



Approved by the Board, 8.15.23

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, July 18, 2023 / 4:30 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 4:30 PM on Tuesday, July 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, Janet Jablow, and Scott Springett – Members Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis (Zoom); Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson(Zoom); Sara Simonton, JVG (Zoom); Attorney William Whittington (Zoom); Assistant Chief Jayson Coil; Division Chief Buzz Lechowski; Division Chief Jordan Baker; Division Chief Dori Booth; GIS Specialist Matthew Spinelli; and Executive Assistant 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 Jon Trautwein requested a Moment of Silence for the 9 Police Officers and 9 firefighters who passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Possible vote to go into Executive Session on Personnel Matters re: Fire Chief's Self Evaluation pursuant to ARS §38-431.03(A)(1), and legal advice pursuant to ARS §38-431.03(A)(3) regarding the same.

Chairman Soto made a motion to go into executive session, Board Clerk McNeal seconded it, there was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

III. RECONVENE TO REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

The public session reconvened at 4:50 p.m.

A. Discussion/Possible Action: Direction to Fire Chief to return comments of evaluation by July 31, and to Board to return comments for inclusion prior to August 8 to Executive Assistant Kimberly Smathers so it will be created with finished comments for August packet.

B. 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.

C. Consent Agenda – Discussion/Possible Actions:

All matters under 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. June 20, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Financial Report and Updates – Sara Simonton, JVG

1. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and Approval of June 2023 Finance Report
JVG Representative Sara Simonton reviewed the budget for the month of June. Ms. Simonton explained any variances for the categories for both revenue and expenses and causes. . Chairman Soto asked since this is the beginning of the budget if there was enough carry over. Ms. Simonton responded that we have the funds to carry over.

Chairman Soto made a motion to approve the June 2022 finance report as presented, Member Jablow seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. June 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report –

a. Administration – Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson

Director Robinson reported that good work is being done with the conflict management group and it continues. Board Clerk McNeal asked about the pictures on the slide and Director Robinson explained that Admin staff have been getting out and attending events like Burn Camp to support DC Lechowski, and another photo was of the repotting of the front office plants.

b. Operations – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil

Assistant Chief Coil presented his slide with photos of the motorhome fire in Oak Creek Canyon, detailing the interagency coordination that was available, through Forest Service helicopter to have an “eye-in-the-sky” view to assist in keeping the fire from spreading off the road and into an area that has historically not burned, preventing a larger wildfire that would have taken major efforts to subdue.

AC Coil noted that there are now 14 completed applications for firefighter and the management team will continue to look at ways of addressing the challenges faced in recruiting for SFD.

There is a high-pressure system parked directly over the region, with high pressure directly over Sedona. When air moisture reaches high enough, the general area should be on alert for high winds that cause sheers of anything in their path.

c. Community Risk Reduction – Division Chief Dori Booth

Division Chief Dori Booth quickly ran through her stats for the CRR office, indicating that plan reviews are backlogged. Inspector Riddell has been presenting defensible space information to local HOAs.

Blasting on Route 89A has been placed on hold. There were safety concerns about the initial and further information will be forthcoming.

DC Booth spoke regarding the monsoon preparedness and noted that flash floods are a problem in this region. Stay alert, watch the reports, and monitor the situation when you are out recreating.

d. EMS, Safety, Development & Planning – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

In his first presentation to the Board, DC Lechowski stated that in his opinion, with the recent promotions, the prospects at SFD are better than he’s ever seen them. He is excited to bring new perspectives and operational changes into play and stated that the presentation plans that were submitted may already need to be changed as things are evolving that quickly in these areas. He spoke about the transitioning of the duties and that he and DC Baker will now have more time to mentor the new Battalion Chiefs. He feels the position he is currently holding gives him time for better future planning and evaluating needs and ways to improve

performance. DC Lechowski is looking forward to providing exceptional, noteworthy service to the community, and to align training and development with expectations and needs. He wants to instill a mindset of continuous improvement, not because we “have” to, but because it’s necessary. He stated that he and DC Baker will be relying on internal and external subject matter experts and striving for accountability and responsibility from all.

e. **Suppression, Preparedness, and Performance – Division Chief Jordan Baker**

Also in his first Board meeting presentation, DC Baker started off saying that his intent is to continue moving forward and building on the foundations already in place at SFD. Both Baker and Lechowski acknowledged that Training Officer Duran did an amazing job in his position and has set the groundwork for continued success. DC Baker wants to assist crews in meeting their full potential and developing future leaders within the ranks. Baker stated that there is a lot of unrecognized potential in employees at SFD and he is passionate about developing them to their full effectiveness as subject matter experts. He is focused on succession planning and anxious to assist in areas that have been formerly the responsibility of the Battalion Chiefs. Baker outlined his job duties, as he understands them, and is anxious to rework new hire orientation and onboarding, finding new ways to advertise SFD position vacancies, and attract new, quality candidates. He will continue to oversee wellness, ASHER, and wildland, with assistance from the new BCs stepping up.

AC Chief Coil spoke about easing the BC workload in that it’s a tactical method to addressing future problems and allows for more delegation down the chain, into the ranks. Chairman Soto asked if Fire Chief Mezulis had anything to add. Chief Mezulis stated that because of the plans submitted by Lechowski and Baker, he was confident in taking the Chief job, having this team to assist in setting up the organization for future success. Clerk McNeal stated that she was the one who had pushed to hear from the new DCs, and she thanked them, but stated she had a few concerns. She wanted to understand how the community at large is going to identify the keyholders to seek information. She also said she understood and supports the needs assessment, but not to get so bound up in assessing that things become off-balance, and nothing gets implemented. She closed by mentioning that she is looking forward to both their innovations and ideas.

Board Member Jablow stated she is looking forward to seeing the implemented changes and thinks that things are going in a very positive direction. DC Lechowski stated that he feels there is a freedom from the Chief, to be allowed to “win or learn” and he thinks that is a very positive position to be in. Board Member Springett mentioned that he talks to a lot of citizens, and they want answers and giving this information to the Board, so that they can share the positive ideas and programs is very helpful to him.

Chairman Soto stated that he thought both presentations were outstanding and answered everything the Board was looking for. The past is the past and as we become more technologically advanced, there are positive ways to move forward in relieving the BCs of extraneous duties so they can focus on their calls and crews. He stated that these two will wear many hats and that as a society, all are scrutinized for everything, these ideas will move SFD forward with better training and more efficiency. Soto stated that the SFD Fire Chief, and the Chief of Operations are second to none and it is noticeably bleeding down the chain of command, and that while things were not broken before, things are getting better now. Chairman Soto thanked Michael Duran for the years of service as the training officer and said he did the best job possible with the authority he had to work with. He challenged the new Division Chiefs to think about how they would infuse themselves into the Sedona community, and how to represent Sedona Fire to the community. He spoke about Captains being versed in Code Enforcement and mentioned that their positions may be involved in some marketing at some point but felt that this was an exciting time and “might be a wild ride.” He again congratulated the DCs on their promotions and stated that the Board will convey their needs and wants through the Fire Chief.

At this point, Fire Chief Mezulis asked if the Board wanted his monthly presentation on response times, etc., and Chairman Soto asked that they be put into next months presentation.

Chairman Soto asked the Board Members to detail their activities for the past month.

E. Board Member Items:

1. Discussion: Board Member's Fire District Related Activities Since the Last Board Meeting.

The Board Members shared their activities related to the Sedona Fire District since the last Board Meeting. Member Jablow reported that she has been doing the same as always, Clerk McNeal stated she attended the AFDA Conference in Glendale and doing the routine check signing, etc. Member Springett also attended the AFDA Conference, and he spent considerable time talking with community members. Chairman Soto was also in attendance at the AFDA Conference and found that some laws had changed, and the information was not always static, there are new things to be aware of, and methods of doing things that other Districts do or not. He also continued to work with Yavapai County Firewise and had a one-on-one with the Fire Chief.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

//signed H. McNeal, 8.15.23//

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:

Date:

Time: