

Meeting Minutes for
Rico Fire Protection District
Regular Meeting: February 16th, 2026

The regular Rico Fire Protection District Meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Chair Tyler Lapp.

Roll Call: RFPD Board members Gregg Anderson, Sarah Eckles, Tyler Lapp and Paul Ruud. Maria Casanova was absent due to her child's birthday.

Guests Present: RVFD Fire Chief Todd Jones, RFPD Administrator David Kunz, Allyn Svoboda.

Approval of Agenda: Gregg Anderson moved to approve the agenda, but to move SMPA from New Business to after the Financial Report; Sarah Eckles seconded the motion. Approval was unanimous.

Approval of Minutes: Sarah Eckles moved to approve the minutes for the January 19th, 2026; Paul Ruud seconded the motion. Approval was unanimous.

Public Comment: Allyn Svoboda commented that the old Rico School building could potentially serve Fire Department uses as the Town has acquired the Church for community center use.

Approval of Financial Report and Accounts Payable: Kunz presented (1) additional bill for payment, \$136,994 to Outback Fire for the balance of the Light Rescue truck. Kunz also requested authorization for the same amount of funds to be transferred from the CSAFE capital improvements account to the DSB general fund.

Gregg Anderson asked about the \$500 payment to Montezuma Fire Chief's Association for dues, and commented that the 2027 budget should have more money for Dues and fees.

Gregg Anderson moved to approve the financial report and pay the bills as presented, plus additional, and to transfer \$136,994 from CSAFE Capital Improvement account to the DSB General account; Sarah Eckles seconded the motion. Approval was unanimous.

SMPA/Terry Schuyler, Discussion of Safety Plan for microgrid facility: SMPA's Wiley Freeman characterized the cop as serving an area of 3600 square miles with 2000 miles of transmission line, roughly half of which are underground. Rico is served by a single, 16 mile transmission line from Ilium. The proposed battery system would serve as a backup power source when the transmission line goes down, as well as providing peak power management capacity. The proposed project has \$1.4 million in funding from State and Federal agencies, and has received a Special Use Permit from the Town.

Terry Schuyler (SMPA) introduced Ola Boye from PSE engineers who is preparing the plans for the installation. The battery array would consist of 4 megawatt hours of lithium-ion (LFP) cells manufactured by Tesla. Failure rates/ resulting fires from these units are declining over time and vs. installed capacity, but can occur. The recommended protocol is to let the unit burn and consume itself, while protecting exposures. Firefighters would need SCBA's on for the entirety of what could be an extended firefighting event.

SMPA is planning (but has not scheduled) a public meeting to discuss the project. SMPA's building permit has not been submitted. SMPA is hoping to have the procurement package/equipment spec completed in April or May, as State money must be spent by June 30. Proposed installation of the system could be in late 2026 or early 2027. SMPA has installed (or is in the process of installing) similar systems in Silverton, Ridgway, SMPA headquarters, and at the Telluride High School.

Initial Board concerns included: requirement for annual training for fire response to a system failure (as opposed to a one-and-done); evacuation concerns, need for highway closure, RVFD's ability to replenish SCBA's in the event of a system fire. Board members generally felt that the system would be better located out of town, however, SMPA was unable to come to a siting agreement with Arco/BP.

Administrative Report (Administrator David Kunz):

Exemption from Audit will be on the agenda for next month.

Grants (awarded):

El Pomar (Wildland fire): Request for \$5,981.83 for wildland fire equipment; awarded \$5000. Fulfillment started.
Telluride Foundation FY 2026 (Community): \$5,000.00 in training funds. This funding may be useful to send RVFD members to the Fire Academy for live fire training.

Grants (pending applications):

CFSDPG: State grant for firefighter disease prevention. Submitted 2/13/2026. Kunz applied for \$2539.40 (100%) in funding for highway visibility vests and safety lighting.
CDPHE EMTS: Kunz applied for \$10,486 (50/50 match) in communications funding to replace/upgrade (4) mobile radios. Review in process. Award notifications in June, 2026.

Fire Chief Report (Fire Chief Todd Jones):

Runs: (3) MVC's with no injury, (1) MVC (mutual aid) where a woman was run over by her own vehicle.

Training: in-house.

Equipment: Suburban will need general maintenance plus suspension work. 931 (new Light Rescue) will need hosebeds, turtle mats, fittings and additional hose.

Old Business:

Light Rescue Truck Project: Project completed. The vehicle's compartments are filled, there will be some accessories needed.

Transfer of Lots to RFPD from Town of Rico: Gregg Anderson is working out the details in order to accomplish the property transfer with minimum time and cost. According to the title company, a statutory deed cannot include the terms of the MOU. Anderson is working with Daniel Zemke and the Rico Town Attorney to continue moving the process forward.

Proposed new Fire Station Construction and Financing: No revised plans yet from Tom Bulk.

New Business:

RFPD By-laws: Gregg Anderson suggested a revision to limit the District Board to having only (1) Department member.

Additional Business:

Proposed joint District Board and RVFD gathering will be at the regular RVFD meeting on May 5th. 2026 Fourth of July falls on a Saturday. Community picnic would be Sunday. Chief Jones is trying to minimize Department involvement in the picnic.

The next regular RFPD meeting is scheduled for March 16th, 2026.

A motion to adjourn was made by at 8:41 PM. By Sarah Eckles; seconded by Paul Ruud.

Chairman

Secretary