



Sedona Fire District

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
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REGULAR BOARD MEETING Station #1 – 2860 Southwest Drive – Sedona – Multipurpose Room Tuesday, April 18, 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 4:03 PM on Tuesday, April 18, 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; Interim Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell; Sara Simonton, JVG(by Zoom); Bill Whittington, Attorney (by Zoom); 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 10 Police Officers and 9 firefighters who passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. Five years of Service Recognition: Branda Brothers, Payroll Specialist, was recognized for her 5 years of service. Chief Mezulis gave an introduction and career highlights and presented Ms. Brothers with the 5-year pin. Ms. Brothers did not wish to say anything. Chairman Soto stated that, without a doubt, she was the singular person that membership was focused on due to her position. He thanked her for her hard work and dedication and asked for a round of applause.

III. BUDGET WORKSHOP

A. Budget Workshop: Sara Simonton of JVG presented the Board with the proposed 2024 Budget for the 2024 Fiscal Year for Sedona Fire District. Chief Mezulis stated that he wanted to thank everyone involved and JVG, for going line-by-line over this budget last week. He stated that the SFD staff was intentful and they are presenting to the Board for them to absorb and give direction and then it will be revised and corrected as directed.

Ms. Simonton stated that she was going to review budget schedule, expenses, revenues, and fund balance status. We are right in the middle of the process right now, with this proposed budget. Tentative final budget for approval will be presented at May 16 Board Meeting with the June Board meeting facilitating the public hearing and adoption.

Ms. Simonton reviewed the budget numbers for the categories outlining expected increases and decreases in all areas. There was discussion about the proposed federal COLA of 4.6% versus the SSI index of 8.76%. Board Clerk McNeal asked why they did not have a hard copy in their packet and Ms. Simonton said that it had just been completed and she would provide to SFD. At this point, Chairman Soto asked that a special Budget Review meeting be scheduled within the next two weeks to go over the line-by-line budget, as presented. He asked Chief Mezulis if

Labor was going to accept the 4.6 COLA and Chief Mezulis responded that he will go back to them in good faith and continue negotiations. Chairman Soto said that he would like to see a downward trend in the budget numbers but realized there was a reality of what SFD needs to operate.

Chairman Soto directed JVG to continue to tune the numbers on the proposed budget until such time as the budget review meeting could be scheduled and directed Chief Mezulis to have staff send out need-to-meet email to accomplish in the next 2 weeks' time. He then thanked Ms. Simonton for her presentation.

IV. 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

Chief Mezulis advised that a letter was received to be read into the minutes that SFD did not receive in time for the current meeting agenda and stated that all Board members had been provided a copy of the letter for their review. Chief asked that the letter be tabled for this meeting and agendized for next meeting. Mr. Soto made a motion to agendize and then Mr. Whittington advised that it did not need a motion, just the Chair to direct that for discussion/possible action at the May Board meeting. At this point, the Chair directed Chief Mezulis to agendize the letter for discussion/possible action at the May Board meeting.

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. March 21, 2023, Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Board Member McCarthy 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 – Sara Simonton, JVG Associate

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

Sara Simonton of JVG Associates provided the March 2023 Financial Report outlining the status of SFD funds and accounts. Sedona Fire District continues to be under budget across the board in most categories. SFD is on target with its expenses and revenues for 2023.

Board Member McCarthy asked about fuel cost estimates and wondered why JVG did not think that the fuel costs were more than anticipated, stating he had certainly noticed rising fuel prices. This was explained that last year, prices were trending up and expected to go even higher and that was what was budgeted. Chairman Soto noted that at this point, the Fleet has never been younger and more fuel efficient and that would certainly be a contributing factor, as well. Along with SFD being more conscientious about fuel and utilities and it is showing in cost savings. Assistant Chief Coil noted that utilities could be lagging due to the need not to use the air conditioning/cooling so far this year.

Board Clerk McNeal made a motion to approve the March 2023 Finance Report, Member Jablow seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. March 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report

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

We are hiring, the announcement went out on the web, social media, and calls are coming in.

A team of admin today attended and participated in the collaborative Communication & Conflict Management session. The session was very productive with good participation. The team was taught some stress-relief activities today.

Website: SFD has been posting weather alerts and wind advisories

Upcoming-April 22, Earth Day; Community Clean-up at end of the month; Verde Valley Fair with lots of SFD personnel and families involved.

