



~ Note: These Minutes were approved by the Board on 3/18/15. ~

# 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

Wednesday, February 25, 2015 / 3:30 PM – Executive Session with Public Session to Immediately Follow

~ MINUTES ~

### I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

**Board Present:** Ty Montgomery – Chairman; Corrie Cooperman – Clerk; Scott Jablow (Arrived at 5:55 PM), Nazih Hazime, Diane Schoen – Members

**Staff Present:** Kris Kazian – Fire Chief; Scott Schwisow – Division Chief; Buzz Lechowski – Division Chief; Gary Johnson – Fire Marshal; Sandi Schmidt – Finance Manager; Tricia Greer – Executive Assistant/Recorder

**Others Present:** Bill Whittington – Attorney to the Board; 15 Citizens and SFD Employees

Fire Board Member Ty Montgomery called the meeting to order at 3:33 PM.

### II. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Vote to go into Executive Session pursuant to ARS §38-431.03(A)(3) Legal Advice; and ARS 38-431.03(A)(4) Instructions to Attorney regarding the following issues:
1. Sedona Regional Communications Center IGA; Dispatch Options.
  2. Powell Workers' Compensation.
  3. Proposed House Bill 2351 Re: Fire Chief – PSPRS; Eligibility Update.

*Mr. Montgomery moved to go into Executive Session pursuant to ARS §38-431.03(A)(3) Legal Advice; and ARS 38-431.03(A)(4) Instructions to Attorney regarding Sedona Regional Communications Center IGA; Dispatch Options; Powell Workers' Compensation; and proposed HB 2351 regarding Fire Chief – PSPRS Eligibility Update; Board Clerk Corrie Cooperman seconded and the motion unanimously passed.*

### III. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

- 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.**

Mr. Montgomery led the Pledge of Allegiance; Division Chief Buzz Lechowski said four Police Officers and ten Firefighters across the nation lost their lives in the line of duty since the January Fire Board meeting.

- B. **Discussion/Possible Action: Follow-up for Executive Session Items:**

1. **Sedona Regional Communications Center IGA; Consider Dispatching Options; Consent and Waiver for Legal Representation.**

Mr. Montgomery stated Board Member Nazih Hazime is excusing himself from the meeting for this item, as he is abstaining from the vote due to the perception of a conflict of interest with his position at Verde Valley Fire District. Mr. Montgomery asked Fire Chief Kris Kazian to begin the discussion with factual background. Chief Kazian said, professionally, this is one of the hardest decisions he has had to make in his career. He said he has been working to find a sustainable solution to save the Sedona Regional Communications Center (SRCC), but through many meetings with subscribing agencies and looking at our long history of dispatching, he and staff recommend the Board consider moving our dispatch center to the new Cottonwood Communication Center (CCC). Chief Kazian said there is no plausible, sustainable solution; this decision was not made "last Wednesday" and suddenly brought to the Board; this has been an on-going conversation for quite some time, and he found Board Minutes from seven or eight years ago talking about it. He said staff looked at how to keep SRCC, and considered the possibility of running it by and for SFD only, as well as a partnership with Sedona Police Department; we also considered other dispatching agencies, such as Flagstaff, Prescott, Guardian, and

Rural Metro in Phoenix, as well as CCC. The facts were presented at meetings with our subscriber agencies, and in considering future capital projects including a new Fire Station 4 in Uptown with a dispatch center; he said the CCC is the most viable option. Chief Kazian said the subscribers felt it was better to work together rather than be in competition with each other; a current trend in the fire service is shared services, consolidation, and mergers and to consider having two regional communication centers in the Verde Valley does not seem in agreement with the philosophy of merging opportunities. He said other Fire Chiefs, and past Board Members have all talked about options and there have been a few studies validating moving to CCC.

Chief Kazian said now that the CCC is built and providing a service, all the uncertainty during its design and building is now “in front of us” and there is no capital outlay for SFD to engage in Cottonwood dispatching; the cost per call is \$60 with an escalator of 5% after two years; to put \$60 per call into perspective, currently, SFD pays \$151 per call for our dispatch services. He would not put the “dollar” before quality of service because he cares about taking care of the public and providing a sustainable future. Currently, the \$151 per call we pay for our dispatch services does not include any capital costs and SFD pays for that on top; new consoles are needed and they are very expensive at about \$225,000, and building a new communication center would be \$2 to \$2.5 million as an estimate. He said it is about the employees and right now, we have the opportunity to work with Cottonwood to give seven of our current dispatch employees priority in the hiring process. He said he cares about our employees and would love to keep them working at SRCC because it is a fantastic dispatch center with fantastic employees, but the matter before the Board today is a decision of whether we are willing to pay more to maintain it or find a savings opportunity in what he believes will be a “like” dispatch system with the same training and standards. The difference is, currently, SFD is a Primary Public Safety Answering System (PSAP), so all 9-1-1 calls in our area, specifically to Sedona Fire, comes directly to SRCC; Cottonwood has been willing and able to accept PSAPs to come into the Center, if they so choose, but the reality is if the County or a police agency want to take the PSAP back, they have the right of first refusal. He said if our subscriber agencies leave and we maintain the SRCC, we would have to reduce to four employees, and six would still be left without a position, and we would have to give up our PSAP status based on staffing needs.

Chief Kazian said we have the opportunity to hedge our financial stability as we have to increase our \$2.13 mil rate to a proposed, tentative \$2.39, and would be over \$3.00 by Fiscal Year 2022, if we maintain the SRCC in our budget; we can take action today to save our future, and hope for legislative relief before reaching \$3.00. He said we have worked diligently to understand the pros and cons, and spent hundreds of hours on it in the last few months, as well as talking about it for the three years he has been at SFD, and many years before. He said although the Cottonwood Center would be different, he does not believe we are putting our citizens’ safety in jeopardy. He said the protocols, training, service level, and certifications are on par with SRCC. He would not be giving this recommendation if it was not backed up with information, surveys, and studies, but he has a heavy heart to think of our dedicated employees who have worked through difficult times, and who were there for us; that is why staff is trying to help get them to the next level at Cottonwood. The greater good in this situation is the stability to financially maintain our services. He then reiterated the numbers – if we maintain our SRCC either by ourselves or with our subscribers, we would pay between \$600,000 to \$640,000, and at Cottonwood, we would be looking at \$248,000, which is \$350,000 in savings; he said in two years, if the numbers play out, we could save \$750,000 and added with the next three years, plus a dispatch center that would have to be built, we would have a \$5 million impact to our taxpayers in five years.

Mr. Montgomery commented he has always been in favor of maintaining our dispatch center, but not at all costs. He said several years ago, they discussed creating a Joint Powers Authority together with the subscriber agencies, but it did not happen; rather, what happened is Cottonwood built a new dispatch center and now we have a competitive field with two regional centers. Mr. Montgomery stated we have the option of going “head to head”, building and staffing our own dispatch center, and seeing which subscribers go where “to the tune” of costing our taxpayers money; or, be a good neighbor, and help create a good communication center with all the Verde Valley agencies; he said SRCC has already lost four agencies, with a significant hit to our bottom line, and to keep our SRCC, we would have to increase our per call charge; currently, SFD pays \$151, but our subscribers pay about \$70, and some of our neighboring agencies are at the top of the mil rate cap and have nowhere else to go. Mr. Montgomery said dispatching only for ourselves would have a tremendous financial

impact, and Prop 117 changed our financial landscape. He said before Prop 117, fire districts got tax revenues from the full cash value of properties, and now, we use limited property value, and our mil rate will go against the lower number on tax bills; he said even though property values are improving, our tax revenues will be decreasing and capped at 5%. Mr. Montgomery said we must be aggressively looking at ways to save money over the next few years, and also, because of the actions of past Fire Boards “burning through” our capital reserves. We are doing what every agency in the state is doing by looking at ways to join and share services, and not duplicate service. Mr. Montgomery said in the past, he would have voted against this, and our Communication Center employees do an excellent job, but he toured the Cottonwood Center and he is confident their personnel will also provide SFD an excellent service, especially with the addition of our experienced dispatchers. Mrs. Cooperman asked to hear from the members of the public before she gave her statement.

**Joy Moore – Village of Oak Creek:** *My name is Joy Moore. I live in the Village. I wanted to say greetings to the Board and the Executive Staff. As you know, I am a former Governing Board Member of the Sedona Fire District, and I successfully served from 2004 to 2008. I'm here today as a former Board Member, as well as a concerned citizen and taxpayer. First thing I want to do is, I want to thank each and every one of you on the Board for serving, because I know how difficult it is, I know how much time it takes and how much hard work it is, and I just want you to know that you have all of my respect, not just because I've been there, but because I see what you go through every month. I am a strong advocate for SFD and our community, and I only want what's best for the community and for SFD. I've been out of the SFD circle for many years now, and I'm here today to become educated on this matter. And my questions today are for that purpose. I feel our goal is to educate the community about this proposed move. The firefighters and 911 Comm center staff were only made aware of this matter coming to the Board a few days ago. I personally don't feel that was enough time to respond properly before bringing it to the Board for a decision. I just don't understand why it kind of came at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour.*

*The Chief stated in his comments earlier that he's done a great deal of research and there have been surveys and studies, but I'd like to know why they haven't been made public... why the lack of transparency? As you know, the State of Arizona has to approve moving a current PSAP – Public Safety Answering Point – to an alternative location, and it has to be proven to the State of Arizona why this move is prudent in all aspects. How does the Chief plan on convincing the State of Arizona that this move is prudent? Additionally, if this move goes through, Sedona will lose our PSAP and we're never getting it back. I'd like to understand the full implications of this. Even as we speak, there has been a really large fiber cut in Northern Arizona and all the PSAPs are down – there's 13 of them down – and the only one that is up is Sedona's, and we are taking, basically, all the 911 calls. The YCSO only has one trunk line, Cottonwood is down, I don't know if they are back up yet, and Sedona is the only PSAP in operation. So, if our PSAP wasn't there, there would be no 911 right now in Northern Arizona. Moving the Comm Center is obviously a huge decision that will impact our taxpayers, but my question is why has the public not been involved in this decision? Why has the Chief not set up public workshops for the taxpayers' input on this topic? You know, over the years during the time I served on the Board, we would routinely hire auditors for various matters. Why hasn't there been an audit ordered for this matter?*

