

**COPPEROPOLIS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
370 MAIN STREET
Copperopolis, CA 95228
209 785-2393 – FAX 209 785-2423
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

**Director John Maness, Director Joe Peery, Director James Valencia, Director Steve Marks, Director Richard
McCarty**

**Regular Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2026**

Pledge of Allegiance

I. CALL TO ORDER- Roll Call 6:30

Directors Present: Maness, Peery, Valenica, McCarty, Marks

Absent:

Administrative staff present: Fire Chief Scott Hertzog, Molly Soulier

Guests: Brian Lovelace, Debbie Acker, Dagmar Poffenroth, John Poffenroth

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Monthly Activity Reports- July 2026
*Motion to approve items **A and C.***

Motion: Marks, Seconder: McCarty

Ayes (5) Noes (0) Absent (0)

- B. Minutes Special Meeting- May 22, 2026

Director Maness explained that the special meeting minutes (May 22) must be pulled from the consent calendar and voted on separately because only three directors were present at that meeting and only those three are eligible to vote on those minutes.

Motion to approve minutes.

Motion: Marks, Seconder: McCarty

Ayes (5) Noes (0) Absent (0)

III. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

IV. COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

None.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. *Brian Nolan spoke about a fundraiser going around for Guy, who is a Copperopolis Fire Volunteer, who lost his house in the Gann Fire.*
- B. *Brian Lovelace got the CERT 239 running for under \$400.*
- C. *There was a recent propane safety training. The training was informative and highlighted safety issues*

VI. Administrative Report

A. Fire Chief

Chief Hertzog reported on the significant increase in emergency activity during the month, including the Gan Fire, several vegetation fires, and multiple structure fires. Chief reported that the Gan Fire began on August 3 near Hogan Dam Road and Gan Road. Water Tender 234 was included in the initial dispatch. Fire behavior was described as extreme and highly unusual, with flame fronts estimated at 50 to 75 feet high at approximately 3:00 a.m. Weather conditions were reportedly within the 97th percentile for heat and low humidity over the past 20 years. The probability of new ignitions caused by firebrands and embers was estimated at 90 to 100 percent. The district's on-duty crew was deployed to the incident. Chief brought in 5810 for coverage, and B Shift provided backfill. The district maintained local 911 coverage throughout the incident and was never left uncovered. Chief Hertzog noted that this was the first time the district deployed its on-duty crew on an initial attack/extended incident while backfilling coverage behind them. Approximately 25 homes and 50 outbuildings, including barns, sheds, and pump houses, were destroyed or damaged. One fatality was reported. Chief discussed the emotional impact of the incident on affected families and emergency personnel. Crews assisted residents, searched for animals, and supported community members returning to properties where their homes had been destroyed. Chief recognized Brian and Dylan for their work on Water Tender 234; Caleb, Parker, and Nathan for their engine and incident assignments; and the personnel who backfilled the district and maintained local emergency coverage. Chief Hertzog stated that he received an approximately 90-page incident report that afternoon and had not yet completed his review. Additional information will be presented at a future meeting. Chief reported that approximately four days into the Gan Fire, Engine 236 was returning from minor repairs when the crew observed a smoke column along Highway 4. The crew discovered a structure fire extending into nearby vegetation and was the first resource on scene. The crew initiated a fire attack. Caleb removed an occupant from the porch, moved the individual to safety, and began a patient assessment. Because several firefighting resources were already operating nearby, including aircraft, dozers, engines, and chief officers, the vegetation fire was contained approximately three acres. The residence was a complete loss. Chief Hertzog stated that the structure was more than 25 percent involved when Engine 232 arrived and that the engine initially had approximately 500 gallons of water available. Chief Hertzog commended Caleb, Parker, and Nathan for their actions and the tactics used during the incident. Chief Hertzog reported that the on-duty crew responded to two additional vegetation fires in the Copperopolis area, one near Kiva and another near Arrowhead. Preliminary findings from the CAL FIRE investigator indicated that both incidents were electrical in origin. High temperatures exceeding 100 degrees and increased electrical loads associated with trailers, recreational vehicles, outlets, and extension cords were identified as contributing factors.

