



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 – 2860 Southwest Drive – Sedona – Multipurpose Room

Tuesday, August 20, 2024 / 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 Chair Dave Soto at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, August 20, 2024. 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: Helen McNeal – Chair; Corrie Cooperman – Clerk; Dave Soto and Janet Jablow – Members
Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Division Chief Jordan Baker; Deputy Fire Marshall Kirk Riddell; Finance Director Gabe Buldra, JVG; 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.

Chair McNeal led the Pledge of Allegiance and Chief Ed Mezulis requested a Moment of Silence for the fifteen Police Officers and six firefighters who have passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. STAFF RECOGNITION

A. Taylor King – Five years of service

As the employee was not present, Chief Mezulis briefed the Board on recognition and Chair McNeal asked that the Chief pass along the Board appreciation for his hard work and dedication.

II. POSSIBLE VOTE TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A. Possible vote to go into Executive Session for personnel matters pursuant to ARS §38-431.03(A)(1) and legal advice pursuant to ARS §38-431.03(A)(3) re: Third Quarter evaluation of Fire Chief's performance (Collaboration Rating).

Member Soto made the motion to go into Executive Session for the Fire Chief's evaluation, Member Jablow seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the vote was unanimous to approve.

Adjourn to Executive Session at 5:28 p.m.

III. RECONVENE TO PUBLIC SESSION

A. Discussion/Possible Action: Board Feedback on Fire Chief's evaluation for Third Quarter, as discussed in Executive Session.

Chair McNeal noted that she is pleased and happy with the Chief's progress on the outlined third quarter goals and welcomes the Board to provide feedback. Clerk Cooperman said that she is very pleased with how the

Chief is keeping the Board informed and advised him to “hang in there” on the slow movement of the progress of the other projects. Member Soto echoed that everything stated he agrees with prior statements and that the past quarter has shown the most movement in completing the set goals. Member Jablow thanked the Chief for all his hard work and for moving things along. Chair McNeal bookended the feedback, thanking the Chief for all the progress made and advising him to “keep moving forward.”

IV. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

A. Public Forum:

1. Public Comments
2. Executive Staff Response to Public Comments

There were no requests from the public to speak.

B. Consent Agenda – Discussion/Possible Actions:

1. July 9, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes
- 2.

Clerk Cooperman made a motion to approve the July 9, 2024, minutes, as presented, Member Soto seconded, there was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Financial Report and Updates –Director of Finance Gabe Buldra

1. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and Approval of June/July 2024 Finance Report

Finance Director Buldra briefed the Board on the June and July 2024 financial positions (June was not reported in July due to the earlier meeting date set to accommodate AFDA). Mr. Buldra noted that we closed the year in a very good cash position and June revenues were over what was estimated with spending being somewhat under what was budgeted, mostly from administrative positions that were not backfilled.

July is the new fiscal year and there is not a lot of activity right now. Revenue has been collected, mostly from delinquent tax revenues and for July the budget is approximately \$96K over estimated. Expenditures remain under budget by \$185K and we have been able to grow our cash position due to savings last fiscal year.

There were no further questions, Member Soto made a motion to approve the June/July 2024 financial report as presented, Clerk Cooperman seconded. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. May 2024 Monthly Staff Report
 - a. Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil
 - i. Significant Events
 - a. All-Hazard
 - b. Emerging Issues
 - ii. Human Resources
 - a. Staffing
 - b. Promotions
 - c. Significant Issues
 - iii. Administration
 - a. Upcoming Events

b. News & Activities

Chief Mezulis noted that Chief Coil is out on a fire in Oregon and is on a blended remote assignment. SFD has one Type 3 engine prepositioned in Bakersfield, CA to assist with regular duties. The focus of the last month has been heavy recruitment with four new firefighters being offered conditional positions and a list of sixteen qualified candidates to draw from in the future. Chief Mezulis stated that these hires replaced both expected and unexpected openings on the floor. They will be pinned with their badges at the November Board meeting. The IT position has gone through one round of interviews, finding really qualified candidates. A conditional offer has been made for the HR clerk position, and the Mechanic opening may need to be revisited such as the former IT position was and retooled to assist in the certification path and let them learn on the job.

- b. Community Risk Reduction Activities – Division Chief Dori Booth
 - i. Inspection Activities
 - ii. Fire Investigations
 - iii. Notable Events
 - iv. Fire Marshal Safety Message

Deputy Fire Marshall Riddell briefed the Board on the plan numbers and challenges that are presenting. He thinks that things will begin to pick up this month and stay busy. He stated that there are a lot of sizeable homes being proposed on mountainsides and that is also leading to a lot of grading plans being executed. These are challenging situations that often do not account for fire truck access and turn-around space. Chief Mezulis stated that blasting on the uptown parking garage starts on Monday, with CRR having someone on-site. Marshall Riddell stated that due to the sheer numbers of attendees at the 4th of July festival, the city is having to revisit that event. Riddell briefed on upcoming events, one of which is the Desert Southwest CRR Conference, being held in Sedona and hosted by SFD. Chair McNeal asked if there was an agenda for that conference available and Riddell advised that it was still in progress. Chief Mezulis stated he would get her one as soon as it was finalized. Riddell then presented the Safety Message regarding outdoor burning.

- c. EMS, Fleet, Telecom – Division Chief Lechowski
 - i. EMS Activities and Updates
 - ii. Fleet Activities and Updates
 - iii. Other Updates

Chief Mezulis reported that DC Lechowski is in Appleton, WI, on the final inspection of the two new fire engines that were ordered in Spring 2022. He stated that now the timeline for new engines is four years. Clerk Cooperman stated that capitalism should take care of the supply chain problem shortly, and new builders would begin business. Mezulis explained that while Pierce is expanding and trying to accommodate, it just is not happening at the rate they can keep up with demand. Chief Mezulis stated that the Type 6 engine should be nearing completion, as well, and we should be doing final inspections on that soon.

