



GOLDEN GATE

Fire Protection District

P.O. Box 843

Golden, CO 80402-0483

(303) 279-3538

www.goldengatefire.org

Golden Gate Fire Protection District Meeting Minutes 16 September 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 32360 Robinson Hill Rd, Golden.
 - 1.2. Welcome audience
 - 1.3. Pledge of Allegiance
 - 1.4. Roll call indicated a quorum was present with Sheila Carlon, Dave Kinnard, Paul Trost, and Dannel Agar. Chief DiFeo was present. Sam Patton had an excused absence.
 - 1.5. Additions and deletions to the Agenda: add 4.3 Conflicts of Interest per Paul Trost; add 5.3 Wildland Fire Prevention Update per Dave Kinnard
 - 1.6. Conflicts of interest: Dave Kinnard raised the Grange's permission to cross issue for transparency's sake since Dave, as well as Sheila and Paul are Grange members.
2. Minutes
 - 2.1. Approval of August 2021 Meeting Minutes: **Motion #1** by Sheila Carlon. 2nd by Dave Kinnard. Discussion: none. Vote: 4 yes. **Motion passes.**
3. Reports
 - 3.1. Treasurer's Report
 - See <https://www.goldengatefire.org/minutes-and-financials/> for reports.
 - Open issues/summary of discussion:
 - Received new treasurer's report from assessor and property valuations have increased approximately 5%, so we'll be getting roughly \$10K increase in tax revenue in 2022.
 - Paul noted on Budget v. Actual that training and incentive/stipend were low. Chief replied that most of the training was in district and taught in house (Covid impact). Stipends were down due to FFs resigning.
 - Sheila asked about line 602.4 repairs and maintenance: \$10K budgeted but spent only \$100. Chief noted that bills will be coming in from engines getting serviced recently. Additionally, there will be end of year maintenance.
 - Paul asked when to anticipate money being spent on station 81. Chief noted money will be spent on drawings, permitting process, so likely by the end of the year.
 - Paul asked about inflation concerns and budget impact. Dave noted for budgetary purposes, state auditor's office recommended using 3% inflation calculation.
 - Dave followed up on Paul mentioning \$21K in liabilities, stating \$19K was property tax due rest of the year. The other \$2K was our credit card bill which is paid monthly in total so we have no long term outstanding debt. Additionally, he asked for feedback on accountant ROV. Feedback positive.
 - Dave noted that the accountant had shouldered a lot of the year's audit exemption work, which had gotten more complex, but we are over budget due to this.
 - 3.2. Chief's Report

- See <https://www.goldengatefire.org/minutes-and-financials/> for report.

3.3. Community Organization Reports

- Auxiliary
 - The GGAC sent out their fund-raising request letter, using the same list as last year, although it had been updated. Receipts were low, only \$1200. Last year this time it was 20 times higher. Considering putting out another newsletter since email doesn't reach everyone in the neighborhood.
 - At the last board meeting, Mary Preister felt that her comments weren't reflected adequately regarding the study group report. The GGAC is strong and they want to do more but wanted to clarify that the report stating all parties could work within that framework without issue with a fire authority or merger was a misrepresentation. GGAC only supports GGFPD, noting that they will consider how to cooperate if necessary but that is not their preference. Chief noted this and thanked them.
 - Mary said if there is a meeting on the 27th they would like to be present.
 - Issue raised to put a link on the GGFPD website to support the GGAC fundraising effort. Mary noted that donations should go through the GGAC so people can claim them as deductible gifts. Do not send donations directly to the fire department.
 - Sheila reminded the board to send in their donations as well.
 - Dave noted the extra cost of extrication training (Auto X) and asked if FFs could apply for training support. Mary replied that they do support this, and individuals can ask for funding via proper channels.
 - Deb Curlee wanted to help with recruitment and suggested the Grange could host recruitment meetings in October. Chief noted that of our 17 FFs, 6 are brand new. Our goal is 20 personnel, but we cannot support bringing on any new FFs at this time due to trainer/shift capacity to train new members.
- Grange
 - Terri Costeldia noted the Grange is slammed with numerous rentals.
 - Celebrated 80th anniversary with an event hosting approximately 70 people.
 - Terri noted the Grange's extensive rental contract in response to Dave's concern about public safety and communication issues.

