

**LA VETA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
**Cichara Fire Station**  
**400 Panadero**  
**Cuchara, Colorado**

**MINUTES**

June 14, 2018

6:00 P.M.

Present: Directors Littlefield, Nielsen, Walker, and Shrout were in attendance. Director Heikes attended via teleconference.

Staff: Fire Chief DeTray, EMS Director Schmidt and District Secretary Pezze.

Guests: Asst. Chief Dave Mower, Jim Berg, Paula Berg, Jim Alt, Mark Worgan, Kim DeTray, Tucker Shrout, Greg Woods, Mickey Schmidt, and Norma Mower. Barbara Steffan and Judy Fisher were in attendance through the Public Forum portion of the meeting.

**Call to Order – Pledge - Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order, the Pledge of Allegiance was given, roll call was taken and Director Littlefield welcomed all those in attendance.

**Approval of Agenda**

**MSA:\*** The June 14, 2018 Agenda was approved as presented.

**Minutes**

**MSA:** Minutes of the May 10, 2018 regular meeting were approved as presented.

**Public Comments**

Judy Fisher, representing the South Middle Creek Road Association (SMCRA) addressed the Board with the concerns of the membership regarding railroad operations that pass through their area. The San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad tour season will commence on June 16, 2018 in addition to the ongoing freight train traffic. Considering the severe drought conditions so far in 2018 the residents have an extreme fear of wildland fire being started by the train. The train also has a very poor safety record and appears to be in financial straits. The SMCRA has won a law suit and has been awarded a settlement for cleaning up the remains of a freight train wreck in the South Middle Creek area in years past. However, no funds have been received to date. The SMCRA desires to have the operation of the tourist train suspended until the drought conditions are alleviated and asked the La Veta Fire Protection District (LVFPD) Board of Directors to help in any way possible. Mrs. Fisher presented a fact sheet outlining seven train fires within the LVFPD since 2013 that the SMCRA members are aware of. Director Littlefield relayed that LVFPD personnel held a meeting with Emily Ellis, System Transportation Manager of the parent railroad company, Iowa Pacific Holdings, on April 20, 2018 addressing the same concerns. Attempts to contact her since that meeting have been unsuccessful. After lengthy discussion Director Littlefield offered, with Board approval, to write a letter to the railroad, and possibly with copies to National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and National Railroad Administration (NRA), addressing the concerns.

Greg Woods, representing the Tres Valles West Property Owners Assoc. (TVW) advised that Team Rubicon will be returning on August 30, 2018 to do fire mitigation in their development. They will be here for 6 days and will have ten 2-man crews, plus leaders, mitigating 50 acres around the area of the TVW water tank at the top of the development.

Paula Berg, President of the LVFPD Auxiliary advised that the Auxiliary will hold the annual open house gathering for the public on Saturday, June 16, 2018 at noon at the Cuchara Fire Station. A delicious lunch of sloppy joes will be served free of charge. This will be after the regular Saturday Fire Training session and she encouraged LVFPD firefighters to attend. Paula displayed one of the two, 2-sided signs that the LVFPD Aux. has purchased for \$625.00 each (total \$1,250.00). The signs will be installed along Highway 12 on the Yellow Pine Ranch property at the north end of Cuchara and the Cucharas Sanitation & Water District land near County Road 422 leading to Blue and Bear Lakes on the south end approaching Cuchara. The Auxiliary is also researching a grant for funds to replace fire hose that failed inspection this year. Paula then clarified that the Auxiliary communicates with the LVFPD Board through the liaison, Director Littlefield and through reports presented at the Board meetings. She stated that the Auxiliary would never think about directly approaching members of the LVFPD with complaints about operations. She further stated that anything heard to the contrary is a misunderstanding, inaccurate and downright untrue.

**\*MSA = Moved, Seconded and Approved (unanimously unless otherwise indicated).**



Asst. Chief Dave Mower interjected an explanation for Paula's statement. Mower stated that an illegal executive session was held at the May 10, 2018 Board meeting with Directors Littlefield, Shroul and Nielsen in attendance with Fire Chief DeTray. Mower requested on June 11, 2018 that the recorded executive session be made public according to Colorado Sunshine Law and Mower was given the opportunity to listen to the recording of the executive session prior to the June 14, 2018 regular meeting. Directors Littlefield and Walker, Sec. Sue Pezze and Mower were in attendance at that session. As a result of the May 10, 2018 executive session Fire Chief DeTray had a meeting with Mower on June 7, 2018 presenting Mower with a written disciplinary action plan which included an accusation of lack of integrity based on a reported conversation with an Auxiliary member regarding lack of training on the new UTV and ATV. Chief DeTray contacted the Auxiliary member and she denied that the conversation took place. Mower stated that he cannot deny that. However, he stated that Jim Berg did make statements regarding UTV and ATV training in rope training classes and that Jim Berg was willing to testify to that. Jim Berg introduced himself and deferred speaking to the statement until the executive session to be held later on the agenda. Mower stated that he renews his request that this evening's executive session to be held in open session. He stated that he is appalled at statements made in the May 10, 2018 session, especially Chief DeTray's direction that Director Heikes not be told of proposed actions against Mower due to the friendship between Mower and Heikes. The Board deferred further discussion on the matter until later on the agenda.

