

RODEO-HERCULES FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 27, 2024

To: Board of Directors, Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District

From: Directors Bowman and Mikel, Board Governance Ad Hoc Committee

Subject: Prioritization of CSDA Key Learnings and Next Steps

Directors attending the CSDA conference in October 2023 returned with energy and knowledge to better understand Board governance to improve our District. The Board Governance Ad Hoc Committee has used the survey of December (which all Directors participated in) to capture key areas of agreement as a starting point for Board direction as we collectively prioritize our direction and determine our next steps for the Community and the District at the Special Meeting of March.

The attached spreadsheet was presented to the Board and shared with the Chief in January. It captures all Directors' comments and aims to summarize key areas where the Board appears to have consensus, which are also summarized here:

- **Board orientation/onboarding:** a focus on Board unity of purpose, speaking with one voice, working together to be a voice for the community, continuing education with CSDA SDLA, understanding and completing State mandated training, Board oversight.
- **Community engagement:** establish a comprehensive community engagement plan for getting our message out, sharing our direction, and engaging our community in the District's direction; ensuring RHFD provides the services the community desires.
- **Implementation of the strategic plan:** in line with the District and its mission; communicating our short- and long-term goals, annual review of the strategic and business plans, providing direction to staff.
- **Financial:** understanding key financial reports (expense, capital, reserves, investments), aligning the budget with the strategic plan, reviewing the budget quarterly, Board engagement with the auditors, identifying red flag areas, advocating for the district to obtain alternate funding to enhance financial stability and provide funds for non-recurring needs.
- **Understanding Human Resources:** Hire a HR expert to assist Board responsibilities vs. the Fire Chief, including the Board's role and process in evaluating the Fire Chief, review vendor peer reviews every 3 years, change of key consultants (legal, auditor, labor, HR) every 5-7 years (best practice), understanding effective organizational management, providing direction to staff.

CSDA Key Learning Summaries by Director – previously published in board packet 1/10/24