Board Member McCarthy had a remark about stress relief that included a board, nails, and a hammer. Chairman Soto asked if the collaboration project met anything within the Strategic Plan and said he would like to see some measurable progress as it should fall into areas of the Strategic Plan. AC Coil stated that this will make the more outward-facing positions more effective.

b. Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil

There was another significant flooding event immediately after the last board meeting in March. He expressed his appreciation for Chief Foley and the City staff and personnel for directing.

Wildland: SFD is training in wildland refresher now and while we try to make training as realistic as possible to include identified weaknesses and using actual communications. The heavy snowpack continues to contribute to “moderate” fire danger and other than one described area, Arizona is out of drought status. Wet spring situations as we are experiencing contribute to delayed monsoon onset.

GIS: Mr. Spinelli has provided a lot of support this month, with flood hazard maps and other mapping requests. There is a group now evaluating application products and determining if they can be integrated into existing programs, etc. Spinelli, Clounch, Espiau are headliners looking at a program called TAK to facilitate different functionality for Search & Rescue.

Telecom: All mountain sites are functioning thanks to Bob Motz and Mike Sheehan. Things that are not working are getting corrected around natural causes of breakdowns (i.e., packrats). The DPS tower on Porcupine Peak is progressing after Mr. Motz identified a way to align accuracy of what was being moved.

Chief Mezulis stated that Mr. Motz is doing a great job and has a solid plan to upgrade the radio system. AC Coil commented that he believed that Bob had found a source as SME for contracts for leases, etc. and will be consulting, as he was tasked before his conference attendance.

Programs & Projects: AC Coil is working on a list of qualified, promotable Captains and along with BCs will, together, evaluate the Captain Job Description and update, as necessary.

Board Member McCarthy stated it was an excellent report and Chairman Soto asked AC Coil if flooding maps noted correlations of depth to speed the water is flowing. AC Coil stated that there are no predictive devices upstream. Chair Soto mentioned that he was interested to see that the Ready, Set, Go program was used during the flooding such as it is with fires and asked if that impacted a different set of people who may not be familiar with the Ready, Set, Go? There was a discussion about how to disseminate the information to citizens and visitors. Member Jablow asked if there was a way to compel rentals in order to educate and Chief Mezulis stated that he is working with the City with their registry of short-term rentals and providing a welcome packet of some sort. Member McCarthy remarked that children in seventh grade, and then again sophomore/junior year of high school are open to suggestions, and it would be a good time to get something added to the curriculum of those age groups regarding Ready, Set, Go in hope that they would retain and take it home. He also stated that former board member Al Comello passes out maps of the entire area and if we could get it attached to that, it would be a good venue, reaching over 500,000 visitors.

Board Clerk McNeal asked Chief Mezulis about the overdue accounts on the tower leases and if anything was being done. Chief Mezulis stated that he has been working on one and probably allowed them too much grace, but he is seeking legal counsel to remove their equipment from SFD towers.

c. Community Risk Reduction Activities –Interim Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell

Two staff members have completed Arson I training and are now certified Arson 1 investigators. Riddell has been contacted and meeting with Pre-School regarding active shooter training. Riddell contacted IC SAFE and will be meeting with the school tomorrow. He feels this is the beginning of many more requests of this type.

Community Clean-Up days are April 29-30 in VOC behind the retail outlets and May 6-7 at the Posse Grounds near the soccer fields, in West Sedona. Hours for both are 8-5, please bring yard waste only, nothing else will not be accepted.

Riddell spoke about Ember wash and alleviating fuels near homes, including cleaning gutters, making sure shingles are intact, checking roofs, window screens and vents, closing off underneath decks, and moving furniture and firewood away from house. After that, working on 10-20-30 zones in the yard, clearing up debris, underbrush, limbing up trees, etc. Make sure that you are practicing safe work habits by staying hydrated, using sun protection, gloves, eye/hearing protection, chaps (if using a chainsaw), etc.

Chairman Soto stated that Ready, Set, Go could be working with CRR to distribute materials and educational awareness. Riddell says it is a good idea to stay at READY status and recommended firewise.org and livingwithfire.info websites for further information.

D. Operational Support – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Chief Mezulis stated that there have been a couple of good Code Saves in the past week. There have been several complex EMS calls in the past few weeks and the air ambulance services are doing great work. Native Air is new to the Verde Valley area, and Guardian Air pilots have jumped right in and are landing in places that others would not attempt to facilitate rescues. Both are great to work with.

