



**Sierra County Fire Protection District # 1**  
**PO Box 255**  
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**[www.sierracountyfireprotectiondistrict1.com](http://www.sierracountyfireprotectiondistrict1.com)**

**Board of Directors**

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*Candy Hunter*  
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*Vacant*  
*Vacant*

April 1, 2025

**TO: SCFPD #1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FROM: TONY COMMENDATORE – CHAIRMAN SCFPD #1**

**SUBJECT: INTERNAL INSPECTION RE: ALLEGATIONS MADE BY EX-DIRECTOR RICHARD MADDALENA REGARDING ADMINISTRATIVE PAY FOR THE DISTRICT CHIEF**

**BACKGROUND:**

On February 19, 2025, Director Maddalena sent an Email (**Exhibit 1**) to several Volunteer Firefighters, the SCFPD #1 Board and the Chair of the Eastern Sierra Firefighters Auxiliary (ESFA). The Email was critical of the District Chief and several Board members. Director Maddalena suggested that there was a disconnect between the Fire District and ESFA regarding the distribution of the fundraising receipts from the Tour de Manure.

The Email caused confusion and controversy among the Board and Volunteers. The Chair recognized the need to mitigate the harm caused by the Email and formed an Ad hoc committee consisting of the Chair, Director Archer, and Director Rowson. The purpose of the committee was to perform damage control and reassure the Volunteers that the Board of Directors fully supported them. The committee also met with several members of the ESFA Board and had a productive discussion outlining protocols for disbursements to the Volunteers for equipment and training to enhance their mission readiness.

On February 26, 2025, Director Maddalena sent his letter of resignation (**Exhibit 2**) to the SCFPD #1 Chair and County Supervisor Roen effective March 18 after the Board meeting. The resignation letter criticized certain Board members for reasons only Director Maddalena understood and then went on to criticize the Chief and said that he was suspicious of the Chief's actions related to payments and billing.

The Chair realized the seriousness of the allegations regarding the District Chief and reconvened the Ad hoc committee to discuss a course of action. The Chair contacted Director Maddalena (separately) to determine the specifics of his allegations. The point of contention was a payment for 69 hours of administrative labor totaling \$3579.72 that the Chief performed for 11 preposition events, 3 wildfire deployments and 4 adjustments needed to complete the billing process with CAL-OES to ensure payment to the District and the Volunteers. Director Rowson was asked to analyze the specific tasks involved with deployments and the procedure with which the Chief was authorized to receive administrative pay by the SCFPD #1 Board.

## **HISTORY AND POLICY FOR PAYMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE LABOR:**

At the October 15, 2024, regular Board of Directors meeting under item 4 unfinished business as reflected in the minutes (**Exhibit 3**), the Board decided to compensate the Chief for time spent on deployment and, after action, billing tasks. This compensation was agreed upon by the Board because the District Chief had been doing it at home uncompensated, which impacted valuable family time. The Board concluded that this action was fair and equitable and would compensate the Chief for the 2024 fire season retroactively at a time and a half rate of the Chief's wage as established by CAL-OES. The wage calculates out to be \$51.49 per hour. Director Rowson was asked to modify the SCFPD#1 Volunteer Payment Policy (**Exhibit 4**) to reflect the added administrative pay for the Chief and submit it to the Board for approval.

At the November 19, 2024, Board meeting the amended policy was unanimously passed with minor language changes suggested by Director Maddalena as reflected in the minutes under unfinished business item 3. (**Exhibit 5**)

## **ANALYSIS OF TASKS ASSOCIATED WITH DEPLOYMENTS:**

The personnel and equipment levels are dictated by CAL-OES or is a function of the number of Volunteers that can commit to staffing for each event. The Chief is responsible for submitting documentation that triggers a pre-position event. Each deployment of SCFPD #1 resources can be described as follows:

- During the fire season the Chief monitors weather for "Red Flag Events"
- The Chief will submit a document designed by CAL-OES that supplies them with local wind conditions, humidity levels, soil water content, projected temperatures and thunderstorm forecasts if a red flag event is eminent.
- CAL-OES will evaluate and approve or deny the request for deployment.
- Once approved the Chief will notify the Sierra County Fire Chiefs that pre-position is approved and they will begin the staffing process with their department Volunteers.
- The Chief contacts SCFPD#1 Volunteers seeking commitment to the pre-position event and determines which apparatus can be utilized based upon the individual volunteer's qualifications and the number of personnel that can commit to the event. This is labor intensive and requires numerous phone calls and coordination. Many of the volunteers must plan with their employers to participate which requires another element of time.
- The Chief will determine which station is most beneficial to occupy based on local fire proximity (if any).
- Pre-position begins. The Chief ceases to be compensated by the District and is now on the CAL-OES payroll.
- After the event, the Chief will review all personnel who participated in the event and verify the hours worked by each Volunteer.
- The Chief will review the apparatus deployed for accuracy prior to submission to CAL-OES for payment.
- The Chief must complete and submit the F-42 form for payment to CAL-OES.
- CAL-OES will review the F-42 and give a preliminary payment amount and return it to the Chief for review.
- The Chief will review the proposed payment and sign off or make changes based upon the situation and re-submit for payment.

## **OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:**

After determining the actual basis of Director Maddalena's declarations and studying the administrative work necessary on both the front end and back end of a deployment, the Ad hoc committee met and deliberated on the evidence of this inspection. The Ad hoc committee unanimously concluded that the allegation of questionable billing was erroneous at best and a false accusation at worst. The committee determined that the hours claimed were reasonable and justified based on the deployment task study. The Ad hoc committee exonerates the Chief of any wrongdoing.

Director Maddalena said it best in his resignation letter when he states, "I have found working with Chief Connolly difficult and there is little trust between us as individuals on a number of topics." This is clearly a personality conflict that has spilled over into a very unified team recognized as the Sierra County Fire Protection District #1. It is unfortunate that this inspection had to occur, but protection of public funds is paramount and worthy of inspection any time malfeasance is asserted.

Tony Commendatore  
Chairman – SCFPD #1