### **Guests, Correspondence, and Presenters**

Director Littlefield advised that Lola Spradley is working on a project and grants to bring high speed, broad band internet access to Huerfano County. She is asking for a letter of support from LVFPD to acquire federal funds for the project. Director Littlefield offered to write the letter based on a concern for enhancement of emergency services.

A thank you letter was received from the Town of Pritchett for older helmets, structure coats, brush pants, wildland pack sets, radio charger, SCBA packs (without cylinders), 1 ½" hose, 2 ½" hose, warning lights, boots etc that were donated to them by LVFPD.

Letters and emails of support for Asst. Chief Mower were presented from Norma Mower, Tyler Schmidt, Phillip Daniels, Malea Schmidt, Matt Branch, Eddie Ray, Vonnie Valdez, and Mark and Cyndi Worgan. Director Littlefield instructed Sec. Pezze to include the letters in the June 14, 2018 meeting minutes as attachments.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report and payments for the June 14, 2018 meeting were presented.

**MSA:** The Board approved the Treasurer's Report as presented.

Sec. Pezze presented a letter from the Office of the Colorado State Auditor approving the LVFPD Application for Exemption from Audit for the year ended 12/31/2017.

Sec. Pezze also advised that Jon Saunders, General Manager for SECom in LaJunta, CO has honored the request for complimentary internet service at the Cuchara Station.

### **EMS Director Report**

- 1) 13 EMS runs with 8 patients transported in May 2018.
- 2) Received \$6,000 RETAC grant check and have reimbursed Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center (SPRHC) for the equipment (practice IV arm and projector) they bought on the grant.
- 3) Next RETAC meeting will be June 21 in Pueblo.
- 4) Letter was mailed to Wendy Waldrop regarding passing EMT National Registry test prior to November 1 or repayment will be required. She has replied that she intends to test and participate with LV EMS Dept.
- 5) Met with Eve K. at SPRHC regarding training. They will start an EMT basic class in July and LVFPD has 2 possible students that will attend the class. Flight for Life was scheduled for a June 12 training but had a call for service so Dave Mower stepped in and provided helicopter safety training.
- 6) Replaced the high beam headlight in Rescue 1 – 2009 Dodge Amb.
- 7) EMS Director Schmidt and Captain Ray took Rescue 1 (2009 Dodge Amb.) to the La Veta Elementary School for safety presentation for EMS Week. Tee-shirts and note of thanks were also distributed to EMS Dept. volunteers.
- 8) Cheryle Johnston and Cyndi Worgan will possibly help with the CDPHE grant for a new ambulance in Cuchara.
- 9) Big R declined housing one of the donated AEDs but Sid's BBQ restaurant has agreed to house it.
- 10) EMS Director Schmidt will be on vacation and unavailable June 23 – 30.
- 11) Considering that the Spanish Peaks Music Festival has not made any donations to the LVFPD for their service of supplying EMS coverage at the last 2 festivals, Director Schmidt asked if charging a fee could be considered.

The Board felt that this could be considered at next year's event.



12) Volunteerism and response to emergency calls is becoming more difficult and this is a nation-wide trend. The Board may need to address response coverage in the future.

Director Littlefield asked EMS Director Schmidt to research and talk to other Districts to see how they are handling the issue. A workshop will be held in a couple of months to discuss options further.

Mark Worgan advised that his wife, Cyndi Worgan is attending the Philanthropy Days grant writing sessions starting June 13 in Lamar, CO.