*During the time I was on the Board, Chief Shobert and the Executive staff and the Board worked diligently to successfully raise our ISO rating, which in turn, saved the taxpayers of Sedona 10s and 1,000s of dollars. How will this ISO rating be affected with this proposed move? As we know, a negative change to the ISO rating is going to cost the taxpayers 10s and 1,000s of dollars annually. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, the Chief sent an email to Comm Center employees and as one of the many financial items stated in this email, he reported a savings of \$400,000 annually; today, he changed that to \$350,000, but how can he report savings when he can't truly corroborate in no uncertain terms the financial certainty of the Cottonwood Center? I would like to be educated on this. After speaking with the Manager of the Cottonwood Comm Center, it turns out they haven't researched the cost of SFD coming on board yet, so where are the Chief's actual numbers coming from? Additionally, according to Kirsten, the City of Cottonwood's Accounting and Budget Manager, quote – there are no plans to expand the Comm Center – end quote. Additionally, according to the Comm Center's management, the Comm Center is – quote – just trying to determine feasibility – end quote – they are in a neutral position on this*

*matter. Is the Chief going to determine feasibility and disclose the financial documents that will confirm his stated number of \$400,000, which is now down to 350, to be saved by the district annually for this move? And, how does this directly relate to the cost that will be incurred by the move? So, cost vs. savings. Where's the research? Speaking of costs, what will it cost to actually make the transfer? Has any research been done on the actual dollars it will cost to break down our Comm Center, transfer it over to Cottonwood including State requirements, and that's even if the State approves the move of the PSAP. The Cottonwood Comm Center has just completed seven months of full-time operation in the current Comm Center dispatching for fire. So, is it truly possible to give an annual per call cost considering they don't have the staff or equipment to continue the volume of work that our 911 dispatch does? As the Board knows, the current call volume is 30,000 annually in a 1,900 square foot area... or 1,900 square mile area, while the current call volume for Cottonwood is approximately 10,000 to 11,000 in a 200 square mile area.*

*If Cottonwood is going to quote a cost of, say, \$60 a call, then how could they quote that going forward when the volume of calls will triple? Because at this time, they have 5 consoles in the Comm Center and one in the Training Center, and they have three 911 dispatchers per shift, to handle our volume, they are going to need at least one more console and six more qualified dispatchers per shift. What will be the cost for that, and how much will that add to the per call number? Realistically, after equipment purchases and hiring the needed qualified staff to handle 30,000 calls a year volume, I feel this number will more along the lines of \$90 per call. Where is the savings for that? When it was my research that we were at \$69 a call. I don't know about this \$150 a call. I've never heard of that. So, I don't know... I got from reliable sources the \$69 per call. So, I'm not sure where that \$150 came from. So, that's something that I'd like to research, but that was already in my notes. Additionally, the Cottonwood Comm Center uses a Spillman CAD, which is a police CAD, not a fire CAD like we have at our Comm Center. How will that affect response times? As far as continuity is concerned, will the staff in Cottonwood be able to duplicate the knowledge and intelligence of our 911 dispatchers? For instance, there's no full-time mapper, like Tammy, at Cottonwood. There's no intimate background of Sedona in Cottonwood. The Cottonwood dispatchers, do they have the background as to where our streets are, where our hidden areas in the Canyon are, our trail system, topography of our mountains, and about mapping that we know about that's literally no on the map. Our 911 dispatchers have been dispatching the same roads, areas, and canyon for 30 years. What is Cottonwood's knowledge of our 1,900 square miles? If the move is approved, is there a guarantee our qualified 911 dispatchers will have jobs to keep the continuity? At this point, I see with this proposed move we all as citizens will see reduced services. I have to ask, what about the lives of our citizens, and lives of the 4,000,000 visitors to this town every year? Money is not the only thing at stake. And as a side note, Station 4 and the Comm Center are grandfathered in for ADA compliance. Finally, during my investigation on this proposed move, I was told the Chief has unofficially received some thumbs down by a few Battalion Chiefs; last year, received a formal grievance filed against him by the employees of the Comm Center when he tried to shut it down the first time. It seems to me that there's a lack of confidence for this move, and I wonder if it's been taken into consideration before bringing it to the Board for a final decision. Confidence on this matter? No. Transparency on this matter? No. Reliable data at this time? I don't think so. Possible reduced services to the public? Yes. The Board has ultimate power and responsibility to make this decision and I feel the Chief needs to exercise his due diligence to answer all these questions in no uncertain terms and prove to the Board this is the right decision for Sedona Fire and the public. Thank you for your time and your consideration.*

Fire Marshal Gary Johnson said he received a request to speak from a resident who is unable to come today because of a medical issue, and informed the Board that Shawn Kirchner would speak on their behalf.