Chief Lechowski conducted a Minimum Company Standards drill for EMS response with Captain Rippy's parents acting as live patients. Feedback on that exercise has been phenomenal.

Chief Lechowski is also working on the Certificate of Necessity from the state, which has expired. The State has changed the processes and is working on developing more accurate maps.

Fleet is busy and Mike is also in Appleton, WI, assisting with the final inspection of the engine.

GIS Analyst Matthew Spinelli presented the Board with charts and maps outlining the frequency and locations of hike-outs, showing how adding latitude and longitude to the incident can drive data. Member Soto asked a question regarding how this would help us and would we then provide additional staffing on those days and times. Chief Mezulis reiterated that now that we have better tools, we can identify when things happen, but it goes beyond that and gives the ability to drill down further to analyze the problems and create helpful assists or solutions. Chair McNeal thanked Spinelli for his highly informative information.

- d. Preparedness & Training – Division Chief Jordan Baker

- i. Division Updates and Activities
- ii. Training Report

Division Chief Baker presented the Board with the Training and Preparedness report, stating that twenty-one assessment interviews had been conducted for new firefighters. State Fire school begins in September in Phoenix, AZ with five Ops personnel and 2 CRR personnel attending. Two personnel are now Fire Instructor II class certified. The 12-month test for the probationary firefighters hired last year has been completed, new class request forms are online and working well. Three personnel had their task books reviewed and approved for the Captain's testing in the Spring, and the first SFD Leadership Academy announcement has been released.

A Quarterly Newsletter for Wellness has been distributed, and a "lost-time" calendar has been created on the dashboard, fueling the competitive spirit between shifts, and tracking days since a lost-time accident. Ready Rebound rollout is next week. This is a recorded functional movement screening for all employees and will be set up at Station 4 for three days. The gyms have been reworked to get equipment off the floor and reduce strains and injuries while working out. DC Baker stated that his goal continues to be building depth in positions for future leadership roles.

- e. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Mezulis
 - i. Call Volume & Response Review
 - a. Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison
 - b. Station Responses
 - c. Response Times
 - ii. Purchases over \$10K
 - iii. Community Thanks & Appreciation

Chief Mezulis relayed incident numbers and response times, purchase orders over \$10K, and thank you's received from the community. His briefing was short as he covered most of the information in his Executive Session briefing for the Board. He did state that as we are spending more time on the road with transports, the travel time bumps up.

E. Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion and possible approval/signing: State Mutual Aid Compact.

Chief Mezulis stated that the contract has expired, but this is the same agreement that we have signed and worked under for years. The agreement covers our neighbors and other Districts statewide for assistance in emergent conditions. There are provisions for requesting, payment, etc. Member Soto asked if this was a 10-year agreement and said it had come up last year. Chief Mezulis stated that at that time it was being retooled and refreshed and now it was available for signature.

Chair McNeal made a motion to approve and sign the State Aid Compact, Clerk Cooperman seconded. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

F. Discussion/Possible Action: Board discussion regarding Sedona Fire District Wage and Benefits philosophy.

Chief Mezulis asked the Board to consider their philosophy regarding the wages and benefits, stating that he understood that there were many questions about the July presentation of the wage study. He said that over the years, there have been many philosophies about wages and benefits, and he would like to know what this Board's thoughts and ideas are. He asked that they provide direction so that going into Meet & Confer he will have an idea of where he can bargain from. Member Soto stated that retention is a key factor and if we are not competitive, then staff will leave. Chief Mezulis stated that there are further complexities to the problem, but yes, that was a concern. Soto followed up by asking if the data could be provided on a per rank basis as to how many have left and for what reason. Chief Mezulis said that one of the problems that he has with labor and management working together is what agencies are comparable to look at to compare against. He would like to know where the Board stands on their views of what is comparable. Clerk Cooperman appreciated the Chief asking and stated that the Board did not get the correct information from the wage study briefing in July.

She feels that SFD should be in the 80th percentile of top pay and would like to see where we rank with other districts. She does not want people to leave because of salary. Member Jablow stated that she does not want people to walk out the door with the training that we gave them. Chair McNeal asked that we find out why we have lost people over the last 5 years and where they went. She felt we should be comparable with Phoenix fire because of the number of our staff who live in Phoenix, and she agrees with Clerk Cooperman to the 75-80th percentile but wants to see the data around it. Chief Mezulis stated that gives him a good starting point with labor and he can work with Keona Freeman in HR regarding exit interviews to extrapolate the data possible without compromising any HR requirements.

G. Board Member Items:

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

Janet Jablow – Nothing to report.

Dave Soto – Member Soto continues to work with Yavapai County Firewise, and closer and closer with Fire Marshall Booth. Yavapai County Firewise is moving closer and closer into our area. He will be Chair of that group.

Corrie Cooperman- Clerk Cooperman attended AFDA and learned that the Board is mandated to participate in the wage study. She also had a one-on-one with the Fire Chief.

Helen McNeal – McNeal has had many conversations with the Chief, attended AFDA and learned that CRR has an impact on increase of retention. She is working on the Board handbook to be brought back to the Board in September, along with a Board orientation for November. She visited Station 3 with a visitor from Iowa and stated that the crew did a great job showing them around and talking to her visitor.

Dave Soto attended the celebration of life for Gene McCarthy and the internment at the Veteran's cemetery in Belmont, AZ. He said it was a lovely ceremony, the grounds are beautiful, and he thinks Gene would like it there.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McNeal adjourned the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

//signed Corrie Cooperman, 9/17/2024//

Corrie Cooperman, 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.