#### Fire Chief Report

- 1) 6 fire calls in May 2018: Mutual Aid call to HCFPD for Dog Spring wildland fire at MM 13, Hwy. 69, 1 day of mop-up on the Dog Spring Fire, 2 smoke reports, garbage disposal smoking, Mutual Aid to HCFPD for wildland fire on C.R. 504
- 2) 4 Fire Trainings in May: One training on May 2 on wildland fire refresher with 13 firefighters and 1 guest (Justin Jameson) in attendance. May 9 wildland pack testing with 6 firefighters in attendance, May 10 wildland pack testing with 5 firefighters in attendance, May 19 on ATV and UTV training and assisting Fire Catt with hose testing with 12 firefighters and 1 guest (Ron Jameson) in attendance.
- 3) 4 applications were presented for: Ron Jameson, Justin Jameson, Brian Jameson and Haley Jameson.
- 4) Hose testing completed on May 19, 2019 with 2,650 feet of hose failed due to inner and outer jackets delaminating.
- 5) Fire investigation Standard Operating Guideline briefly discussed.
- 6) Attended school safety meeting on May 29, 2018. Planning a large scale fire drill by October 2019 to be followed up by large or module re-unification drills by end of year 2019.
- 7) Met with Asst. Chief Mower on June 7, 2018 along with Jim Berg. Information to be presented in executive session.
- 8) New Roster will be determined after June 14, 2018 meeting.
- 9) Tucker Shroul traveled to Ft. Collins and picked up a donated pump and motor for future Type 6 brush truck.
- 10) Have asked Rob Velie to submit quotes for #1) installing and completing the 800 and VHF antenna at La Veta Station and #2) coordinate with Huerfano County for installation of County internet.
- 11) Will talk to Mike Warren to get with Director Heikes to get flag pole and fence installed and recommend paying the normal \$15.00 per hour rate.
- 12) Presented the proposal and options that were presented at the May 10, 2018 meeting for equipment and upgrade to add a Type 6 brush truck. Recommends Option 2 and ask CS&WD if they would carry the \$12,000 over 4 years with an annual payment each year.
- 13) BLM and USFS have entered into Stage 2 fire ban restrictions.
- 14) Jim Berg has advised that State funds of \$2,000,000 have been allocated for updating and upgrading existing 800 communication equipment, service, towers etc. Chief DeTray feels that if the 800 tower located on Cordova Pass was elevated it would help 800 service in both LVFPD and Las Animas County. He is working with Huerfano County Emergency Manager Larry Sanders and other communication entities regarding this suggestion.
- 15) The LVFPD Auxiliary is researching grants (possibly El Pomar Foundation) to fund fire hose purchases due to losing so much hose in this year's hose testing process.
- 16) Presented cost of purchasing used, but in good condition, fire hose from R.O.I. in Denver as quoted below:
 

800' of 1 ½" hose at \$40.00 per 50' length for \$640.00	(cost new is \$169.00 per 50' length)
500' of 2 ½" hose at \$60.00 per 50' length for \$600.00	(cost new is \$199.00 per 50' length)

 Total cost for used hose would be \$1,240.00.
- 17) Presented recommendation for restructuring the command staff by moving Jim Berg to the position of Administrative Assistant Chief, keep Mark Brunner as Lieutenant, Robby Velie and Mike Warren will move up in the roster numbers and work toward Lieutenant's positions in the future. Per the actions at the June 7<sup>th</sup> meeting with Dave Mower and Jim Berg, Dave Mower will be recommended for a Lieutenant position. The Captain's position will remain open at this time.

Norma Mower spoke to the Board and Chief DeTray and asked that Dave Mower be allowed to play the recording of the executive session before any action is taken. She also asked that Directors Littlefield, Nielson and Shroul immediately resign as Board members and Dave DeTray resign as fire chief. She stated that if resignations are not immediate, recall action will be taken immediately and every LVFPD member will have a copy of the executive session. Chief DeTray stated he refused to resign.

Discussion was held regarding acquisition of a third brush truck. Chief DeTray recommends purchasing the 2009 Ford pickup from Cucharas Sanitation & Water District (CS&WD) and possibly asking them to spread payments over a 4 year period. Directors Littlefield and Shroul and Jim Berg meet with Ryan Ellerton, Chief Financial Officer of San Isabel Electric Assoc. (SIEA) about adding the \$12,000 for purchasing the CS&WD truck to the LVFPD's current REDLG loan



with SIEA. Ellerton advised the REDLG loan is not a revolving fund loan and that would not be possible. The full application process would need to be completed again. After lengthy discussion it was decided to delay the decision on the brush truck until a work session can be scheduled.

Director ShROUT made a motion that the Board approve purchasing the used hose (800' of 1.5" @ \$40.00/50' = \$640.00 and 500' of 2.5" @ \$60.00/50' = \$600.00) for a total cost of \$1,240.00 and approve the applications of Ronald Jameson, Justin Jameson, Brian Jameson and Haley Jameson contingent upon clear background checks.

Jim Berg stated that he will personally purchase new 1.5 inch hose and give his check to the LVFPD Auxiliary who will then write a check to the LVFPD in the same amount to cover the new hose purchase. He also asked Chief DeTray to supply a written statement/letter to the C.S. & W.D. Board of Directors outlining the request to spread payments for purchase of the used pickup over multiple years. The Board and Chief DeTray thanked Jim Berg for his generous donation.

**MSA:** Director ShROUT withdrew his motion and the new motion passed to approve purchasing 500' of 2.5" used hose @ \$60.00/50' for a total cost of \$600.00 and approve the applications of Ronald Jameson, Justin Jameson, Brian Jameson and Haley Jameson as probationary firefighters after Chief DeTray explains his expectations to them and contingent upon clear background checks.

Director Nielsen responded to the spreadsheets outlining firefighter attendance at fire calls and fire trainings. He expressed concern for the cost of supplying gear and radios to non-participating members. Director Nielsen asked that a roster be drawn up noting all the members' certifications and qualifications and their level of competence. Chief DeTray stated that he would supply that information. Director Littlefield asked that attention be given to low attendance by officers and those in leadership positions.