**Shawn Kirchner (On behalf of Community Members) – SFD Communications Specialist:** *I'm going to read a letter from a fellow 911 dispatcher that also lives in the Village. Her name is Nicole Vandemark on East Lindsey Way, Sedona. And on behalf of her mom and her brother, Henriette and Paul Asbell on Indian Ruin Road, Sedona. Dear Board, it has come to my attention that the Fire Chief of Sedona is recommending getting rid of our Sedona 911 Center. He always states that it's a matter of numbers and financial concerns. I am sure we could find another Fire Chief in the area that would work for much less than he makes. Does that mean we should outsource his position too? We also have a Captain and a Firefighter staffed at Station 5 in the Canyon*

*– 24/7/365 days a year, handling only about 150 calls in their area last year. Does that make their jobs less important? It's called the cost of being prepared.*

*We the citizens of Sedona want to keep our local 911 center and we praise them for working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to keep our families and tourists safe. They sacrifice their families, holidays, and special events to keep our community safe. Without their knowledge, expertise, and professionalism, we would not have saved Oak Creek Canyon during the Slide Fire this past year. Again, just an added note on the Oak Creek Canyon Slide Fire, there was no loss. They have also been there to calm all of us during many of our medical and fire emergencies. I myself am amazed at their professionalism and their knowledge of the complex trail system within our district. Our dispatch center has been located at Station 4 since 1984 – 31 years ago. Even before the City of Sedona was incorporated, the fire district assumed dispatching responsibilities in 1985, and in October of that year, FireHouse Magazine named Sedona Fire Department one of the Top 25 in the country. Our Communication Center is a Primary PSAP – public safety answering point – meaning all 911 calls are routed to them directly, and then routed to the appropriate police agency, if applicable. They handle approximately 30,000 calls annually, and only about 30% are transferred out to police agencies. That means all of our medical and fire emergencies are handled immediately, dispatching our fire and EMS units to get to your home as fast as possible. We do not want Sedona dispatch to leave our area, and we do not want them being handled by Cottonwood dispatch. We pay good taxes and want our dispatching needs to remain here in Sedona at all costs. Our taxes pay for this fire district and the Communication Center. It's part of the cost of doing business for the district. They are not a separate entity. They are our first, first responders. Chief Kazian has never supported the Center and they have been under constant attack since his arrival. He comes from a Midwest philosophy that dispatch needs are not handled by a fire agency, and we could care less what his past experiences are. We are highly regarded in the state and country as being a state-of-the-art center and on the moving edge of next generation 911, and extensive GIS development. If we give up this Primary PSAP – 911 status – we can never get it back.*

*What happened to the new Communication Center that was supposed to be built over 7 years ago? Would you even be considering this had that center been built? So, the economy took a down turn and we all took a hard hit and we had a Board that was not financially efficient for SFD. Just because we don't have those sunken costs does not mean we shouldn't support our Communication Center now. Invest in our future, just like you have for all our firefighters and additional fire stations. These EMD certified dispatchers are the true life savers within our fire district – awake while even the Firefighters are sleeping. They may hide behind their quiet walls up in Station 4, but aren't you sleeping better at night knowing that they are there watching out for our community, fielding all those crazy calls that come in day after day, night after night? Please do not make any rash decisions about our Communication Center without fully understanding the complex and devastating effects this could have on our community, ten individual lives, and possibly the SFD ISO rating. Thank you for your time.*

**Shawn Kirchner – SFD Communications Specialist:** *For me, on my note, I came here five years ago because SFD 911 is that good. I came from a 911 Center where they did all congregate, in Wisconsin, I started up a 911 Center. I can guarantee that no matter how many employees they say they are going to need, they are going to need more. It's going to cost more. The price is going to raise. It may not right away in the first six months, but you can guarantee it's going to raise within the next year. Nobody ever hires enough dispatchers. They always think they can do it for less. And that's the whole key. Try to entice the Board that it's going to be less to start with. Mind you, it's going to be more within a year or so – coming from experience. And I came here because I know that they are awesome. We do have an awesome crew. Thank you.*

**Jeff Jennings – Lake Montezuma:** *I live in Lake Montezuma, so in one of our fire districts that's a subscriber currently with the Sedona Regional Communication Center. I'm also the Lead or only Supervisor now in the Communications Center, and so, I oversee the group of nine other dispatchers plus Tammy in GIS, and I've been here now for 16 years. So, you'll have to forgive me if this seems a little bit emotional to me. I've spent a lot of time and invested a lot of hours in the Communication Center. I've benefited a great deal from working for Sedona Fire District over the years. And I'd like to thank Sedona Fire and its citizens and the other agencies*

