



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, December 17, 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 Helen McNeal at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, December 17, 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; Dave Soto, Scott Springett, and Janet Jablow – Members. Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil; Division Chief Buzz Lechowski; Fire Marshall Dori Booth; Gabe Buldra, JVG (by TEAMS); Lydia Hunter and Daniel Harris of BeachFleischman PLLC an auditing firm contracted by JVG; Bill Whittington, Attorney; 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 eleven Police Officers and eight firefighters who have passed away since the previous Board Meeting.

II. SWEARING IN OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

- A. Appreciation and gifts to resigning Board members.
1. Janet Jablow
 2. Dave Soto

Chair McNeal introduced the outgoing Board members and gave a short bio on each. She presented them with plaques of appreciation. Chief Mezulis presented them with their bricks for the front patio at Station 1. The Chair asked if the Board had anything to say to the outgoing members. Clerk Cooperman spoke about working with both of them and that she would miss them. Member Jablow stated that she was honored to have served, and she stated that she had learned so much about SFD personnel and the jobs that they do on a daily basis.

Member Soto stated that it had been a great ride and that there are a lot of good people, in the community, on the Board, and within SFD and that a lot has been accomplished. He stated that he felt that the Governing Fire Board at SFD was the best board in any capacity, in any city.

Chair McNeal called a recess for photos and cake at 4:40 p.m.

The meeting was reconvened at 4:52 p.m.

- B. Introduction of New Board Members and Swearing in
1. Diana Christensen
 2. Lance Waldrop

Chair McNeal gave a brief background on the new Board Members. Chief Mezulis gave them the Oath of Office and they were then seated in place of Members Jablow and Soto to continue the meeting.

III. 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. November 19, 2024, Regular and Executive Session minutes

Clerk Cooperman made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented and Member Springett seconded. There was no further discussion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

C. Financial Report and Updates – Gabe Buldra, JVG

1. Mr. Buldra briefed the Board about the financial status of Sedona Fire District, Facility/Grounds Maintenance has been driving a lot of the overage with necessary repairs to facilities that have been deferred. Overall, SFD has a cash on hand increase of \$3.3 million over last fiscal year. Tax collection was lagging a little in November, so revenue was not as high as anticipated, but it is just a timing issue, *Clerk Cooperman motioned to approve the November Budget Report, which Chair McNeal seconded. There were no further questions, and the motion passed unanimously.*

2. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and possible approval of 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).

Lydia Hunter of BeachFleischman, along with Danial Harris, her associate, presented the Audit findings for the year ending June 30, 2024. They are prepared to issue an unmodified finding, which is the highest level opinion they can issue. There were no serious issues. Chair McNeal stated that she had a correction and would provide them with the information. There were no further questions, Member Christensen made the motion to approve, which was seconded by Lance Waldrop. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion and possible action to change Board meeting days/times to better accommodate staff, Board, and other contributors.

Chief Mezulis asked the Board to consider that the District load that JVG is carrying and all the road time that both Mr. Buldra and Mr. Whittington are accomplishing to be at the meetings and asked that the Board consider changing the time of the Board meetings to earlier in the day on the same day as they are scheduled now. There was discussion by the Board members, and all agreed that earlier in the day was better and they settled on 3:00.

Clerk Cooperman moved that the meeting time be moved from 4:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., Chair McNeal seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the motion was approved to begin in January 2025.

D. Staff Items:

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

- a. Upcoming Events
- b. News & Activities

Chief Mezulis reported for Chief Coil, who had to step out. He stated that there is an increasing number of very complex rescue calls and there has been a lot of good feedback on recent training from personnel, saying that the training is helping them with these incidents, that they have more confidence in treating complex medical issues.

There have been several resignations lately, so there will be a spring academy for new hires in 2025. This will assist with availability of staff for wildland deployments and keep the floor staffed, as necessary.

The Mechanic Assistant position is in the final stages of onboarding, the IT position will be reposted in January. Chair McNeal stated that at the last academy, there were several good candidates who were not hired and asked if any of them were still available. Chief Mezulis felt that a few of them might be and HR would be contacting.

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

Fire Marshal Booth relayed CRR activities and numbers of inspections and investigations, noting there have been forty-three plan reviews, 52 initial inspections, and 10 re-inspections. The Hilton Garden Inn in the Village of Oak Creek is in the final stages of approvals, and the parking garage in uptown is under review. Sedona Fire trails Sedona PD in the battle of the badges for Toys-4-Tots by approximately \$600 with one week to go for donations. The goals for both sides have outpaced the original fundraising goal of \$1500 per entity. Chair McNeal asked if the Board could see the Division program numbers from the last year, to compare with current numbers of inspections, reviews, etc.

The Safety Message relayed proper use, storage, and recycling of lithium-ion batteries.

