



liocene Ridge CSD District Manager's report  
Meeting date 5/20/2021

**Agenda item 4.a Correspondence since last meeting**

Incoming: Rejection notice from Secretary of State for statement of information sent in February to update the list of directors (didn't use new form). Letter from NORCAL EMS re: National EMS recognition week thanking our first responders for their service to our Country,

**Agenda item 4b) 5. Firewise Projects** Alleghany was granted recognition on April 21<sup>st</sup>. Chris Dorn and Ned and I are working on the encroachment permit to be able to put up the signs. As of this writing the signs for Alleghany have not arrived but we are doing one permit for both communities. The county has indicated that they might waive the permit fees.

**Agenda item: 4b) 6 Staff report non-agenda items:**

**Registration of engine 7180** When I went to DMV to transfer the title on 6760 I also took the paperwork for engine 7180 with me. This truck is a 1968 international that was purchased from the State OES by AVFD in the 1980s for \$10,000. When the truck was paid off, the final transfer was never done. \$859 in taxes was owed to complete the transfer. This was discovered in 2006 when I went to transfer ownership to the district. At that time the district did not have enough money to pay the taxes but the transfer was started so that PRCSD was listed as the registered owner. I was able to complete the transaction on May 5<sup>th</sup> and the truck now has license plates! The money to pay for this will come out of the vehicle fund for Alleghany. Total paid: \$871 in sales tax plus a credit card fee of \$20.84.

**Knox Box** not on the agenda as discussed last month. We need to do more research on this. Possibly this should be a county-wide program? I did include a document that explains what they are in the online meeting documents.

**Money for PG&E community resource center in Alleghany** I followed up with the County on this because the water district got paid several months ago for the resource center at the park. Tim Beals is looking into it for us. The generator was brought back to Alleghany on May 7<sup>th</sup> by PG&E as they are planning on using the building again this year.

**AED Provider agreement** per State Law the district must have an agreement with a state recognized medical authority to carry Automatic External Defibrillators. We have an agreement with NORCAL EMS and normally we just sign an extension every year, but this year they updated the agreement and wanted to see more documentation than was previously required. Currently the district has 6 AED's four in Alleghany and two in Pike. All requested documentation was provided to NORCAL and a new agreement is in place.

**Hazard Mitigation Plan/Grants** On April 16<sup>th</sup> I attended a remote meeting with Cal OES and Sierra County. Eight staff members from OES' hazard mitigation division were in attendance along with Sierra County reps. Lee Brown with Sierra County OES, Bryan Davey with public works, Vickie Clark of Health & Human services, and Sheriff Mike Fisher. Also Don Yegge of the Sierra Brooks firewise community. I attended representing both PRCSD and ACWD. This was a "scoping project" to identify potential projects to be funded by Hazard Mitigation Funding. The OES reps said that normally they don't do this type of outreach but their budget is

2 to 3 times normal this year so they are actively looking for projects to fund. The meeting lasted about an hour and by the end of it wildfire mitigation seemed like the highest priority with funds available for both the hardening of homes and defensible space within 200 feet of any building or road, this includes vegetation clearance along escape routes.

Lee Brown asked about widening, paving or even creating roads for escape routes but that is something they don't cover. I asked about replacing old fire hydrants but that also is something that isn't covered (nothing related to fire flow). I asked about water tanks and a secondary tank in Alleghany would qualify because it is drinking water. Additional water tanks at the Pike Firehouse would not qualify (I asked).

I was hoping that this money could be used to match the Alleghany Firehouse Project USDA \$ but it can't be used to match other federal dollars. It could be used to make the firehouses more fire resistance or retrofit them for earthquakes though!

In order to qualify to apply for funding the district has to have a hazard mitigation plan. We can piggy-back onto the County's plan which is currently under revision. This would save us having to create our own. Evidently it is a very dense document, as is the application for funding. OES provides Technical Assistance grants to help with the paperwork and it sounds like Sierra County has already been approved for such a grant for the mitigation plan. Lee Brown stressed that if the district wants to be included in the County's plan we would have to participate in putting it together and I told him that we could do that.

Possibly it would be better to have our own mitigation plan, I am researching this. The application is VERY DENSE! Lee Brown estimates that it will take one to two years for the County to complete the Hazard Mitigation Plan but he also thinks that the district would have a better chance of qualifying for funding if we piggy-back with the County.