*and citizens we serve that have benefited by my work in communications. So, I don't discount... and I've been doing the budget now for years... I don't discount what Chief Kazian has said about how much it cost, about the annual costs of the Comm Center, about the investments that need to be made in the Comm Center, in the infrastructure. Those costs are there. Consolidation – quite honestly... sorry. I know it sounds strange, but I have to check... we've been dealing with some 911 issues and I'll get to that real quick because I think I do need to get out to the public that's here, but the... consolidations, like this, do occur. The vast majority of them end up in the long run, don't save anybody any money. Sedona Fire, I could see it saving just because we're talking about an owner going to a subscriber. So, I think Sedona Fire, out of anybody, could save money. Our other subscribers, some of them are going to have their costs go up if they go to Cottonwood. So, we're not necessarily saving money for everyone across the board. This is just a thing for Sedona Fire to save money, and it would help some of the smaller agencies, like Lake Montezuma where I live. Personally, I don't like that idea because I know we spent a lot of time learning that area. Cottonwood would, obviously, have to take that time to learn it. Eventually, I'm sure they would. I've been working alongside Marie over in Cottonwood for years, you know, as a peer. One of the things I've been pushing and mentioning in meetings now for a while with the Chief and other Chiefs, as I have an opportunity to say it is, I try and look at things as a big picture, not only in my role as a Comm Center – if you will – Manager; I'm not the Manager, it's a Supervisor position, but for lack of a Manager in the position, that's me. So, I try and look at the big picture, and as such, not just in that, but in my role on the side as a PSAP coordinator for Yavapai County; basically, I help coordinate communications between the State of Arizona and all the 911 centers in Yavapai County. I work with the budget, the billing, things like that. Tammy works with mapping. We get money in from the State as well to help defray those costs. Those... when I take a look at the big picture and I know how the system works, if you will, I look at the backups and redundancy that's built into 911. I look at Yavapai County as kind of a weak area – Northern Arizona is weak. If you look at Maricopa County, you know, and something happens to the Phoenix Police Dispatch Center, well, they still have Phoenix Fire; they can flip a switch and there's a large group of people there. There's some extra facilities they have. If we flip the switch in Sedona, it goes to Sedona Police; obviously, that's a much smaller center. If Cottonwood flips the switch right now, it comes to us. So, my thinking is that Sedona and Cottonwood, at least right now, we're relatively close to being the same size. If we go away, then what are they going to do when they flip that switch? More than likely, it will go to Camp Verde Marshall's office right now because Camp Verde Marshall's share their computer system, CAD, with Cottonwood. Well, to me, that's not really redundancy if you're sharing equipment, that's not redundancy. If something happens to the building in Cottonwood, then, I kind of have concerns.*

*So, like I said, consolidation maybe a moot point, you know, financially, we may be forced to, but I also look at it as long-term. Sedona Fire has invested a lot of money over the years. Its last major investment in communications, the communication Center, was 2008, so it's been awhile. All the investments since have been running the Communications Center. That was our CAD in 2008. Eventually, my thinking is, somewhere along the line, somebody's going to go, you know what, if we flip a switch somewhere, it needs to go to someplace that can handle it, and maybe Camp Verde is going to be the one to do it, but we're going to have to invest in Camp Verde then, to upgrade their equipment or maybe we're going to have to connect our infrastructure to Prescott, so they can back it up and dispatch units, because obviously, if you're transferring 911s, but nothing else happens and you have to evacuate a building, you have problems. So, my thinking is, I'm not just trying to plan for now, this year, five years from now for the budget of Sedona Fire, I'm trying to look at the big picture and don't understand... I don't want to see the same mistake that Flagstaff has. Flagstaff has one communication center for the dispatch, they dispatch county-wide, and then, they have DPS. DPS is their backup center. Well, guess what DPS is looking at doing? Closing their dispatch center because they can't hire enough dispatchers. If they close and it goes to Phoenix, what's Flagstaff going to do for backup? They are going to have to build a new building and have a dark center, or to have to make a deal with Prescott? I don't see that being feasible just knowing the numbers and being in this area for that long. And that, to a certain extent, is their problem. But, like I said, I'm just trying to point out problems and trying to plan for the future, not just here, but region-wide, and if we do consolidate with Cottonwood, I'd also see then, what's the plan for that backup. And two last notes, first off, you've heard there have been some problems with 911 today. CenturyLink does have some major issues today with everything north of Phoenix, literally, to Deer Valley area, up past Flagstaff. If you can't call out of Sedona – if you're on a landline, Flagstaff can't call out of their region, and Prescott, same*

thing. Cell phones may or may not work, depending on what carrier you have. Verizon is working, but getting a little erratic because of the amount of people using it right now.

Bob's been warning us for years that you can't count on cellular companies for your communications because they don't build in the redundancy. If you have AT&T, they use Century Link for their back-calls. So, AT&T is apparently having problems with their cellular service. 911 is currently working – may not be working 100%, we're still trying to develop that. I've been in the Comm Center for the last couple of hours before coming here, most of the Comm Centers including Cottonwood, I believe, are getting some of their calls. We were, initially, getting calls from the Cottonwood area sent to our center, so we were handling more than the Sedona area. The City of Sedona PD was getting calls for Prescott. Why, we're not entirely sure right now, but they were getting those. If you were in Ash Fork, and you call 911 from a landline, it went nowhere, absolutely nowhere. They don't have a dispatch center in their area. The YCSO does not have a sub-station in the area, so there was no seven-digit emergency number for Century Link to transfer calls to; so that's something else that we will be looking at here after this is all said and done, to figure out what to do, and that might be the fire department having to answer 911 calls, but on their admin line in Chino Valley... just one of those weird things. But, all the PSAPs are communicating with each other best we can via cell phones or whatever different things, but again, it kind of gets into that redundancy. Maybe make a plan for 911 centers to have better communications amongst each other in the future. The only other thing I'd like to do is just thank, regardless of what happens today or in the future of the Comm Center, is thank my co-workers in the Comm Center. The past several years, it's been very trying. I kind of did some quick numbers and, roughly, our people averaged, I think, 20 hours of overtime per week from July 1<sup>st</sup> of last year through the end of 2014. So, 60 hour weeks on average, I think, once you take out people on vacation and things like that, they average about 20 hours of overtime every week for six months. We're just starting to get everything back stabilized now that we have a hiring list. We probably got behind in that process and kind of put us behind the 8 ball last year. And, just glad the hours are kind of reducing, and people are going to have a little bit better chance to be able to spend time with their families. I'm just thankful for all their hard work over the last six months, and supporting everything we've been doing, and I've had to attend meetings and things like that, in supporting the Comm Center, and I should say, the citizens we serve. I'm thankful for their work. So, thank you.

