



Sedona Fire District

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
Telephone (928) 282-6800 FAX (928) 282-6857

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

**Station #1 – 2860 Southwest Drive – Sedona – Multipurpose Room
Tuesday, March 21, 2023 / 4:00 PM**

~ MINUTES ~

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to notice, a regular meeting of the Sedona Fire District (SFD) was called to order by Chairman Dave Soto at 4:14 PM (due to connectivity and wi-fi issues) on Tuesday, March 21, 2023. Executive Assistant, Kim Smathers recorded the minutes. A quorum was present, and the meeting, having been duly convened, was ready to proceed with business.

Board Present: Dave Soto – Chairman; Helen McNeal – Clerk; Gene McCarthy, Scott Springett, Janet Jablow – Members. Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson; Gabe Buldra, JVG; Bill Whittington, Attorney; Employment & Labor Law Attorney Josh Waltman, Littler Mendelson P.C.; and Executive Assistant Kim Smathers – Recorder.

A. Salute to the Flag of the United States of America and Moment of Silence to Honor all American Men and Women in Service to Our Country, Firefighters, and Police Officers.

Chairman Dave Soto led the Pledge of Allegiance and Chief Ed Mezulis requested a Moment of Silence for the 5 Police Officers and 6 firefighters who passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

This item was moved to precede Budget Workshop to let awardees leave due to weather situation. Eight Operations personnel received 20 years of service pins, with Joe Kinzel and Millan Zorita were present and received their pins from Chief Mezulis. Captain Todd Miranda was recognized for 15-years of service. Kyle West, Marc Howard, and Isaiah Moore (present) received recognition for 10 years of service. Isaiah accepted his pin from Chief Mezulis and said that “10 years went quickly...they tell you that when you start and you don’t believe it, but it really does.” Director of Administrative Services, Heidi Robinson received recognition on 5 years of service.

Several members of the Board expressed congratulations and thanks on the service to SFD. Mr. Soto commented that with the length of service, the employees became sought after for guidance and mentoring and that the jobs that staff accomplishes does not go unnoticed.

III. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Finance Director Gabe Buldra presented the 2024 Budget Kick-Off briefing to the board with an update on the process, schedule timelines, and significant numbers. Tax levy and County assessments continue to drive revenue, with non-levy sources such as ambulance billing, telecom tower rents, and wildland revenue bringing in further budget dollars. Chairman Soto asked if any of the allowed adjustment to the commercial tax rate included any COVID relief money from the Federal Government. Mr. Buldra stated that it did not. Member Springett asked for clarification on wildland revenues and what that included. It is all wildland deployment reimbursements paid to SFD, statewide, nationally or international. Mr. Buldra explained that it is not factored into Budget numbers as there is no way to predict seasonality of wildland fires, so those reimbursements are put into Capital fund

reserves.

Mr. Buldra said that at this point, everything has been turned in by SFD staff and JVG is compiling, adjusting revenues and taking known expenses such as PSPRS and ASRS payments, and Workers Comp adjustments and working up a presentable budget for April. There was discussion about whether a COLA bank had been considered and would/would not be beneficial and about the salary increase of \$1.3 million if Social Security rate is followed.

Mr. Buldra stated that Station 6 will be paid off this year and that money can be adjusted to cover other costs. He asked if the Board would want a more detailed review like was presented last year, prior to the final request for tentative adoption and all Board members agreed that they appreciated the special meeting last cycle and would like to do that again.

(ZOOM recording failed at this point in the presentations.)

Chairman Soto asked if the rents on the IT towers was being escalated as established or what the status was on that project. Chief Mezulis stated that there are several answers to that question, based on who the renter is. One is far in arrears and SFD is ready to take legal action to recover the back rent and remove their equipment from the towers. Another has placed their equipment on a local hotel, no longer needing our equipment. SFD is working on restructuring and renegotiating those rents, but finding it difficult to engage necessary assistance needed.

