



Approved by the Board, 1/16/24

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, December 19, 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, December 19, 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 Corrie Cooperman – Members
Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil; Division Chief Division Chief Jordan Baker; Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson; Finance Director Gabe Buldra, JVG (by Zoom) 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 10 Police Officers and 8 firefighters who passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. 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. November 8, 2023, Special Board Meeting Minutes
2. November 14, 2023, Regular Board Meeting Minutes
3. December 4, 2023 Special Board Meeting Minutes

Board Chairman Dave Soto made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Board Member Jablow 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 November 2023 Finance Report
Finance Director Buldra gave the monthly overview of expenditure and revenue, noting that the tax levies have slowed and are under projections by about \$184K. Non-levy revenues are about \$8500 with ambo revenues over \$22K. There were some unexpected wildland deployments in November,

unexpected costs in removing SpeedConnect from the towers and repairing the towers once removed, and the fire extinguisher training prop for CRR.

Chairman Soto asked about paying towards the unfunded pension liability with the cash on hand available. Director Buldra stated that while the unfunded liability is a liability, but it could be paid off on one day and the next day there would be an unfunded liability. Mr. Buldra recommends waiting until there is a little more stability, with 1:1 swing volatility or less. Chair Soto clarified that this was something that JVG is watching. Director Buldra stated that the single audit that was required due to ARPA funds receipt is holding up the final report, but will be available next month for reporting.

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

D. Staff Items:

1. November 2023 Monthly Fire Chief Report –

a. Administration – Director of Administrative Services Heidi Robinson

Director Robinson reported that Toys-4-Tots picked up the donations and SFD has just received their plaque for this year.

This year SFD also participated in Adopt-A-Grandparent with their donation box also in our lobby and FULL! They were very happy to have us participate and will be using us again for their Spring event.

The Holiday Potluck was well attended and enjoyed.

Administration is working on process improvements in finance and the retail store.

Chairman Soto asked is the Adopt-A-Grandparent seemed successful. Director Robinson explained that the box was full and the organizers were very happy with the results. While we have no feedback on the total program, as yet, they did receive a large cash donation to fill in. Member Jablow mentioned that all the trees were bare very quickly.

Clerk McNeal stated that while the Holiday Potluck was great, so far only Station 1 has been able to participate and she thinks that they should move around the District so they can get to know other stations.

Chief Mezulis stated that it will take more coordination, it can be tried.

b. Operations– Assistant Chief Jayson Coil

Communication Infrastructure Projects

1. Discussions with DPS on Porcupine Mountain tower replacement project, involving VHF antennas, microwave equipment, and connectivity changes.
2. Coordinated with Dibble Construction to avoid equipment placement that could block microwave links at South Airport.
3. Addressed technical issues with the DPS project, including custom antenna mounts and winter weather challenges at the Porcupine Mountain site.

Personnel and Training

1. Justin Broos joined the team but has been absent due to a family health issue. He is currently undergoing training.
2. Conducted training with Justin on mobile antennas, bands, SWR, correct mounts, etc.

Operational Support and Maintenance

1. Repaired a Sedona Police Department (SPD) vehicle with radio issues.
2. Resolved an antenna issue on E561 and a radio noise issue on E541.
3. Assisted with the setup for a new CRR position and configured new equipment for board members.
4. Addressed a major network switch failure at Station 1 and deployed temporary and new core switches.
5. Worked on the resolution of microwave interference affecting DPS links and our communications.

Legal and Vendor Coordination

1. Dealt with equipment return issues involving Trifecta and Speed Connect.
2. Liaised with the DEA for the removal of their equipment from Mingus Mountain.

Technical Improvements and Updates

1. Upgraded station computers with additional RAM and SSDs.

2. Continued configuration and migration projects, including SOTI and Huntress.
3. Prepared for the SharePoint online migration and software license renewals.

Plans for Next Month

Infrastructure Upgrades

1. Assist with MPR upgrade and continue deployment of CRR computers.
2. Deployment of new switches at Station 4 and the Airport, along with the SPD console upgrade.
3. Continue work on the Porcupine Mountain tower project with DPS, focusing on microwave radio installation and battery backup power solutions.

Staff and Equipment

1. Complete board member iPad upgrades and set up for a new radio tech PC position.
2. Continue with SharePoint migration to SharePoint online.

