



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, March 18, 2025 / 3:00 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 3:02 PM on Tuesday, March 18, 2025. 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; Diana Christensen and Lance Waldrop – Members. Member Springett was absent due to illness. Others Present: Fire Chief Ed Mezulis; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil; Gabe Buldra, JVG (on TEAMS); 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 seven Police Officers and six firefighters who have passed away since the previous Board Meeting. Recorder Smathers called the roll; Member Springett was absent due to illness; all others were present.

II. EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

A. Badge Pinning – Isaiah Moore, promotion to Engineer.
Chief Mezulis presented the Engineer badge to the newly promoted Engineer, Isaiah Moore. Engineer Moore's father was present to pin the badge, with other family in attendance. Chief Mezulis outlined Engineer Moore's accomplishments with SFD. Chair McNeal congratulated Engineer Moore on his promotion.

Chair McNeal called a five-minute recess for photos at 3:07 p.m.

Regular business was reconvened at 3:12 p.m.

III. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Gabe Buldra, Finance Director, gave a brief outline of the continuing budget process, stating there will be a line-by-line budget for review in April. The majority of the budget requests from the Divisions have been received and they are in the process of reviewing the requests to ensure adequate funding. Chief Mezulis stated that the Division Chiefs were given some flexibility, considering the impacts of coming tariffs. Mr. Buldra stated that the Board will see some movement in the Capital plan.

Chief Mezulis stated he met with labor today and he is working with labor to fine tune the numbers for COLA and other requests. Member Christensen asked if the differing amounts between the two labor groups affected morale. Chief Mezulis stated that the COLA amount was the same for both groups.

There was some discussion and Assistant Chief Coil asked Mr. Buldra when the Board could expect the "high water mark" for this year's budget. Both Chief Mezulis and Mr. Buldra stated that the Board would see the "highest request scenario" budget in April.

Member Cooperman asked about the Station Four and IT projects. Chief Mezulis assured the Board that those projects have been planned and projected in the Capital plan. Mr. Buldra stated that the Station Four funding depends on interest rates. Chief Mezulis stated that the current year budget allowed for \$730K costed out for the project, so that will give the Board a little room when it comes time to make finance decisions on the Station Four project.

Mr. Buldra then reviewed the budget schedule up to the June adoption. Chair McNeal asked if there were any further questions for Mr. Buldra; there was no further discussion or questions.

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. February 18, 2025, Regular and Executive Session minutes

Member Waldrop made the motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented and Clerk Cooperman 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, Mr. Buldra stated that both Wildland reimbursements and CRR revenue have contributed to an increase in over-budget estimates. Mr. Buldra mentioned that the second half of tax collections begin in March/April. There are budget savings across all categories. At this point in the year, SFD has expended 63% of the budget, rather than 67%, as anticipated. Depreciation of assets and some liabilities increased slightly, which explains the slight decrease in other assets. There were no further questions for Mr. Buldra.

Member Christensen motioned to approve the February Budget Report, which Clerk Cooperman seconded. There were no further questions, and the motion passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. February 2025 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 Coil noted that the significant event for February was that the weather was nice and people were out and recreating. Spring breaks are happening and people are visiting Sedona. The call volume reflects this, as does the fact that there are new mountain bike trails that reflect a high level of difficulty and those trails have generated some business for SFD.

An emerging issue in the wildland arena is the challenges in the federal service. That is being worked through

and there is a level of uncertainty as to the staffing/funding levels. It seems to be moving towards more individualized to different programs. It is not necessarily the primary fire response positions, but the non-primary fire positions, like there are a lot of resources necessary on these large incident fires, including finance, catering, etc. Incident Management Teams last year had 48 teams to respond, this year, it has been pared down to 38, at this point. The Incident Management Teams are not a standing body of employed individuals that are waiting, ready to deploy. They are made up of State, local, and Federal resources, and depending on what is happening, their agencies may not be able to support their staff as part of these teams. These are assumptions at this time, and everything is up in the air, very unsure of what is going to actually happen.

Human Resources is busy reviewing the IT support and administrative clerk positions and once those are ready, the HR clerk position will be posted again. Four new firefighters are coming onboard on March 31. Chiefs Baker and Coil will begin one-on-one debriefs to each of the Captain's Assessment candidates, letting them know their strengths and areas of improvement for them to use to better themselves in their career.

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

Chief Mezulis briefed for Acting Fire Marshal Riddell, who is attending AZ Wildfire Academy in Prescott at this time.

CRR continues to be busy with increased Firewise requests and they are grateful that Chief Mezulis is covering community outreach. Meetings continue with conversations and evaluating budgets to determine what CRR looks like with shared services. SFD is going to leverage some software to reduce efforts in the CRR plans review processes, increasing efficiencies.

The biggest gap/challenge for CRR is the plans review piece. Chief Mezulis has brought former Fire Marshal Jon Davis back to accomplish plan reviews as an independent contractor.

Chief Mezulis covered the information regarding the community clean up days, and the Firewise programs being held to train individuals, in cooperation with the Realtors of Sedona. There will potentially be more classes available.

