

## Hatchet Ranch East Fire Protection Committee (HRE FPC)

### Final Minutes of Meeting: September 18, 2010

**Attendees:** Scott Brecheisen, Bill Coman, Jim Elliott, Bud Haberstat, Beth Lenoski, Jim Miller, Paula Moore, Greg Moore

**Purpose of the meeting.** Jim Miller convened the meeting just after 11am with introductions, distributed a proposed agenda, and asked for any changes. The agenda was unanimously accepted. *(It is covered below in the order of discussion.)*

**Establish official Fire Protection Committee.** Jim conveyed the decision of the current Hatchet East Property Owner's Association Board of Directors to support the efforts of the Fire Protection Committee to gain fire protection district status for the ranch and/or explore other fire protection measures that would benefit property owners, which were further discussed later in the meeting.

**Select co-chairmen.** Jim Elliott volunteered to serve as co-chair for the next year. Paula Moore volunteered to serve as co-chair/secretary. They were unanimously accepted. Jim M. thanked Jim E. for his efforts over the past 5 years to gather information, explore options, connect with various groups, and communicate with property owners on fire protection coverage and issues for the ranch.

#### **Update on efforts to become part of the Rye Fire Protection District.**

##### **Review of 2005-2008 effort.**

Jim E. originally approached the Rye Fire Protection District (RFPD) Board of Directors (BOD) and Fire Chief Daniels in 2005 about adding Hatchet Ranch East to the district.

The possibility of establishing a substation on the ranch was explored, an acre of land identified for the substation site (donation offered by a property owner), equipment needs and sources identified (including BLM and US Forest Service), estimated cost impacts to property owners determined (a one-time fee to join the district and annual mil levy), and property owner signatures obtained to petition the board to include Hatchet in the district.

The RFPD Board met in 2008 and voted down (3-2) our petition to join the district.

##### **Upcoming meeting with Rye Fire Protection Committee.**

The composition and political climate of the RFPD Board has changed somewhat since the 2008 vote, and Jim M. feels that they may now be more amenable to Hatchet joining the district. With the support of the ranch's Board of Directors, the first step will be taken on Sept. 22 by requesting that this topic be placed on the committee's meeting agenda for the following week.

At the subsequent RFPD Board meeting, Jim E. and Jim M. will make a presentation in support of adding Hatchet Ranch East to the RFPD. If well received, we would need to meet the requirements set forth for joining the district, including another petition signed by at least 20% of ranch property owners who are Colorado residents, registered voters, and ranch residents (in 2008 there were 142 ranch residents).

#### **Discuss potential solutions for fire protection.**

**Do nothing.** The status quo was discussed, including home insurance rates as high as \$4000 annually, insurance companies dropping coverage, and (obviously) lack of timely fire protection. These issues were seen as affecting the value, marketability, and livability of ranch properties.

**GCC coalition.** Jim Elliott related that collaboration with GCC/Rio Grande (the cement plant on the south side of Pueblo) on establishing a new fire protection district/fire station no longer appears

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productive, as the contacts at the plant have not responded with any offers to meet since late 2009. Given the distance of the plant from Hatchet Ranch East, a fire district/station that would include both the cement plant and Hatchet may be too far to provide adequate response for the entire ranch or any reduction in home insurance rates.

**Volunteer fire department.** The possibility of establishing a fire protection substation on the ranch with volunteer firefighters was discussed, even without the support of the RFPD. Bud Haberstat noted that assembling fire department infrastructure (building, water trucks, well, cisterns) would be less costly if we could take advantage of official channels for surplus equipment available through affiliation with an established fire department/district.

A question was raised about whether the special assessment currently being collected could be used (at least partially) for fire protection instead of roads. Jim E. related that the assessment has typically been fully utilized to handle road maintenance and repairs.

Another Red Creek Ranch development (on the north side of I-25 south of Pueblo) has established its own volunteer fire department. Jim E. has been in touch and they are willing to share their information and lessons learned on setting one up.

**Other options.** Beth Lenoski suggested that a calling tree would provide a way to alert ranch residents in the event of fire or other emergencies. Jim Miller took an action to bring this suggestion to the Hatchet Board of Directors.

Greg Moore raised the possibility of obtaining fire protection gel as a community resource, rather than each homeowner buying their own. This could be one of the resources available to the volunteer firefighters if we establish a fire substation and/or volunteer fire department. No action was adopted at this time.

**Plan way ahead.** Based on how the RFPD Board responds to our request to join the District, the Hatchet Ranch East Fire Protection Committee will determine how we can best meet the prerequisites specified by the district, and will explore the feasibility of the other ideas for ranch protection raised at this meeting. If the RFPD Board denies our petition, we will request a letter that explains their reasons. Such information was not provided for the 2008 decision.

**Next meeting.** Scheduled to follow the presentation by Jim Miller and Jim Elliott to the RFPD Board of Directors on 10/20:

Saturday, October 23, 11am

The Moore's (719-676-3760)

8561 Railroad Spring Drive (Phase V, Lot 72-- across from Jim Elliott's house)

Bring snacks to share, if you are so moved. Beverages will be provided.

**Postscript:** The Rye Fire Protection District (RFPD) Board of Directors attempted to convene on 9/22, with Jim Miller and Jim Elliott present, but did not conduct business because a meeting notice was not published in advance. The board met again legally on 9/29, and Jim M. requested that Hatchet's request to join the fire protection district be added to the agenda at the October board meeting. The Board agreed to hear a briefing from Jim M. and Jim E. at their meeting scheduled for 10/20.