

# Ross Valley Fire Department Board of Directors Handbook



# ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS HANDBOOK

## SECTION I PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the Ross Valley Fire Department and its governance, and establish general guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors as a group and its members as individuals.

## SECTION II REFERENCE MATERIALS

The following materials and resources were used in creating this handbook.

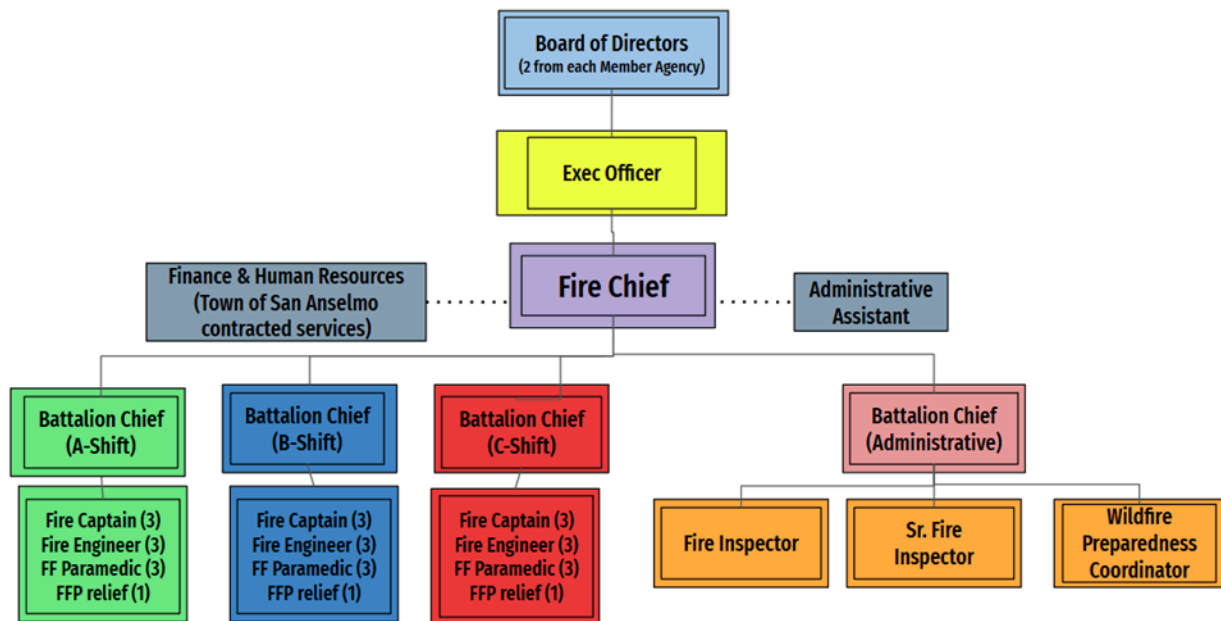
- [Joint Powers Agreement with Amendments](#)
- RVFD website [www.rossvalleyfire.org](http://www.rossvalleyfire.org)
  - [Fire Board Meetings](#) - members, agendas, minutes, etc.
  - [Overview of fire stations, equipment, etc.](#)
  - [Financial Information \(Budget & Audit\)](#)
  - [History of the Ross Valley Fire Department](#)
- Memorandums of Understanding & Contracts:
  - [Firefighters MOU](#)
  - [Chief Officers MOU](#)
  - [Fire Chief Employment Agreement](#)
- Websites to JPA members
  - [Town of Ross](#)
  - [Town of San Anselmo](#)
  - [Town of Fairfax](#)
  - [Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District](#)

## SECTION III ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

Ross Valley Fire Department is a consolidated department, operating under a Joint Powers Agreement, with the mission of protecting lives, property and the environments of Ross, San Anselmo, Sleepy Hollow and Fairfax. There are three fire stations: Fire Station 19 - San Anselmo (San Anselmo Ave), which also serves as the Administrative Headquarters; Fire Station 20 - San Anselmo (Butterfield Rd); and Fire Station 21 - Fairfax (Park Rd.). The Town of Ross is currently served by Fire Station 19.

