

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE AND FIREWISE BOARD MEETING
FOR THE VILLAGE OF TAOS SKI VALLEY, NEW MEXICO
HELD ON NOVEMBER 7, 2022 (VIA ZOOM) at 10:00 AM**

CALL TO ORDER AND NOTICE OF MEETING

Members present included Jim Woodard, Mitch Daniels, Henry Caldwell, Kent Kiehl and Ben Pitz. Trudy DiLeo was absent and Jim Woodard chaired the meeting.

Public Safety Committee:

Mitch gave an update on the newly purchased fire engine #316. He stated that the village is going to return the fire engine to the company we purchased it from for a full refund of \$294,000., as it will not work properly at our altitude. The village will use the money to purchase a water tender fire truck (a specialized vehicle capable bringing water, foam or dry chemicals to fire trucks) which will probably be available by the end of next summer.

Mitch also stated that he and Matt Rogers are working to re-establish the village EMS Service with the County and State. They believe that once this process is complete, they will be able to apply for a grant to get a new transport vehicle.

Chief Vigil stated that an account has been established to purchase replacement pads and batteries for AEDs (defibrillators). He also stated that there are currently AEDs in village offices, police vehicles and many businesses. TSVI also has several units. He added that AEDs had been used 3 times in the last 2 months in the village. There was some discussion of creating a diagram, or map of sorts, showing where all the defibrillators are located in the village.

Chief Vigil also stated that having an annual review of our village evacuation plan is a good idea, preferably right after ski season ends. We should put it on the agenda in late winter. He also stated that the village had done a 'table top' exercise on the evacuation plan with Taos County Emergency Services a couple of months ago. He added that our evacuation plan is in good shape and up to date.

With regard to the village providing smoke masks for residents during a wildfire, Chief Vigil believes we have enough N95 masks to transport residents to the safe evacuation centers at Tenderfoot Katies or the Phoenix, where the air is filtered and clean. The village also has about 2000 COVID masks on hand in case they run out of N95 masks.

Chief Vigil said that at the time of the meeting, 2 sirens are working in the village, and 2 others are ready to hook up, hopefully to be completed in about 2 weeks.

Henry Caldwell had some disappointing news about the package lockers to be installed in the post office. Originally, the Postmistress of Taos had told Henry that the lockers had been ordered. Then, when another inquiry was made, she told Henry that the request had been denied. Henry said he will follow up about the package lockers.

Jalmar Bowden talked about requirements in several of the codes of the village that mandate house numbers on each village residence. The village has numbers that residents can pick up at the office. Jalmar said he would

send code references out to Jim Woodard, so that the Firewise Board can create a letter to residents stating this requirement.

FireWise Board:

Mitch Daniels updated the Board on the work being done on the CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan). He said that he has all the information he needs to complete it, and will send out a draft soon. There was a discussion about the CWPP requiring an approved rehabilitation plan in place for after a wildfire occurs, a 'BAER plan' (Burned Area Emergency Response). There is a "Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program" from the federal government that may need to be applied for in 2022.

There was no input on quarterly updates for CWPP data entry, nor establishing a folder on "SharePoint" for CWPP and data entry.

Our Firewise annual recertification was approved. Our next certification renewal will be in October, 2023.

An update on the Non-Federal Land (NFL) grant was given by Jalmar Bowden. He stated that James is back to helping with data management and he is almost ready to submit the plan to the State. He said that he has not sent any feedback to applicants yet, as it was difficult. There is a rank order and only so much money and he doesn't know where the cutoff will be. He was hoping to send some kind of feedback to applicants next week.

There was a discussion about Board members communicating with the village grant writer, if they ran across grants that may help with Firewise and Public Safety needs. John Avila stated that grants being pursued were presented to the Village Council, and that if Board members see a potential grant, they should contact a relevant staff member and ask if they are aware of it.

It was noted that Trudy DiLeo, on behalf of the Firewise Board, had sent a letter to all property owners and businesses about a 'cost-share' program offered by Taos Soil and Water Conservation District, that will pay for the bulk of clearing dead and down trees on their property. A paper copy was enclosed with village water bills, and a mass email was sent to others in the village. The letter also encouraged residents to clean up around the outside of their home, to sign up with "ReGroup" emergency messaging system and to post the current village evacuation plan in the home. Residents were encouraged to buy smoke masks in case of a wildfire, and to keep the village office current with their updated contact information.

A second letter was also sent by Trudy DiLeo, on behalf of the Firewise Board, to all property owners and businesses about the history of work done thus far in the village for Firewise certification and the creation of the CWPP. A paper copy was enclosed with village water bills, and a mass email was sent to others in the village. It was an educational letter that spoke of work done over many years by many participants. It asked each property and business owner to take responsibility to help with the work around preventing the spread of a wildfire. Individuals have financial incentives now that will not be around forever.

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It was noted that feedback can be obtained from Taos Soil and Water Conservation District on how many residents apply for the cost-share program, and the monies spent by TSWCD and by individuals in the process. This information will be needed for Firewise renewal and CWPP recertification.