Chair McNeal asked about the fee schedule, a consistent rate plan throughout the Verde Valley. Chief Mezulis stated that what he thought was a simple fix is actually very complex and he is working with the cooperating agencies to de-conflict mandates in order to put the fee schedules in place regionally.

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

Division Chief Lechowski was also on vacation leave tonight, so his briefing was handled by Chief Mezulis. One of the Type One engines has been deployed. The manufacturer was able to get here and make the necessary repairs, which are proprietary and must be made by the manufacturer.

The Type Six is here and 95-100% built out, but SFD is taking time to produce training videos and distribute to the crews so they know how to operate. It will be in service for the season.

The past weekend, the Spouse's Retreat took place with a very good turnout. Chief Mezulis' wife was able to attend. Chief Johnson, Verde Valley Fire District, and Chief Mezulis presented on Friday night, so the spouse's could ask them questions. Chief Mezulis stated that he was ill-prepared for the level of intensity of the questions that were asked. There is still work to do in explaining benefits beyond the employee. Open enrollment will now provide a TEAMS link for the spouse to participate and understand what is available.

SFD continues to build out the peer support network, including Sedona Police and other regional partners like Copper Canyon and Verde Valley. There was a question regarding the cost of this retreat by Member

Christensen, with Chief Mezulis explaining that the insurance companies and Start Moving On Counseling had provided food for the events, and the Verde Valley Fairgrounds donated the meeting space, so the cost was minimal to SFD.

Chief Lechowski has been focused on numbers for EMS, with the complexity and frequency of calls continuing to increase. The question was asked if this was related to trails and Chief Mezulis stated that there are multiple factors contributing. Crews continue to do a great job.

Chief Lechowski is also working closely with NAH regarding inter-facility transfers to Phoenix. There have been identified gaps in NAH's understanding of these transfers and a framework is being developed to improve SFD's customer service, while realizing there are several bills in the AZ congress that could change everything about the way SFD provides customer service. There is a level of confidence that at least one of those bills impacting SFD service is going to pass, but it is unknown which one at this time. Lobbyists for PFFA and Arizona Fire Chiefs /Districts are working with bill sponsors to seek to understand the changes. Most of the bills are impactful in heavily populated Maricopa and Pinal counties but those issues don't exist in more rural areas. At this point, there has been no movement, but the session is approaching closure and much of those bills may be killed or get closer to center.

- d. Preparedness & Training – Chief Ed Mezulis
 - i. Division Updates and Activities
 - ii. Training Report

Division Chief Baker is also on leave, assisting his son in Texas. Regarding the Captain's Assessment Center, Chief Mezulis stated that there were 1,272 measurable points, seven different stations with three evaluators at each station with each candidate going through all seven stations.

New extrication instructors have completed their class.

Chief Baker has really coordinated a regional training approach and SFD is seeing the fruits of that labor. SFD is pushing the shared calendar and will soon have a QR code to link to users. The regional training accomplishes firefighter safety and public safety, while allowing cooperators to respond with other agencies and keep standards up.

Minimum company standards are being evaluated this week with battalion chiefs running their crews through different drills. Ladder truck training is scheduled for March 24-25 for those with open Engineer task books to accomplish ladder certification. ROHVA (Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association) training is upcoming in April. Probationary evaluations for six-month firefighters are coming up, and four new firefighters starting on March 31.

Older fitness equipment continues to be worked on and over. Annual physicals are ongoing and going well. Chief Baker is working on tracking injuries and it seems that SFD is trending downward as it relates to Workers Comp.

Chief Baker, Acting Marshal Riddell, and GIS Matt Spinelli attended three local career fairs to let local students know that SFD is not just firefighters. Other positions are available and necessary for continued operations. There are opportunities in public safety, besides being a first responder.

- 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 began by covering the incident numbers, with calls trending up this year. The chief reviewed response times and noted that dispatch times are down. SFD is maintaining and doing well.

SFD has partnered with PFFA (insurance) and with a grant from Arizona Fire and Medical Authority grant, to offer the Vincere cancer screenings. The Chief reviewed numbers from the past two years and some of the

outcomes of the screenings, statewide. This is another way of reducing costs of Workers comp as well as improving employee health. This screening is also available to non-operational personnel and spouses. Chief Mezulis has been busy with budget preparation and community engagement. The public service announcement for the townhall meeting on April 2 went out today to be advertised. The City of Sedona is also distributing the announcement.

At this point, Clerk Cooperman and Chief Mezulis began discussing the response times with Chief stating that the numbers were not representative of actual times and that mitigating factors that could skew them. Chief stated that it is something that SFD will keep an eye on, as the area is developed in Uptown and out in the annexation zone towards Cottonwood and SFD will evaluate .

At this point, Chair McNeal stopped the Chief's report moving to further business.

E. Discussion/Possible Action: Possible approval of BAC for purchase Sharepoint software.

Chief Mezulis asked IT user technician Josh Clouch to brief his request and findings for the Board. Mr. Clouch briefed that the last software was a free version and no longer supported and was put in place by his predecessor in 2013 and not touched again. It sits on internal servers which are at end-of-life and is a repository for links to websites, not using its functionality as intended.

