



Approved by the Board, 12/19/2023

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, November 14, 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, November 14, 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; Janet Jablow, and Scott Springett – Members Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil (by phone); Division Chief Dori Booth; Division Chief Jordan Baker; Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson; Finance Director Gabe Buldra, JVG; Attorney William Whittington; 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 4 Police Officers and 11 firefighters who passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. Badge Pinning – New Hire Firefighters & Fire Inspector

The badge pinning was well attended by families and friends and went quickly with the families pinning their loved ones. Chief Mezulis inadvertently announced an engagement of one of the newly-hired firefighters, who had not told their families yet. Chairman Soto offered the Board's congratulations and welcomed them all to Sedona Fire, saying that the Board could not be more proud of them for their accomplishments, thus far, and told the families that their support would continue to be needed as they advance through their career.

*Chairman Soto dismissed the new employees and their families to take photos at 4:47 p.m.
The meeting reconvened at 5:02 p.m.*

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**
- 2. Executive Staff Response to Public Comments**

There were no requests to speak.

B. 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. October 17, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

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

C. Financial Report and Updates – Gabe Buldra, JVG

1. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and Approval of October 2023 Finance Report
Finance Director Buldra gave the monthly overview of expenditure and revenue, noting that the tax levies have begun to come in with \$7.6 million collected in October. Mr. Buldra noted that SFD continues to run under budget in most categories.
Chairman Soto asked about wildland revenue and how it is not what we would usually get. Director Buldra explained that it was not tied to the budgeting of operating expenses. Fire Chief Mezulis stated that it has been a mild season so far and that SFD has turned down several dispatch requests on fires due to lack of staffing.

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

2. Discussion/possible action: Possible allocation of ARPA reimbursement funds into the Capital Fund. State ARPA reimbursement funds for COVID personnel costs, etc., have been received in the amount of \$1,108,390.00 have been received and Director Buldra asked that we move \$1.1 million into the Capital Fund. Fire Districts were not included in the initial distributions of these funds and receiving them now was not budgeted for but will be used for necessary improvements. There was discussion about the motion and Chairman Soto asked Mr. Whittington to weigh in on how the motion should be made. The Fire Chief clarified that any amount could be moved, whatever the Board wanted.

Chairman Soto made the motion to move monies received from ARPA in the amount of \$1,108,390.00 to the Capital Fund. Board Member Scott Springett seconded the motion. Board Member Jablow had a question about the amount and it was clarified. No further discussion was held and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. **October 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report –**

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

Director Robinson reported that all staff in Administration have been to classes and conferences in the last month, including audit training, UKG conference, Administrative Professional Conference, and car seat installer training.

As to the car seat training, Stephanie Knight was able to eliminate an issue with an older car seat which allowed CRR to save a new car seat for another time.

Toys-4-Tots is on-going through December 14. A drop box is in the lobby of Station 1.

Finance Director Buldra stated that Beach-Fleishman should have their report ready for the December board meeting regarding the audit.

Operations – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil

Operations - Major Efforts:

Assistant Chief Coil reported that the primary focus for the last several weeks was the new hires academy which he will let Division Chief Baker report on, and numerous prescribed and one wildland fire (Maid Fire, 100% contained).

The Sedona Fire District, as party to a grant request with Flagstaff Fire, has proposed several accomplishments, if funded:

1. Creation of a Greater Flagstaff Region (GFR), Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) hub website. This will be a public platform for all CWPP achievements and a secure location for tracking sensitive home assessments and structure protection plan data.

2. Update of the existing CWPP: Leveraging research from Northern Arizona University and the Ecological Restoration Institute, the aim is to enhance the CWPP based on State and National Standards. This will contribute to shifting risk profiles at various levels and address

the local homeowner's insurance policy crisis.

3. Development of a GFR CWPP Story Map: This digital map will narrate the history of GFR fires, the current situation, and future goals.

4. Creation of a Project Tracker Tool: This tool will track federal, state, and local efforts within the GFR CWPP area, replicating the Santa Clara County Project Viewer Dashboard.

5. Parcel Level Firewise Assessment and Planning Tool and Database: Based on established NFPA and NWCG processes, this tool aims to evaluate the return on investment in wildfire risk reduction and inform community-level decisions.