Below is an organizational chart of the department. There are 39 full-time employees

## RVFD Organizational Chart



### Administrative Staff & Schedules

The Fire Chief, Battalion Chief - Administrative, two Fire Inspectors, Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator and Administrative Assistant work a typical 40 hour week, Monday through Friday with varying start times between 7:00 am and 8:30 am depending on the position.

The Fire Chief is appointed by and reports to the Board. The Fire Chief is responsible for general operations of the Fire Department, including budget, personnel, operations and emergency operations. The Fire Chief is exempt from overtime pay.

There is one Battalion Chief-Administrative who works a 40-hour schedule at the San Anselmo Station and is responsible for administrative and operational functions as assigned by the Fire Chief.


The Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator is a five year fixed term position funded separately by the member agencies. Ninety percent (90%) of the fully burdened cost is funded by MWPA local funds received by the three Towns and SHPD. Ten percent (10%) is funded through the three towns and SHPD. See the [staff report](#) for more information on percentages and cost, and see the [job description](#) for more information on the scope of responsibilities.

The Fire Inspectors are responsible for ensuring code enforcement and conducting mandated and routine fire inspections. They work closely with the Member Agencies' building and planning departments as well as with homeowners, contractors, and the general public. The Senior Fire Inspector performs fire investigations.

The Town of San Anselmo provides fiscal and human resources services to the Department. The staff report and agreement can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Firefighter Staff & Schedules**

RVFD Firefighter schedules, and fire departments in general, are structured around 24-hour station coverage, 365 days a year, and minimum staffing levels, which makes implementing schedules very different from a standard 40 hour workweek. The workforce is divided into three shifts A (green), B (blue) & C (red), which are color coded on the snippet of the shift chart below.

 <b>Ross Valley Fire Department Shift Calendar 2026</b>																											
A Shift							B Shift							C Shift													
January							February							March													
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat							
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	13	14							
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	20	21							
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	27	28							
25	26	27	28	29	30	31								29	30	31											

Each shift covers all three stations over a 48 hour period and rotates continually. As an example, A shift (green) worked January 3 and 4. There was one Battalion Chief on duty stationed out of San Anselmo, and at each station there was a Captain (supervisor), Engineer, (driver) and a Firefighter Paramedic. There is one “relief” Firefighter Paramedic built into each shift’s schedule to cover vacations and other leaves in the normal course of work. There may be sufficient capacity for the relief to cover unexpected absences and/or injury leaves, etc. And there may be days where the San Anselmo Station has a crew of four (Captain, Engineer and 2 FFPs). However, if the relief is covering for someone on a planned vacation, for example, and another shift member is unexpectedly out, minimum staffing requires paying someone who was not on the schedule overtime to cover. Employees are asked to voluntarily accept overtime shifts. If no one volunteers, the Fire Chief has the right to force overtime to ensure 24/7 coverage at the minimum staffing levels. Some of the biggest drivers of overtime are unexpected illness and disability leaves.

This ties into a key concept called minimal staffing, which is the number of personnel that must be on duty at all times to operate apparatus and respond to emergencies. Minimum staffing is set in the Memorandum of Understanding and the department is legally bound to staff to this level. The current daily minimum staffing is three Firefighters per engine and one Battalion Chief for a total minimum staffing of 10 firefighters per day. The Battalion Chief typically responds to incidents that require more than one fire engine. They use an assigned vehicle, which is a pickup truck or an SUV. There is no state or federal minimum staffing level, but there are recommended standards, which is typically four per engine.

Since the stations are staffed 24/7, 365 days a year, there is a process for vacation and holiday bidding based on length of service seniority. The schedule is created in advance so people can plan their holidays, etc. However, the Battalion Chiefs manage the schedule and will move people between stations depending on staffing and coverage needs with the requirement that each station is staffed with a Captain, Engineer and Firefighter Paramedic.