After a brief break and confirmation that there were no firearms being carried by those in attendance, Director Littlefield invited Dave Mower to speak. Mower opened by referencing the May 10, 2018 meeting executive session and stated that he felt it was an illegal session due to him not being notified prior to the meeting. Mower listened to the recorded executive session prior to the June 14, 2018 meeting and felt very demeaned by statements made. He requested that the Board take into account all the letters of support received on his behalf.

Mower presented the Board Directors with his written notice of contesting the disciplinary action against him and the demotion of Assistant Fire Chief position to Lieutenant. Mower stated that typically the Board approves or disapproves promotions and demotions in open meeting session. This was not the case with this action. Mower advised that he has never received approved and adopted Assistant Fire Chief job descriptions. His notice responded to the allegations levied against him in a written Notice of Disciplinary Action that he was given at a session with Chief DeTray and Jim Berg on June 7, 2018. The notice stated 1) Lack of Integrity referencing a reported conversation with a LVFPD Auxiliary member regarding UTV and ATV training that never transpired. Mower countered that there was indeed a conversation with Jim Berg regarding lack of UTV and ATV training and it was Chief DeTray who fabricated the details of a conversation with an Auxiliary member. 2) Lack of follow through on installation of radio antennas for the new La Veta fire station, flag pole not being installed and the Humvee project from Huerfano County Sheriff's Office not being completed. Mower expanded on these allegations stating that the antennas were installed on June 8, 2018 and he had also talked to Huerfano County I.T. Specialist Jeff Byland and they plan to meet within a week or two to complete the firmware upgrades and turn up the high speed internet service at the La Veta station. Regarding the flagpole installation Mower is waiting to coordinate with Director Heikes to install the flagpole using his post hole drilling equipment etc. The Huerfano County Humvee project delay is without merit due to difficulty in obtaining repair parts. The parts have now been received but the unit has been relocated back to Walsenburg for an anticipated inspection. 3) No help with important District issues such as I.S.O. inspection and hose testing. Mower again stated this allegation is without merit. He has never contacted by Chief DeTray to participate, in any way, with the I.S.O. review process. Also, in regard to hose testing, Mower was coordinating and conducting the UTV and ATV orientation and training that same morning. The double scheduling of UTV and ATV training and hose testing was coordinated by Chief DeTray and DeTray never asked for Mower's assistance with the hose testing. Additionally, the paid vendor that does the hose testing should be covering all the work involved with hose testing. 4) Lack of ability to stand in during Chief DeTray's absence at Board meetings despite verbal instructions. Again, Mower stated this is without merit. He feels this is DeTray's attempt to deflect from his noticeable absences from mandatory Board meetings, lack of preparation for those meetings, and failure to provide mandatory reports to the Board and blaming Mower for his lack of dedication to his duties as Fire Chief and lack of respect for the Board. Mower informed the Board that the Asst. Fire Chief is not



required to attend Board meetings but that he attends on his own accord. He has attended 33 Board meetings as a 'guest' and Chief DeTray attended 21 meetings in that same time period. Regarding presenting the Fire Chief's report Mower advised that Chief DeTray did not communicate with him or expand on any reports other than what is emailed with the Board packet by Sec. Pezze. There have been 3 recent meetings where no Chief's Report was presented, most recently the April 12, 2018 meeting. 5) Total lack of communication, specifically on fire incidents. Mower again stated this is without merit and is frustrated with the lack of communication on Chief DeTray's part to advise him and other members of the department about the Chief's Trinidad work schedule, availability etc. Mower stated that he has called and texted Chief DeTray repeatedly without any response from Chief DeTray. The notice contained the recommendation that Mower be moved from Assistant Fire Chief to Lieutenant status, be placed on probationary status for 6 months with strict stipulations and that if there was a lack of compliance at any time, Mower would be terminated from the District consistent with District policies and procedures. The last recommendation was that Mower will return the key to the Chief's office, as well as the new Motorola Apex 4000 radio, no later than June 7, 2018. Mower cited statistics from his and Chief DeTray's attendance at fire incidents, EMS calls, Board meetings and County/Regional H-MAC monthly meetings all showing better attendance by Mower and an apparent lack of dedication and respect on Chief DeTray's part. Having divergent views on policy or procedure should not equate to disrespect. The manner in which this matter has been administered shows that the current Chief has no respect for fellow officers, the Board or the policies and procedures of the LVFPD or the cohesiveness of the membership. Lack of continuity and constant change of fire training topics is another contentious point as shared by other volunteers. Mower suggested that the Board conduct an anonymous survey to garner the true feelings of the LVFPD membership regarding the current Fire Chief and the leadership structure. He feels that the department moral and lack of response to fire calls is declining due to Chief DeTray's "because I'm the Chief and I say so" attitude and that he does not lead by example. Another concern is inability to respond due to alcohol consumption. The example of Chief DeTray not responding to the Heikes barn fire was cited. Chief DeTray had told the Board in the executive session in question that he was in Trinidad at work however, he had told Mower, the day after the fire that he was not able to respond due to alcohol consumption the night of the fire. Another EMS incident was cited with extenuating circumstances involving alcohol. Mower asked that his comments be recorded and stated that he has nothing to hide and was appalled at the actions and comments against him and Director Heikes in the May meeting executive session. Mower stated that it's the Board's duty to take a long hard look at a Fire Chief who is absent from meetings, does not supply proper reports or communication and makes false accusations against volunteer members who are not present to defend themselves. Mower stated he is not the first member who has experienced these issues with the Fire Chief and is bringing these faults and issues to the Board to honestly inform them, with the expectation that the Board will know what the membership has experienced and make the decision to remove Chief DeTray from the Fire Chief position. Mower had met personally with Chief DeTray on March 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss his concerns of lack of communication, lack of respect and other issues and felt that instead of embracing it as an opportunity to resolve the problems, Chief DeTray decided to attack Mower, his character, his integrity, his leadership ability and do everything he could to act against him and without taking into consideration the impact on the District. It is time for drastic change to occur for the betterment and benefit of the District overall. It is beyond time for resentment, arrogance and insecurities to end. The ongoing conflicts need to be resolved and Mower formally requested that his Assistance Chief position be made whole, his equipment be returned, the disciplinary action be negated because it was performed under illegal methods with direction given, and decisions made by three Directors in an executive session to support the Chief in Mower's demotion and removal of radio and office key.