It was noted that, after sending out these letters, Trudy DiLeo had gotten some feedback from residents that

the village website seems confusing, and that it would be nice to have all the fire information under one heading, along with the TSWCD program on the homepage. Ann Marie Wooldridge, the Village Clerk, stated that the website was built on an old platform, and that Neal King, who recently passed away, did most of the work on it. It will eventually need to be replaced. She manages the website now, but if there is a major revision, the village will need to get someone else to build the new website and manage it.

A county-wide Firewise meeting was held for Taos County on October 11th. The meeting was held 'in-person only' in Taos and no one from our TSV Board was available to attend. Garrett Hanson, who is the Taos County WUI (Wildland-Urban Interface Coordinator) sent a summary to all the FireWise Boards in the county.

The attendees discussed what was working well with their FireWise communities. These topics included community chipper days, (including utilizing Kit Carson Electric for chipping), the Taos Soil and Water cost-share grants, and inviting forestry and wildland fire professionals to community-based meetings to share knowledge and educate.

Some of the challenges noted by the group included recruiting FireWise members, the fact that the Taos County chipper is stationary and not mobile around the community, disseminating information to part time residents and homeowners that rent out their homes and properly educating community members as to the importance of creating defensible space around their homes and maintaining FireWise status.

Other notes included mentioning 'ecosystem restoration' when educating, and not always focusing on the fear of fire and your house burning down. Suggestions were made to provide FireWise members with some key bullet points and links for locating literature, to help coordinate distribution of firewood from cleared areas to Taos Pueblo and others, and to bring the USFS back for a presentation with their digital sand table to demonstrate possible fire scenarios in a particular area (this takes a lot of planning and is a tool used throughout Arizona and New Mexico, so requests must be made well in advance).

The Forest Stewards Guild is a potential asset should a community be interested in pile burning. They are funded to do this sort of work and generally, at no charge. This can be very cost-effective, but not everyone is comfortable with this.

The New Mexico Prescribed Burning Act was passed in 2021 to set standards and training for private landowners and contractors in order to conduct prescribed burns responsibly. The link is: <https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/sfd/prescribed-burning/>

Garrett mentioned various grant opportunities including the Non-Federal Lands (NFL) grant, Taos Soil and Water, Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP), New Mexico State Forestry based opportunities such as Forest Health Initiative and Forest Legacy Program, Community Wildfire Defense Grant, Natural Resource

Conservation Service (NRCS) and Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Each community would need to see what is applicable for them. He also mentioned that there is a 2022 updated Taos County CWPP that should be published soon.

Adam Ledell, the Chief Forest Ranger with the Questa District, held a public 'meet and greet' on October 14th, called "Coffee with a Forester". Trudy DiLeo, Mitch Daniels and Tom McCullough met with Adam. He was very engaging and receptive to questions and concerns of the community. He spoke of the severe understaffing of

his agency at present, which slows up some projects. A lot of resources were drained with the Hermit's Peak fire. One major point he made was that the Forest Service acts as a coordinator, of sorts, in many situations and that it depends on community actions to get a lot of projects done. One thing he is particularly frustrated with is the delay in burning of slash piles throughout the forest, since a Ranger must be physically present to burn. He talked about his mixed feelings about having the 3 campgrounds on Highway 150 open. Sadly, some campers have left the campgrounds in filthy conditions, including defecating next to the river and leaving dirty syringes all around the campgrounds. He thinks the only way to leave them open is to have a concessionaire live on site and manage the campgrounds. He also talked about the problem of 'squatters' all along Highway 150, and the constant law enforcement needs for that issue. He said he has posted a job opening that he will start interviewing applicants for in the next month or so. This job will be a 'PR' position of sorts and provide public education. This new employee will also be the contact person for FireWise Boards to contact. He said that 'way down on the list' (but it is on the list), was establishing a hiking trail from TSV to Red River. He spoke to the fact that TSVI has done monumental work thinning the forests and paid for all of it.

Adam suggested that someone from our Firewise Board meet with 2 of his other foresters, Paul Mondragon and Adrian Ponchas, as they are currently the foresters who will deal with community members. Trudy DiLeo will meet with them on December 6th, along with anyone else that may want to attend.

There is a meeting on November 16th through the 18th called the Wildland Summit. Currently, none of the Board members are able to attend this meeting.

John Avila spoke about chippers. He stated that the Chipper Grant is due in April of 2023. Apparently, they give priority to organizations with a history of using chippers. They tried to run a pilot program this fall, but were not able to get contractors. He said he is open to applying again and trying next year. We should put it on the agenda in late winter for review.

The question came up if an organizational chart for the village existed. John Avila stated that there was one and he would email it to Jim Woodard.

The question came up if there was any money available for Firewise / Public Safety for educational material, etc. Apparently, none is dedicated as such, but in the past, the Fire Department has paid for some educational materials and handouts.

The meeting was then adjourned.

(Minutes submitted by Trudy DiLeo as per notes from Jim Woodard.)