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

Division Chief Lechowski started his briefing stating that SFD has responded to eight cardiac arrests in a two-week period. There have also been several 10+ meter falls needing backcountry rescue in the past month. Clerk Cooperman asked if the cardiac arrests were on the trail and if bystanders had provided CPR until First Responders could arrive on scene. Chief Lechowski stated that yes, high quality CPR had been administered, also noting that SFD has eleven new certified CPR instructors and will be ramping up the community health program, teaching in hotels, trail groups, Jeep tours, etc. He stated he would also like to have a Board member CPR day to renew/refresh their skills.

There have been good meetings with NAH who are trying to rebuild trust with the communities locally and positive things are happening in that regard in the Verde Valley.

The Dispatch Center is streamlining response instructions and the meetings with them have gone well.

There was a softball game between Verde Valley Special Olympics and the Sedona Police and Fire personnel.

Captain's promotion testing process is being outlined for Spring.

There are three new paramedic students entering their classes and the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Audit was completed with a lot of assistance from JVG.

- d. Preparedness & Training – Division Chief Jordan Baker
 - i. Division Updates and Activities
 - ii. Training Report

Chief Mezulis reported for Division Chief Baker, who was working at the training center. Driver's training has been completed and OSHA mandated courses are being finished by many staff. The 2025 training plan has been released and aircraft familiarization at the Airport was completed.

Six-month reviews are coming up for several new hires. Battalion live fire training/ISA is planned as is B-shift annual extraction training. Captain's task books are being evaluated prior to the Assessment Center in February.

Personnel are preparing for Annual physicals, and the older gym equipment is being repaired. SFD partnered with Mingus Union High School FFA and Sedona Verde Valley Firefighter Charities to provide 46 turkeys for the needy at Thanksgiving.

- 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 with Chief Mezulis stating that the yearly number is catching up to last year. Chair McNeal asked about frequent flyers and the Chief stated that we always have several but there are none that are really taxing SFD at this time.

Chief Mezulis noted that he continues to look at data sets regarding interfacility transfers. He noted that SEC is reporting higher incidences of patients from other Verde Valley zip codes due to shorter wait times for ER visits.

Clerk Cooperman asked if they would be standing up a second ER doctor. Chief Mezulis felt that it may be more of a mid-level practitioner, rather than an ER doctor. Division Chief Lechowski noted that if more people are coming to SEC, then that increases SFD interfacility transfer rates as there are no beds for patients at SEC.

E. Discussion/Possible Action: Possible approval of BAC for purchase of fleet 2024 Suburban to replace IT Manager response vehicle, from Chapman Chevrolet, in the amount not to exceed \$70,000.

DC Lechowski noted that Bob takes this vehicle everywhere and he secures his monitoring equipment in the vehicle. Often Bob responds from home and his existing vehicle has 211,000 miles of hard driving. Other vendors' prices were much higher, and they did not have the basic model. This quote is commensurate with State pricing. Member Waldrop asked if the upfitting was included and DC Lechowski said SFD will keep the equipment and Mechanic Sheehan can upload onto the new vehicle in-house.

Chair McNeal made a motion to approve the BAC, as stated. Member Springett seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

F. Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion of rate increase from Boyle, Pecharich, Cline, Whittington, & Stallings, PLLC from Mr. Whittington's service as attorney to the Fire Board and possible action to accept or decline.

Mr. Whittington explained that the rate increase will not go into effect until July 1, ,2025. There was some discussion about reviewing all contracted services and this matter was tabled until a date closer to July 1.

G. Discussion/Possible Action: Possible action to approve 2025 Board Meeting Dates.

Member Waldrop motions to approve the proposed meeting dates for 2025, Member Christensen seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

H. Board Member Updates and Ideas for Future Meetings.

Chair McNeal explained that this was a change from past member accountings and asked if the Board had anything to suggest or report. Member Waldrop gave a shout-out to Mike Sheehan for assisting PD with a

hazardous condition in one of their patrol vehicles. Member Christensen asked about paying bills and when they would receive training.

Chair McNeal stated that the grant proposal from last month had been prepared and submitted. She also remarked that a change in protocol would happen in January with the Chair taking roll call at the start of each meeting.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Possible vote to go into Executive Session for real estate matters pursuant to ARS §38-431.03 (A)(7) and legal advice pursuant to ARS §38.431.03(A)(3) re: Station 4; possible transaction with the City of Sedona re: same; consideration of other properties.

Chair McNeal motioned to enter Executive Session to real estate matters pursuant to ARS §38-431.03 (A)(7) and legal advice pursuant to ARS §38.431.03(A)(3) re: Station 4; possible transaction with the City of Sedona re: same; consideration of other properties. Clerk Cooperman seconded the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion was approved.

VII. RECONVENE TO PUBLIC SESSION

- A. Reconvene to public session with possible direction from Board Chair to Fire Chief regarding follow up meeting with City of Sedona regarding Station 4 relocation/re-build alternative sites.

Chair McNeal noted that no direction was given to the Fire Chief regarding negotiations with the City Council at the next Board meeting/City Council meeting held at Sedona Fire District on December 18, 2024.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McNeal adjourned the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Corrie Cooperman, Clerk of the Board