Director Littlefield and Mower clarified that Mower had indeed received copies of the Standard Operating Procedures (S.O.P.s), however, Mower reiterated that, despite repeated requests, he has not received adopted copies of the fire department Assistant Chief job descriptions or the Standard Operating Guidelines (S.O.G.s). Director Littlefield recognized Mowers contributions however, due to Mower's actions since the disciplinary notice meeting, he does not feel Mower can be a solid participant in the LVFPD process. He contends that Dave DeTray is the Fire Chief and that settles the rhetoric. Director Shroul concurred that Chief DeTray is the Chief and discussions in the executive session supported the Chief's operational plans. Director Heikes countered that he felt Mower should have been consulted prior to any disciplinary notice discussion. Director Heikes stated he has concerns for Chief DeTray's lack of participation in station projects, hands-on tasks and decision making. All parties agreed that a better training schedule needs to be developed. The District needs to have everyone getting along and communicating with a goal of bettering the District. Director Walker stated that he thinks this situation is disgusting and embarrassing and wants to know why there is a track record of the command staff not working. If the command structure is faulty it needs to be replaced and if it is functioning it needs to stay. He recommends the Directors giving thought to what they want to see happen.

Director Nielsen advised that he agrees with some of Mower's statements and recalled the two Chiefs' confrontation after a previous fire incident. He recalls issues with prior Assistant Fire Chiefs and Captains and expressed concern for both DeTray and Mowers' abilities to lead and communicate. He stated that Chief DeTray is going to have to demonstrate that these management weaknesses are resolved.



Jim Alt addressed the Board and expressed his frustration with poor and unorganized training leading to poor volunteer response on actual fire calls. Paula Berg stated that the District needs to have the skill sets of both DeTray and Mower working together in this critically dry season. She hopes that the situation can be worked out for the benefit of the community. Mickey Schmidt spoke and offered that proper channels need to be followed for disciplinary and demotion matters. As it stands there is currently a Fire Chief and an Assistant Fire Chief. The Fire Chief is making a recommendation for a personnel action. Director Nielsen suggested that the Board eliminate the position of Assistant Fire Chief and that causes the disciplinary action to be a moot point and Mower has the choice to continue in the fire and/or EMS departments. This elimination of the Assistant Chief position would afford Chief DeTray the opportunity to demonstrate his ability to manage this organization.

**MSA:** The Board approved the proposal to eliminate the position of Assistant Chief at this point for a temporary period of time. With this action there is no disciplinary demotion because the position does not exist. This gives the Board the opportunity to validate Chief DeTray's leadership of his Chief's position and allows the blemish to be taken off of Mower's reputation. It is the hope that Mower will continue to be both a fire and EMS member. He will no longer be the Asst. Chief so he can turn in his keys to the Chief's office but he will be issued a radio. This will give the Board time to assess the strength of the management team and the abilities to make decisions at that point. The vote for this motion was Directors Littlefield, Nielsen and Shroat "Yes" and Directors Heikes and Walker "No". Motion passed.

Director Nielsen expressed his concern for all Directors keeping the discussions in executive sessions confidential, privileged and private. Secondly, he advised that he has discussed with Chief DeTray the necessity of never disparaging a Director or withholding information from them.