### **Chain of Command**

The Battalion Chief is the management classification that has responsibility for supervision of the Captains at all three stations and oversight for daily operations, including staffing. The Captain is responsible to lead the Engineer and Firefighter Paramedic(s). The Engineers are mainly responsible for driving the engines and operating equipment on the engines. The Firefighter Paramedics respond to emergency and rescue activities with the crew. The Captain, Engineer and FFP respond as a 3-person team to incidents. All Battalion Chiefs, Captains and Engineers are EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians), but not all of them are Paramedics which require additional schooling, certification and ongoing training. All of our Firefighters are Paramedics, as Firefighter EMTs are no longer hired. Paramedics can perform more advanced procedures in the field.

### **Overtime and FLSA**

The Fair Labor Standards Act affects how overtime is calculated. The FLSA was originally designed to guide how overtime is paid on the 40 hour workweek. Because Firefighters' normal schedule is 48 hours on and 96 hours off, there are provisions for Fire Departments to set a work period different from a 7 day week so they are not incurring overtime during the course of a normal shift. In addition, there are parameters that define “the regular rate of pay” that Firefighters are paid for their overtime.

### **Ross Valley Paramedic Authority**

The Ross Valley Paramedic Authority is a Joint Powers Authority providing paramedic services to the Ross Valley. Medic 18 is the primary paramedic unit that is stationed at the Town of Ross.

### **Mutual Aid and Cross-Jurisdictional Coverage**

In addition to staffing the three Ross Valley fire stations, Firefighters will assist other jurisdictions in emergency response. This is guided by written and unwritten agreements to support the mission of protecting life, property and environment.

*Mutual Aid within the County:* Fire Departments throughout Marin County will cover for each other as needed or requested under a mutual, reciprocal relationship that is not formally in writing. For example, if RVFD Engines are responding to a call, a neighboring agency will cover us, which means they will be ready and willing to respond to a call if needed.

*Automatic Aid:* There are some unincorporated areas embedded within the Ross Valley Fire

jurisdiction that make it more efficient for Ross Valley Fire to respond. These include areas like Oak Manor, end of San Francisco Blvd and White's Hill. Therefore, we have a five-year written agreement with the County of Marin who pays us approximately \$279,779 per year to provide these services. The contract runs for a five-year term with an annual escalator and will need to be renewed in 2028.

*Mutual Aid Agreement with the State Office of Emergency Services:* There is a California Master Mutual Aid Agreement where the State can request staffing to respond to emergencies. Several factors go into whether we send Firefighters "out of county". First, we need to ensure we have adequate coverage and can meet our minimum staffing levels. If there are multiple Firefighters out on leave, such as injury leave, we may not be able to accommodate. OES will put a call out for roles/positions needed. We may not always have Firefighters available with that particular training or qualification. When we do send someone "out of county", we are reimbursed typically from Federal funds that are passed through the State. The Department is reimbursed for the Firefighters' time at time and a half. In addition, we are reimbursed for use of equipment and an additional 15% for administrative overhead. Therefore, the Department is not incurring overtime expense. This additional revenue and expense is not included in the regular operating budget since it is unpredictable. A mid-year budget adjustment is done when applicable.

## **SECTION IV ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING & BUDGET**

The RVFD operating budget is currently funded by member contributions from the four participating Joint Powers Authority members (Ross, San Anselmo, Sleepy Hollow and Fairfax) based on the cost-sharing percentages as outlined in the Joint Powers Agreement. Below is a list of some of the elements of the cost-sharing structure, but this list is not exhaustive. The complete language can be found in the JPA and its Amendments.

- Fire Stations are owned by members. Station 19 and 20 are owned by the Town of San Anselmo and Station 21 is owned by the Town of Fairfax. Replacement or reconstruction costs are the separate responsibility of the owning member. Routine maintenance is the responsibility of the Authority.
- The closure of the Ross Fire Station on July 1, 2025 affected the calculations for the cost-sharing formula.