#### **Agenda item 4.b 7. Firehouse projects and ADA compliance**

**Pike Firehouse ADA Compliance:** Nothing new to report

**Alleghany Firehouse ADA Compliance:** We are still working on a budget that includes labor. Hopefully we will have something by next month for the board to consider.

#### **Agenda item 4.b 8 Pending Grants**

**Homeland security grants:** Need to follow-up with County.

**CDF Fireman's assistance 50/50 grant for the 20-21 cycle:** Everything has been ordered. The final invoice for the 20-21 grant must be dated no later than June 30<sup>th</sup> and submitted by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The application for the 21-22 cycle was submitted on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The chiefs decided to order the following: 2 sets of structure turnouts for Alleghany estimated total \$7,190 2 sets of wildland gear for Pike along with two extra helmets plus ten 50 foot rolls of fire hose. Total \$3,391. There is a good chance that the hose won't be covered, but if it is, part of it might come to Alleghany. Grant application total \$10,581 ~ district's portion if approved approx. \$5,291.00

#### **Agenda item 5.a 1. Policies & Procedures**

Annual review of Affirmative Action Policy # 3015. In order to qualify for Federal Funding, such as the USDA Rural Assistance grant for the Alleghany Firehouse Project we must review this policy once a year.

**Agenda Item 5. a) 5 Changes to Rae Bell's Contract**

First, I want to point out that I should have provided some background information for both my current contract and the proposed changes prior to last month's meeting. Not doing so was a failure on my part.

The proposed additions to my contract are all tied directly to activities that have the potential to generate revenue for the district. The frequency of mutual aid calls and non-resident billings is something that the district has no control over. Because the Forest Service changed the terms of our contract last year we are less likely to have paid calls. They added a 12-hour minimum requirement for reimbursement! For example, Jim Buckbee and the water tender were on the fire on Magnus Orchard road recently for 9 hours and we can't bill it. We have been assured that they are working on lowering the minimum hour requirement. Hopefully they do. This will really hurt us if they don't.

At last month's meeting Dan Guyer asked if the money to pay me for paid calls would reduce the amount that goes into the individual funds for the fire departments and the answer is "no". The money used to pay me would come directly out of the portion that goes to the district and would not reduce the amount of money that is transferred to the individual departments for mutual aid calls or non-resident billings. Also, it should be noted that the Forest Service tacks on 10% for admin. whenever they pay for a call. In the case of non-resident billings \$150 goes into the general fund with the remaining \$600 per call placed into the unallocated fund of the responding department. It is split at \$300 each if they both respond.

Administration (preparing billing, processing payments, and running payroll for mutual aid calls) would be paid out of the \$150 that the district gets on the non-resident calls and from the 10% admin fee that the Forest Service pays for Mutual Aid calls.

Last month's proposed hourly figure of \$27.00 is based upon the 2021 value that Firewise USA has established for "in kind" labor of \$27.20. This figure was used in the firewise support request that was sent to the County. Denise brought up a valid concern about pay increase limitations for employees of special districts. Even though I am not an employee, I took the \$15 per hour that I was paid starting in 2009 and added 2% per year through 2021 compounded each year and ended up with \$19.00. How about we go with \$20 per hour? I have substituted this in for the proposed contract changes. It should be noted that the Firewise administration and pursuing grants are NEW job duties.

**Description of firewise admin.** update website, input community work hours in firewise portal, schedule and attend committee meetings, locate grants and help with grant applications, prepare mail-outs as well as other public outreach, coordinate training for defensible space advisors, facilitate the creation of evacuation plans and help with scheduling evacuation drills. Keep track of task deadlines, such as updated action plans and submission of community hours each year. Interact with residents for the purpose of scoping out projects for grants. Continued interaction with residents and crews once "on the ground" work is ready to begin. Other inter-agency communications/meetings expected. I asked Chief Dorn if he would want to get paid for any of this work and he said "no", he will help but he wants others to "keep the ball rolling". The board could consider offering the job to others, but this would require training another person and another contract for services. The title III money that we have requested from the County is not an infinite pot of money, it is \$2,500 for each community. The goal should be to get grants to keep it going. Most grants have an earmark for administration.