HR:

Mental Health & Wellness Training on 11/10/2023 was attended by nine firefighters, one fire inspector, and 1 Fire Marshal. The training was organized by DC Baker and included resiliency training by Captain Jon Scaife, Mental Health & Wellness resources by Start Moving On Counseling and Dr. Debbie Ritterbush, and Arbinger Outward Mindset by Captains Josh Wells and David Rodriguez.

Harassment Prevention Training was held on October 4 & 5 for all SFD leaders, including Chief Officers, Managers, Captains, and billeted Captains. Positive feedback from frontline managers included building awareness of harassment and how to address it.

Sedona Fire was awarded the 2022 FEMA AFC Regional Award for Comprehensive Cancer Screenings Firefighters. Coordination of the grant was through Securis and AFMA, and SFD is one of 22 agencies awarded this grant.

UKG Conference was held 11/6-9 in Las Vegas, NV and was attended by Keona Freeman, Branda Brothers and Brian Espiau, and included time management, payroll, benefits, and personnel management software.

Telecom Activity Summary:

Since the October 17 Board Meeting, there has been significant progress in various telecom areas:

Acquisitions & Updates-

Received EMS toughbooks

Renewed Lexipol and FCC call signs

Managed Century Link/Lumen system outage and confirmed its resolution.

And many more.

Challenges and Solutions-

Investigated SPD radio complaints and microphone issues.

Coordinated with AT&T on tower modifications and lease updates.

Managed power outage coordination at South Airport Radio building

And many others.

Infrastructure & Maintenance-

Conducted tests and data collection for Sedona PD MDC1200 and console redesign.

Resolved VPN DNS issues.

Managed repairs and maintenance on microwave waveguides and links

Personnel & Training-

Prepared for onboarding new radio techs.

Planned training with Brian Espiau on toughbooks and ESO software.

Continued deployment of antivirus and computer upgrades

Future Plans-

Upgrade Sedona PD radio dispatch consoles

Repair microwave waveguide at Schnebly Hill and links to the Airport and Porcupine Mtn.

Finalize dashboard project and assist with multipurpose room upgrade.

Replace end-of-life laptops and upgrade station crew computers.

b. **Community Risk Reduction – Chief Dori Booth**

Fire Inspector Riddell and Firefighter Puyana completed Arson Investigator 3. They will attend another level in the Spring to receive their level 2 certifications.

Brian Russell is onboard and getting to know the SFD methods and programs.

Blasting will continue tomorrow on Bell Rock Road and at this time, there has only been one complaint to the Contractor. Forest Road blasting is set to begin the first week of December, with blasting work on 89A happening the week of December 3.

Stuff-the-Bus (Toys-4-Tots) will be at the Posse Grounds on December 12. December 16 will be the Bicycle Rodeo with donated bikes and helmets being given away, along with obstacle courses to teach balance, etc.

November's Safety Message is Holiday Fire Safety. Thanksgiving is the number one day for fires due to cooking.

Chairman Soto asked Chief Booth a question regarding Firewise and if the Firewise consultations were turning into wildfire prevention and she clarified that often they are.

c. **EMS, Safety, Development & Planning – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis**

Chief Mezulis reported for DC Lechowski, who was at a wedding. Chief reported that there is an uptick in transports to Phoenix that SFD is monitoring. The loss of the new hospital in Flagstaff (NAH) will impact SEC and VVMC.

Type 6 is on track for delivery. The committee traveled to Boise, Idaho to make modifications, etc., last week.

Matt Spinelli reported on GIS activities which included revising new slides for the dashboards and attending a meeting tomorrow with Yavapai County.

d. **Suppression, Preparedness, and Performance – Chief Jordan Baker**

DC Baker reported on the new hire academy and that these past few weeks had been the busiest of his career at SFD. Baker noted that this class of recruits is very strong and detailed the new Top Rung award idea and scoring. DC Baker stated that the recruits are all proficient in basic skill sets, in fact, so proficient that they were included in the Minimum Company Standards on their first day of being on the floor. They have all received their Probationary Firefighter Task Books which were recently revised (after seven years of no revision). Both DC Baker and GIS Specialist Spinelli thanked Brian Espiau for creating a library system to track accountability for books.

Cascade Detrick will be attending a symposium in February to bring back information on how to recruit and retain female firefighters.

