

Falls Creek Ranch Board Meeting

Status: Approved **Date:** Aug 21, 2025 5:30 PM MDT **Location:** Fettinger Residence and Online

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/pjo-phvf-xje>

Or dial: (US) +1 484-546-8363 PIN: 511 849 003#

More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/pjo-phvf-xje?pin=2257742131594>

Attendees

- **Board Members:** Pat Fettinger, Teresa Rushton, Pam Flowers, James Trammell, Justin Poehnelt
- **Guests:** Mary Ann Bryant, Barry Bryant, James Grizzard, Bonnie Basset, David McCament, Joan Heil, Paulette Church, James Thompson, Mark Smith, Robin Lucie, Joe Scarpino, Brigid Walsh

Approval/Changes to the Agenda

- No changes

Conflicts of Interest


- None

Open Period Comments

- Barry Bryant: Discussed history of Valley Fire that burnt 10 homes and regional perception that the cause of the fire was from an electric fence and stated his concern about risks of fire and liability. Discussion deferred to agenda item.

Approval of Previous Minutes

- minutes_2025-06-26

-  minutes_2025-07-27_transition

Pat Fettinger motioned to approve the minutes, James Trammell seconded. The motion was approved.

Treasurer's Report

Capital	\$127,000	Bank of San Juans
	\$111,100	Bank of San Juans - Water Reserve
Operating	\$96,800	Bank of San Juans
Grant	\$1,000	Bank of San Juans
Total Cash	\$335,900	

As of 8-17-25 we have collected \$95,650 in HOA assessments.
10 residents have paid in full for 2025-26.

PO Box Acct - \$0. (need to vote on to cancel this) Historically we had a PO Box for HOA payments. We no longer utilize this box and Robin has contacted the 3 residents that were still using it for payments. We now have an on-site mailbox for HOA correspondence and payments. The rental on the box expires Aug 31, 2025. Recommendation is to NOT renew.

Justin Poehnelt motioned to close the PO Box Acct, Pat Fettinger seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Action Items: The Board needs to discuss who will be the check signers on the account (need 2) and who will keep track of the physical checks, as this will need to be a different person than the signers. Once decided, the Board must create official minutes stating the names of said members who are now officially check signers for FCR. That official document will need to be taken to the bank along with an official ID (drivers license) to add them to the bank account. Also, previous signers will need to be taken off of the bank accounts.

Justin Poehnelt motioned to make Pamela Flowers and Teresa Rushton as check signatories with Robin Lucie to hold the checks. Teresa seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Paulette will be continuing to do payroll for the foreseeable future (as far as I know). I would like to confirm this information with her.

I am still working with Robin, and will continue to do so, to learn all of the information for the treasurer position and the different websites and programs. Please be patient with me, as there is definitely A LOT to learn.

Justin Poehnelt motioned to accept the treasurer's report. Teresa Rushton seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Committee Reports

Common Property

Slow, steady progress is being made clearing brush below the homes along Oakcrest. We will be holding a workday near the end of August to move slash into piles for burning after snow cover makes it safe.

Common property includes our wildlife and that has been an issue this summer.

Bears: Bears are frequenting the neighborhood and if they become a danger by getting too familiar with homes and residents it will mean a death sentence for the problem bears. Please do not store garbage in garages. Bears will smell it and attempt to break in. The best approach is to take your bagged garbage directly to our dumpsters on your way into town. Please do not let garbage accumulate in garages or homes for a once a week trip to the dumpsters. This clogs the dumpsters and attracts bears.

Turkeys: We probably have several hundred turkeys living in the neighborhood now. Please do not feed the turkeys. We have been advised by Colorado Parks and Wildlife that overpopulation of the turkeys leads to disease infestations that tend to kill the entire population in a given area. So let's let nature take its course and let the turkey find their natural diet without help.

Deer and Squirrels/Chipmunks: Lots and lots of all of these around. All of the above are crossing roads regularly and are being killed by cars. At least three fawns and countless squirrels and chipmunks have been killed this summer on Main. Please slow down to our

posted speed limits and avoid running over our wildlife. At 25mph we all should be able to avoid these collisions.

Needle Bags: We are arranging to have another large number of bags to be hauled out of the burn area by Table to Farm since our curtain burner permit is continually delayed. We are also working on that issue, but it is difficult, to say the least.

Community Garden

Harvest is just getting underway and the bears seem interested in what is inside the fence. We are extending 2 of our gates to reach the same height as the deer fencing. We have stationed a bear bell on the flag of our mailbox just inside the front gate for anyone to use who encounters bears.

Architecture

We currently have 12 open projects on the Ranch.