The JPA requires that the Board adopt a budget for the ensuing year by June 15. You can find the staff report and corresponding budget at the May or June Board Meeting Materials on the website. Typically there is a mid-year budget adjustment made in February. .

[Staff Report - 20-Year History of Member Contributions](#)

[20 Year History of Member Contributions - Chart](#)

[Five Year Budget Forecast](#)

The Department has a reserves policy in place, per best practice by the Government Finance Officers Association, of 10% of general fund reserves. Such a reserve reduces the risk of financial impacts resulting from a natural disaster or other catastrophic event; increases the ability to respond to challenges of a changing economic environment, including prolonged downturns in the local, state, or national economy; and demonstrates continued prudent fiscal management and creditworthiness.

Fire Department Equipment is expensive. The Department plans for replacement by creating an equipment replacement schedule where funds are set aside. Fire Engines and Utility Vehicles are often custom made and require a long time to make because there are limited vendors who serve a lot of fire departments. Fire engines typically last approximately 20-25 years before needing replacement, with a standard, highly recommended cycle of 15 years as front-line service followed by 10 years in reserve. Once it is decommissioned, it will be sold or donated. We have donated some of our no-longer compliant equipment to Latin America.

## **SECTION V ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT BOARD OVERVIEW**

Below is a summary of the governance model and board overview.

### *A. Basis of Authority*

The basis of the authority is the Ross Valley Fire Service Joint Powers Authority that includes the Towns of Fairfax, Ross, and Fairfax and the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District (FPD). Sleepy Hollow FPD was established in 1949 as an autonomous Special District of the State of California. It is a different type of entity than the Towns. Below is a timeline of the Authority:

1982 Authority was formed with Fairfax and San Anselmo

2010 Authority Amended and Restated Initial Agreement to include Sleepy Hollow as a full and voting member of the Authority; modify the composition of the Board; set forth member's ownership rights as to the assets and reserves of the Authority; and address certain other issues agreed upon among the Members.

2012 First Amendment to the Agreement is to include Ross as a Member of the Authority; modify the composition of the Board; revise the Members' cost sharing and ownership rights; and address certain other issues agreed upon among the Board members. The staff report can be found [here](#).

2014 Second Amendment to the Agreement to establish a management committee; implement provisions of the Government Code 54956.96 permitting the disclosure of certain closed session information in an authorized closed session of a Member. The staff report can be found [here](#).

2022 Third Amendment to Agreement to provide for the closure of the Ross Fire Station and allocate Authority resources, savings and costs attributable to the Ross Fire Station Closure. The staff report can be found [here](#).

2025 Made the transition to increase the minimum staffing level from a 2-person engine to a 3-person engine. The staff report from 2023 outlines the importance of this change and can be found [here](#).

## *B. Governance*

The Authority created a Joint Powers Agreement, which is a written document that governs the Ross Valley Fire Department. The Agreement has been modified in 1982, 2012, 2014 and 2022 to reflect the changes made to the Authority. Please refer directly to the Agreement and Amendments for more information regarding a detailed list of the powers and duties of the Authority, votes that require unanimous decisions or multi-member majorities, and information on closed sessions. Currently, there is not one consolidated document that incorporates all of the amendments. The original agreement and amendments can be found [here](#). RVFD is working on creating a consolidated document for approval and distribution to the Board.

The Board has operated on a governance model based upon reaching consensus. The Board shall consist of eight (8) voting members (each a "Board Member"), two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Fairfax Town Council, two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the San Anselmo Town Council, two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Board of Directors of the Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District, and two (2) of whom shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Ross Town Council; provided, however, that each Board Member shall be an elected or appointed Town Council or governing body member of the Member by whom he or she is appointed.

Each Member shall also appoint an alternate to serve in a Director's place at any meeting of the Board. Any such alternate shall be an elected or appointed Town Council or governing body member of that Member. Each director, or their alternate, are entitled to one vote.