**Craig Cushenberry – Village of Oak Creek:** Most of what I have to say has been kind of covered, but I can echo much of it. I have concerns regarding any agreement with the new dispatch center, in only a few days of hearing this, I have not heard one positive statement from current fire subscribers, because you run into them at Fry's... they've got the Cottonwood patch on, and you talk to them, and... one said it's a huge step backwards, and the other one, I won't repeat. Maybe it's a learning curve, but seven months, they've been working, I guess. How are the taxpayers served in an incident, like the flood at Tlaquepaque or Canyon fire? Mainly on the hundreds of incoming calls. For us, we have that covered, but I doubt by policy and geography, that past practice of fire officers quickly coming to assist in dispatch, is feasible. Losing the PSAP 911, again, how will that affect our ISO, when that comes up again? How long does it take to dispatch calls according to the NFPA guidelines? What kind of performance guarantees are planned in the IGA with Cottonwood, if in a couple of years, Cottonwood doesn't perform to expectations? What happens? Do we get our stuff back? I don't know. I ask this because the first time experience with dispatch and EMS expansion long ago with private ambulance in most of the San Francisco Bay area – East Bay, we took over dispatch of Sacramento, that I was tasked with... they put out a low ball price that seemed reasonable on the first contact, and probably in good faith, but as others have mentioned, there's substantial costs to recover. And Cottonwood isn't the huge EMS corporation that I was with. That's how it's done. I mean, it's sort of a hostile takeover in business terms, but soon, as you've seen on TV, taxpayers are asked to pay a fee year down the road, like we just saw with Rural Metro, just saw that on the news down there. Perceptions – I mean, when nearly every regional fire department states intentions to leave us at once, it can be perceived as a takeover, hostile or coordinated by those served, but how did this come to be and in what meeting? That was mentioned earlier, as well. It was news to me. Public and taxpayers need to know and it would be nice to have some input. That was expressed to me, and I said, well, that's your perception, you're entitled to it, but I really didn't know much more to offer them. Would public input bring forth valid questions that would serve us well in negotiations going forward? Would the dispatchers offer the same? I've more concerns, and only verbalized a few here due to the time constraints, but I ask the

*Board to delay any vote in order to examine this venture further, and possibly, include the public and certainly, any of our dispatchers that wish to volunteer their experience to get the best outcome. Thank you for your time.*

**Terry Keller – West Sedona:** *Chief Kazian, staff, and Sedona Fire District Governing Board, I respectfully request to address today in three capacities – first, as a long-time resident of the Sedona Fire District, and the City of Sedona; secondly, as a former member of the Sedona Fire District, where I served 24+ years as a Volunteer Firefighter, a Volunteer Captain, and eventually became a full-time employee serving as a Firefighter, Paramedic, Captain, and Battalion Chief, Training Officer, Assistant Chief, and even the Interim Chief. Finally, now, I want to address you as the Fire Chief of both Camp Verde Fire District and Montezuma-Rimrock Fire District, both of which are current subscribers for dispatch services from the Sedona Regional Communication Center. Obviously, I'm addressing the dispatch issue. For as long as I have been aware of Sedona Fire District's operations, they have always undertaken dispatching for themselves. It is my understanding this started simply because there was really no other entity or agency capable of conducting this task way back when. Without question, this model was expensive as SFD had to bear 100% of the cost of dispatch during this era. At some point, Pinewood Fire District joined the mix, and the cost of dispatching for Pinewood Fire became a revenue stream to help offset some of Sedona's dispatch costs. The silly analogy I've used over the years to describe this was that Sedona was making the trip anyway, and if a hitchhiker was picked up to help pay for the gas, any amount offered simply helped to offset the cost of the trip. Eventually, multiple subscribers were solicited to join the center, but at some point, prior management at SFD made the decision to maintain control over the governance of the center by manipulating the subscription structure so as to ensure SFD maintained the majority of the costs, even though the volume of calls dispatched had now evolved to where the subscribers were the larger percentage compared to that of SFD. During the explosive growth of the mid-2000s, this strategy did not seem to raise too many questions as there was plenty of revenue to overlook this issue; however, the great recession of 2008 began to change things and SFD's spending habits and cost recovery for dispatching came under scrutiny. I remember those times well.*

*It is clear that SFD has done a great deal to rectify this situation by cutting positions and operating costs and also by abandoning the philosophy of maintaining the majority of the cost structure to maintain their control. Today, we are in a whole new world, however, of course, the City of Cottonwood has followed through with their plans to construct a state of the art dispatch center and is willing to take on hitchhikers to help lower their operating costs. Several agencies that were formerly dispatched by SFD are now riding the Cottonwood bus, which has only made it even harder for SFD to lower their share of costs in comparison to what the cost are for those other agencies, such as Montezuma-Rimrock and Camp Verde, who still remain subscribers. As a Sedona resident who pays property taxes to SFD for two properties, actually three, here in Sedona, I desire to see SFD pursue an approach to keep my property taxes as low as possible while still maintaining quality service. With the Cottonwood Center boasting a new facility and new infrastructure, and Sedona's facility in need of replacement and new technology, and with Sedona switching to Cottonwood representing a significant savings to the budget, as well as no need to construct a new building or purchase new hardware, switching to Cottonwood is the logical answer. However, as a former long-tenured employee of the district and the fire service, it seems hard to simply unplug what has been an extraordinary service to the community and partner agencies. We are in the business of 911, which means we take care of people. My concern if SFD decides to close down the regional center is for the dispatchers, and those who have done a terrific, actually fabulous, job over the years of watching out for the safety of all of the responders in the Verde Valley and beyond. These are terrific folks who deserve the best options that can be offered them.*

*Finally, as a Fire Chief over two agencies who currently receive these quality dispatch services, it would be my preference to stay with the known entity and continue to receive dispatching from Sedona Fire. This represents a known quantity for both Montezuma-Rimrock and Camp Verde. For Camp Verde Fire, closing the Sedona Center might actually save them money, if they were to switch to Cottonwood, but at what cost in the form of what reduction in service or quality. This is unknown. For Montezuma-Rimrock, my current estimates are that it will actually cost them more money if they switch to Cottonwood, rather than remaining with Sedona, even based on the new pricing Sedona has suggested. Finally, if the decision is to close the Regional Center and compel everyone to seek alternate opportunities, be it with Cottonwood or elsewhere, I would only implore you*

*to again consider the welfare of the dedicated dispatchers who have staffed the Regional Center through these tumultuous times. I would also ask these employees to continue to stand by their posts and continue to offer their talents to Sedona and other subscribers to ensure that a tragedy does not befall anyone in need of calling 911. If this does come to pass, then I would certainly like to see Sedona Fire do something to compensate those who stand by their post and stick it out to ensure this transition occurs without issues. I'm not sure what that might be – severance packages of some sort, every assistance possible to help them find alternate employment, perhaps employing them in other capacities, whatever it takes, but again, we take care of people, and I'd like to see these people who have done so much for me and everyone in this valley and beyond, taken care of to the best of our ability. Thank you for your time.*

Fire Marshal Johnson announced that Yavapai County issued a Code Red Alert and by permission of Mr. Montgomery, asked Mr. Jennings to further explain the current situation. Mr. Jennings said Code Red is part of the county's emergency notification system, which means subscribers receive alerts on their phones. He recommended citizens sign up for the notification by going to the Yavapai County website. He explained tonight's announcement is two parts – one, 9-1-1 is mostly working right now in most areas of Yavapai County. He stated Century Link is working quickly to fix the connection, and asked the public to not call 9-1-1 to "test" the system because it puts more traffic on phones lines that may be needed for an emergency.

Mr. Montgomery then asked for Board discussion of the dispatching issue. Mrs. Cooperman stated she is aware this is the most important vote she will make over the seven years she anticipates being on the Board; she is aware of the unique history of the SRCC in that a fire agency has the PSAP; she also stated her appreciation for the dedication and quality of the SRCC dispatch employees. However, she is concerned with the discrepancy in cost bearing for services SFD provides and that SFD has paid more than double, and sometimes triple, the amount subscribers pay; this is a serious budgeting problem. Mrs. Cooperman said with escalating costs and the need to build a future Uptown station, she does not believe SFD can continue to sustain the financial burden of the discrepancy in costs between SFD and our subscribers for dispatch. She said it is heartening to know the Cottonwood Center is very interested in hiring our dispatchers, if they are interested, and they have offered to give them preferential treatment in the hiring process. She visited the Cottonwood Center earlier this week, and its dispatchers are dual trained in fire/EMS and police call answering. Her concern was the CCC was run through the police department, and fire might not get equal treatment, but she no longer has that concern. Mrs. Cooperman said her lingering concern is regarding the PSAP and if it does not transfer with SFD to the CCC, calls will first be answered by Sedona Police, and then routed to Cottonwood, which extends our response time. She asked Chief Kazian to do all he can to bring the SFD PSAP to CCC, although it may not be in his control.

Board Member Diane Schoen stated this is a very difficult time for all and wanted the dispatchers to know how much they understand and listen to the employees in a positive way in hopes of finding a solution that will make a difference for everyone. She said when the Board makes decisions such as this, they know not everyone is going to feel a benefit, or feel they are getting the support they need because these decisions are difficult and when a decision is difficult, she said some people will be unhappy; she is mostly concerned for employees feeling there was not a lot of study, but assured everyone this has been on-going for five years, and the district has worked hard; she said it is wrong for Chief Kazian to bear the brunt of responsibility because it is truly the Board's responsibility. Mrs. Schoen said it is not personal, and there is no "big, bad Chief here"; she said everyone is trying to make the best decision for our citizens and their safety, and for the long-term future of the district. She said change is always hard, and although she cannot speak for the entire Board, she will do everything possible to protect the community, our employees, and make sure they try to make the best decision.