Mr. Clouch clarified that the new software is supported by a team that develops, trains, and manages, which SFD IT is understaffed to do. This will upgrade to cloud server storage and provide a master calendar for all calendar sources, replace Lexipol for policies and procedures, and serve as a file storage repository, as intended.

Chair McNeal questioned if other platforms had been researched or looked at. Mr. Clouch reiterated that the Sharepoint is not the problem, but the management of Sharepoint, and this gives SFD a team which will manage. McNeal again asked if other platforms had been considered. Assistant Chief Coil replied that the free version that was initially developed was not adequate for SFD needs and this new software would provide a process and systems program management. After further discussion,

Member Christensen indicated she wanted to make the motion to approve the purchase, saying that it was a small amount to pay for a lot of value. Member Christensen motioned to approve the purchase order in the amount of \$60,000 for WCI, aka Hingepoint, for the Sharepoint migration project. Clerk Cooperman seconded the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

F. Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion and possible approval to purchase replacement turnout gear in the amount of \$62,203.75.

Chief Mezulis noted that this purchase is a capital, budgeted item, replacing turnouts that are 10 years old and ensuring second sets for each firefighter to meet cancer mitigation strategies put in place.

Clerk Cooperman asked if the 10-year replacement was based on time or number of uses. Chief Mezulis stated that it was a time-based replacement due to degradation of the materials, due to donning and doffing, and normal usage. Some of the gear contains PFAS which produce as many carcinogens as things that are burning.

Member Christensen made a motion to approve the purchase of turn out gear for operational staff in the amount of \$63,203.75 from the Swift Group, LLC. Clerk Cooperman seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

G. Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion and possible approval of Glidescope-Go Laryngoscopes for Paramedic Ambulances and Engines in the amount not to exceed \$53,000.00.

Chief Mezulis stated that these laryngoscopes are an innovative devices with a camera to assist in intubating difficult airways. Money was capitalized for cardiac monitors but SFD is foregoing that purchase to utilize budgeted dollars in addition to a \$10,000 private donation from a resident to purchase the Glidescope-Go video laryngoscopes. This expense improves SFD's medical services. Clerk Cooperman added that it was fascinating to learn that medics can apply laryngoscopes and that they are certified to do so. Current laryngoscopes are at end-of-life and must be replaced.

Chair McNeal made a motion to approve the purchase of Glidescope-Go video laryngoscopes for our paramedic ambulances and engines in the amount not to exceed \$53,000.00. Member Waldrop seconded the motion, there was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

H. Discussion/Possible Action: Discussion and possible approval to approve Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFQ) for architectural services for Fire Station #4 construction, and Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFQ) for Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) for the construction of Fire Station #4. Chief Mezulis stated that he has worked with Attorney Whittington and his team to develop RFQ's for an architect and a Construction Manager at Risk. He explained the process of hiring each that it is more impactful to do this way and the architect working with the CMAR reduces costs as the architect works with the contractor to enable the build.

Chief Mezulis noted that this process is used throughout the state and has been identified as the most productive process for SFD. The Chief asks that the Board approve the contracts, and that he had been made aware of modifications by the Board chair. He noted that the Board chair had the contracts did not have consistent language regarding no contact with Board or staff members, and the architect RFQ contract has a conflict of interest identified as a disqualification but the CMAR did not. At this point, Clerk Cooperman noted that it was not specified that the three bays were pull-through and did that need to be specified. Chief Mezulis stated that he did not feel it was necessary as that was an NFP standard. Clerk Cooperman then asked if it would be beneficial to ask for start and finish dates of various projects from the contractors. Mr. Whittington stated that would be good to have and it could be asked for. Chief Mezulis stated that he wanted to get the template correct so he could use for future projects. There was further discussion with the Chair reiterating that consistency is a good approach and that the Board would do the motion now and ask that the contracts be looked at for consistency.

Mr. Whittington noted that a motion to approve the RFQs as presented with the recommended edits and how do we write to the like size and how you appropriately staff with the recommendation that staff and Counsel get together to see if they can bring them into a compatible format for future use.

Member Christensen made a motion to approve as presented. Chair McNeal seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the motion was approved with the Chair stating you have RFQs with contingencies.

Board Member Updates and Ideas for Future Meetings.

Clerk Cooperman stated that she had attended the Sedona Women presentation by Chief Mezulis and was proud of the job he did.

Member Christensen has no input.

Member Waldrop stated that he will be attending an Emergency Vehicle Upfitter Expo online next week and will be harvesting the new and latest tech to continue his own recertification package which will get him current through 2029.

Chair McNeal echoed Clerk Cooperman's information regarding the Sedona Women's meeting, stating that she felt the Chief was the most approachable presenter, as well as being the most informative for local interests. She reminded the Board of the Welcome Potluck for the new firefighters on March 31, the City of Sedona at the April 8th Council meeting, will recognize the week of May 5th the be Keep Your Pets Fire Safe Week, and that April 2nd will be the townhall meeting regarding Firewise and fire preparedness at the Performing Arts Center.

V8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair McNeal adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

DRAFT