

Board of Governance Meeting Minutes Valley Regional Fire Authority



Meeting Date: January 13, 2026
Time: 5:15 p.m.
Location: 1101 D St NE, Auburn, WA 98002

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Backus called the Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA) Board of Governance Regular Meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

A. Flag Salute

Chair Backus led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Roll Call

Chair Nancy Backus, Vice Chair Troy Linnell, Member Vic Kave, Member Kerry Garberding, Member Tim Fairley, Member Bill Thomas, Member Tracy Taylor, Member Eric Petersen, and Member Hanan Amer.

Staff members present included Chief Brad Thompson, Deputy Chief Tim Day, Deputy Steve Zehnder, CFO Mark Horaski, HR Director Sarah Borden, Legal Counsel Brian Snure, and Clerk of the Board Stefanie Harper.

C. Announcements, Proclamations, and Presentations

VRFA Chief Thompson recognized Vice Chair Linnell for his 10 years of service on the Board of Governance and thanked him for his dedication and service.

D. Appointments

There were no appointments.

E. Agenda Modifications

There were no agenda modifications.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS, CITIZEN INPUT, AND CORRESPONDENCE

A. Public Hearings

There were no public hearings.

B. Audience Participation

There was no audience participation.

C. Update from IAFF Local #1352

Tyler Eliason addressed the Board as the newly elected President of IAFF Local #1352. He previously served as Treasurer for the past 10 years and shared that he looks forward to continuing a strong working relationship between the Local, Administration, and the Board of Governance.

Cory Wallace thanked the Board and shared photos from December toy drive, highlighting the impact of the event. He expressed appreciation to everyone who volunteered and helped make the effort a success for local families.

D. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

II. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**A. Finance Committee**

Member Backus reported that the Finance Committee did not meet this evening. She shared that the Board agreed to place the Committee on hiatus, as all financial information presented to the Committee is also brought before the full Board for approval.

The Committee will be reconvened at such time as the Board deems necessary.

IV. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Member Kave thanked VRFA for its response to the recent flooding in Pacific, recognizing the work at the Emergency Operations Center, ongoing assistance to affected residents, and strong communication throughout the event.

Mayor Backus shared similar appreciation for the support provided to her city and the coordination demonstrated during the response.

V. STAFF REPORTS

VRFA Chief Thompson welcomed Member Fairley back to the Board of Governance, noting his previous service concluded in 2015. He also recognized Member Taylor for two years of service and Chair Backus for 16 years of service, thanking both for their dedication as their anniversaries fall on January 1st.

Chief Thompson also stated the following: I recognized that our cities are still working through the flooding and its aftermath, especially the City of Pacific. I witnessed firsthand the strength of the partnership between the cities and VRFA during our co response, including the rescue of 28 individuals following the levee break. The coordination among city, county, VRFA, state, and federal partners was truly remarkable.

This response would not have been possible without strong relationships and strategic partnerships. Member Kave's extensive water rescue experience was clearly on display, and Member Peterson's "earthwork" expertise proved instrumental in addressing the levee failure. All of this occurred while Algona and Auburn were managing flood impacts within their own communities.

Our AAR is still underway to identify what went well and where we can improve. This event reinforced the importance of agencies working together and preparing for the "just in case." There is significant recovery work ahead, and we stand with each city as we continue to support those efforts and learn how we can serve even better in the future.

Looking ahead, the 2026 Fire Benefit Charge notices are now in the mail. Community members with questions are encouraged to visit the website or contact the Finance team, who are prepared to assist.

The VRFA Executive Team met and reviewed key priorities for 2026, including reaccreditation, with a site visit anticipated in Q4 2026, and succession planning, as three Battalion Chiefs, two Captains, and the Assistant Fire Marshal are expected to retire within the next 12 months. VRFA has a strong bench and systems in place to support these transitions. In capital facilities updates, Station 36 is scheduled to open this summer, and rebuilding efforts for Stations 38 and 31 will begin this year.

VI. CONSENT ITEMS

All matters listed on the Consent Agenda are considered by the Governance Board to be routine and may be approved by one motion.

A. Minutes

1. The minutes of December 9, 2025, Regular Meeting were reviewed.

B. Vouchers**1. Claims**

Check numbers 213328 through 213413 in the amount of \$1,210,812.99 and electronic payments in the amount of \$2,323,128.48 totaling \$3,533,941.47 dated January 14, 2026.

2. Payroll

Payroll electronic deposit transmissions in the amount of \$2,848,576.23 for the period covering December 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.

There being no further discussion or questions, Vice Chair Linnell moved, and Member Peterson seconded the approval of the Consent Items.

Board member Vic Kave stated for the record at the February 13, 2024, Board meeting that his vote on consent agendas excludes any vote on the payment of his post-retirement medical benefit from which he abstains, so Board member Kave has abstained from Voucher # DFT0013991.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 9 - 0

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

IX. RESOLUTIONS & MOTIONS**A. Election of Chair & Vice Chair**

Chair Backus read Section 12.1 of the VRFA Governance Bylaws regarding the nomination process for Chair and Vice Chair and opened the floor for nominations.

Member Amer nominated Mayor Backus for Chair, and Member Garberding nominated Member Kave. By a show of hands, the vote resulted in five votes for Mayor Backus and three votes for Member Kave. Mayor Backus did not vote.

For Vice Chair, Member Thomas nominated Mayor Linnell, and Member Peterson nominated Member Kave. By a show of hands, the vote resulted in four votes for Mayor Linnell and three votes for Member Kave. Mayor Backus and Mayor Linnell did not vote.

Legal Counsel confirmed that a majority vote is sufficient, provided a quorum is present. Mayor Backus will serve as Chair and Mayor Linnell will serve as Vice Chair, each for a two-year term.

B. Resolution No. 214

VRFA Chief Thompson stated that, with the ad hoc Finance Committee no longer meeting at 5:00 p.m., the proposed Resolution would adjust the Board of Governance meeting start time to 5:00 p.m., and included consideration of potentially changing the meeting day.

Discussion ensued, and the Board agreed to retain the second Tuesday of each month while moving the start time to 5:00 p.m.

There being no discussion or questions, Vice Chair Linnell moved, and Member Garberding seconded to approve Resolution 214.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 9 – 0

C. 2026-2028 Firefighter/Captain CBA

CFO Horaski called for an executive session to discuss negotiations. Details and motion referenced under section XI. Executive or Closed Session.

X. INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

There was no information or discussion

XI. EXECUTIVE OR CLOSED SESSION

CFO Horaski requested an executive session to include himself, Chief Thompson, and members of the negotiations team to review matters related to collective bargaining issues and negotiations, as authorized by RCW 42.30.144(g). The session was anticipated to last ten (10) minutes, with possible action upon return to open session.

Chair Backus convened the executive session at 5:52 p.m. The session concluded at 6:02 p.m., and the Board returned to regular session at 6:03 p.m., allowing time for excused members and attendees to return to their seats.

There being no discussion or questions, Vice Chair Linnell moved to accept and authorize the signing of the 2026-2028 Firefighter/Captain et.al. CBA, and Member Amer seconded.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 9 – 0

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Dated this 10th day of February 2026

Nancy Backus
Nancy Backus
Chair

Stefanie Harper
Stefanie Harper
Clerk of the Board