Username	Please share your top THREE-to-FIVE learnings from "Setting a Foundation for Good Governance" you'd like to see the board consider for adoption by our district.	Please share your top THREE-to-FIVE learnings from "Board's Role in Human Resources" you'd like to see the board consider for adoption by our district.	Please share your top THREE-to-FIVE learnings from "Charting the Course" you'd like to see the board consider for adoption by our district.	Please share your top THREE-to-FIVE learnings from "Get the Word Out" you'd like to see the board consider for adoption by our district.	Please share your top THREE-to-FIVE learnings from "Show Me the Money" you'd like to see the board consider for adoption by our district.	Please share any other learnings from the Special District Leadership Academy Conference you'd like to see the board consider for adoption by our district.	Please share any other thoughts you may have regarding the leadership academy for possible group discussion.
hill@rhfd.org	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refine FC evaluation process, consider finding and outside vendor to replace counsel+B2:B13 role 2. Consider forming a Citizen's Advisory Committee 3. Consider tasking staff to implement a regular series of community surveys, perhaps on a quarterly basis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider adopting the FC evaluation suggestions presented in pages 326-331 of the leadership academy handbook 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IMPORTANT – Establish a clear direction for the district to allow for more effective planning and decision making. Perhaps something like, "Deliver a financially sustainable fire service in the next X years, aligning costs with reasonable revenues, garnering public support for the same, and maintaining service levels acceptable to the communities served 2. Consider hiring Martin Rauch as facilitator for our decision-making process 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider forming an ad hoc or citizen committee to guide staff in development of an engagement plan, including a recommended budget, scope of work, assigned responsibilities, and staffing through consultants or in-house staff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider appending the glossary of financial terms beginning at page 239 of the handbook to our board handbook for use by all directors and staff 2. Do we have and/or need an investment policy and some sort of annual review process? 3. Do we have clearly stated appropriations limits? 4. Have we reviewed our auditor's peer review report in last three years? 5. How many months reserves does policy dictate and how does deficit spending impact this? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I think we should formalize the requirement for new board directors to attend a leadership academy within one year of their election and consider some sort of requirement for ALL directors to attend on some regular basis -- every four years? 2. I believe our fire chief should attend a leadership academy on some regular basis, perhaps beginning with newly elected directors after the November 2024 election? 	<p>Fabulous, can't believe we haven't been doing this for decades!</p>
bowman@rhfd.org	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board Orientation "pre-election, qualities and skills of a director, Brown Act, ethics requirement, meet-and-greet with staff, tour stations, meet firefighters. Directors to attend CSDA leadership academy. 2. Board Responsibility "read & understand board packet and ask questions if needed. Understand governance, unity of purpose, carry out mission. 3. On-boarding process prior to election for Director candidates, after elected/appointed process for Directors and Meas O Committee members 4. Change of general counsel, labor negotiators every 5 years to get new blood, better ideas, greater interest in District needs. 5. Not use General Counsel for labor expertise, with Chief evaluation but a HR professional. Benefit from their expertise, it'll be faster and less expensive. 6. Help with informational exchange between Board and staff for research/policy etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining roles as one size does not fit all. Roles and responsibility depend on context including size of the organization. Directors in setting policy for effective communication should ensure staff understanding of the policy. 2. Audit ad hoc meets with auditor (management attends introduction) to discuss audit process and any concerns. At the conclusion of the audit, or if the auditor has any questions, Board ad hoc meets with the auditor to receive an oral/draft report and discuss concerns. To obtain more objective feedback from auditors and general counsel, best practice is to rotate out every 5-to-7 years. 3. Chief's evaluation "Hire HR specialist to work with Board on Chief's eval, utilizing their expertise will produce results at less cost and sooner. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Align our mission with the strategic plan and communicate our long and short term plans annually. Board needs to be a voice for the entire community and to the community 3. Board needs to do its homework to be able to fully participate; action only takes place with a majority vote 4. Effective planning and the SP; need an oversight plan, process for staff reporting and Board oversight. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Let the public know how we are meeting their needs. 2. Use social media, posting agenda one week in advance in public places (Rodeo Senior Center, Library, RMAC, Voices of Rodeo, Hercules City Hall, Rec Center, Senior Center, Library). Review website monthly to ensure currency and effective communication. 3. Advocacy: local, county, federal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure budget aligns with the strategic plan. Annual orientation early in the fiscal year for directors including review of key budget factors. Provide a checklist to the Board of what will be reviewed quarterly and annually to ensure budget is on track. Review budget quarterly and take any necessary actions to deliver mission objectives within budget. 2. Review of policy regarding disposition of District assets. Generally this requires Board approval. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue and obtain external funding to support budget, enhance financial stability, and provide for non-recurring needs.

CSDA Key Learning Summaries by Director – previously published in board packet 1/10/24

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- a. Three Legged Stool: Staff; Community; Board Relations.
- b. Unity does not mean uniformity.
- c. Unity of Purposes: Governing bodies work most effectively when they have a rational and purposeful framework to focus and guide their work.
- d. Institutionalized Effective Governance in Writing.

a. Role of staff is to carry out the board's plan and manager's direction to achieve goals

b. Indicator of HR problems: Gaps in employee evaluations

c. Indicator of HR problems: Lack of checks and balances.

d. All members should have the same information about decisions to be made.

e. Does your HR Budget offer additional employee job training ; mandatory and voluntary; educ. programs; workshops; conferences

a. Strategic plans are about policy direction and are squarely in the board' domain.

b. The board should be an energized advocate for its own strategic plan.

c. Become financially strong

d. Obtain public support for a key project

a. Districts are obligated to close the gap between the agency and constituents through engagement

b. Leadership in the community is about recognizing when something needs to change. Then developing a board consensus to do something about it.

c. Engage in your community as a member of your board

d. Model formal polite conduct and equanimity

a. Key Financial Reports: Expense Balance; Investments; Capital; Reserve; Budget-to-Actuals (Multi-year); Payables and Receivables;

b. Specific areas of staff concerns

c. Relate fiscal activities at the mission of the district The budget determines which programs and services the district will strive to accomplish and the budget allows the district to set strategic priorities each year.

a. The CSDA conference was a good opportunity for the board to meet in a neutral 3rd party location in order to learn about RFPD as a CSDA.

b. The CSDA conference was a good opportunity for the board to meet to get to know each other in a more individual, person-to-person way.

c. Therefore, the CSDA conference should be a regular institution for board members.

d. Therefore, the CSDA conference should be a regularly attended by the RHFD's chief administrative officer

Consider how the RHFD can use the CSDA in an ongoing manner and also in ways not yet experienced at our first conference.