Captain Ojeda has been training staff on new software for ordering inventory. New personnel at NAH are getting up to speed on procedures with meetings and information.

Fleet – Mike Sheehan has had some extended repair jobs that are getting done as parts are available, etc. He is doing preventative maintenance and catching up on projects.

Training: Annual training is underway. Wildland and Swiftwater trainings are being documented and performed. Flooding in Verde Valley produced rescues including six people, two dogs and a pig. All were safely evacuated. Water rescue last week was successful and shown on local news stations. Board Clerk McNeal commented that the water rescue made the national news on ABC.

e. Fire Chief Activities – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Call Volume and Response Review

a. Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison – ESO Conference was attended by Spinelli, Clouch and Espiau. They have produced some new graphs and charts to show information. Chief Mezulis stated that Station 5 will pick up soon with summer visitors to the Canyon. They are being utilized as an added resource with training and response.

b. Response Times –New slide from the ESO group, showing dispatch, response, and ambulance transport times. SFD will continue to drill down on the reported areas.

c. Station 4 Update: As reported last, Wilmeng did not provide acceptable options and Chief Mezulis continues to engage with the City of Sedona on available properties. With the City settling the disputes with the Forest Road extension and the new council being resistant to building the parking garage, the Chief intends to have something actionable for the Board for May. Chief Mezulis has a meeting with the City Manager in 2 weeks to discuss and evaluate options.

Board Clerk McNeal asked about the Wilmeng plan and if that had been set aside. Chief answered that it was determined that the engineering necessary and the wall loads made that plan not practical for SFD purposes.

Chairman Soto asked if the new slides of response times were from Dispatch or if SFD personnel had produced them. Chief Mezulis explained that the ESO conference showed SFD personnel a new way to extract the data and it makes it now reasonable to track dispatch times that are either increasing or decreasing and drill down to determine why they exist.

E. Discussion/Possible Action: Fire Board Agenda Communication (item tabled from March Board Meeting); Restructuring of the Training Officer position to Division Chief; and funding one shadow position in training for the first 6 months of FY24.

Chairman Soto asked if Board members had reviewed and if there were any questions. When nothing was presented, he stated that he wanted to thank the Chief and staff for the thorough job that was done in detailing the request and the hard work involved in preparing. He stated that this was a cleaner method for the Board and the public to dissect the request and understanding of approval/disapproval. Chief Mezulis stated that the staff put a lot of work into the documentation with AC Coil and HR leading. Chief stated that this was now a need and not a want as another resignation in the time since the last meeting and that it is time at SFD when the experienced employees are aging-out and/or leaving and it makes the training division even more important in backfilling those positions.

Board Member McCarthy motioned to approve the temporary increase in organizational staffing by one person for six months to allow an effective transition from the current training officer to the newly appointed Division Chief of Training. Scott Springett seconded the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

F. Board Member Items:

1. Discussion:

Scott Springett: Finally, has been able to provide his bio to Ms. Robinson. One-on-One with Fire Chief, assessed flood damage and spoke with people in the affected area; referred a friend to employment with SFD.

Helen McNeal: Also, has referred a former Marine who is getting information regarding employment at SFD; usual activities, billpay.com, signing checks, etc.

Janet Jablow: Has also referred people for employment in the past; usual billpay.com activities; enjoyed her one-on-one with Fire Chief and the parade.

Gene McCarthy: Upcoming meeting with Fire Chief, he enjoys that time spent. He will be sending out emails regarding yard clean-ups to his neighborhood and reiterated that SFD needs to be getting into the schools with educational information about fire, employment, etc. Chief Mezulis stated that he is noticing that things are “coming back” from Covid and the past couple of months have been opening up . SFD will be at Sedona High School career day and will look at getting Ready, Set, Go into middle school.

Chairman Dave Soto: Chairman Soto stated that he has been discussing and working with Executive Assistant Smathers and she has produced an outline of timelines and expected actions and deadlines relating to the Board meetings and the expectations therein. These are statutory deadlines and requirements and a good reminder due to changing personnel and responsibilities over the past two years.

April 22 is Earth Day and Firewise, Prescott Chapter is having a county-wide event at the town center from 10-2. There will also be utility companies and other groups involved. He also had his one-on-one with the Fire Chief.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

//signed Helen McNeal, Board Clerk 5.16.23//

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: Kim Smathers

Date: 5/17/23

Time: 10:30 a.m.