One incident involved a melted electrical cord extending from a deck, while the other was traced to an RV outlet. The Highway 4/Gelding incident also appeared to be electrical in origin. Chief reported on a subsequent structure fire at Iroquois Circle. Crews arrived at approximately 10:30 to 10:45 p.m. and found the structure fully involved. Firefighters successfully prevented the fire from spreading to nearby accessory dwelling units and trailers, which sustained only minimal heat damage. Personnel involved included Corey, Drake, Shane, Jacob, Brian, Eduardo, and other responding members. The cause remained undetermined and under investigation. Chief Hertzog reported that Water Tender 234 would be placed out of service beginning Monday for driveline repairs and work on the tank and body mounts. The anticipated downtime was three to five days. Loki had committed a full week to completing the necessary repairs. One permanent firefighter accepted a position with another fire district. Interviews for a fulltime position were expected to be held at the end of the month after the employee officially transitioned to the new agency. Chief Hertzog also reported that reserve staffing levels were trending downward. An additional recruitment and interview process may be conducted within the next several weeks, either using an existing eligibility list or opening a new recruitment. Formal training was limited during the month because of the high operational tempo. Chief Hertzog noted that recent incidents provided personnel with extensive practical, real-world training and experience. Chief Hertzog reported attending the three most recent County Board of Supervisors meetings to oppose proposed reductions in funding allocated to fire districts through the Transient Occupancy Tax and Proposition 172. He addressed the potential effects of reduced funding on District staffing, ISO ratings, community insurance costs, and public safety. Firewise representatives assisted by gathering and presenting information regarding the potential insurance consequences of reduced fire protection funding. Chief reported that all FEMA grant applications had been completed and submitted. The district received a small "Drip Drop" grant consisting of electrolyte packets. The packets were distributed to firefighters during recent extended incidents. The previously discussed ambulance replacement project was deferred. Chief will return at the next meeting with additional information and supporting data. Chief reported that sprinkler inspections and construction oversight remained ongoing. Drake continued to monitor work associated with Building 15 in Town Square near the Tesla charging stations. Chief Hertzog provided an update regarding the County Board of Supervisors proposed 25 percent reduction in funding allocated to fire districts through the Transient Occupancy Tax and Proposition 172. Chief Hertzog expressed concern regarding the County's public presentation comparing fire district reserves of approximately 46 percent to County reserves of approximately 9 percent. He stated that the comparison did not fully account for district expenditures or the fact that fire district budgets were already operating at annual deficits ranging from approximately \$75,000 to \$130,000. Chief provided historical context regarding the 2018 proposal to increase the County's Transient Occupancy Tax from 6 percent to 12 percent. The proposal was publicly promoted as providing 25 percent of the revenue to fire districts, 25 percent to the Sheriff's Office, 25 percent to the visitor's bureau, and 25 percent to public works. Campaign materials included an image of a fire engine and emphasized support for emergency services. However, the final language adopted by voters designated the revenue as discretionary and gave the Board of Supervisors authority over its allocation. Chief and members of the public expressed frustration that

funding was now being redirected away from fire districts after previous assurances that the County and fire districts would work collaboratively. Concerns were also raised that fire districts were not included in early discussions regarding the proposed reductions. Chief presented the compromise proposed by the county's fire chiefs. Under the proposal, the County would retain the Proposition 172 funding, totaling approximately \$300,000 countywide or approximately \$30,000 per district. In exchange, the fire districts would receive the full 25 percent share of Transient Occupancy Tax revenue, including any revenue collected above the 25 percent allocation. The County would also resume responsibility for dispatch costs consistent with prior resolutions, including the resolution adopted in 1997. The Chief reported that the political climate and the Gan Fire may influence the Board of Supervisors' position on fire district funding, particularly during an election year. The county's fire chiefs will continue advocating for the funding necessary to maintain staffing and emergency services and will meet soon to discuss their next steps. Chief Hertzog plans to attend the next Board of Supervisors meeting in approximately two weeks and requests that the applicable consent-calendar item be pulled so inaccurate or incomplete information concerning the fire districts can be corrected. During public comments, a resident asked how the District's Board and Chief coordinate with the other county fire districts regarding the proposed 25 percent funding reduction. The Chief explained that the county's 10 fire chiefs meet at least monthly and frequently meet weekly, with each chief working for and representing their respective governing board. However, the Board of Supervisors ultimately controls the discretionary county funding allocations. The residents expressed concern that funding reductions could cause chiefs and firefighters to seek employment elsewhere and jeopardize public safety. The Chief acknowledged that personnel are aware of opportunities with other agencies but remain committed to protecting their crews and communities, noting that the Board of Supervisors would be accountable for any resulting reduction in services. In response to a question about how residents can support firefighters during major incidents, the Chief identified CERT as the primary organized support resource and noted that community members frequently donate water, electrolyte drinks, meals, and snacks at the station. Large CAL FIRE-managed incidents have incident management teams with logistics and liaison officers who provide firefighters with meals, water, and electrolytes, while local crews and CERT assist with local needs and support displaced residents. Community members were encouraged to coordinate donations through CERT, the Fire Chief, or the local station because public access to staging and operational areas is restricted. Chief Hertzog also clarified that credential media may enter evacuation areas unless the location has been designated a crime scene, provided media personnel have proper protective equipment and do not interfere with emergency operations. Additional discussion concerned Visitor Bureau reserves, the effectiveness of Transient Occupancy Tax expenditures in promoting tourism, and the importance of organized community advocacy. He confirmed that members of the public may attend and comment at Board of Supervisors meetings in person or through Zoom, with comments entered into the public record.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion/ Action: Review and Possibly Adopt Resolution 2026-10 Authorizing Assessment list for the District Charges Tax Code 64100 64210

Motion Approve Resolution 2026-10

Motion: Valencia, Secunder: Peery

Ayes (5) Noes (0) Absent (0)

VIII. CLOSED / POST SESSION

With no further business for open session, President Maness adjourned the public portion of the meeting at 7:05 p.m. The Board then entered post/closed session for administrative matters.

The Board entered closed session at 7:06. There was no reportable action.

ADJOURNMENT REGULAR MEETING- 7:37 P.M

Respectfully Submitted, Scott Hertzog, Fire Chief