Chairman Soto asked again about a COLA bank and if the concept had been discussed. Chief Mezulis stated that he has been waiting on final numbers from PSPRS, WC, etc. to go into Meet & Confer with Labor and that he has not done a deep dive into the COLA as it might not even be an issue for Labor this year. He will explore every option to manage with advice from Mr. Buldra.

Chairman Soto stated to Mr. Buldra that he would like the Budget kept in close alignment with last year. He also asked for clarification about carry-over funds that SFD holds from July-September to continue operating until new year tax assessments begin. He would like to see where that money is being carried over. Mr. Buldra stated that growth in the fund balances had been willful and intentful over past several years and originated from a time when the accounts had been depleted with no long-term capital plan. Mr. Buldra said that he will have fund balances and sources for next meeting. Board Member McCarthy noted that those funds are often used after catastrophic loss of apparatus to decrease the impact to the budget and that he appreciates that SFD has the funds available.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 4:59 p.m., Chairman Soto motioned to go into executive session for legal advice pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A3) regarding the appropriate best practices to be applied related to reports, investigations, and protected leave processes. Board Clerk McNeal seconds motion, vote is taken and unanimously approved. Attorney Josh Waltman, Littler Mendelson P.C. provided legal advice.

V. RETURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Returning from executive session, Chairman Soto reconvenes regular Board meeting at 6:38 stating no action is necessary for information received. Chief Mezulis adds that Assistant Chief Coil had left to assist Sedona Police Department and Emergency Management at City Hall.

VI. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

A. Public Forum:

Speakers are limited to three-minute oral presentations but may submit written comments of any length for Board files. Board Members may not discuss items not specifically identified on the agenda. Therefore, pursuant to ARS 38-431.01(H), Board action taken as a result of public comment is limited to directing staff to study the matter, responding to any criticism, or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date.

1. Public Comments

2. Executive Staff Response to Public Comments

There were no requests to speak.

B. Consent Agenda – Discussion/Possible Actions:

All matters under the Consent Agenda are considered by the Board to be routine (i.e., Minutes and/or signatory authority for bank accounts) and will be enacted by a single motion approving the Consent Agenda. If discussion is desired on any particular consent item, a Board Member may ask that item be removed from the Consent Agenda to be considered separately.

1. February 21, 2023, Special Board Meeting & Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Board Chair Soto made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Board Clerk McNeal seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Financial Report – Gabe Buldra, Finance Director

1. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and Approval of February 2023 Finance Report.

Gabe Buldra of JVG Associates provided the February 2023 Financial Report outlining the status of SFD funds and accounts. Sedona Fire District is under budget across the board in all categories except for personnel costs, which is being driven by the Workers Compensation payments.

Board Chairman Soto asked Mr. Buldra about paying PSPRS in lump sum versus how it is paid now and if there would be any benefit to changing the way it stands. Mr. Buldra stated that now we pay bi-weekly with payroll and there is a chance, if paid in lump sum payment, that the money would not be tracked correctly and “lost” in the market. He did not feel it was advisable to change the bi-weekly deposit attached to payroll.

Board Chair Soto made a motion to approve the February 2023 Finance Report, Member McNeal seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. February 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report

a. Administration Updates – Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson
News and Events –

Budget -all departments have turned in and timelines are set to continue budget process.

The St. Patrick’s Day Parade-photos look like everyone had an enjoyable time.

Weather impacting staffing, causing IT issues, etc., as we are experiencing currently.

Upcoming-March 31, Special Olympics Torch Run, details will be emailed to Board members.

Working on standardizing processes for administration with a collaborative group effort.

Staffing-3 new firefighters have been hired, two are good, one is pending background investigation; Engineer testing started today with 14 candidates; getting inquiries on web information request regarding new hire academies,

Mental Health Moment: March is Disability Awareness Month.

