



# Sedona Fire District

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## **SPECIAL BOARD MEETING** **Station #1 – 2860 Southwest Drive – Sedona – Multipurpose Room** **Wednesday, April 26, 2023 / 11:00 AM**

~ MINUTES ~

### **I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Pursuant to notice, a special meeting of the Sedona Fire District (SFD) was called to order by Chairman Dave Soto at 11:02 AM on Wednesday, April 26, 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; Interim Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell; Labor Representative David Rodriguez; 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.**

Chairman Dave Soto led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **II. BUDGET WORKSHOP**

#### **A. Discussion/Possible Action: Budget Review Workshop with JVG Associate, Sara Simonton, SFD Leadership, and Governing Board.**

Sara Simonton of JVG presented the Board with the proposed 2024 Budget for the 2024 Fiscal Year for Sedona Fire District. She began with an introduction of what would be covered and how the meeting would flow following the Budget Book. The 10-year projections for Sedona Fire and Budget expectations were covered.

At this point, the line-by-line review of the budget commenced with many questions from the Board regarding the budget asks and explanations of increases or decreases in requested amounts. There were clarifications to new line items, areas that have been broken out of other areas that had previously been grouped together. JVG is clarifying program areas that were previously grouped with other like costs to facilitate transparency.

There was a long discussion about wildland revenues showing in the budget but not being credited as revenue. Ms. Simonton, Chief Mezulis, and Assistant Chief Coil provided clarifying information explaining that it is an estimated amount based on the prior year and is pushed to Capital funds to be used to offset funding for capital projects. AC Coil added that there is basically a year “lag” in the funding due to the collection after the fact, and Ms. Simonton stated that doing it this way does not allocate the funds to a project that might need more funds than are collected and then trying to make-up with other allocated funds set towards another project area.

Board Clerk McNeal asked if the amounts allocated for salary and wages included the proposed 4.6% Federal COLA and Ms. Simonton stated that it was. Chief Mezulis expressed that he had asked JVG to run the numbers at the Federal rate, and Social Security rate, as has been used in the past. Chief Mezulis stated that having labor involved was intentful and that the management team and JVG have been regularly working with labor and feels that they present themselves with passion and practical approaches, Chief Mezulis then mentioned that he feels that a total compensation study needs to be done to determine where SFD stands in comparison to others of like size and staffing to remain comparable and competitive for hiring and retention purposes.

Captain Rodriguez stated that the process this year was different, and they feel that the Fire Chief and the Board has heard their voices and he understands the political side of the pressures on the Board and

that he appreciates the relationship that SFD has with the Board and hopes it continues to be good and grow. AC Coil asked if the Board was aware of the confidentiality and rules of Meet & Confer and Chief Mezulis detailed the process for Meet & Confer with Labor representatives. AC Coil stated that Chief Mezulis was required to maintain confidentiality to act in good faith with the other representatives. Board Clerk McNeal noted that it helped to understand the process. Chair Soto stated he was not interested in inserting the Board into the negotiations. He then asked about incremental increases being proposed. The Chairman directed JVG to provide salary rate proposals for the budget at several other percentages and directed Fire Chief Mezulis to continue negotiations with labor.

The line-by-line review continued after a short break at 11:45 to make lunch plates to continue working. The meeting resumed at 11:55 with questions from Chairman Soto about breaking out positions in each category/project code to better determine compensation for each area.

Board members asked clarifying questions about Arbinger training, pending grants, and other program areas. Under Community Risk Reduction, it was asked if the estimates provided were ever updated to actual numbers. There was a discussion about JVG removing the budget KPI reports from the proposed budget. AC Coil stated that the information could be more accurate, reliable, near real-time and pertinent with the dashboards that are currently in development. Chairman Soto directed that JVG adjust to take the KPI reports out of the budget as they do not represent actual events, correct numbers of contacts, etc. The review continued and Board Clerk McNeal asked about Overtime and for clarification on what Rank-for-Rank meant. Chief Mezulis detailed that it was a coverage method having a person of the same rank covering an absence, versus someone stepping up or down into a position to cover shift. Chief Mezulis stated that this should reduce mandatory overtime and will provide more mentoring opportunities. AC Coil added that it will foster a quicker speed to competency for certain promotional purposes. This led into Clerk McNeal asking about the new Division Chief for Training position. Chief Mezulis stated that the savings from his unfilled position would cover the costs for the mentorship program with no additional costs. The line-by-line continued through requests for new adapter purchase to ensure new air supplies work with existing equipment, Mental Health services for first responders, and wellness requests.

There was discussion regarding the purchases allocated for IT equipment and services for 2023 and new requests for 2024 for the mountaintop tower sites with explanations of how they have been reflected in the capital plan.

Chairman Soto stated that the review was complete and asked if there were further comments. Chief Mezulis stated that he appreciated the open dialogue and that he understood all direction given by the Board Chair. Chairman Soto stated that SFD staff should continue fine tuning for the May Budget Workshop and to move forward with labor negotiations.

### III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

//signed Helen McNeal, Board Clerk, 5.16.23//

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Helen McNeal, Clerk of the Board

SFD