



# GOLDEN GATE

## Fire Protection District

P.O. Box 843

Golden, CO 80402-0483

(303) 279-3538

[www.goldengatefire.org](http://www.goldengatefire.org)

### Golden Gate Fire Protection District Meeting Minutes 19 August 2021

1. Preliminary
  - 1.1. Location/Call to order: Sheila Carlon called to order the regular meeting of the GGFPD Board at 7:00pm at 7181 Crawford Gulch Rd, Golden, CO.
  - 1.2. Welcome audience
  - 1.3. Pledge of Allegiance
  - 1.4. Roll call indicated a quorum was present with Sheila Carlon, Dave Kinnard, Sam Patton and Paul Trost, and Dannel Agar. Chief DiFeo was present.
  - 1.5. Additions and deletions to the Agenda: add 3.4 Firewise and fire prevention report.
  - 1.6. Conflicts of interest: none
2. Public Agenda
  - 2.1. Public Comment
    - Dave Primmer reiterated his concern about having dual FF/Board member role stating it's "bad relations with the troops."
    - Terri Costeldia noted ahead of the Study Group discussion, that the informational study group post card mailed last year was too vague: no contact, no names; it didn't mean anything. Additionally, Terri reiterated her problem with conflicts of interest regarding Chief DiFeo.
    - Ellie Phillips questioned rumors of giving money to another district to upgrade their computers. Chief corrected that we bought software (that we own) that helps us manage our training, and we pay \$740/month to have our training captain coordinate with TFPD training chief. GGFPD can't afford to employ our own training officer to manage the administrative aspects of training which is too much work and time commitment for a volunteer.
    - Terri noted that in 2019 between Auxiliary and this department we spent \$3811 for training. The budget today is \$4K in house and \$8880 in the budget for TFPD. She questioned why we now spend \$12,880 when it used to be \$4K.
    - It was suggested that some of this conflict could be resolved with better itemization. Chief agreed we could break it out on the budget for better visibility to alleviate this misunderstanding but noted that the trainings were already itemized, e.g. TFPD IGA training, etc.
    - Steve Green noted a fear in the community about a merger and the training expense is a step towards a merger. He asked if this money is a new expense. It was noted this was previously done by a volunteer FF for free. Sam replied that FF left and we don't have volunteers that have the time to support this. He also agreed with Dave Primmer that FF/Board member is a conflict of interest. Previous board changed this but it's a good rule. On question of drainage issue, he felt the ball was dropped-- he did communicate with Dave Katz and Chief.

- Mary Preister stated that the Auxiliary had contact with Chief and Study Group and would like time to talk after the Study Group presents to the board. She also asked if the community would have the ability to comment on the Study Group report outside of board meetings noting the lack of attendance. Sheila replied that eventually the community will have an opportunity, but we have yet to hear what the committee has recommended.
  - Deb Curlee had a housekeeping comment regarding the website, noting numerous things missing since April. Sam will update.
- 2.2. Approval of July 2021 Meeting Minutes: **Motion #1** by Sam Patton. 2nd by Paul Trost.  
Discussion: none. Vote: 5 yes. **Motion passes.**
3. Reports
- 3.1. Treasurer's Report
- See <https://www.goldengatefire.org/minutes-and-financials/> for report.
  - Open issues/summary of discussion:
    - Transferred \$130K to ColoTrust
    - Noted some Budget v. Actual line items cleaned up, i.e., grant revenue. Accountant will clean up line numbers from previous build of QuickBooks.
- 3.2. Chief's Report
- See <https://www.goldengatefire.org/minutes-and-financials/> for report.
  - Open issues/summary of discussion:
    - The decision to have the cistern fund part of general fund was the auditor's decision. Dave Kinnard noted that historically we haven't segregated funds. Terri asked for this to be addressed in next year's budget.
    - 2021 Jeffco Hazardous Mitigation Plan needs to be formally adopted by the Board or our district won't be included in the plan. Sam noted this increases our district's ability to receive grants from FEMA and other gov't agencies.
- 3.3. Community Organization Reports
- Auxiliary
    - DeeDee Ramstetter read an email from Feb 11, 2021, between Mary and Chief DiFeo clarifying GGAC formation, purpose and by-laws in light of questions put forward by the Study Group.
    - Mary Preister mentioned receiving a large donation from Meyer's Hardware.
  - Grange
    - Terri Costeldia noted the success of the Slash Day event.
    - Terri discussed 2 outstanding issues: 1) easement/permission to cross from the 2019 purchase of Station 83 and 2) drainage issue into their parking lot. FD fixed the drainage problem from Station 83. It was noted the current drainage problem was coming from the road not the station and that this particular issue was never discussed.
    - The Board will take it under advisement to discuss and get back to Terri.
- 3.4. Firewise Activity / Fire Prevention Report
- In association with Jeffco, we had a record slash event: district FFs donated over 40 manhours assisting residents unload their slash and the Auxiliary provided water and snacks to the FFs. County residents dropped off 156 loads of slash, a record performance for our site, compared to our previous record of 140 loads in 2020. This increase contrasts with the 20% decrease reported by the county slash processing vendor at other sites this year. 91 of 156 loads were brought in by GGFPD residents, who reported over 2400 manhours of thinning and slash collection work. Combined with the work of the FFs,

Grange, and Auxiliary personnel, this community effort will count for a greater than \$60,000 investment in wildland fire safety on our 2021 application to maintain NFPA Firewise certification for the District.