4. Old Business

4.1. Study Group Next Steps

- Dave Kinnard noted Study Group completed its life span and no longer exists. Next step is to pursue nomination/volunteering of 2 board members to begin discussion with TFPD to find common ground (per motion 2021-08-02) noting no one has met with TFPD yet.
- Chief noted we can take the Study group off the agenda going forward since the study group disbanded.
- Sheila thanked Terri for providing information about Triton Consulting Group and their willingness to come talk to us, esp. with their experience with the 3 city departments that they're working with now. Chief noted they are giving their report to city council in Golden next week.
- Dannel Agar and Sheila Carlon volunteered to be on the district exploration group. Noted we don't need to nominate volunteers.

4.2. Station 81 Update

- Reviewed in Chief's report. There's a meeting tomorrow and he will provide updates.
- Sheila asked Chief to highlight for the audience the purpose of the station renovation.

- Dannel asked when we'll see a drawing. Chief replied at tomorrow's meeting and then he will send it out to the station committee.

4.3. Conflict of Interest

- Paul reviewed that at the last meeting, several people complained about conflict of interest regarding dual board/FF roles. He was on a previous board with a similar situation and the legal opinion was that it's not illegal but could pose ethical problems. Sheila noted the situation was slightly different (board president's spouse was a FF).
- Paul asked Dave to state why there is/is not a conflict. Dave noted that since this wasn't on the agenda initially, he didn't call this out as a conflict and should the board choose to revisit this, he'd recuse himself from voting. Dave explained that several years ago, he got to know the Chief, who asked him to consider volunteering, especially since 70% of calls were medical. Sam Patton also received this feedback from Chief. Dave saw an opportunity to further contribute to the community as a FF. As a serving board member, though, there's an intrinsic conflict of interest. This doesn't preclude going forward, but it does demand identification and transparency. Sam and Dave made a presentation in conjunction with Chief, asking for variance from traditional guidelines to allow 2 board members to serve as FFs. Several concerns with robust discussion were presented: 1) potential with personality/authority conflict. In the field chain of command is essential; 2) FF benefits and recusing themselves to avoid these types of conflicts of interest. Past minutes reflect their careful attention to avoid these conflicts. It was always understood that should the community or the board have concerns warranting revision of that permission, it could be rescinded. To his knowledge, there have not been any callouts on specific conflicts of interest.
- Sheila added that she attended the board meeting to hear their presentation. Sheila was not in favor of this initially, but after listening to how they planned to manage this and recuse themselves with a plan for handling conflicts, she felt that it didn't appear to be a problem. It was noted that no one has come forward with a specific conflict of interest with Chief, Sam, Dave, this board, or the fire department. Steve Green disagreed. Sheila reiterated there was never any specific example. Julie Ramstetter asked who hired Chief because that is a conflict of interest. Chief noted anything can be a conflict of interest but if mitigated, doesn't need to be an issue.
- It was noted that other fire districts also face this situation: TFPD, Kremmling, Otis, a lot of small rural fire depts, because it's the only way they can get things done. Dave noted they talked to people in the SDA, and where there's a limited manpower pool, it's frequently done, you just have to put in safeguards.
- Chief said they work great in the field, there has never been an issue.
- Aaron Primmer's concern as a taxpayer was the FFs weren't joining the board to give themselves a raise which he hasn't seen. Chief noted that he pushed for adding Sam and Dave to take LOSAP because as firefighters, they earn/deserve that benefit.
- Steve Green felt that conflicts of interest had been raised many times, for example on the meeting to adopt codes, the merger (he was corrected that there is no merger), the postcard no one received.
- Paul was unaware that other districts had the same situation.
- Paul would like to keep this topic on the agenda for next month as Old Business so that they could hear Sam's perspective as well.