Chairman Soto asked about IT positions and if the vacancies had been abandoned, status. Chief Mezulis stated that he had spoken with Cottonwood Dispatch & HR (who have a similar vacancy) and there are no recruiters for this type of position. Bob Motz is attending a telecom conference next week and has been tasked with finding a recruiter or interested party for position and finding someone who can assist with tower contract language and fee schedules,

b. Operations Activities – Chief Ed Mezulis

Chief Mezulis briefed for AC Coil, who was at flood command & control at Sedona PD, stating that GIS has been busy working on flooding maps, heat maps for smoke detector calls (for Red Cross & AZ Burn Foundation replacing smoke detectors), and map book updates.

IT: propane got into Schnebly Hill, but there have been multiple power outages due to weather.

New spam software has been deployed by MerIT Technologies and seems to be doing a better job than Titan system.

Track UTV has been allowing Bob Motz to access towers, as necessary. Juniper switches that were ordered manufacturer sent wrong power supplies (A/C instead of D/C) and while the company swore that couldn’t happen, Mr. Motz took pictures to show them the defect. Currently waiting on new power supplies and estimated time of arrival for power replacements.

Today, crews worked on a battery fire on a Tesla for over 3 hours, pumping 18,000 gallons of water over several hours. Board Member McCarthy stated that he felt that Tesla should have to set up a grant or reimbursement program for public safety for these battery fires.

Last week, in conjunction with Verde Valley Fire, a rescue was completed in Cornville using the Mutual Aid system in place. Crews staged on both sides of the river and with a system of ropes and pulleys, swiftwater craft, etc., were able to rescue 3 adults, one 8-year old child, and 2 dogs safely, with no injuries.

There have been multiple media opportunities in the past couple of weeks for Executive Staff, BCs, and crew members.

Not much to report for Wildland. Last year in early April, SFD was deployed on fires. Could see more mid-season grass fires due to weeds, etc., but Verde Valley is at 507% snowpack in the watershed area, so there is a lot more moisture to come from spring melting, etc.

c. Community Risk Reduction Activities – Chief Ed Mezulis

Six “P’s” of Evacuation: People & Pets, Papers(phone numbers & important documents), Prescriptions (vitamins & eyeglasses), Pictures and irreplaceable memorabilia; personal computers (information on hard drive & disks), and Plastic (credit cards, ATM & cash.).

D. Operational Support – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Fire Chief Mezulis noted that SFD has participants and crew members assisting with scenarios at the Northern Arizona EMS Conference in Flagstaff.

Captain Ojeda has finished all shifts, all stations training on Handtevy program and running cardiac codes for pediatric patients. He is finalizing the training of the software side of the inventory system, setting levels of inventory.

Fleet – Mike Sheehan continues to do great things. SFD has pre-build meeting scheduled in October for the apparatus ordered in November 2022.

Training: Promotional tests ongoing, followed by new hire academy, new hire testing, and another new hire academy. Set to exhaust current Captain’s list by fall and will need another Captain assessment center to establish new promotional list, Board Clerk McNeal asked where we stand with filling the Operational Support Chief position and Chief Mezulis stated that he has another item on the agenda for that.

e. Fire Chief Activities – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Call Volume and Response Review

a. Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison – remain steady and as expected, slight post-holiday dip in February, gearing up for Spring Break.

b. Response Times – Response times were reviewed as they pertain to Out-The-Door and Travel Times. Chief Mezulis stated that SFD is under national average time but he is working with ESO personnel to filter out the non-emergency times that are currently in the reports.

There was a question from Board Clerk McNeal regarding year-to-date numbers and Chief stated he would drill down and find out what is happening. Chairman Soto asked Chief Mezulis what the goal for SFD is for turn-out times. Chief stated that he would like to get the 90th percentile more accurate and, while there is not much we can do about travel times, there seems to be some delays in dispatching and where the calls go regionally, which may be affecting the out-the-door times that he would like to address. He is willing to look at adjusting out-the-door times as long as there are no safety or increased risks of injury to personnel while exiting the stations.

E. Discussion/Possible Action: Restructuring the Training Officer Position to a Division Chief and funding two (2) positions in training for the first 6 months of FY 2024.

