



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE & FIREWISE BOARD MEETING
MINUTES
MEETING TO BE HELD VIA ZOOM
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2026 AT 3:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER AND NOTICE OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Henry Caldwell at 3:00pm. Notice of the meeting was properly announced.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda for today's Public Safety Committee and Firewise Board Meeting was approved (Motion: Jim, Second: Kent, Unanimous).

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Discussion and approval of minutes of the January 5, 2026, meeting.

The minutes for the January 5th, 2026, Public Safety Committee and Firewise Board Meeting were approved (Motion: Jim, Second: Kent, Unanimous).

4. PUBLIC SAFETY

- A. Brainstorm Underground Power – All

The project plan Robbie prepared for the Underground Power Project stated that it would require 13 years to complete using available franchise fee funding. The committee feels strongly that the Village should seek additional funding to complete this project sooner. In conversations with Rick Bellis, a grant from the New Mexico Department of Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources seemed the best fit for additional funding. Apparently, their grant applications are due in July. To support an application Henry introduced a draft Emergency Declaration Ordinance intended to call attention to this issue. A motion was made to have Henry to present the draft Emergency Declaration presented below to the Village Council at their next monthly meeting (Motion: Jim, Second Kent, Unanimous).

- B. Miscellaneous Items

No miscellaneous items were discussed.

5. FIREWISE BOARD

- A. Proposed Community Forestry Program – Garrett Hanson

The committee discussed the proposed program that Garrett outlined in an email message to the committee. This proposal is outlined below:

Proposed Community Forestry Program

Community Forestry Program: This proposal is based on improving the current VTSV slash situation and the Village of Angel Fire slash program which is financially supported by what they refer to as the "Wildfire Protection Fee". Here is how they break down their fees: 1 acre or less = \$10/month; 1.01-2.50 acres = \$16.50/month; 2.51-5.00 acres = \$22.50/month; 5.01 acres or larger = \$27.00/month and multi-

dwelling properties (condo's) = \$4/month per unit. This is how they do it, I am not proposing the same set of fee's but could provide a starting point to begin assessing. I think the next step in this would be to break down how many tax paying properties there are in the Village of Taos Ski Valley, how large they are and who owns them. I did request that documentation from Taos County but it's not so easy to make sense of, or at least it is very cumbersome to do so.

One thought I have is if someone owns multiple properties is to lump all those into one so that they one fee and would likely be paying less vs paying a fee for each individual property. Does that make sense? Or each property is simply fee'd based on its size. It's a conversation to be had no doubt.

Objective of the program: Assist property owners in their wildfire preparedness efforts. The Village is committed to becoming a Fire Adapted Community and taking action to reduce wildfire risks throughout the community before a wildfire occurs.

Village Investment: VTSV is equally invested in these objectives by allowing VTSV property owners to dispose of slash at a designated slash drop off location without additional disposal fees and/or contracts. A slash disposal permit must be obtained by the Fire Department and requires the following information: Legal owner name, name of person delivering slash, physical address of the lot/property, property owner contact information and estimated cubic feet of slash.

Slash Policy: (For Drop Off). No stumps. Nothing longer than 6'. All tree trunks or branches greater than 4" in diameter must be pruned. No pine needles, those go to the dump or trash compactor. No construction debris or dirty slash. Nothing greater than 12" in diameter or greater than 6' in length. No unloading unless the load was inspected by FD staff. VTSV residents only. No trash, rock or dirt. Any slash dumping without a permit or violated requirements will result in a fee of \$20 per cubic yard.

Application Process for Wildfire Protection Assistance and Slash Drop Off: Applications are open year round for slash drop off. Slash pile will be open from May 1st-November 1st. Can drop off Monday-Friday from 8:00-4:30, no exceptions. Property owners must apply for Wildfire Protection Assistance between December 1st-March 31st. Applications will be reviewed and prioritized based on need.

What is Wildfire Protection Assistance: FD personnel will assist property owners with fuel modification via hand thinning and chipping. Slash will be hauled to the village slash pile if not chipped on site. Hazard trees will be mitigated at the FD's discretion. Difficult to access slash or large tree trunks will be scattered/left in place and will assist with soil erosion. Logs larger than 6" in diameter will be bucked and stacked on the property for the owner to use as firewood or made available to the community should the property owner allow for that.