Dave Mower asked for time to determine his decision on remaining on the fire department. He recognized being a portion of the communication problem and he stated that if he continues he requests written job descriptions and a written list of expected standards. Director Walker asked that if the proposed plan formalizes both DeTray and Mower will provide monthly, written updates to the Board on how the process is working, or not working.

Director Nielsen asked that the Fire Chief and EMS Director present their respective departments' job descriptions at the July meeting. EMT Norma Arnold asked, and the Board concurred, that whenever Chief DeTray is out of town for work or unavailable to respond to calls that he advise the department of his status. Director Littlefield expanded on that point and asked that a cadre of capable volunteers be listed as possible Incident Command leaders.

**MSA:** The Board approved appointing Dave Mower as Captain if he accepts the position.

A Special Meeting was set for Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 p.m. for the C.S. & W.D. truck purchase and receiving Dave Mower's decision on acceptance of the Captain's position.

### **Old Business**

Chief DeTray advised that the application for the Volunteer Firefighters Assistance grant through the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention has been submitted. This grant applies to wildland firefighting equipment and gear.

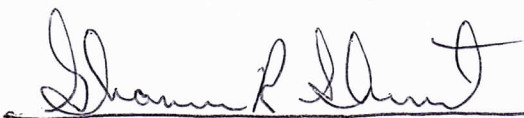
Director Littlefield advised that House Bill 1423 recently passed and the Governor has signed the bill. At the end of June \$500,000 will be allocated to small rural districts. Maximum benefit to any one District will be \$25,000. This will be on an application basis and that process is still being established.

Director Littlefield briefly discussed the Gallagher Amendment and CO Special District Association has a good article in this month's newsletter.

### **New Business**

None.

**MSA:** The meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.



Shannon R. Shroat, Secretary



June 12, 2018

Dear LaVeta Fire Protection District Board of Directors,

This letter is an expression of my "Vote of No Confidence" in David DeTray and his ability to run our Fire Department and represent the LVFPD in a leadership role. I understand the severity of the decision to come forward to express my point of view and did not arrive at it hastily.

LVFPD has always been a district to be proud of, one of where decisions were made on a collaborative basis with the best interest of our citizens in mind. We have always been a district that experienced great vision from our board members and leaders, and members were given the respect and support to achieve our goals. I myself am a former Board member of 8 years. I know what it takes to run a successful and cohesive Fire Protection District, as well as deal with discord within the department.

Over the past year in particular many fire, EMS members and citizens have had concerns regarding David DeTray's leadership, specifically regarding trust, collaboration, decision making, and vision.

He has created a toxic environment for both fire, EMS members and command staff. Without the recognition of mistakes or the willingness to listen to members or command staff, who are trained competent fire fighters, there is no hope for learning or improvement and thus no way to move forward.

He shows a failure to recognize and respect the expertise of the professionals in the district, both in EMS and Fire. There is a lack of unity between fire and EMS because of DeTray.

A fire department cannot be run successfully with a one-way avenue of communication. We need a different, more solid leadership. The moral is just too low and I feel it is time for a change. Many People I have personally talked to have a fear of speaking up because if DeTray will retaliate when his Assistant Chief brings to light his short comings and DeTray demotes him, what will happen to them as members if he stays in the Chief position? Will the Board step in and do what is right?

It is the Board's duty to act and end the discord. You have contributed to the strife within the department by allowing Chief DeTray to be absent, violate SOPS and not participate in the daily business of this department well after he finished his Paramedic Course, with absolutely no consequences for his actions.

I plead with you to not allow the actions of a rogue Fire Chief to bring down this department on both the EMS and Fire side. Please take a long hard look at the years of experience you have within Fire and EMS. Is keeping this Chief worth losing medical and fire expertise throughout the district especially in the midst of a critical fire season? Is it worth watching the department crumble?

Sincerely,



Norma Mower, RN, PA-C,



Tyler A. Schmidt  
162 Rio Vista Circle  
South Fork Colorado 81154

To the Board of Directors,

I pen this letter to express my complete support for Dave Mower as Asst. Chief. Though I live out of district, I am disappointed that action would be considered against Mower, as he is a valuable asset to the district. I have worked with Mower on few occasions, however I know a great deal about his qualifications and even share a work interest with him. Allow me to elaborate.

I am the Director of the Colorado Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators District 7. Like NREMT, IAAI certifies and accredits arson investigators Throughout the country, and throughout the world. To my knowledge, there are only three qualified arson investigators that reside south of Highway 50 in the state. Myself, Dave Mower, and the Director of District 8, which has 6 total members. Your district is very fortunate to have someone of his qualification on staff. There are only 82 of us in the state. Most of which you can imagine have jobs in metro areas such as Denver, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs, and other such areas. Mr. Mower has approached me about furthering his investigation credentials, and I have directed him towards our Annual General Meeting, where he can attend advanced level classes for a very inexpensive price. Having a certified arson investigator on staff is a rare commodity usually reserved for metropolitan fire departments with 9-digit budgets.