To have a quorum, at least 5 directors are present and of those 5 or more, it must include at least one from each member agency. If there is less than a quorum, the directors who are present can adjourn the meeting and reschedule or continue it to another date and time, but they cannot transact substantive business or make board decisions.

Voting, Decision-Making. Each Director or his or her alternate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Any decision of the Board shall require a minimum of five (5) votes to be effective, subject to the following.

- A. Matters Requiring a Unanimous Vote. Any change in a Member's cost-sharing percentage (as set forth in Section 8, below), or any revision of the adopted budget that results in an increase in the annual Member's contribution, or any decision with respect to fire station service levels (as set forth in Section 9, below), or the making of any single expenditure of Authority funds in excess of three percent (3%) of the adopted operating budget of the Authority shall require the unanimous vote of the full Board.

- B. Multi-Member Majority. In the spirit of Recital E, above, all other actions of the Board shall require a majority vote of the Board, which majority must include at least one (1) vote by a Director from each Member, except in compliance with the following:
- C. If a motion fails because the majority does not include at least one (1) vote by a Director from each Member, then any Director may reintroduce that motion at the next Board meeting.
- D. If at the second (2nd) consecutive Board meeting where the motion is introduced the majority again does not include at least one (1) vote by a Director from each Member, then the motion may be reintroduced by any Director at the next meeting.
- E. At the third (3rd) consecutive Board meeting where the motion is introduced, the motion may be passed on a simple majority vote without requiring that the majority include at least one (1) vote by a Director from each Member unless the minority votes opposing the motion are cast by Directors from not less than two (2) different Members. The intent of this Subsection 2.3(d)(ii)(C) is to preclude any single Member from blocking passage of such a motion unless at least one (1) Director representing another Member joins in voting to oppose the motion.

*C. Board Members*

The offices of Board President and Vice President were established in 2000 per Resolution 00-11. The Resolution states the President and Vice President should be elected each January and shall only be filled by voting members. The President is the presiding officer and he/she has the same rights as the other members of the Board in voting, introducing motions, resolutions and ordinances, and any discussion of the questions that follow. In absence of the President, the Vice President shall serve as the presiding officer.

Current board members can be found [here](#). The practice has been for the President and Vice President to serve a one-year term and to alternate the presidency and vice presidency between member agencies, with the vice president to be appointed as the president the following year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Vice President</b>
Jan 2026	Julie McMillan (Ross)	Barbara Coler (Fairfax)
<i>June 2025*</i>	<i>Steve Burdo (San Anselmo)</i>	<i>Julie McMillan (Ross)</i>
Jan 2025	Steve Burdo (San Anselmo)	Elizabeth Robbins (Ross)
Jan 2024	Thomas Finn (Sleepy Hollow)	Steve Burdo (San Anselmo)
Jan 2023	Stephanie Hellman (Fairfax)	Thomas Finn (Sleepy Hollow)
Jan 2022	Beach Kuhl (Ross)	Renee Goddard (Fairfax)
Jan 2021	Ford Greene (San Anselmo)	Beach Kuhl (Ross)
Jan 2020	Richard Shortall (Sleepy Hollow)	Ford Greene (San Anselmo)

*\*Elizabeth Robbins left the Board mid-year. Julie McMillan replaced her for half the year as Vice President and then began her term as President in January 2026.*

#### *D. Executive Officer & Management Committee*

The Board has an Executive Officer. The Executive Officer (EO) shall rotate among the Town Managers of Fairfax, San Anselmo, and Ross for two (2) year terms, or such other term as may be determined by the Board. Resolution 25-17 can be found [here](#). The Executive Officer serves under the direction of the Board and serves as a liaison between the Members and the Fire Department. The EO serves as the personnel officer, negotiates with the employees in accordance with MOU contract dates, acts as an official signatory, attends Board meetings and provides overall support.

The Management Committee was created in the 2014 Second Amendment to the JPA.