Much of the rough draft above is taken from the Angel Fire program and how they have it spelled out. I adjusted it to make more sense for our situation and no doubt could be adjusted more I am sure. Perhaps this is not a program for us but I do believe it is worth looking into should we truly want to continue moving forward with our efforts as a community. The reality is that folks will pay into this and not get assistance on their properties for a long time if at all depending on their situation, i.e condo unit owners whose condo building does not have forested land. My argument against the complaint that would be associated with that, is that this is a community effort and they would be paying in to keeping their community as a whole safer which in turn helps their property. It really is no different than paying taxes that cover wages of Fire/EMS personnel and never needing them to put a house fire out for you or take you to the hospital, or at least that is how I see it.

There is a grant I am still waiting to hear back about (which I have mentioned previously) that is funded

under the NM State Forestry and if awarded will be used to give this sort of program a shot. The status is showing as "in progress" but the folks reviewing applications told me a week ago that they were beginning the process. The full grant would be \$60,000 and I believe \$5,000 of it can be used on equipment (chainsaws, a trailer for hauling slash, etc.). We would need another vehicle for hauling the trailer, perhaps there is an old PD truck or something laying about that could be used.

Garrett has applied for a \$60,000 grant to develop this proposal. This committee was very supportive of the draft proposal. It was agreed that Henry should introduce this concept to the Village Council at their next monthly meeting.

B. Progress on List of lots with Out-of-Control Dead and Downed Trees - Chris Hansen

C. Brainstorm Next Steps for Dead and Downed Trees – All

The new Building Code adopted by the Village Council might allow the Village to treat out of control lots with dead and downed trees to reduce the fuel available in case of a wildfire. The process would involve letters, possible fines, and eventually the Village hiring foresters to treat the lot. This might coincide with the proposed Community Forestry Program discussed above. The starting point for this process is a list of out of control lots within the Village. Chris Hanson volunteered to create such a list for the Board at the January meeting. Chris stated that due to the recent snowfall he has not yet begun creating this list.

D. Brainstorm an Ordinance on Dead and Downed Trees - All

With insurance companies becoming more aggressive on insuring houses in the Village an Ordinance might be helpful. However, the process and penalties and the Community Forestry Program will have to be worked out before writing an ordinance.

E. Brainstorm an Ordinance on Propane Tanks – All

The committee is supportive of undergrounding all propane tanks. The committee thought that a good way to start the process was an ordinance requiring all new construction and major reconstruction using propane to bury the tanks. Subsequent action would also depend on the rate of natural gas adoption in the Village.

Building Code vs Ordinance Approach

One question that came up during the brainstorming was whether the best approach to undergrounding propane tanks and electrical power and clearing dead and downed trees was an Ordinance or an adjustment to the Building Code. Building Codes would only apply to new construction and major renovation, but the Village has a clear mechanism to ensure compliance.

F. Brainstorm and Ordinance on De-Energized Power Lines - All

Committee agreed that de-energized power lines should be removed as quickly as possible. However, the committee wanted to make more progress on undergrounding electrical power before pushing to get the de-energized lines down

G. Brainstorm Fiber Optic Lines Undergrounded - All

When electrical lines are buried, fiber optic conduit should be included in the trench. It is not completely clear how to make that happen.

H. Natural Gas Extension Update – Bob Thomas

Jim and Bob reported that Chris Baca of NM Gas has provided a tentative written estimate for extending the main natural gas line to the end of Upper Twining Rd, including trenching. Bob will explore with homeowners if the costs are acceptable and implore more lot owners to join in. Bob stated that he had not made much progress in contacting Upper Twining residents,

I. Miscellaneous Items

Trudy DiLeo raised the issue of an alternate road out of the Village to Red River. The committee supported the idea, but Chief Vigil stated that the landslides made such a road very difficult to develop.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DATE, TIME & PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY/FIREWISE COMMITTEE

03/02/2026-REGULAR MEETING. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Public Safety/Firewise Committee of the Village of Taos Ski Valley will be held as a hybrid in-person and on-line meeting on March 02, 2026 , at 3:00 pm in Room 102, 9 Firehouse Rd., Taos Ski Valley, NM and the Agenda, Agenda attachments, and Zoom Meeting link will be available to the public on the Village website at <https://www.vtsv.org>.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The Meeting was adjourned at 4:50pm

Jim Woodard