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- 1 - Building Better Board Relationships - particularly better community outreach, and understanding our roll and district staffs role.
- 2 - Being able to speak as one voice
- 3 - Understanding the Strategic Plan is part of the Budget process
- 4 - (For me personally) to be an effective Director, doing more "Dialogue & Deliberation", and less "Debating" for the good of the board and our constituents .

1 - The CEO/Fire Chief leads the Fire Department in the best way they see fit without Fire Board interference.(The fire board has already set the direction and tone)

2 - the CEO/Fire Chief hires, fires, trains, contracts for the good of the organizations. (The board must be get in the loop and receive the answers to the "Why"?)

3 - Any Board member that needs assistance with services from staff must go thru the Fire Chief.

4. Do not micro-manage

5. Understand the policies and procedures, do not interfere, but ask questions (why and why not.

1 - Accept and evaluate information provided by staff as a group

2 - Annual Workshop/retreat for strategic planning

3 - Link goals and objectives, develop priorities (doing a good job at this with staffs direct input) with timelines.

4 - On-going reality checks

1 - Communicate better in getting the Fire Districts information out - in one voice

2 - Develop a more robust engagement plan

3 - Advocacy for the district, as long as we are all speaking the same language

1 - When onboarding new board members, provide a Special District budget workshop. On-going budget training for District members (Law and rule changes).

2 - Appropriation limits? and how this affects our district? forecasting the amount of revenue lost due to age exemptions/loss-gain of home values/loss-gain business tax.

3 - Understanding our Red-Flag indicators

Good Communication, Understanding "all" decisions are made based on "all" of the board members input. The board does not run the Fire Department nor it's staff, one single board member does not make any decisions independently.

We are scratching the surface on a great deal of the items I mentioned. I believe in my heart we all want what is best, and we all have something positive to provide. Dialogue and deliberation will get us far if community and organization is placed before self.

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Focusing on the unity of purpose

Ensuring all board members have a clear understanding of the district and its mission

All items brought to board for discussion should be aligned with Strategic Plan

Making sure board members who respectfully disagree engage in effective dialogue to reach understanding.

Avoidance of Micro-Management. The Subject Matter Expert is the General Manager. We need to be sure we are allowing the GM to direct the 'how' while the board focuses on the 'what'.

Develop Communication Plan

Confirm HR policies

Revise current evaluation criteria

Create a mission statement for the board

Utilize outside facilitator for major decision making

Creating a social media policy

Designate a spokesperson

I think we achieved this this year with Chief Ramirez's help but communicating the budget to the public clearly in a way that is understood by most.

Nothing more than was listed above. I firmly believe that our communication with each other and the public will serve us all in reaching our common goal.

Regular community surveys; more community outreach	Review and revise fire chief evaluation process	Establish clear board direction for the district aligned with strategic plan and policies	Establish comprehensive communications policy	Establish regular budget review process to identify red flags, ensure alignment with strategic plan and community understanding	Make CSDA SDLA conference requirement for all board directors, chief, and administrative officer
Better board orientation, relationships, and understanding of mission, processes and methods, including deliberative process	Examine roles and responsibilities between board and staff; ensure understanding to avoid micromanagement	Use outside moderator for major decision making	Speak with one voice on matters of board consensus; appoint spokesperson	Review and establish appropriations limits	
Consensus Learnings Compilation		Ensure community awareness		Ensure board understanding of budget process	
A focus on board unity of purpose					
New board member on-boarding process					
General counsel tenure; use in labor and HR issues					
Better strategic plan understanding and alignment among board members					

CSDA Key Learnings Workshop Participation Guidelines

As a Board we're seeking to hold a productive goal-setting workshop. For the group process to be enjoyable, cooperative, and productive we are asking each Director to:

- ✓ Take responsibility for helping the Board achieve a positive outcome.
- ✓ Listen carefully to what your fellow Directors are saying.
- ✓ Monitor your level of participation (neither dominate nor withhold).
- ✓ Be aware of our purpose, stay on topic.
- ✓ Engage with, build on, respond to the ideas from fellow Directors.
- ✓ Express disagreement or concerns constructively, with respect.
- ✓ Be aware of how verbal and non-verbal signals impact group dynamics.
- ✓ Avoid side conversations when we are conducting business as a whole.
- ✓ Be fully present, (i.e. avoid unnecessary use of smart phones).
- ✓ Come with a clear and unmade mind.