- 1.1. **Management Committee.** The Management Committee composed of the Town Managers of Fairfax, San Anselmo and Ross is hereby formed. The Executive Officer shall serve as the Chair of the Management Committee. The Management Committee shall meet monthly to review the Board agenda and any other current issues. The Management Committee will also provide a forum for decision and coordination of Ross Valley Fire Department issues. The Management Committee shall undertake other activities as determined by the Board that are not inconsistent with this Agreement. In the spirit of Recital E to the Agreement, decisions of the Management Committee, if any, should be made by consensus, whenever possible. While the Management Committee may advise and comment on such matters, the Executive Officer individually retains the authority, duties and responsibilities under Section 5.3 **Fire Chief**, Section 6.3 **Budget Process** and Section 6.4 **Control and Accounting**. Except as otherwise expressly provided, the Executive Officer individually retains any other assigned authority, duty or responsibility, such as, without limitation, those involving civil service or personnel rules, regulations, policies, agreements and procedures or other Ross Valley Fire Department rules, regulations, policies, agreements and procedures.

#### *E. Subcommittees*

The Board can create ad hoc committees and/or subcommittees as needed under the provisions of the Brown Act. Ad hoc committees are often exempt from Brown Act noticing provisions, provided it is purely advisory to the main board, it consists of less than a quorum of the board, it is created for a specific, limited task such as creating a report, it is limited in duration, and it dissolves once the task is complete.

Subcommittees and standing committees are subject to the Brown Act and typically have continuing subject matter jurisdiction and have a fixed meeting schedule. These committees may be required to meet in public, post agendas and allow for public comment, etc.

## *F. Meetings*

RVFD Board Meetings are held in person on the second Wednesday of the month at 6:00 pm at the Town of San Anselmo Council Chambers and via Zoom. All regular and special meetings are conducted in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. Meetings are recorded on Zoom and are made available after the meeting on the website.

Board materials, including the agenda, are posted to the website and emailed to Board Members generally the Friday before the Wednesday meeting. Materials must be posted to the website no later than the Sunday before the meeting (72 hours)

The presence of a majority of the Directors including at least one (1) Director representing each Member shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Authority business. Less than a quorum may adjourn or continue meetings from time to time. The Board shall have a President to preside at and conduct all meetings and a Vice President who shall succeed the President and preside in absence of the President. Each Director or his or her alternate shall be entitled to one (1) vote. Any decision of the Board shall require a minimum of five (5) votes to be effective, subject to additional provisions as outlined in the JPA Agreement related to matters requiring a unanimous vote or a multi-member majority.

The Executive Officer and the Town Managers of Fairfax, Ross and San Anselmo are often in attendance. Occasionally RVFD's Legal Counsel, currently David Lim, will attend a meeting, depending on the agenda item.

Below is a list of items that are on every agenda, :

- Chief's verbal report
- Consent Calendar:
  - Check register and budget report
  - Incident Report
  - Approval of previous meeting minutes

The incident report is a monthly report that lists the types of calls that the RVFD responded to over the previous month. The calls are broken down into incident types across the three stations. There are approximately 2,800 calls over the course of a year. Approximately 50-60% of the calls fall under medical regardless of the station. Fairfax receives more calls for bicycle accidents and a lot of the car accidents happen along the Sir Francis Drake corridor and the corresponding intersections.

When you read the call report, you may see some calls that are not coded to a Station or an incident type. This is usually because the report in the system has not been finalized, which can happen if the call took place at the very end of the month because the report is automatically generated on the first day of the following month.

Below is a list of items that the Board takes action on annually, but is by no means exhaustive.

<b>Month (approximately)</b>	<b>Item</b>
January	Appoint President and Vice President AB 2561 Vacancy Report & Public Hearing
February	Mid year budget revisions
March	Inspection Compliance Report
May	Proposed budget for next fiscal year
June	Approve budget
July	Publicly Available Pay Schedule
September	Receive annual audit Defensible Space Inspection Report

Every two years: Update the conflict of interest code; Appoint Executive Officer

Every three years: Update MOUs and non-union salaries. Current MOUs are approved through June 30, 2028. The MOU is the labor agreement that outlines the rules for things like wages, hours, benefits, working conditions, schedules and operational parameters such as probations, promotions, seniority and grievance/discipline procedures.