Members will also be attending an Advanced Extrication course in February in Corona, CA. This will be highly detailed and explore the challenges of electric vehicles and advanced extrication.

Chief Baker thanked all of Administration for their help and support with the new hires and putting together the orientation idea and potluck to welcome. Baker stated that all were nervous on their first day, not knowing what to expect and that Admin made them feel welcome and enforced the idea of "family" and now they know who to seek out for what problems or issues they may be having. Baker also mentioned Stephanie Knight and Kris Ahern for getting the flag put together (the 10th man) and noted how the new hires became very proud of the guidon and took it everywhere with them during their training.

e. **Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Mezulis**

Chief Mezulis reported that incident numbers remain about the same, as well as Station responses and response times. Chairman Soto asked about the recent move of personnel from Station 1 to Station 6 and if that was still in effect. Chief Mezulis stated that everyone is "home" now but that there will be more strategic moves of more senior Captains which will be a deviation from standard practices. Chief then reviewed the Purchase Orders over \$10K, most of which listed were approved in a prior meeting. Chief Mezulis noted that the social media pages continue to be a source of good information. Chief mentioned the community appreciation for the efforts to be back out in the community in a more relaxed way, attending golf tournaments, etc.

E. **Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion regarding upgrade to radio system and installation.**

Chief Mezulis began his briefing by stating that this was not in any way an ask for any funds, at this time. Chief began with a historical background of the current situation, which began back in

the early 2000s when technology began ramping up and changing quickly. SFD typically acquired slightly or gently used equipment and made do with patches and Bob's expertise. Mr. Motz built the Channel 3 simulcast system and received an award in 2009, when he has staff to assist him.

The current situation is that we are onboarding one radio tech in December. Motorola will come in and build a complete system with staffing to help manage maintenance, but the shortfall might be availability to assist, especially on holiday, etc. Zetron-Codan and piecemeal a system for much less money, but they would build it sourcing from vendors, rather than everything Motorola built. They can come in and take the radio component racks from the existing six down to 2 with upgrades, plus including facility support such as generators, battery banks, and tower infrastructure to allow remote monitoring. This will be an 18–24-month project and should come in around \$3 million dollars.

Chairman Soto commented that after a year of juggling 3 positions, now, with this type of report, the Fire Chief seems to be settling in and it is all coming together in producing what the Board needs to see. From here, SFD can move forward with the ability to prioritize asks. The Chairman stated that the Board would not withhold funding to provide for firefighter safety but being presented with the pros & cons, costs, etc. allows them to make informed decisions and move in a direction to get things done. The Chairman felt that there was need to have a discussion with the Chief about the value of the IT person in charge. He wants to maintain good communications to the community is aware that it is for their protection.

F. Discussion/Possible Action: Announcement of new board member to be seated December 2023.

Chairman Soto described the interview process for the four applicants. He said the process was challenging because the candidates were close in scoring. Corrie Cooperman has the previous experience with the Board and spoke passionately about Sedona Fire, which the interviewees felt was a good fit with the sitting Board. In the meeting on November 8, Chairman Soto made the motion to appoint, and Ms. Cooperman accepted. She will be sworn in and seated in her position on December 4 at the Special Board Meeting. Chief Mezulis stated he would coordinate with Exec. Assistant Smathers and Ms. Cooperman to facilitate a day and time.

GI. Board Member Items:

Discussion of Fire Board Members Fire District related activities since the last Board Meeting:

Janet Jablow: Attended Board vacancy interviews and has upcoming one-on-one with the Chief.

Scott Springett: also attended interviews, bill pay training with Heidi, and interacting with community.

Dave Soto: Led interviews for the Board vacancy positions and enjoyed the interactions with the candidates;

The labor representative was present in the interviews and a good step as all went well.

The Chairman was the Board member chosen to speak to the auditors and that also went well, but he feels that SFD should be in a good position as we use best practices towards finances.

He attended the potluck for the new hires. Chairman Soto also addressed the prescribed vs. controlled burn. and how there are no controlled burns. Fire Chief Mezulis added that prescribed burns are actual prescriptions detailing everything about the fire, they are in no way random and are very complex. Chairman Soto felt that a public service announcement should be made to explain that information and Board Member Jablow stated that Red Rock News had run articles on that information.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

//Signed by Helen McNeal//

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: 12/21/23

Time: 08:00 a.m.