Beautification

No Report

Bees and Chickens

The Bee and Chicken committee is working well together to create health in our colony and flock. Our next committee meeting will be at the beginning of September. We have no mites in our hives at our last count. We have added chicks over the summer to increase our flock number a bit.

Dam

On August 18, the water level in our lake was 30 inches below capacity and we are releasing about 1.1 million gallons of water a week to downstream water rights holders. Insufficient snowfall that melted quickly, combined with little summer rain and our contractual obligation to release water has resulted in the water level in our lake falling dramatically. For this reason, we are in communication with the water commissioner who is reviewing our water level measurements our agreement with the Zink's and we hope these steps lead to action which will stabilize the water level in our lake.

Entrance Gardens

There has been little activity this month other than some weeding and planning for fall plant introductions

FireWise

The Firewise Committee met recently to get an update on the two major grants on which we are working on the northeast corner of the Ranch and across from the stables. Both projects may continue into next spring and include significant fuel breaks to protect the Ranch. We also discussed two new grant opportunities offered by Colorado State Forest Service. One is for capacity building and the consensus is to request a hay mower attachment for the Kubota for our meadows. The other one is for fuels education and consensus was to expand our work along the western boundary moving north and south of our current work there, including a small interior area south of Mason Cabin and east of the meadow. This totals 40 acres and would be treating new acreage. The committee is also exploring some new treatment methods to speed up the work by using contractors with specialized equipment and larger crews to work on targeted areas. Our current work crew will continue to work in areas that may or may not be in grant landscapes. There is no word yet from CDPHE on our air curtain burner certification application. Paulette has followed up with another email and phone call. We are awaiting documents from contractors to submit two reimbursement requests.

Horses

1. The water leak that has been ongoing for a couple of years is on the utility committee's radar to fix before winter. We hope this can happen as we are still turning the water on and off at the main at the picnic ground. Even though we turn the water off after using (we occasionally forget) the leak is significant enough to cause a lot of water loss as reflected in our usage which is going up. We are not being charged for the usage associated with the leak, but the leak is a waste of water.
2. There has been a lot of bear activity in the area, at the orchard and at resident's homes. We are being careful to keep all grain and treats secured in the tackroom. We ask everyone on the ranch to keep bears from successfully getting food as a result of interaction with human activity. We hope that will reduce their interest and keep us and our animals safer.

3. There was concern from a Falls Creek resident at the annual meeting about the electric fencing that has been installed at the horse barn. In response to the concern, the fence was disconnected from the solar charger. However, it is important to understand that modern fence chargers have an intermittent charge that prevents them from getting hot enough to create any type of burning or fire. They are very safe and used all over the Durango area even during dry times. When we have received some moisture, and the thread of fire is lowered, we plan to do more training with the horses using the solar charged fence. It will only be on when we are present, and never left on without supervision. We invite people to contact Karen Yates directly with questions.

Lake

The Lake Committee would like to request the Board to approve residents Rebecca Jaeger and Barbara Belanger as Co-chairs. Rebecca and Robin Lucie are currently interim Co-chairs that had not yet been officially approved by the Board. Robin plans to step back to a Lake Committee member role, so we are requesting approval of new Co-chairs. The FCR Lake is an incredible amenity of the neighborhood and we are fortunate to have Rebecca, Barbara, and the rest of our Committee members working to ensure it continues to be well cared for. The lake has been super busy this summer. Trespassing has been an issue but seems to be tapering off. The water level is dropping fairly rapidly with so little rainfall, and as a result base layers of gravel are coming through in the beach areas. We have a stockpile of sand that we will use to patch certain areas. The next project is to add shade tree(s) in the newly expanded sunny beach this fall. If you are planning to host a large group of guests at the lake, please notify co-chairs so they can address resident concerns when large gatherings are there, and can check if other group outings are planned on your day. Most important, enjoy this Falls Creek Ranch treasure!

Roads

We will be filling potholes on Main in September using our volunteers. Also, our Chipseal contractor is scheduled to return next month to upgrade the surface on Main where potholes continue to occur. The side roads will be addressed this fall for pothole repair and bar ditch clearing prior to the winter season. Progress on the new gate continues. Thank you to Joe Scarpino for his great work on this community asset.