5. New Business

5.1. Grange Permission to Cross Agreement

- Sheila raised concern about the sentence regarding the shared well failure and the right to terminate position if the well should fail. Since this was already addressed in the shared well agreement, she was not willing to support this agreement with that sentence. Terri said she added this sentence. Additionally, Terri read her statement regarding the permission to cross triangle area in front of the bay as Grange property, noting in particular that if current owner (GGFPD) is unable to provide Grange water (the well fails), they could re-frack the old well and while they don't expect this to happen, they would need support (an agreement) in case GGFPD doesn't own the property anymore. Dave suggested, rather than revoking permission to cross, have language that if the well fails, that the old well access for the Grange would be protected.
- Chief noted that this is not an issue since they can install a traffic rated manhole cover.
- Dave suggested words to the effect that granting the district permission to cross does not preclude the Grange's right to access that area if needed.
- Paul said he will work with Terri to reword this and submit it to the board prior to the next meeting so they can finally put this to rest.
- Terri noted this will be a partnership.
- Dave asked Terri if she talked to the state water folks. Yes, but they were not helpful.

5.2. Future Board Meeting Locations

- Historically meetings rotated between the stations, even months at station 82, odd at station 81. The Grange can't be kept in rotation due to the lack of internet.
- Dannel felt zoom meetings were important. Many boards continue to meet solely over zoom.
- Dave reminded that state health guidelines about social distancing are still in effect.
- **Motion #2** by Paul Trost to keep the old schedule for Stations 81 and 82 for odd and even months respectively, which allows for zoom virtual meetings. 2nd by Dave Kinnard. Vote: 4 yes. **Motion passes.**

5.3. Wildland Fire Prevention Update

- Dave provided a brief update. Fall is the time for submitting the community's firewise investment to the NFPA for our certification. He would like to reinvigorate our website page to allow the community to enter their wildfire risk mitigation activities and efforts which are used for part of our application for our firewise certification. A website front page announcement, along with email, plus word of mouth would be helpful to collect data needed to meet the end of November deadline.
- Chief mentioned that a contractor has been hired to rebuild our website so navigating the website should become easier.
- Mary Preister said they could help with notifications, either email or possibly a newsletter.
- Terri Costeldia said they could use their email distribution to help support as well.
- Dave will craft verbiage that they can distribute.

6. Public Comment

- Terri Costeldia, regarding conflict of interest, wanted to note Resolution 2017-02-01 to allow FFs to be on the board and vice versa. This was a one-time exemption for Dave and Sam. She wanted to know if there was follow up on this, any exemptions, noting Dave ran for the board again in 2020. Per the document this exemption expired 6 months ago. She felt that regarding conflict of interest, it was proposed by FFs, voted on by FFs, so right from the start this was sketchy. Sheila noted that resolution was not passed, no by-law change, but it was voted on per the minutes. Sheila agreed we need to look into it, noting, however, that some of the board members at the time were replaced and this may not have

been revisited. It was also noted there was a change of chiefs. Terri suggested when the website gets updated that we include a calendar.