Operational Support

1. Coordinate with the Airport on the South Airport/AWOS upgrade project and with DPS on various ongoing projects.

Human Resources Update

- Recruitment
 - Telecomm
 - New Hire – 11/27/2023 Public Safety Radio Technician Justin Broos
 - 1st Radio Tech position vacant from 1/20/2022 (1 year and 10 months)
 - 2nd Radio Tech vacancy still in pre-employment. Currently coordinating start date.
 - 2nd Radio Tech position vacant from 11/28/2016 (7 years)
 - TRT Member Recruitment in progress
 - HR currently accepting letters of interest
 - Testing occurs 1/29-30/2024
- Annual SFD Award Nominations in progress
 - Nomination period ends 12/27/2023
 - Committee decides in January 2024

NATO C2COE Seminar

Benefits to NATO

Expertise in Dynamic Environments: Wildfire management involves making high-stakes decisions in dynamic, unpredictable environments. Your experience can inform NATO decision-making in similarly fluid situations.

Chairman Soto asked about the job descriptions that he feels have been on-going for a long period and stated that he hopes they are just about done. He then asked Chief Coil if the weather patterns he briefed are the tail end of the summer's El Nino. Chief Coil explained that normally in El Nino years, most of the precipitation is in January-March. Chairman Soto then stated that he appreciates that it is a difficult job to respectfully approach other vendors and agencies about SFD towers. Chief Coil stated that it is all Bob and that soon he should be able to get back to action and future thinking, rather than everything being reactionary. Chief Mezulis stated Bob' attention to these details is critical.

c. **Community Risk Reduction – Chief Ed Mezulis**

Chief Mezulis reported for CRR as Chief Booth is on Jury Duty. The new fire extinguisher prop is working well in schools and soon CRR will be working with large groups at hotels, restaurants, etc. It is a clean and functional tool to demonstrate.

Blasting for the water tank on SR 179 has one more blast scheduled. ADOT is finished in the Canyon, and the City may have one or more blasts to finish the roadway. There was only one formal complaint and 1 unsubstantiated claim.

Bike Rodeo was last week with many kids receiving bikes and training.

Safety Message was on heating safety. Make sure all items are at least 3' from the heater, never use stove/oven to heat your home, and chimneys should be cleaned every year. Member Jablow asked about the chimney if unused. The consensus was that it should be inspected and maybe cleaned prior to using again.

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

Chief Mezulis reported for DC Lechowski, who was ill.

EMS Committee/Workgroups Rollout to address district EMS service needs

Public CPR – Starting in the new year. Starting with organizations, hotels, resorts, and groups to

maximize “CPR safety-net” that spreads throughout the community in the areas of greatest probability. Public Classes hosted by SFD will plan to begin thereafter.

Fleet-

Mike Sheehan continues to keep our fleet rolling.

Capital fleet planning has begun for fire apparatus and Ambulances.

Pierce pre-build for the 2, Type 1 engines that were ordered in April of 2022. When our first metal is cut, they will provide a reliable timeline. Expected delivery in the summer 2024.

The current, estimate if we were to order today, is greater than 48 months and approximately 40-50% increase in cost. We bought at the right time, though it is a sign of the current state of fleet purchasing concerning cost and time.

Training-

After Action Review Format rollout.

GIS –

Matt Spinelli briefed on his support of operation with imminent tasks and planned projects. He participated in and supported the After-Action Report from the Elysian rive fire and is affecting change to addressing in that area. He is also working with ESRI to clear up tech support for a proposal to come. He is looking forward to build a position to support where GIS should go. He supported the various controlled blasting projects alongside CRR and continues to provide continual training and support of the dashboard system as it is now rolled out across the district.

Behavioral Health-

SFD rolled out the new peer support team in earnest this month. Captain Jon Scaife will be the operational team lead.

This team is being trained alongside area and regional partner agencies to form a like-minded, capable support structure that serves our people here at SFD and is also available to our neighbors, and vice versa. From Sedona PD to CAFMA, YCSO, and Prescott we are joining forces.

Clerk McNeal asked regarding the high cost of vehicles, should the Board be seeing a new Capital plan for those purchases? Chief Mezulis stated that he will be prepared to present that as part of the budget process with an industry standard replacement schedule to determine when we need to order replacements.

Member Cooperman asked who was training the peer support team. Chief Mezulis noted that it was part of the Start Moving On Counseling services and Dr. Ritterbush is trained specifically for the Verde Valley region. Chairman Soto asked about the prebuild process and if SFD could not order a more standardized apparatus to shorten build time and costs. Chief Mezulis stated that with a couple of exceptions, SFD apparatus are very standard, stripped and boilerplate.