Utilities

The new south well was drilled late July, located on the west side of Falls Creek Main and Starwood. Two other potential locations for the well failed. The next step will be to begin water yield testing and water quality testing sometime this fall. We still have five water meters to replace; that is expected to be scheduled and completed in the next month or so. The water tank cleaning and inspections were completed in June; we are waiting on cost estimates for recommended repairs. We are looking for a volunteer to coordinate the corral water line replacement. We are waiting on a final report for our fire hydrants' testing from our ORC. We are still seeking a volunteer to assume the Utility Committee management. Barry Bryant, Interim Utility Committee Chair

Welcome

No Report

Ranch Manager



No Report

Old Business

- Board: Decision around ranch manager position and the change to a more limited role while filling some responsibilities with external contracts.
 - Mark Smith: We have found a contractor to replace snow removal and road maintenance using FCR equipment.
 - The estimate for snow clearing is about \$15,000 per year. Small storms will be cleared by FCR.
 - Estimate for road maintenance of \$12,000 per year.
 - The contractor would like to rent the grader in the summer for \$6k/month and be responsible for maintenance.
 - Mark Smith: Ranch manager role will be more limited but still many valuable tasks to be done. Mark has a candidate to fill this role.
- Board: Ranch house repairs necessary as presented by Mark Smith and Joe Scarpino.
 - Joe Scarpino: The ranch house is in need of renovation and updates of some appliances and countertops. The budget is about \$16,000-\$20,000.

- Mark Smith: There has been no inspection of the ranch house for many years. This changed recently as the house has been vacant.
- Mark Smith: Would like ranch house residents to make yearly inspections or suggestions to maintain the home.
- Robin Lucie: Can share depreciation schedule with board. Foundation was updated in 1998. 2011 siding. 2006 garage was built. Very little work between these projects.
- *James Trammell motioned to approve a budget of \$20,000 for the capital expenditures to improve the ranch house. Pat Fettinger seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*
- Board: Based upon the annual meeting straw poll, scheduling of town hall for discussion of an automatic gate and future vote.
 - Will schedule town hall and distribute information in September with a vote to follow.
- ~~Board: Update check signers~~
- ~~Board: Discussion about amendments to the 2025-2026 budget given changes related to the ranch manager position and ranch house.~~

New Business

- Paulette Church: From the FireWise and Common Property Committees
 -  2025-08-21: FireWise Grants 2025: Requests for Letter of Support
 - Two grants, fuels reduction and capacity building.
 - The primary treatment area for fuels grant is the southwest corner of Falls Creek Ranch Association.
 - The brush hog will be kept as a backup and because it can cut oak brush.
 - *Pat Fettinger motioned to approve the grant for capacity building. James Trammell seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*
 - *James Trammell motioned to approve the fuels reduction grant. Pat Fettinger seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*
 -  2025-08-21: Chipper Rental by Lot Owners Proposal
 - Kern is the only operator at this time.
 - Mary Ann Bryant suggested reviewing the existing rental policy.
 - *Justin Poehnelt motioned to approve the rate structure for the chipper as presented. James Trammell seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*

- Paulette Church: Purchase additional stone for home hardening. \$614/load delivered - *No action taken*
- James Grizzard: Suggested more research on solar electric fence at Orchard and Garden. Stated that there were no incidents of alternating current causing a wildfire. Fence is important to keep bears wild and away from human interactions. Fence over 4ft above ground and grass. *No action taken*
 - Paulette Church: No fire investigators attributed the fire to the fence.
 - James Trammell: Related, we should have information shared about living with wildlife, wildfires and more regularly.
- James Grizzard: Proposal for a foster dog at Orchard to reduce pocket gopher population over night. Will defer for further study. *No action taken*
- James Grizzard: Lake pump noise could be addressed by tank on stand with valve and solar water pump. Will defer for further study. *No action taken*
- James Grizzard: Emergency response team (17 individuals) has recertification every two years, recently had one this month. Residents should still call 911. \$35/person/year. *No action taken*
- Lake Committee: The Lake Committee would like to request the Board to approve residents Rebecca Jaeger and Barbara Belanger as Co-chairs.
 - *Justin Poehnelt motioned to approve Rebecca Jaeger and Barbara Belanger as commit chairs. James Trammell seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*
- Justin Poehnelt: Trail proposal for area west of main and the stables.
 - ☰ Waterfall Trails *No action taken*
 - Concerns about trespassers were shared.
 - Support was given for the trail additions.
 - Information will be shared with residents and compiled for the next board meeting.

Executive Session

Announcements

- Minimize things that will attract bears around your home. Hibernation will put more pressure on them to find food. Durango CPW will respond to messages. Contact CPW for bear issues at: <https://cpw.state.co.us/contact-us> and 970-247-0855.
- See <https://fallscreekranch.org/residents/calendar> for future Board Meetings

Adjournment

- *James Trammell motioned to adjourn. Pamela Flowers seconded the motion. The motion was approved.*