comes from disaster declarations but is contingent upon having an approved Hazard Mitigation plan which needs to specifically identify a need in the plan to be eligible for funding (the link is: <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/for-individuals-families/hazard-mitigation-planning/local-hazard-mitigation-program>). For example, theirs identified the need for back-up station generators so they received them.
- Public interest in having warning sirens surfaced and they are in the process of implemented the Emergency Notification Siren System (ENSS) but are doing so strategically to focus on areas with the highest concentration of residences. He indicated the average cost per siren with all the supporting hardware is \$25k with \$5k in maintenance costs each year. They are an alert system only, not an informational tool which needs to be sought after by the resident once they are alerted.
- Replacing gates, they have instructed residents to install locks that anyone can cut as replacement gates are installed (mutual aid agencies do not have access to Knox Keys).
- For Tax Reductions that occurred, the State backfilled the loss the first year with a partial backfill year two. He added that this loss was spread out over all the special districts in the county so everyone took at least a partial hit. Chief Piccinini suggested the Fire Districts look into this which was also echoed by Chief Akre who has already having this conversation with their elected representatives. Chief Gossner indicated that when this issue was raised in SR, he advocated for a regional approach. In response to Chief Piccinini's question on how they dealt with elected reps who no longer lived in their respective district after being displaced, Chief Wink replied the issue has yet to be raised.

Closed Session: There was no closed session.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Chief Grinnell, second by Chief Akre at 1:07

Next Meeting: December 13th at Santa Rosa

Respectfully Submitted: Nov.20, 2017

Randy Collins,
SCFCA Secretary