Negotiations are a formal process that begin months before the current contract ends. Typically a salary survey is completed, and the items to negotiate are prioritized. Both “sides” - management and the union - hire an attorney to represent them through the process. The Executive Officer also plays a key role in negotiations. Reports are provided to the Board throughout the process as the Board needs to approve the proposed MOUs. The goal is to agree upon a contract in a timely manner.

The Department also has employees who are not represented by a union. The salaries, cost of living increases, benefits and working conditions are reviewed and updated at the same time but are not formally negotiated.

### *G. Remuneration*

Members of the Board of Directors shall be paid a stipend of \$100 per meeting attended. The Executive Officer is paid \$300 per meeting attended.

## *H. Expectations of the Board*

- Understand how items are agendaized for meetings. See the [staff report](#) and [Resolution 24-01](#)
- Attend meetings in person. If a Board Member is unable to attend, s/he should inform the Fire Chief or the Administrative Assistant and make arrangements for the alternate to attend, if possible.
- Review the materials in advance of the meeting. Information may be requested from staff before the meeting within guidelines of the Brown Act.
- Uphold laws and best practices related to ethics, conflicts of interest and maintaining confidential information.
- Be familiar with and uphold the Ralph M. Brown state law that applies to all public bodies in the State of California.
- Understand and uphold rules and laws related to the [California Fair Political Practices Commission](#) and the RVFD's [Conflict of Interest Code](#)
- Complete the annual Conflict of Interest Form 700 and participate in any other related training or education as required.
- Understand the Authority is a public entity separate from its Member Agencies. When acting on Authority business, Board Directors serve in a fiduciary capacity exercising due diligence by carefully reviewing financial statements, budgets, audit reports, and key organizational policies to ensure informed and prudent decision-making. Board Directors act in good faith, ask thoughtful questions, and rely on appropriate expert advice when necessary to uphold my duties of care, loyalty, and obedience to the organization's mission and legal obligations. Board Directors must disclose and appropriately manage conflicts, including those arising from their roles with Member Agencies. Directors remain officials of their respective Member Agencies, and also have a duty to those Agencies; however, when sitting as the governing body of the Authority, Directors shall not knowingly act in a manner that would materially harm the Authority or impair its ability to provide the shared fire and emergency services of the Authority. There are times when Directors have a responsibility to bring certain items to the Member Agency they represent prior to voting at RVFD Board Meetings.
- Maintain confidentiality when appropriate and expected. For example, a public servant cannot disclose confidential information acquired during the course of their official capacity for the purpose of private gain or interests.
- The Fire Department is a public agency, remains politically neutral and employees are expected to uphold this tenet and act accordingly while on duty. There are firefighter associations that are separate organizations funded by members. Employees have first amendment rights to join such groups and express opinions on political matters outside of the course of work.
- Board Members are expected to understand the rules for communicating with employees and/or with union reps. These rules change once official bargaining is underway. When in active negotiations, a Director should refrain from discussing negotiation details, maintain strict confidentiality, and direct all inquiries to the designated negotiator in order to protect the integrity, legality, and effectiveness of the process.
- Develop a basic understanding of the unique operations of a Fire Department.

## *I. OnBoarding New Board Members*

There are several ways a new Board Member can learn about the Fire Department and their role in order to make informed and sound decisions. The first is to read this manual and the associated documents, including the most current version of the Ralph M. Brown Act rules. Take advantage of the Fire Chief's offer to take you on a tour of the Fire Stations and meet staff. Schedule periodical station visits and chat with the Firefighters. They welcome the interest. In the first Board Meeting, ask for a fellow Board Member to take some time and pair up with you to answer questions and/or explain anything.

If you have questions on this handbook, please feel free to contact

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