Chairman Soto then noted that he had seen several GIS personnel and this is the first person to see and feel how important a role they play in the District, and as part of the Strategic Plan. He noted that he knows that Spinelli has a lot of irons in the fire and he appreciates that. Chief Mezulis stated that he appreciated the Chair’s words and agreed with him. He stated that Spinelli has moved the needle on that position.

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

DC Baker reported on his training division, beginning with the photo on the slide of the shopping that the Mingus-Union FFA youth leaders participated in for Thanksgiving dinners for families in need. Sedona-Verde Valley charities funded \$700 for the turkeys, and Chief Baker was able to do some recruiting and answer a lot of questions regarding Sedona Fire.

Chief Baker detailed that training is ramping up with Driver’s training being completed this week with the classroom portion. Last week practical training was completed. A non-operational defensive driving class is being planned with Captain Kurtz.

The Class/Training request has been made electronic with a lot of hard work between Espiau and Spinelli. This form will eliminate inter-office delays on approvals and is very comprehensive in what it covers.

The 2024 Training Plan has been finalized. Verde Valley, Copper Canyon, and Cottonwood Fire will all be adopting this plan for their districts/departments. These regional training partners will know dates and be able to attend the trainings so the whole region benefits from offered trainings.

Chairman Soto asked about how completions on these trainings is reported and Chief Baker stated that training is tracked through ESO and he receives monthly training reports.

Baker reported that a Captain’s Candidate Leadership Academy is going to be offered for billeted and those with open task books with expectations to better prepare the candidates for positions.

Chief Baker stated that they will continue to fine tune with the plan being to roll out in August. January 9 (not 19) will be a scenario-based training for extrication. This is a yearly requirement and with the new training plan, each complete battalion will be trained every three years. Verde Valley and Cottonwood Fire will also be attending this training on the 9th.

Member Cooperman asked about electric vehicles being more difficult to extract from and Chief Baker stated that not only were they harder to put out when on fire, there are several issues with extraction on these vehicles, as well.

Training policies are being migrated from Sharepoint to Lexipol. Chief Baker reported that this is NOT a quick and easy project and standardizing the policies before moving to a central location for all information is a challenge. There are no timelines yet on this project being completed.

Clerk McNeal asked about who was teaching the Captain's Academy and noted that SFD should think outside the box and bring in speakers from other disciplines and businesses to address same situation type thinking. Chief Baker stated that a large portion of the presentations will be from Human Resources with matters regarding worker's compensation, personnel matters, and also bringing in outside Fire Chief's as a round table and for Q&A. It will be scenario-based and show up and coming leaders what to expect from their crews. Clerk McNeal reiterated that as Chief Coil had noted with the NATO trip, the skill-building and areas that don't fall into HR can come from outside the fire service for a different take on the same challenges.

f. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Mezulis

Chief Mezulis began his briefing explaining the photo on the slide was a community forum for fire chiefs to meet with young people in the fire service. It was very well received and he got a lot of good feedback. He was also asked to give the Keynote presentation to the Yavapai College Fire Science graduation. While working with Verde Valley Chief Danny Johnson Chief continues to work on an IGA for shared CRR services.

This year is the renegotiation of the Cottonwood Dispatch center contract and Chiefs Mezulis and Lechowski are working with them to upgrade their systems to accommodate State law that was passed on December 7 requiring ambos are equipped and tracked by GPS. He wants to ensure that dispatch can provide the correct information necessary. Also, evaluating software, so Chief Lechowski has submitted a waiver to the State to hold off on this requirement until we can provide an appropriate solution for SFD.

Board Member Cooperman asked if the State was providing any money to alleviate the burden. Chief Mezulis outlined the timeline and the waiver situation.

Chief Mezulis noted that Chief Freitag had called him about the Yavapai County Supervisors are discussing a Yavapai County Regional Fire District. County has a lot more work to do, and there should be a meeting in the next month to find out where this is coming from.

Chief then reviewed his slides of call summaries and noted that this may be a record year for incidents and it is feasible that SFD will hit 5,000 calls this year.

Chief Mezulis concluded his monthly report and the agenda moved forward.