- Deb Curlee, resident on Robinson Hill Rd, felt that it's a problem serving 2 masters: as board members, Dave and Sam serve her as a resident, as FFs they serve the Chief. She mentioned the TFPD merge is going to be a problem down the line for them because if the community is against the merger where will they fall on that issue? Chief corrected there is no merger.
- Sheila explained that the board has a responsibility to the district to investigate every option for the future of this district. It was noted districts all over the state/country were merging, even Golden, Fairmount and Pleasant View FDs were discussing merging.
- Sheila noted the entire district will be voting on the findings eventually. Reiterating we are entering the dialogue stage. They haven't even met with TFPD, yet.
- Deb said that it's obvious just looking at the study group. She understands the FD has needs so let the community help the FD. Fix your house.
- Terri said recruitment and retention have been neglected because all the focus went to TFPD and the Study Group. She argued that GGFPD was not keeping their house clean because they were so focused on the Study Group, and the merger with TFPD, pointing out Station 82's unkempt appearance. Chief again corrected that there is no merger. Dave responded that part of the reason for pushing for the study group was to address the concern about long-term district finances and substandard services. The need to think outside the box, be creative and leave no stone unturned was part of the reason for pushing to initiate a study group to examine these issues. He assured that if what comes out of the task force findings are exposure to debt, deterioration in integrity of service, further reduction of volunteerism, there's not going to be a lot of support for that.
- Steve asked what was substandard. Dave responded that this is noted in the study group report, that the data collected noted the NFPA standard for rural fire service and how far below that GGFPD fell. Steve felt that was unreasonable since the standards in the mountains are not the same as the city. Dave noted that we hit around the 40% mark for the rural standard for time and personnel on call response. Steve felt the report was written by 2 chiefs with a bias. It was argued that the report was a data document.
- Julie Ramstetter said that everyone wanted the best service but from the public's perspective things were shady and being worked underhandedly. The concern was all of this looked like it was geared to bypass the citizens. Paul asked for specific examples that lead to this opinion. Julie asked, for example, why we weren't talking to city departments. While she understood that TFPD was close, it appeared that the Board was not looking into anything; rather they were diving into a goal of merging with TFPD. Chief understood about perceptions and explained that TFPD was our closest aligned neighbor. We've looked at all the data from all the area departments to see what other opportunities exist, but our situation best aligned with TFPD, reiterating we are trying to provide the best service to our district, at the lowest cost. Julie explained she was not opposed to the talk, rather the perception that the board is focused on one goal and the community wasn't allowed any input. Dave asked how we could be more transparent, with the understanding that there's no concrete proposal—can't have a discussion until there's something concrete to discuss. Julie's concern was that citizens were asking questions and it appeared they were being ignored. It has taken this meeting to acknowledge their concerns. Dave asked how much energy she wanted to put into this if the task force came back with TFPD wanted nothing to do with us. Julie replied we'd have to cough up more money. Chief said

this argument was pointless. Allow them to do their due diligence. They'll keep everyone informed as much as possible but know that other arrangements are being worked with all neighboring departments, e.g., auto/mutual aid with Fairmount FD. Currently, there is nothing concrete to discuss.

- Steve Green stepped in arguing this board doesn't listen and keeps spinning a yarn about not merging. He provided a list of his concerns: 1) the new fire authority for fuel mitigation—what are we getting that we haven't gotten already except a new tax? Chief noted nothing has been proposed, that it has been passed to the county. Dave asked if he read the legislation and Steve replied that it didn't matter. He heard what's been said. 2) conflicts of interest: they are too close, Chief and board have merged, and they don't represent the citizens anymore; 3) Amendment A, perfect example of why we don't trust the Chief because he sprung it on the district in 2 weeks, on Oct 5th or 10th, and voted on it Nov 1st. Many people sent their ballots to the wrong place. Additionally, there wasn't a lot of notice on that (passed by one vote to take the mill levy votes away); 4) Recalled the postcard that nobody received; 5) New regulations being put in place, requiring sprinklers if the driveway is inadequate; 6) WUI Code adoption secret meeting that no one was told about; 7) noted Sheila's comment about a Facebook post stating that it was not misinformation, as Sheila said. "When the board claims things are facts, they are actually your opinions and feelings, not facts," he stated.
- Terri wanted to talk about misleading stats, particularly FF call response stats. In 2018, when previously 5-6 FFs would respond to a call, now only 2-3 FFs would respond. Marith Reheis reached out to Dave Kinnard on this statistic change. Dave wrote back that back then with low volunteers, the department was concerned about how to maintain its ability to respond. The idea was that if FFs hear on the radio a call on the other side of the district, if there's a full complement responding, then they were instructed to sit tight. The point was to prevent unnecessarily exhausting personnel, but in fact this happened infrequently. This was a procedure change and an example of how stats can be misleading. Another point she raised was the misinformation concerning why GGFPD wasn't talking to Golden FD. Her opinion was that Chief's response from the last board meeting was misleading. Another point Terri made was that she kept hearing that FFs wanted to go on calls but there were also the FFs who live in district and just want to serve the community. Chief noted that the shift workers do want to go on calls and this is part of the problem with retention. Terri suggested we start recruiting in district. Finally, Terri stated, that while she respects TFPD, she did some research on them, and wanted to highlight several negative points: board meeting minutes were vague and weren't posted; their website was antiquated; they don't post their meeting locations; there were no tax payer interactions, no public shows up, they were \$1.2M in debt, there were claims against the district, raised concern regarding the 4 year, full time, recruitment person that we will share, and noted the conflict of interest with TFPD trying to sell Station 9 on Smith Hill, which had been donated by the Green/White foundation to be used for the fire district. It's now off the market and tied up in litigation and the Green/White family were so disappointed with the chief and board they're no longer funding TFPD for now. Terri closed stating she wanted to bring these TFPD issues to the board's attention.
- Dean Dowson, 5785 Horseradish Gulch, appreciated the email replies from Sheila and Dave. His problem was that communication from the board to the residents had been minimal. It would be nice to involve residents and invite them to board meetings, involving them, rather than let rumors fly. Having been on boards previously, he stated the

