



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, June 20, 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 4:01 PM on Tuesday, June 20, 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; Division Chief Dori Booth; Gabe Buldra, JVG; 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 9 Police Officers and 2 firefighters who passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

This meeting held many promotions, recognition for new hires and years of service. Chief Mezulis briefed the Board and the large crowd of family members on each awardee and recognized the promotions, presenting their new badges for their family/friends to pin them. Battalion Chiefs Lechowski and Baker were promoted to the new Division Chief positions, their formal Division Chief names are pending, but in progress. Captains Todd Miranda and Eric Lewis were promoted to Battalion Chiefs. Firefighters Jonathan Scaife and Greg Eberlein were promoted to Captain, and Millan Zorita promoted from Firefighter to Engineer.

Three new hire firefighters were pinned with their official firefighter badges. We officially welcomed Michael Hardy, Indiana Palmer, and Tarren Soto and their families into the Sedona Fire family! Engineer Andrew Johnson and Firefighter Lars Romig were presented their 15 years of service pins, and Firefighter Jesse Cave was awarded his 10 years of service pin.

Chief Mezulis spoke regarding his experience with the awardees and regarding the changing of the guard at Sedona Fire. He stated that he had worked with and/or for all of them and was proud to see the future and looking forward to what each will continue to provide to SFD. He's excited about the changes and looking forward to working with all in their new positions.

Chairman Soto addressed the large audience, offering congratulations and echoing Chief Mezulis' excitement about what the future looks like. He welcomed the new members and their families. He mentioned that there is approximately 98 years of fire service on the Board, with the ladies to keep them "grounded" in their roles, and expressed his appreciation for the ways the community will continue to benefit from such dedicated public servants.

At this time, 4:16 p.m., there was a recess for photos for the staff members and families. Meeting reconvened at 4:36.

Chief Mezulis asked Chairman Soto if it would be appropriate to move the Regular Business Meeting item

A.1. Public Comments as there was a speaker, and Chairman Soto agreed.

III. 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

Ms. Jeannette Hovey of Air Methods/Native Air requested to speak to the Board to introduce herself and her company, Air Methods/Native Air. This is a new company to Northern Arizona for air medical transport. She stated that she has 3-4 technical aircraft that function as Emergency Rooms to support the region. The company also provides patient advocates to the patient after each transport to assist with billing issues, etc. The services are covered under Medicare Part B and Medicaid.

Chairman Soto asked how large the response region was and Ms. Hovey answered that it was approximately 75, limited by fuel availability at the response site, and that there are 4 transports available to service this side of the freeway.

Member McCarthy asked if the helicopters were side or rear loaded and she answered that all were side loaded, Bell 407's.

There were no further questions, Chairman Soto thanked Ms. Hovey for her presentation, and proceeded to the budget workshop.

IV. BUDGET WORKSHOP

A. Budget Workshop: Chief Mezulis spoke about the countless hours of work by staff to ensure this budget was thorough and complete. He believes that this budget will allow SFD to move forward with appropriate fiscal management and responsibility, maintaining industry standards & service. Finance Director Buldra recapped the meetings of the last 4-5 months and stated that we are now at the Public Hearing stage of the budget process. The agreed upon budget of \$23,842,812.00, with a mil rate of \$2.7030 was broken down between PSPRS rates, salary scales with step increases, and the savings that have been recognized by the pay-off of Station 6 and interest income earned. Chairman Soto noticed that throughout the budget vs, the salary scale, there are some wording corrections that need to be made, but those were minor adjustments. The Chairman called for public comments and then asked the Board if they had any questions or comments, no other comments were made. Chairman Soto read the Budget Resolution, and the Public budget hearing was adjourned.

Board Chairman Soto made a motion to accept and approve the FY24 Budget, with proposed Salary Scale and PSPRS pension funding, in the amount of \$23,842,812.00 with a mil rate of \$2.7030 for the FY2024 cycle, Board Clerk McNeal & Member McCarthy seconded at the same time. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS 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. May 16, 2023, Meeting Minutes & Executive Session Minutes
2. Annual Acceptance of Pension Funding Scale
3. Annual Acceptance of Salary Scale

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

A. Financial Report – Gabe Buldra, Finance Director, JVG Associate

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

Mr. Buldra presented a short overview of the status of the FY2023 Budget, showing most areas remain under budget and that SFD is still in line with projections for the current fiscal year. Overall, expenses are under budget across the board, with exception of the IT infrastructure upgrades and improvements.

Chairman Soto asked if we would have enough carry-over to get us into the new FY until assessments begin coming in and Mr. Buldra assured him that we are in a good position. Mr. Soto then commended staff for their work in getting Station 6 paid off and being able to reallocate those Funds.

Board Chairman Soto made a motion to approve the April 2023 Finance Report, Member McCarthy seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

B. Staff Items:

1. May 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report

a. Administration Updates – Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson

There was mention of the Awards Dinner and video clip and a good time was had by all from the feedback.