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Building consensus is the process the group goes through to reach unity of agreement. In its simplest terms, consensus refers to agreement (on some decision) by all members of a group. Consensus needs five ingredients to be successful; a group of people willing to work together, a problem or issue that requires a decision by the group, trust that there is a solution, belief that all persons have some part of the solution (and that we will reach a better decision by putting all of the pieces together before proceeding), and perseverance to find the best group solution.

These attitudes and skills will help a group move in a more creative, inclusive, and healthy direction.

Governance Ad Hoc Committee Directors Bowman and Mikel, March 27, 2024

What to Expect in Today's CSDA Key Learnings Workshop

WELCOME: Directors Bowman and Mikel

PURPOSE: The aim of this workshop is to turn key learnings from the CSDA academy into actions, becoming a more engaged and proactive board.

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES: Rules to make the discussion effective and professional.

PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE: Directors will vote on areas of interest identified previously, to determine which ones have the highest priority, and which ones Directors are willing to work on.

POTENTIAL NEXT STEPS:

- Establish an Ad Hoc Committee for each area of interest (1-2 Directors) to take the lead on prioritizing goals.
- Use the strategic plan as a guide.
- Set goals, timelines, assign responsibilities: identify potential obstacles or resources required.
- Check in with the Chief to review how goals may impact staff workloads.
- Update Board at a regular Board meeting.
- RHFD 2024 Administration and Board calendar attached as a reference.

CLOSING

RHFD ADMINISTRATIVE AND BOARD CALENDAR 2024

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
January 10, 2024	DISTRICT REORGANIZATION (BOARD CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR) ANNUAL CALENDAR OATH OF OFFICE (POST ELECTION YEARS)
February 14, 2024	RECEIVE FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT RECEIVE FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023 MEASURE O AUDIT REPORT FROM CHIEF RECEIVE MIDYEAR BUDGET REPORT LAIF SIGNATURES (IF NEEDED)
March 13, 2024	SELECTION OF 2024-25 BUDGET AD HOC COMMITTEE WEED ABATEMENT PROCESS
April 10, 2024	PUBLIC HEARING MEASURE O CPI INCREASE WEED ABATEMENT PUBLIC HEARING CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR
May 8, 2024	DECLARATION OF INTENT TO CONTINUE TO LEVY A FIRE SUPPRESSION ASSESSMENT AND SUPPLEMENTAL FIRE SUPPRESSION ASSESSMENT ON ALL PARCELS OF REAL PROPERTY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR THIRD QUARTER BUDGET REPORT ORDERING EVEN-YEAR AND SPECIFICATIONS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION (EVEN YEARS)
June 12, 2024	PUBLIC HEARING PRELIMINARY OPERATING BUDET APPROVAL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 BUDGET 101 PRESENTATION CONFERENCE WITH LABOR NEGOTIATOR RECEIVE MEASURE O COMMITTEE REPORT FOR FY 2022-2023
July 10, 2024	
August 14, 2024	END OF YEAR BUDGET UPDATE
September 11, 2024	PUBLIC HEARING ON FINAL OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 ADOPTION OF APPROPRIATIONS LIMIT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025
October 9, 2024	PUBLIC HEARING-BENEFIT ASSESSMENT APPEALS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 FIRST QUARTER BUDGET UPDATE FIRE CODE ADOPTION (TRIANNUALLY) CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE (BIANNUALLY IF NEEDED)
November 13, 2024	
December	NO REGULAR MEETING

Director Bowman, 10/6/23. Calendar approved by the Board on 10/11/23.