Aside from my personal passion for investigations, Mr. Mower possesses a great many other branches of knowledge that rural departments just don't have. Examples include his status as a paramedic, Haz-Mat Tech, Engine Boss, Fire Officer, Technical Ropes Tech, etc. To be frank, Mr. Mower could take his level of certifications and lateral to about any department he wants with a ridiculous salary. He chooses to be in La Veta and serve the community. This alone should speak volumes, as there is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.

Mr. Mowers status as an ALS provider is a huge asset to the health care and well-being of the citizens of your district. Rural areas are seldom home to paramedics, as the money and benefits are better elsewhere. Even EMT-199's are a dying breed, and many departments are reverting back to BLS because they cannot keep paramedics around, or they cannot retain their certifications because of education issues. The district is blessed to have ALS on staff. At the rate that rural department budgets are being cut, we need to be fostering our volunteers, not hobbling them. I share many of Mr. Mower's certifications. And like him, I once performed this job as a career. Now I retain my certifications, and keep earning new ones, to serve the community I live in for next to no pay. I sure as heck don't do it for the money, I do it because I'm able to provide a service that not many can. I do it to preserve whatever life I can. So Does He.

Before you ask, Director Schmidt did not put me up to this. I keep in touch with many people still living in the district. This letter was written with no influence, and of my own free will. I encourage you to take this letter of support to heart and encourage you to make the appropriate decision.

Most Sincerely and Respectfully,



Tyler A. Schmidt  
Director, CIAAI District 7





## COLORADO

Division of Fire  
Prevention & Control

Department of Public Safety

Wildland Fire Management Section  
690 Kipling Street, Suite 2000  
Lakewood, CO 80215

To whom it may concern,

June 10, 2018

I have personally known Dave Mower for over 20 years. In that time, I have found him to be a responsible, dynamic individual with strong leadership skills. Dave and I have worked together in many different scenarios, both as a supervisor and as a subordinate, in times of high stress and in times of relative calm. At no time have I been unhappy with his job performance, attitude, or personality.

Throughout all of these events, Dave has demonstrated his ability to allocate scarce resources, look forward to potential problems and opportunities, and execute plans that he has created as well as plans provided to him by his supervision.

I have great respect for Dave and believe that he is an individual of exceptional integrity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "PD", written over a horizontal line.

Phillip Daniels  
Deputy Chief, WFMS



June 9, 2018

To the La Veta Fire Protection Board of Directors,

This letter is to wholeheartedly lend my full support to David Mower as Assistant Fire Chief. As you should be aware, Mower brings to this district not only his numerous and extremely qualified certifications of Incident Commander Type 4, Firefighter 1 & 2, Fire Investigator, Technical rescue technician, Hazmat Technician, Engine Boss, Red card, Chief Officer 1 & 2 along with Paramedic certification, years and years of Fire and EMS experience and is a more than qualified leader. Most all of these qualifications being unique to our district and certainly not held by any other in the current Fire Department leadership.

Having Mower as Assistant Chief, or Chief 2 has greatly benefited this district in times when the current Chief was out of district, or unavailable while in district, which has been a considerable amount of time, especially this past year. Mower makes consistently mature judgement decisions when commanding fire and EMS scenes. Members look to Mower for his professional conduct, maturity, calm leadership and assistance with knowledge on fires and with all fire department matters. Mower is also an excellent and qualified trainer and is able to provide certified training to the fire department members.

His integrity is of the highest, and I of course, appreciate all his medical expertise as a Paramedic on the EMS team. I have known and worked with Mower in EMS long before he was a member of our district and can tell you he is extremely competent in all that he's involved in. He is an example of common sense and does not let emotion, insecurity and immaturity cloud his actions.

It would be a great mistake for this Board to take any misconceived adverse action against such a crucial and valuable leader in our District. Please take time and consider this thoroughly, your actions could affect the safety of our District today, and in the future.

Sincerely

Malea A Schmidt

LVFPD EMS Director



6/1/2018

Letter of Professional Reference for Dave Mower

I write this letter in the hope that I may convey to you the professional nature of Dave Mower. I have known Dave since 2006 when we both worked with the Rye Fire Protection District. I was a part-time Firefighter-Paramedic at the time and he was a Chief Officer. I have also worked with Dave since then on several wildland fires to which we were both assigned.

I have always known Dave to be a professional and honest individual. I have witnessed his strong work ethic and his positive leadership abilities in his dealings with both internal and external people.

If Dave were my employee, I would have confidence in knowing that he would take on any assignment with professionalism, integrity and experience and that he would represent my agency and myself well.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Matthew W Branch, Regional Fire Management Officer  
State of Colorado, Department of Public Safety,  
Division of Fire Prevention and Control

[Wilson.branch@state.co.us](mailto:Wilson.branch@state.co.us)

970-222-8996



Eddie Ray <sonray\_99@hotmail.com>

Reply |

Wed 6/13/2018 7:51 PM

To: Sue Pezze (lvfpd@hotmail.com)

To La Veta Fire Protection District Board,

I have been asked to write a letter of support for Dave Mower and express my confidence or lack of confidence in his abilities and leadership skills.