- Jeffco had said they were planning on holding this in a central location moving forward, i.e., Rooney Rd recycling for slash. The cost to the county bringing in crew to chip, transport and dispose = \$60/truckload. They charged \$20/load. Net cost absorbed by the county averages \$40/load.
- Paul asked if we could budget \$6K to do this ourselves as a contingency.

#### 4. New Business

##### 4.1. Budget Committee for 2022 Budget

- Sam, Paul and Chief volunteered to be on the committee.

#### 5. Old Business:

##### 5.1. Study Group Report presented to Board

- Dave Kinnard provided background: In spring 2020, Chief DiFeo presented an analysis to the Board of the operational and financial challenges facing our District and the actions taken by other rural, volunteer Fire Departments in Colorado facing similar challenges. In response, the Board commissioned a Study Group comprised of two Board members and two community volunteers to assist the Chief in further analysis of the emergency service demands, trends in volunteer participation and financial health of our District in comparison to other similar districts in the state. After reporting interim findings to the Board in November 2020, the Study Group recommended, and the Board subsequently directed, the Chief be authorized to discuss with neighboring TFPD the potential for any form of increased collaboration between adjacent districts that already share training resources and engage in extensive mutual aid during provision of emergency services. Working with TFPD Chief Ondr, Chief DiFeo began by conducting a detailed review of the two district's organizations, personnel management, emergency service provision and performance, and financial status. Their findings were shared with the Study Group in July, with additional questions and suggestions for clarity that were addressed in the Chiefs' Organizational Comparison that is shared with the Board tonight.
- The Study Group reviewed the Chiefs' report, including the analysis of both organizations' strengths and weaknesses, as well as any opportunities or threats that increased collaboration might involve (SWOT analysis). The Group found that there are clear opportunities for improvement in emergency service delivery in GGFPD with significant operational and financial challenges that could be addressed by some form of increased collaboration with TFPD. Accordingly, the Group recommended to the Board the following:
  - The Board appoint 2 board members and Chief DiFeo to request that Chief Ondr and 2 TFPD board members form a joint Task Force to identify any opportunities for increased collaboration that might exist between the Districts to improve emergency services for our community while maintaining careful stewardship of taxpayer resources;
  - If the Task Force does find such opportunities for further partnership between the districts, that the GGFPD Board would appoint a sub-committee to include interested district residents and FFs to solicit public input on these opportunities and any alternatives that might exist; and

- To further study the implications of any such opportunity identified by the Task Force, the Board should consider professional analysis of the opportunity by independent financial and legal experts, prior to any final decisions by the Board.
  - Sheila acknowledged Marith Reheis and Dave Kincholoe for their time and work, stating the public had good representation.
  - Dannel noted TFPD is 3-4 times GGFPD district size. TFPD has more stations, capital needs, larger budget, so what benefit is there for TFPD? Dave explained that their response was a building respect for our level of professionalism, but also these are foothills people and it's the right thing to do. They see an ethical opportunity to improve services.
  - Sheila said the next step is to talk to TFPD. Study Group is asking the Board to sanction our Board talking to TFPD Board, which hasn't seen the report yet.
  - Dannel asked about their funding percentage: 85% compared to our 130%.
  - Paul noted the community owes Chief, Sheila, Dave, Marith and Dave Kincheloe thanks for volunteering their time to put this together.
  - **Motion #2** by Dave Kinnard to approve the 3 proposals (stated above). 2<sup>nd</sup> by Sam Patton. Discussion: Additional time would be helpful for some Board members to further review the Chief's Report, gather public comment and consider whether the above initiatives are warranted at this time. Dave noted that the extent and severity of our current reduction in emergency service performance argues for more rapid initiation of discussions to address time-sensitive issues; any specific recommendations that are forthcoming will have ample opportunity for Board, community and professional analysis. Terri felt Dave's comment was misleading because we have mutual aid. Chief replied mutual aid was still not sufficient and highlighted recent call stats. Dannel made it clear he's not opposed but he wants to wait. Paul would like more time to read through the document and believes the citizens ought to read through it, too. Vote: 3 yes (Carlton, Kinnard, Patton), 2 no (Trost, Agar). **Motion passes.**
  - Terri said that it seems there's a conflict of interest that Sheila and Dave, as board members, are on the Study Group. Sheila noted that boards have sub-committees. Sam stated that the Board is looking into providing a better service to our citizens which is the most important job of this Board.
  - Chief reiterated this report is all data, noting that GGFPD is not a sustainable business with our budget and lack of volunteers. This problem is systemic across the country where districts can't cover calls, can't retain FFs, can't afford to pay staff.
  - Dannel said it boils down to money. Sheila noted we aren't even in the running for grants because of our call/FF status. Chief noted all FDs along the 285 corridor from C470 to top of the county line are having this same discussion. This is the evolution of small fire districts.
  - Paul felt this discussion was beneficial-- puts it into perspective where we stand.
6. Adjournment
- 6.1. Sheila Carlton adjourned the meeting at 9:01 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board is on September 16, 2021 at 7:00 pm at Station 81.

END

Minutes approved by:

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Sheila Carlon, President