problem was the lack of communication. Chief asked how we could do better. Dean suggested putting the minutes up on the website. They are already posted but perhaps posting them quicker.

- Julie Ramstetter stated that this was her 4th meeting, and this was the first time the board has acknowledged that the public was upset.
- Steve Green noted this won't be in the minutes and Dean suggested making the minutes more thorough and include all the arguments and complaints.
- Sheila noted it's difficult to gather information, mail newsletters, only to find out later that no one was reading them. The public has a responsibility, too. She asked Dean for suggestions. He replied that this meeting should be on Zoom. It is—board meetings are hosted on zoom (have been for the past 1.5 year) and being recorded.
- Julie asked if recorded minutes could be posted on the website along with the minutes.
- Dean argued if people are ignoring emails, the question is why? If they are really interested and are informed, then the rumors are exposed and explained.
- Steve Green stated that no one believes what we write anymore.
- Julie noted the influx of new residents interested in the district. Terri suggested having a sign up option on permit applications to have emails included on a distribution list so that more people are notified of the agenda. Or have a sign-up sheet at every meeting so that emails can be recorded. Chief noted the website will be cleaned up.
- DeeDee noted if there is something happening in the community, the 3 fire stations can pass this information via signs/boards. Sheila noted this was tried in the past, but it still missed some of the neighbors.
- Julie agreed that it's on the residents to know what's going on, noting some residents may struggle with technology. Chief said we used to have a newsletter that we mailed once a year (via Jeffco voter registration list) just for this purpose, in an attempt to reach more people. Dave acknowledged that in rural communities without a lot of infrastructure, fire departments often were the locus of communication. Dave said we have unspent monies for public education since we've been shut down 2 springs in a row, and there's room in the budget to create some form of communication board at the 3 stations. Chief had applied for a FEMA grant for an LED sign to go outside station 83 but we didn't get it.
- Matt Phillips, 25111 Golden Gate Canyon Rd, asked, if there are monies for public education, where is the best place to send suggestions? Dave requested he put his ideas/suggestions to email and communicate these to the board, whose emails are found on the website.
- Paul asked if a suggestion box at each station would work. Dee Dee felt that a sign at each station (and the Grange) would better serve the public.
- Mary asked if the Chief was doing the station refurbishment alone. No, there's a committee. Also questioned if the accountant does our audit. No, our CPA prepares the paperwork. Audit happens through an independent audit accountant, submitted to the state for certification.
- Julie asked for future meetings to allot for extra time for public comment. Chief agreed it's important, as long as it's based on facts, not rumors, and to listen when he states that a rumor is false so he's not wasting everyone's time repeating the same thing every meeting. Julie stated, the repetition means that we're not listening to each other.
- Dave asked for feedback on having public comments at the end of the meeting and everyone responded favorably.

7. Adjournment

7.1. Sheila Carlon adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board is on October 7, 2021 at 7:00 pm at Station 82.

END

Minutes approved by the Board on Oct 7, 2021 .