Dave Mower is great to work with on both fire and EMS calls. I have had the privilege of working with him on multiple occasions and I am very confident in him and his skills. I feel we have a great group of people on both the fire and EMS departments and all of the leaders seem confident and capable of performing the tasks they are asked to perform. As everyone knows, in the middle of a call things often get very chaotic and everyone's adrenaline is pumping, our ALS personal are there to calm us down and bring order to the scene. All of our ALS personal do a great job of calmly expressing the tasks that need to be accomplished for the patient and what tasks need to be performed by each member on the calls.

Dave Mower in my opinion is a great asset to this department and brings some very useful and helpful knowledge and experience to the department.

Eddie Ray



June 11, 2018

LaVeta Fire Protection District, Board of Directors

Dear Board of Directors,

I am writing a letter of concern regarding the recent decision of Fire Chief, Dave Detray, to demote Assist Fire Chief, Dave Mower to Lieutenant. In lieu of the extreme fire danger, and the need for quality staff with the proper training and expertise, I believe the demotion is INEXCUSABLE!!! I have known Mr. Mower for over 25 years, Dave is a man of integrity, knowledge, and has accomplished and maintained fire training and certifications. Because of Dave Mower's unique job with Centerylink, Dave is able to work from home, and is readily available to provide FIRE and EMS coverage, to the LVFPD. Dave Mower's availability is reassuring to me, as a citizen of the LVFPD. Chief Detray works in Trinidad and is also employed at Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center. Due to Chief Detray's work requirements, he is frequently unable to serve our district, which leaves LVFPD uncovered by top leadership. I would think that Detray and the Board of Directors would see the extreme importance of having stellar leadership available, especially during these times of extreme fire conditions in Huerfano County. I would also think that the Board of Directors would expect a higher level of commitment from Chief Detray, especially since he is a paid employee.

I would like the Board to investigate the real reasons for this inappropriate decision to demote Dave Mower. Please consider the safety and the welfare of the citizens of LVFPD.

Sincerely,

Vonnie Valdez

719-989-0988





## **Mark & Cyndi Worgan**

*268 South Meadow Road, Cuchara, Colorado 81055*

Mark 512-761-2804    CO. 719 742 3497    Cyndi 512-415-1114  
MarkandCyndi@me.com

**Mailing Address: P.O. Box 572 La Veta, Colorado 81055**

**Jim Littlefield**

**President**

**La Veta Fire Protection District**

**PO Box 44 / 100 Birch Street**

**La Veta, Colorado 81055**

**June 11th 2018**

Dear Jim,

I am writing to you as President of the LVFPD Board, and for you to share with your fellow board members my personal testament for Chief 2, David Mower.

As a fairly recent yet fully committed member of the LVFPD, both as a volunteer firefighter and an EMT. I owe much of my commitment and willingness to serve, to Chief 2, and his support for me since I joined.

When a volunteer gives his or her time, risks life and service for the community, it is vital that they have a strong leadership to oversee them and protect them in every situation. From training to actually being out in the field.

In Chief 2 I have total confidence in his ability as a Lead Firefighter and a Paramedic/Assistant Medical Director. His many years of experience, I believe over 22 years, alongside his qualifications and knowledge in all aspects of the firefighting and medical service provide a security that is vital to the success of the team he commands.

There can be no better person to stand by your side in times of crisis or danger. His ability and willingness to actually go in and fight a fire alongside his colleagues, demonstrate his leadership qualities, leading from the top and supporting at all times. I witnessed this on the recent Hiekes fire, where he took control as chief in command. He was exemplary in his clear and thought out strategic instructions while at all times being fully cognizant of the dangers and the abilities of the individuals around him.

As a newly qualified EMT, his support throughout my training was over and beyond what he necessarily needed or had to do. He helped me tremendously demonstrating his vast knowledge and encouragement for not just me but all those in the training to succeed.

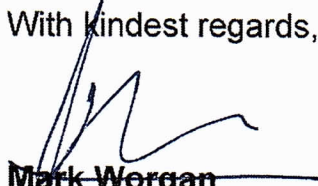
In Chief 2 I strongly believe that the LVFPD has the very best person it can have in the leadership position that he serves. It is with great pride that I offer my full and unwavering support for him and urge the board to make careful consideration and appreciation for his abilities as a leader, and qualities as a man.



It is vital to make sure that we continue to surround our volunteers with the best people that we can in Leadership positions to ensure that they continue to give their time and service knowing that they are in safe hands at all times.

Thank you for your time in reading and circulating this testament to my friend and respected Chief.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Worgan', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

**Mark Worgan**  
**Volunteer Firefighter and EMT**  
**LVFPD**