**Other potential “reimbursable” administrative expenses are grant admin. if awarded** The district is always getting information on available grants. I try to pay attention to these and have been looking at various requirements to apply for many years. Grant applications are very time consuming (some more than others). The district has a good foundation started with its financial record keeping and independent audits. This helped with qualifying for the USDA grant for the Alleghany Firehouse Project. Grants that have to do with firewise work could be billed to the title III fund as outlined above. Different grants have different requirements and guidelines that must be followed. We would have to work within those guidelines and work out possible compensation on a case-by-case basis. I am willing to do the initial work where no reimbursement to the district is available as part of my \$200 per month contract, as time allows. I can keep a “time bank” in case opportunities to bill any of it present themselves.

Providing incentives to bring in \$ has the potential to increase the viability of the district and benefit our community in ways that are not always measurable in district dollars, such as insurance discounts for residents and grants to help residents with hardening homes, creating defensible space, and establishing escape plans & routes.

**Red Cross Instructor** This was added on since last month’s meeting because Chris Dorn convinced me to renew my Red Cross teaching certificates. I will leave it up to him to explain how this benefits the fire departments. The district does have an Approved Provider Agreement with Red Cross in place. In the past, we have been able to find training grants to cover costs. It should be noted that the district would most likely have to pay another instructor to train the firefighters if I was not available to do it.

**Response to the spreadsheet provided and the concerns raised at the April meeting.**

	FY 2005-2009	FY 09/10	FY 10/11	FY 11/12	FY 13/14	FY 14/15	FY 15/16	FY 16/17	FY 17/18	FY 18/19	FY 19/20
<b>Total Revenue</b>	N/A	\$46,519.00	\$32,151.00	\$40,373.00	\$39,674.03	\$50,171.00	\$42,378.00	\$47,688.00	\$58,968.00	\$57,389.00	\$44,432.00
<b>District Admin</b>	DONATED	\$ 720.00	\$ 720.00	\$ 730.00	\$ 585.00	\$ 428.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 1,358.00	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,400.00	\$ 2,400.00
<b>Percentage of revenue</b>	N/A	1.5%	2.2%	1.8%	1.5%	0.9%	2.1%	2.8%	4.1%	4.2%	5.4%

The spreadsheet above provides a longer look and the streetlight revenue is included for each year. If the amount of work being done was the same every year, then it would be fair to compare the years this way. Here is a timeline to put the info. into context:

- 2005-2007 I handled the treasurer’s duties on a volunteer basis.
- 2007 (Late in the year) Kyle Hall joined the board and became Treasurer, I became President.
- 2008 (mid-year) Kyle moved out of the district, I took over the treasurer’s duties, Wayne Babros became President. At the end of that year, I announced that I would not be renewing my board seat because I was returning to school part-time. The district began searching for a volunteer Treasurer with no luck. I continued to do the work.
- 2009 the district ran an ad in the Grass Valley Union and the Mountain Messenger for a paid treasurer’s position at \$15 an hour capped at a specified budget amount. After nobody applied, I did. (I was no longer a board member)
- 2010? Mark Jokerst moved leaving a lot of administrative duties to be handled by others. Those others were: Maris Womack, Tom Starr, Jim Buckbee and me.
- 2013 I ended up as the President of the Alleghany County Water District when long-time President Joe Hauck died. This became my highest priority. I did minimal work for PRCSD during this time. Maris helped with some of my tasks.
- 2015 Maris moved away. I agreed to be interim Secretary until a replacement could be found.
- 2017 once again, I announced that I wanted to leave the district. The board decided to combine the positions of Treasurer & Secretary and offer \$200 a month for the job in the hopes of finding a taker. Ads were run in the Grass Valley Union and the Mountain Messenger. There was one inquiry and not a single applicant. At that point I said that I would take the combined Secretary/Treasurer position for \$200 a month.

You can decide for yourselves how relevant the information in the spreadsheet provided last month is to the district's operation. The district is not a corporation. The district is a "non-enterprise" fund. More details about what that means, and special districts in general are provided at the end of this document for anyone who wants to know more.