Chief Mezulis spoke about adding a shadowing position to the training officer position, as the current Training Officer is in the DROP and cannot extend past January 2024. He asked the Board’s approval to have the second position, paid out of savings from his vacant position of Operational Support Division Chief, be approved to shadow training Officer Duran. There was much discussion on the details, with Chairman Soto asking for a BAC outlining the position description, salary, other needs such as clerical staffing, etc., and length of time in the shadowing position for the change. He asked that the issue be tabled until next month until the

BAC can be delineated and agendaized for the April meeting Board Member McCarthy felt that there was no need to table, he had the information he needed, and Board Clerk McNeal stated she felt that the board was making it more difficult than it needed to be. Chairman Soto stated that he needed the position in writing in order to make a motion for approval and felt that the delay was good for the community to clarify the additional position and cost. Chief Mezulis stated that the position description would be “loose” as they determine what to redirect from HR in the areas of recruiting and retention and Chairman Soto said he felt that it could be loose to start and then tightened up as it was more formalized. He asked Mr. Whittington if he was missing anything legally, in asking this. Mr. Whittington stated that it’s more a political statement and not a legal concern. Board Chair Soto directs Fire Chief of provide information in the form of a BAC, detailing all that had been discussed, for approval at the April Board meeting. Board Clerk McNeal asked if this would slow down the filling of the EMS Division Chief vacancy and Chief Mezulis stated that it would.

F. Discussion/Possible Action: Fire Board Agenda Communication; Possible review and approval of the Arizona Mutual Aid Compact to allow for statewide cooperative emergency management and mutual aid services.

Chief Mezulis began by stating that this compact expired in 2018 and SFD was notified about the expiration last week. He said that the Compact aligns with Strategic Goal #6 and provides resources on a statewide level. Fire Chief recommends the approval of the Compact, as stated in the BAC as it has been in place for over a decade. Chairman Soto asked if the Compact had really expired, referencing bullet point 29, and asking about the 10-year extension therein. Chairman Soto and Mr. Whittington has a discussion about corrections to the document, with Mr. Whittington expressing his concerns were technical in nature and needed to be addressed at the State level. Board Member McCarthy asked Chairman Soto what the negatives were to signing the document and having it in place, referring to California Firescope examples which Mr. Whittington stated that this document was Arizona’s version of California’s Firescope program. Fire Chief Mezulis expressed that he asked the Board to approve as presented and Mr. Whittington stated he had no legal issues with the Compact.

Fire Chief Mezulis clarified that he did not know why the County waited so long to inform SFD of the expiration and explained that a scanner has been ordered to upload all this documentation digitally, and that process will begin shortly. Other ways of tracking are also being discussed to avoid this situation in the future.

Board Member McCarthy made a motion to approve the Arizona Mutual Aid Compact to allow for statewide cooperative emergency management and mutual aid services. Board Clerk McNeal seconded. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

G. Board Member Items:

1. Discussion:

Gene McCarthy: One on one with Fire Chief; attended the St. Patrick’s Day parade and rode in the UTV.

Janet Jablow: Usual billpay.com activities; enjoyed her one-on-one with Fire Chief and the parade.

Helen McNeal: St. Patrick’s Day parade and usual activities, billpay.com, signing checks, etc.

Scott Springett: One-on-One with Fire Chief; was sick during parade; working on billpay.com training; talking with people in the community about SFD activities.

Chairman Dave Soto: Chairman Soto noted that the Prescott Chapter Firewise, Wildland Expo was being held on April 22, in conjunction with Earth Day; had a blast at the parade; enjoying Ready, Set, Go notifications which he is getting several ways; had a briefing with the AV professional who is evaluation Multi-purpose Room to revamp network and presentation system; had community

member voicing concern about turn-out gear and chemicals used and would like Fire Chief to contact and vet the video that was referenced.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Helen McNeal, Clerk of the Board

SFD Multipurpose Room is accessible to the handicapped. In compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act, those with special needs, such as large print or other reasonable accommodations, may request them by calling 928-282-6800.

Posted by:

Date:

Time: