

The Palomar Mountain Community Fire Association

Minutes of the monthly meeting of The Board of Directors, December 6, 2025.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by President Robert Carlyle. Board members present in person at the Community Center (Station 79 grounds): Robert Carlyle, Michael Pique, Keith Ronchetti, Tom Mendenhall, Mark Thompson. Also present in-person were Cliff Kellogg and Yvonne Vaucher. Elizabeth Getzoff and Jim Hamerly joined by Zoom teleconference.

Pledge: Robert led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: Cliff Kellogg notes that snow removal complaints should come from the Station 79 crews, not the county's fire advisory board. Of course, the PMCFA can put in a good word. Elizabeth Getzoff asks whether we've talked to the snow plow operator? Yes, that was no help.

Minutes: The minutes from the November 1, 2025, meeting were approved.

Financial Report: Keith Ronchetti's written report (available at palomar-fire.org) showed a balance of \$90,952.74, with an additional \$1220.29 held for CERT. Expenses were \$361.94 for property taxes. The report was approved.

Station 79 Report: No captains in attendance, no report. Stalwart Dean Kowalski is off of the Saturday rotation and we're apparently not communicating well enough with the other captains in asking them to attend and offer a brief report.

County Fire Advisory (CFA) Board: Cliff Kellogg. The most recent meetings were in September and November. The September meeting minutes are online at the County Fire Authority website. 7500 gallon water tanks are now required for new construction for houses 3600 ft.² or smaller. There are new sprinkler rules for accessory (detached) buildings. The WUI code has proposed changes for 2026. Defensible space inspections are to be required for unimproved vacant land on parcels 1 acre or less. FEMA funds of \$1.7 million are available for hazardous fuel reduction in high fire severity zones, including county parks, preserves, and roadsides along 77 one-way access local roads. This reflects a four year period for this activity. A newly revised "Standards of Coverage" document shows all the county fire stations, their response areas, and characteristics. Palomar Mountain Station 79 covers a total of 38,090 acres with 282 residences. There is also a new "Standards of Coverage Executive Summary." A private land owner donated 6 acres in Borrego Springs for a new station, 4 acres of which is out of a flood zone. The county has bought a Sikorsky "Fire Hawk" helicopter from San Diego Gas and Electric for \$30 million plus sales tax. Next fire advisory board meeting is March 2.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): No report.

Community Center of Palomar Mountain (CCPM): Robert Carlyle, Chair. Robert will ask Cecelia Borland to again organize a Christmas party. Elizabeth Getzoff says that Nkechi Okorie (“NK”) has offered to help.

Palomar Mountain Fire Safe Council (PMFSC): Yvonne Vaucher reported that the FSC has about \$18,843 in hand, \$13,000 of which is unrestricted. We have 61 completed FIREWISE surveys. We need these for applying for membership in the nationwide FIREWISE program. Most insurers listed were USAA and the CAL FAIR plan. We will probably do another mailing of survey forms to all Palomar Mountain post office boxes. Elizabeth Getzoff will contact Tom Shoots for help in completing our FIREWISE application. The Crestline/Birch Hill dead and dying tree removal program is under way in Birch Hill, with mapping still in progress along Crestline. Downed pine & cedar will be removed from the mountain, but not oak because of GSOB concerns. Stan Hill is working with SDG&E contractors to have dead trees below power lines removed completely, not just topped and left standing as fire hazards. The USFS clearing in Jeff Valley remains a priority. A county Fire Safe Council Resource Conservation District meeting discussed a new “Vibrant Planet” program for wildfire hazards reduction.

The next FSC meeting will be 9 AM Saturday, January 24, in person at the CCPM and by Zoom. There will be no December meeting.

Palomar Mountain Planning Organization (PMPO): The last meeting was November 22, 2025. Discussions included obtaining TOT funds for CCPM bandstand improvements, the success of the State Park’s Harvest Festival, getting help maintaining the pmpoinfo.com web site, and the freeing up of \$11,000 budgeted for removal of a boulder along Easement Road 30 because the Station 79 crews assure us it does not block access. The next meeting is 10 AM February 28, immediately following the 9 AM PMFSC meeting.

Old Business: the Emergency Telephone outside of Station 79. The device has not worked for a long time, according to Captain Kowalski, but there is no sign or indication that pressing the “HELP” button does nothing. Michael Pique suggests we make a sign indicating that it is out-of-order, so people needing help will not think that help is coming.

Adjournment: 9:55 AM 12/06/2025. The next PMCFA meeting will be 9 AM Saturday, January 3, 2026, at the Community Center. We expect to have Zoom call-ins available.

Michael Pique, Secretary

Minutes approved by PMCFA Board 01/03/2026.