Payroll & Benefits is in their busy time of year with open enrollment closing the end of May. All the paperwork and auditing is now going on in Branda's office and she is making sure all the new elections and other changes to each individual account are correct and updated. There was negotiation between Kairos insurance provider and one of the major hospital service providers that went down to the wire, but was resolved so that members can continue to use their current services.

“Start Moving On” Counseling services will be here to begin ride-alongs, talking with staff and crews in July. They are the new EAP provider for SFD.

Open recruitments are open for Firefighters. There remains a vacancy in Administration that is being reevaluated to best suit, and there will soon be a recruitment for a Fire Inspector in CRR. Chairman Soto thanked Branda for all she is doing to keep everything running smoothly.

b. Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil

Human Resources: Assistant Chief Coil stated that going forward, he will be reporting on Human Resources. Ms. Freeman, HR Analyst, was recently involved with a panel at the Administrative Professional Training at Central Arizona Fire & Medical Authority and attended the Society for Human Resources Management Conference in Las Vegas.

There are 48 successful applicants for the Firefighter vacancies. Chief Mezulis stated that with the rural environment, 30 candidates is a HUGE pull and everyone else in the state is hiring at this time, as well. Member McCarthy stated that he feels with what he saw at the recognition ceremony, SFD will continue to pull the same quality as the new hires recognized today. Chief agreed that that is the new goal. Chairman Soto asked Chief Mezulis if he saw that trend continuing and Chief stated that was a big issue for the Arizona Fire District's Association that he will be meeting with tomorrow to discuss. The answer is we just don't know but it's a topic all over the state and the old model doesn't work anymore for hiring. Assistant Chief Coil stated that he wonders what it will look like with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence and what that does for the fire service.

The Fire Inspector job description is nearly ready to launch and should be announced early next week.

Two retirements last month contributed to the earlier ceremony and promotions.

Wildland: The 14-day forecast calls for more of the same, warmer and windy. We've seen an

uptick in human-caused fires the past week. Green up is over, and the moisture is leaving. The Forest Service went to “high” fire danger this week.

GIS: Mr. Spinelli and Brian Espiau launched the new dashboard with demos from the First Arriving company. Chief Mezulis stated that this software will flip board meetings on their head with the information available in real time. It will be available at all stations and in the multi-purpose room. With the upcoming blasting, Spinelli has mapped out road closures, worked with crews and staff to determine if trails need to be closed and SFD has staged an ambo and water tender at Station 5 for response north of the road closure. Matt has worked with the City to update the Evacuation Plan zones, and had a field trip to Dispatch with BC Lechowski and Josh Clouch. Matt is working on getting his drone license, as well. There was discussion on new requirements for latitude/longitude in the reporting to track incidents at the location, not the trail head, which Matt is working on, as well. Clerk McNeal asked where the information is coming from, if dispatch was providing and was answered in the affirmative, that dispatch provides to a certain point. Member McCarthy asked if it was like dropping a pin in GIS and was answered affirmatively. Chief Mezulis detailed that he is getting more requests from press and social media wanting trending information on trails, conditions, etc.

Telecom: Telecom is also working hand-in-hand with Spinelli on the dashboard roll-out.

Bob is performing maintenance at the Airport South tower site to repair the microwave link and continues to work with Juniper to resolve the problem with the wrong switches.

BC Dave Cochrane has been working with the distribution of the new airpicks and synching them with the radios. The APX radios have over-the-air programming and can be updated remotely, with Bob entering the necessary into and sending.

Special Projects: There has been an on-going (approx. 6 months) incident at a residence here in Sedona. Chief Coil wanted it known that everyone who has responded and dealt with the situation has remained focused on the best interest of the individual involved and that speaks to the character, the morals, and the intent of everyone involved. This has become a drain on several of the crew, knowing they will be up every couple of hours each night, but they have remained professional and are looking for the best outcome of the individual.

Several SFD staff work on special projects and take on assignments that are not part of their job description. SFD is evaluating how to ensure those personnel get credit towards promotions for their additional workload benefiting SFD. The surveys have been completed and returned, and at this time, AC Coil is moving into Phase 2, working on deliverables, equalizing workloads, and giving credit where it’s due. Board Member McCarthy stated that he has read a book about “catching people doing something right,” and thought was a good way to do things.

Chairman Soto stated that he was excited to see the trending information and where that would spin off into other things. He stated that the report verifies that there are quality people working for the District and wondered about certificates of appreciation or other ways to recognize. Chief Mezulis stated that it was “in the works” and then gave kudos to Matt Spinelli for recognizing an issue at Back-of-Beyond Road and bringing it to SFD and City of Sedona attention. Chairman Soto stated that Spinelli is a true gem, as are many others in the District. Chief Mezulis stated that SFD is taking a step back to re-evaluate why we are doing things a certain way, across the District.

c. Community Risk Reduction Activities –Division Chief Dori Booth

Chief Booth reported that Fire Inspector Riddell continues to knock it out of the park, doing so much, while they are short-staffed. She, Riddell, and former Fire Marshal Jon Davis, who is doing contract plan reviews, are working to catch up on the backload. Riddell continues to work on his certifications, and it should be noted that he only has 2 years in CRR, coming into the office just before Chief Booth.