**I checked around to see what neighboring "fire" districts are paying for administration.**

**Camptonville Community Services District**

Services: fire, EMS, cemetery and water. Most recent budget shows estimated revenue of \$58,000 and the following for administration: Outside bookkeeper \$2,483, community center admin. \$3,000, Secretary wages \$1,454 per year. Annual total \$6,937. Admin = about 12% of revenue. Additionally, the Fire Chief is paid a stipend of \$3,600 a year.

**Downieville Fire Protection District**

Services fire, EMS and dispatch. Most recent budget shows estimated annual revenue of \$237,545. Secretary \$2,000 a year, Bookkeeper \$4,000 a year in budget but the actual figure for this year is \$5,000. EMS admin \$4,500. Total \$10,500 (not counting the budget overage of \$1,000 for the bookkeeper). I left off the dispatch supervisor position. Admin. = about 4% of revenue. Additionally, the chief is paid a stipend of \$3,000 a year.

**Sierra City Fire Protection District**

Services Fire & EMS Annual revenue est \$ 86,000 (from a 2015-2016 budget which I was told doesn't change much) All administration is donated. They have professionals who are retired and willing to do it at no charge.

**North San Juan Fire Protection District**

Estimated annual revenue: \$500,000 administrative staff about \$55,286 per year or 11% of revenue (includes payroll taxes). Chief's stipend is \$21,600 per year not included in total above.

I added the Chief's stipends above because the Chief's job is at least 50% administration. Currently I help as much as I can with district admin. for the PRCSD Chiefs.

**Pliocene Ridge CSD Rae Bell's Admin. hours for calendar year 2020**

Jan	46.75	26.5 on ISO survey for both Pike & Alleghany				
Feb		3 vacation				
March	25					
April	33.25					
May	44.25	May includes ins. Claim including purchasing items				
June	14					
July	5.75					
Aug	4	estimate did not track from Montana				
Sept	46.25					
Oct	21					
Nov	16.25					
Dec	22.75					
<b>Total</b>	<b>282.25</b>					

At \$200 a month for the whole year it works out to about \$8.50 per hour. OR at \$15 per hour (my 2009 rate) it would come to \$4,233.75. In other words: I am donating a lot of time. That is OK. Everyone else is donating time.

I have been tracking the firewise admin. and some of my operational (EMT) time separately and they are NOT included in the totals above. I do not track incidentals, like checking phone messages, getting the mail, taking deposits to the bank & fielding phone calls.

## More info. on being a Government Entity and what would happen if the district should fail

Government entities are different than corporations in many ways. Special districts are divided into two broad accounting categories that I am aware of: enterprise and non-enterprise. Of the two, non-enterprise is even less like a regular business than enterprise. Enterprise entities get most of their income by charging for services (such as a water district). Pliocene Ridge CSD is a “non-enterprise fund”, most of its revenue comes from property taxes.

Most of the laws that govern special districts are “one size fits all”. There is no consideration of the amount of revenue that the district has available or whether there are paid staff positions. This creates a “catch-22” for the smallest districts in the State. They are expected to do things like hire a general manager but lack the funds to do so. In this case, the district’s board must do the best that they can, with the resources that are available to them, to manage their district in a fiscally responsible manner.

In the past, I spent many hours on the Calif. Special District Association’s forum consulting with both professionals and staff members of other districts on this very topic. Not a single person had a solution for how to solve this dilemma. I see this as a major flaw in the special district system of governance. The water district in Alleghany has the same problem as I am sure many other small districts do.

There are things that the district does that help with property values. (Its primary source of revenue) The work that the district does for the ISO survey every five years is one example. This impacts the insurance rates in our area in a positive way. An insurance agent left a message at the Pike Firehouse not too long ago. When I called him back he wanted to know how in the heck our district had such a good ISO rating. He said that he can’t touch properties in the town of Washington because of their ISO rating. Having a functioning fire district is another way that the district benefits property values. The firewise work being started is a third example. Some of these benefits will never be seen on a balance sheet or income statement but they are real.

If the district should ever fail, it would be a failure on the part of its residents. My understanding is that fire services can’t go back to the non-profits. Even though the laws that allowed for the formation of Volunteer Fire Companies in unincorporated areas are still on the books, that does not mean that things can go backwards. As explained by the district’s attorney in his legal opinion, the California State Legislature has made it clear that EMS and Fire services are to be provided by government agencies. If the district were to fail the County would have to either find or create another local government agency to take over fire and EMS services in our area.