E. Discussion/Possible Action: Disposal of decommissioned SCBA packs and associated equipment.

Chief Mezulis began by stating that in an effort to be transparent, while he did not need Board approval, he asked that it be put on the agenda for discussion so the Board would be advised what he is doing. The SFD now has all the new airpacks in service and the old packs are taking up room in storage. The old packs are outdated and might be sold for \$50 if SFD pays \$150 for them to be recertified with a legal rider saying that the manufacturer has certified them. The crews have picked out 2 sets of 20 of the best and it is Chief's intention to donate them to Coconino Community College and the high school fire science department. Chief stated that he wanted to bring this to the Board's attention but they are disposal with no value, which has been verified by JVG.

Chairman Soto stated that this should have come to the Board with a Board Agenda Communication so they are prepared for what they are looking at and could have questions prepared. He feels there is liability of donating. Chief Mezulis stated that he believed that Mr. Whittington could prepare a one page "hold harmless" agreement that the schools would sign upon receipt. Chairman Soto again asked that it be put in a Board Agenda Communication, to which the Chief stated that they fit within the disposal plan and it doesn't require Board approval. Attorney Whittington agreed that policy permits the Chief to dispose without Board approval. The Chief reiterated that he just wanted to have the conversation and he has done

his due diligence with these airpaks and they have no value. Chairman Soto stated that he appreciates the Chief keeping the Board advised.

F. Discussion/Possible Action: Proposed Board meeting dates for 2024.

Chairman Soto stated that the proposed dates were in front of the Board and they all meet the 3rd Tuesday of the month timeline with no changes for the holidays. Member Cooperman stated she thought they all looked good. Chief Mezulis made a point for consideration that if practical, due to the policy review request, the meetings might start earlier. Chairman Soto asked if it should be workshopped prior to the budget workshop with a reasonable amount of time to review. Chief Mezulis stated that it was SFD intent to provide the Board with a policy packet for them to review, then have a Board discussion regarding edits, changes, etc., then have a 2nd read of the policies after the changes had been made. Chief Coil asked how many policies the Board was going to review each month, and asked Mr. Whittington what was a normal amount that other District's reviewed at a time. Attorney Whittington's answer was about five, depending on the size of the policy. Chief Coil then asked at what level other Board's reviewed, SOPs, SAPs, or Board level. Attorney Whittington stated that very few Board's drill that deep into the weeds with SOPs, SAPs, etc. as if any litigation was to happen, the Board will be responsible, but any reasonable expectation would be that the Board and the Chief rely upon the Subject Matter Experts to advise. Clerk McNeal asked if the policies could be listed so they could review the list to see if there were further the Board wanted to review. Chairman Soto asked that a list of the Operations SOPs be listed to start the ball rolling. Chief Mezulis stated that he would rather the first round of reviews be the policies in the Board Handbook and the lists could follow in the following months. Clerk McNeal has many concerns about the Board Handbook. Chief Mezulis stated that they are now discussing two different subjects and he would like to start with policy updates and will have a draft of the Handbook available for the January meeting. Chairman Soto stated that the January Board meeting will start at 3:00 p.m. with a policy workshop and flow into the Budget workshop. Chief Mezulis stated that he feels the policies will be buttoned up by March.

Chairman Soto motions to approve the proposed 2024 Board Meeting dates. Clerk McNeal seconded the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously. Chair Soto directs that staff will note on the agenda that the meetings for the first three months of 2024 will commence at 3:00 p.m. with the policy workshop an agenda item.

G. Board Member Items:

Janet Jablow: looking forward to upcoming one-on-one with Fire Chief on the 26th; still doing Gene's bills

Helen McNeal: Attended the potluck, has one-on-one on 27th, bill pay for Scott

Corrie Cooperman: interviewed for Board position; attended the Potluck and Chief's evaluation meeting

Dave Soto: Yavapai Office of Emergency Management meeting with Firewise discussing lot cleanings and fuels remediation and SFD came up in conversation regarding the city's evacuation plans and the work Chief Coil did was recognized. They have a meeting in the Spring that he would like Matt Spinelli to attend to see what/if he can support. Chief Mezulis said that was up to Matthew and his workload, it would be Matt's decision. Chair Soto stated that he had been on an inspection with Chief Booth and looked at all the debris that had been removed. He attended the Potluck and the Chief's evaluation meeting and thanked Chief Coil for his work in preparing and providing the documents for that meeting. He stated that he is looking forward to the next quarterly meeting. Chairman Soto then thanked everyone for the work over the past year and said that it was appreciated by the Board. He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Soto adjourned the meeting at 6:24 p.m.

//Signed by Helen McNeal, 1/16/24//

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: