



Approved by the Board, 9/19/2023

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, August 15, 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, August 15, 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 Gene McCarthy – Members Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson; Finance Director Gabe Buldra, JVG; Attorney William Whittington; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil; Division Chief Buzz Lechowski; 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 Ed Mezulis requested a Moment of Silence for the 11 Police Officers and 6 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 5:18 p.m.

A. Discussion/Possible Action: Direction to Board Members to return comments re: Fire Chief's Self Evaluation for review and compilation by August 31, 2023, to Executive Assistant Kimberly Smathers so it will be completed with finished comments for September packet.

B. Discussion/Possible Action: Direction to Fire Chief to provide quarterly dates for Board workshops with Fire Chief to review actionable goals and facilitate collaborative evaluation process.

C. Discussion/Possible Action: Direction to Fire Chief to include Executive Session in September Board meeting to discuss the completed results of the self-evaluation.

D. 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.

E. 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. July 18, 2023, Regular & Executive Session Meeting Minutes

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

F. Financial Report and Updates – Gabe Buldra, JVG

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

Finance Director Gabe Buldra reviewed the budget for the first month of the new year. Director Buldra explained reviewed expenses and revenue with the attendees, noting that the Budget is on track at this time, that SFD has spent 9% of its total in the month of July. Director Buldra noted that now is audit preparation time and the on-site dates will come soon.

Chairman Soto asked since this is the beginning of the budget if there was enough carry over.

Director Buldra responded that we have the funds to carry over and maintain business operations.

Chairman Soto made a motion to approve the July 2023 finance report as presented, Clerk McNeal seconded, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

G. Staff Items:

2. **July 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report –**

- a. **Administration – Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson**

Director Robinson reported that as the slide shows, the new Admin picnic area has been an added benefit for lunches and meetings. She spoke about the work done by the Administrative team on the conflict management collaboration and how it is being used to shape the environment and stated that she has been really impressed by the team.

A communications study is in progress, to survey communication issues and breakdowns in communications between Operations and Administration.

Director Robinson is working with JVG and HR to update procedures and policies, and job descriptions.

Chairman Soto asked about the 9-11 plans and Director Robinson deferred to Chief Mezulis.

Chief Mezulis stated that he would address, but later in his presentation.

- b. **Operations – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil**

Assistant Chief Coil presented his new slide Operations regarding Significant Events, which he noted that there was a problem that had not been dealt with before and that several leadership and command personnel worked to resolve. For the next 5 months, the crews at Station 1 and Station 6 will swap Stations to alleviate the fatigue issues and shared workload. While there was a little negative pushback about this, Chief Mezulis stated that there have been unexpected outcomes in that this gives the Station 6 crews time to interact with Administration and the ladder truck, and give the Captains experience in the backside of the Captain duties, such as writing reports, doing time in Telestaff, etc. Also, the Station 1 crew has done so much yardwork and tree trimming that they need a dumpster, in preparation for the 9-11 ceremony!

Human Resources: There are 7 immediate firefighter vacancies, along with Fire Inspector and the ongoing vacancy in IT. Leadership will be involved with oral boards for the next two days and then completing the list to begin hiring. The first review of the Fire Inspector candidates will happen on August 17 and the vacancy will remain open. There are two interviews next week for the Radio Tech position.

There was some discussion on job descriptions and development and Chairman Soto asked if they would be completed by the deadline. Chief Mezulis stated that there has been progress on multiple job descriptions, but they are determining if tasks, etc., are still relevant. Chief Coil stated that the

Captains job description has been deferred past the deadline. There will be a compensation study in the fall and SFD is trying to determine standard occupation classifications to compare duties rather than titles.

Retirements: Shawn Foster, and Dave Cochrane (end of the month, Walk-Out)

Resignations: Marc Howard and Jacob Schwisow

Telecom: There are so many challenges each day for Bob, but he is being supported and things are getting down as new equipment arrives. Bob is working to identify issues with other agencies equipment and helping Sedona PD. There is a trunk conversion from Century Link and working to get Speed Connect's aging equipment off our towers and collect on the money owed to SFD. It's high-level triaging and imperative that SFD gets assistance for Bob.

Chairman Soto wanted it noted that the Board is appreciative of Bob's efforts, and it does not go unnoticed. The list presented by AC Coil verifies the need for a headhunter even more than was justified. Chief Mezulis noted that it's beyond the point of recognition, let's just get him someone. Member McCarthy noted that while we will never be able to replace Bob, he can certainly mentor and share his knowledge with someone who can observe and emulate his actions.

c. **Community Risk Reduction – Division Chief Dori Booth**

Division Chief Dori Booth quickly ran through her stats for the CRR office. CRR participated in WetFest on July 4th, taking a static display, and having the ladder truck on-site. The Fire Inspectors participated in two investigations, assisting Verde Valley and the US Forest Service. Chief Booth, Inspector Riddell, Captain Eberlein, and Firefighter Jeremy Vargas attended an Advanced Arson Seminar in Prescott during July.

Safety Message: Fall prevention is trending up and Chief Booth spoke about ways to maintain balance, avoid falls, and navigate your home and environment safely by presenting the NFPA Steps to Safety for Fall Prevention. Clerk McNeal asked if there was a way to track the calls on lift assist versus actual rescue falls. Several are working on ESO reports to track that information and report it out.

Chairman Soto noted that there were 0 engine company inspections and there was discussion among the members and staff mentioning familiarization for the engine companies with businesses they respond to. Soto asked what was being done to address the lack of inspections. Chief Booth noted that she is working with Chief Baker to have company officer level inspector training to take on inspections. Member McCarthy noted that this would be a life-safety factor and that firefighters should be aware of building layouts, obstructions, etc. before responding.

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

DC Lechowski referenced the photos on his slide, showing SFD personnel training Sedona Police in CPR, as they have AED's in their vehicles. DCs Lechowski and Baker are revamping the community CPR classes and looking forward to getting them started again.

State Moving on Counseling has already had some calls for assistance, so the program seems to be popular and working well. They can also provide Crisis Response.

DC Lechowski has been busy learning his new job and meeting with hospitals, Guardian & Native Air services, local peers, and the Fire Chief. DCs Lechowski and Baker have met with Yavapai Community College to get medical classes rolling, and they are working on revamping the New Hire Orientation Process, starting with the basics, with the next class of probationary firefighters starting the week of October 16.

DC Baker is busy going through boxes and boxes of training records and getting the information online, for easier access for all. He is working on an Annual Training Plan and task book review to make them a training tool rather than checking boxes before they ever hit the floor.

Both new Division Chiefs are mentoring the new Battalion Chiefs, getting them up to speed and hopefully, back on shifts! Member McCarthy asked about EMS areas of the state and who runs what, with Chief Mezulis responding that there are several State agencies involved and SFD has representation on all. McCarthy asked if there was any way that the Fire District could emulate a citizen's law enforcement academy as a recruitment tool and DC Lechowski answered that they are planning a fire academy day for local officials, press, Board members, etc. with fire challenges where the attendees would participate in scenarios.

Chief Booth stated that she and DC Baker are targeting athletic teams for recruitment, planning boot camps for practices and getting back into schools with Firefighter challenges, etc.

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

Chief Mezulis stated that DC Baker had to be in Flagstaff for personal reasons or he would be in attendance. Finance Director Buldra was instructed to leave early to beat the incoming weather back to Phoenix. Director Robinson had a personal meeting she needed to attend, and AC Coil left early to obtain medicine for his sore throat.

f. **Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Mezulis**

Chief Mezulis boldly stated that COVID is over and SFD is re-engaging like never before.

For 9-11, he plans a flag ceremony with opportunities at the podium for those that would like to speak, followed by a community pancake breakfast, giving those present a chance to speak with the community. He will be discussing timelines with Chairman Soto.

There will be a Walk-Out for Dave Cochrane for his retirement on August 31, at 3:00 p.m.

Chief Mezulis reviewed his slides, covering incident numbers, response time, etc., along with the thank you notes and donations from the community and reviewed the Social Media slides.

Board Clerk McNeal asked if there was a way to re-balance shift numbers with Chief Mezulis responding that it was due to be evaluated and re-consider geographic areas. Chairman Soto recognized how the staff moved could be upsetting, but the bid system honors the seniority system.

H. Discussion/Possible Action: Review SFD Board Handbook, make corrections, edits, changes.

Chairman Soto stated that this item had been bumped from the July meeting and asked if the Board had reviewed. They stated that they had reviewed, and Member Jablow noted 2 changes she felt were necessary. Chairman Soto stated to Chief Mezulis that the whole book needed to be revamped and they all wanted paper copies when finished.

Chief Mezulis asked the Chairman to let him know what changes the Board wanted and he would identify the concerns and assign appropriately, avoiding the middleman.

I. Board Member Items:

3. 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 McCarthy had nothing to report, as did Member Jablow. Board Clerk McNeal reported that she did the "usual," signing checks and meeting with Fire Chief.

Chairman Soto stated that he worked on the collaborative evaluation process. The Chairman stated that he could already see the impact that the new Division Chiefs were having and feel the positive vibe.

Chief Mezulis stated that when he accepted the job as Fire Chief, he was ready for new challenges and fresh eyes on problems. He said good things are happening and there are new ideas, and fresh perspectives on old ideas. Chairman Soto told all to keep up the good work.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

//signed Helen McNeal, 9/19/23//

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.