Airport Fuel Farm has had a soft opening and was used to stage response to the current fire, getting fuel flowing through the new tanks.

89A blasting by Fisher is happening next week and CRR is prepared. Chief Booth will be on-site, along with Inspector Riddell. Chairman Soto asked where the blasting was occurring. It’s on the west side of 89A past Owenby Way, across from Therapy on the Rocks. There is an emergency contingency plan in place to support. Member McCarthy asked if radio silence during the blast was still an issue, and was answered that electronic detonations have changed dramatically. There will be drones in the air, as well. Also, there will be more blasting later in the year.

Final reports from the Canyon cleanup days were over 31 tons of yard debris, which is the most ever. Chief Booth gave recognition to Paul Chabot, who has been coordinating for several years, Jarrett Tarver and Kirk Riddell for assisting and thanked the City of Sedona who directed SFD to Posse Grounds park and assisted with providing a chipper.

Safety Message: Lithium-Ion Batteries

In the past week alone, there have been 15 fires caused by lithium-ion batteries, causing fatalities and other critical injuries. Do not leave them plugged in at night, follow safety precautions, and dispose of them properly.

D. Operational Support – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Chief Mezulis noted that Knox box systems are being upgraded in all the vehicles and Mike is working on preventative maintenance. There may be a brewing battle with Cummins Motors for engines, as they are pushing back fire engines over other orders.

Chief Mezulis has been working with NAH to re-tool the relationship with SFD, garnering support for the partnership with the services provided. All was going well until the new Administrator was put on administrative leave and then fired, so back to square one. Cath Lab is closed. Our crews continue to do a bang-up job with increasingly technical situations.

BC Baker has begun working with Training Officer Duran with training, with the training officer showing up to train with crews. He is focused on letting the new hires know that the support is there for them. Training Officer Duran has a plan for retirement, after 30+ years of service.

Chairman Soto asked for clarification on the roles of the two new Division Chiefs and Chief Mezulis replied that he is letting express their point of view on what “right” looks like and that they had identified the needs he and AC Coil had, plus many others, to the positions. Clerk McNeal stated that she keeps hearing about the excitement of them being placed and what they are doing, but she wants more “meat” as to what they are planning and doing. Chief Mezulis stated that until they are seated in their new roles (July 8) he did not feel it appropriate. AC Coil stated that there was a functional analysis, after the needs were evaluated, and that they used best practices and leveraged their skills to make the determinations. Chairman Soto asked if they would have a seat at the table with the Board or if they were under Operations purview and would be reported as such? Chief Mezulis stated that he has some ideas about the Board presentations, going forward, and there would be times that it would be appropriate to have them attend and report.

e. Fire Chief Activities – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Call Volume and Response Review

a. Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison

b. Response Times

c. Purchase Orders over \$10K

d. Social Media Engagement

Chief Mezulis reviewed all the above very briefly, with explanations of the purchase orders over \$10K, which were all planned expenses. He also noted that the State of Arizona released \$100K for medical training and that SFD had received a \$4200 grant from that money.

Station 4 Update: Chief Mezulis met with the city manager and discussed properties and locations for Station 4. The City’s parking plan has been modified considerably with the new Board and there are a variety of suitable locations in Uptown for a new station. Once the City finalizes its plan, they should be able to provide more input on their willingness to partner with SFD. That decision should be within the next 6 months.

Stations 5 Update: Chief Mezulis met with the Director of Operations for the State Parks regarding the relocation of Station 5. The Director was supportive of moving on the Station but there are issues is ADOT access, which seems to be a sticking point. Chief Mezulis will continue to work with the State Park to resolve and accomplish this situation.

Chief Mezulis stated that he had been approached by members of the public regarding these issues and asked how SFD was going to pay for the new stations. He stated that his answer is that we have been preparing for this eventuality and making it happen.

C. **Board Member Items:**

1. Discussion:

Gene McCarthy: Looking forward to his meeting with the Fire Chief.

Janet Jablow: The usual operations activities, and meeting with Fire Chief on Tuesday.

Helen McNeal: Upcoming meeting with the Fire Chief; attended Verde Valley Regional Meeting with Fire Chiefs and boards.

Scott Springett: Had his meeting with the Fire Chief that was information filled; he has been contacted by a local non-profit who wants to hold an event at the fire stations, trying to facilitate a fundraiser; had his 66th birthday on June 17.

Chairman Dave Soto: Also attended the area Chief's Meeting with regional Districts; meeting with Foothills South HOA regarding Firewise and their preparations; attended Prescott Valley Home & Garden Show and participated in the Firewise booth, handing out information and talking to homeowners, speaking to over 200 people. Really looking forward to the new year!

V. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.

//signed H. McNeal, 7/18/23//

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: K Smathers

Date: 7/19/23

Time: 10:00 a.m.