Mr. Montgomery reiterated this is not an easy decision, and this issue certainly did not come up "overnight". He said a rather large audit was conducted several years ago, of which he was not a "big fan", but a major recommendation was that dispatch should be outsourced, and although he disagreed at the time, he believes the benefit of a centralized dispatch center for the Verde Valley outweighs the objections. He also said the future of the fire service is consolidation, which they saw at the AFDA Conference. He said we must seek ways to cut costs in order to maintain our independence, and cannot continue to subsidize other agencies. He also said, regardless of what some people may think, \$151 per call is our current cost, and in the \$60 range for other

agencies; as a taxpayer, he cannot see how that is fair; some may question the information, but he spoke with Chief Kazian today and no one called and asked for facts, figures, or data, and perhaps the outdated information quoted by the public tonight is from old Board Minutes or hearsay. He assured the public that staff and Board have carefully gone through the numbers and visited the new Cottonwood Center, and have assurances from them regarding the per call costs and the 5% cap, so many objections being brought up tonight have been covered; he said this is not a new issue and it is a decision the Board must make; he does not see any other choice given what SFD is facing in the next few budget years with the downturn of Assessed Values, health insurance, Workers Comp, and other factors; Mr. Montgomery said a cost of more than \$5 million over the next five years in order to keep a service that can be done efficiently by our personnel with the assurances of Cottonwood they will make every effort to hire them, is a “win/win”. He said the Board must do what is best for the organization, the taxpayers, and future sustainability of the district.

Mrs. Cooperman reiterated that in the contract to be written, there will be definite limitations on how much the per call fee can be increased and it is not large, so the concept it would soon be \$90 per call is not accurate. Mr. Montgomery said the Board will consider how to incentivize current dispatchers and make every possible effort to help them with employment with Cottonwood, if that is their choice.

Chief Kazian said not all financial issues regarding this have been fully determined, and if there is an employee incentive package, the difference between \$350,000 and \$400,000 could be even more; however, he assured the public the long-term impacts are non-negotiable and are fact; he further stated even the \$90 per call amount quoted by someone today is still a far cry from the current \$151 fee. He also said there has been three years of discussion about the PSAP having to be given up if the subscriber base is not maintained, and asked Mr. Jennings to comment; Mr. Jennings said if the SRCC does not have other subscribers, the cost will be entirely Sedona Fire’s; Chief Kazian said for SFD only or with a few small subscribers, there is still a \$648,000 projection just for four employees in the SRCC – one person a day, with perhaps, a part-time position, which is “pretty thin” coverage, and were we to add the PSAP back in and maintain two dispatchers per day, the cost would be at \$1.2 million to SFD; he said the only possible subscriber projected to stay with SRCC would be Pinewood Fire, and their annual fee would only be \$37,000. He has been at SFD for three years of budgeting and now on the fourth; he is extremely confident in his ability to manage numbers and understand the complexities this presents; he assured all that does not mean everyone is a “number”, but rather, it is about long-term sustainability, and as far as public safety, one dispatcher trying to handle, for example, a Tlaquepaque flood, is unsafe. The Cottonwood Center will have two fire dispatchers plus a call-taker, and a police dispatcher, which makes him much more comfortable to safely serve the public.

Board Member Scott Jablow joined the meeting at 5:55 PM, and stated he has been in touch with Chief Kazian in this matter, and was impressed during the tour of the Cottonwood Center, and agrees that going down to one dispatcher is not good for the community.

Mr. Montgomery said the Cottonwood Center far exceeds the standards, and the building is extremely well built with ballistic-rated windows, dedicated generator systems, even dampers that close in the event of bioterrorist attack; Chief Kazian reminded everyone that during the Slide Fire, our dispatchers were being inundated with the smoke; Mr. Montgomery said our current dispatch building is very out-of-date and not built to withstand any kind of major catastrophe, and the extreme amount of money necessary to upgrade the facility has been on his mind for a long time. Mrs. Cooperman added there is excellent expansion capability built into the CCC. Mr. Jablow said the facility replacement costs also weigh heavily on him, and pointed out this community just spent money on a needed fire station and he does not know if SFD can sustain several more million dollars for a new dispatch facility. Mrs. Schoen said she also toured the CCC and considering our outdated facility, SFD is fortunate to have an opportunity to be part of a state of the art dispatch center; and without it, we would be asking our taxpayers to fund another dispatch center, and to be nearing a \$3.00 mil rate and build a dispatch center would be overwhelming for our community. She also addressed the notion of postponing this decision, and said in life, it is not a good idea to put off some decisions and wait until the next crisis to make a decision that is so important to our employees and taxpayers, even though it is done with heavy hearts. Chief Kazian said Cottonwood has designed a great facility, but it is not the building that should sway the Board’s decision; Mr.

Montgomery agreed but asked, why would SFD build a \$3 million center in competition with Cottonwood for a finite number of subscribers; he said some people may think, why was this not addressed before, and pointed out a former Board Member had even recommended SFD transfer its dispatching services to the Internet; he said there are such ways to extreme cost cut, but this is a well thought-out decision to save money and insure services are provided and to take care of our people to the best guarantee we can get.

Chief Kazian said he hopes the dispatchers understand there has never been a personal attack on dispatch, and pointed out he had come from an area of the Midwest with a regional fire dispatch center; he understands fire dispatching and hopes our current dispatch employees will help work forward to a solution truly beneficial to all. He is glad the Board mentioned wanting to take care of our employees, and possibly, provide incentives to remain with us in a transitional period and provide service to our community; he thanked each employee for all they do, and he is sorry if there is a feeling he has a “vendetta” against any of them; he said that has never been the case, and is here to make sure our district is able to provide service into the future; although it is the Board’s decision whether to go to CCC or stay with SRCC, it is his duty to see the Board fully understands the situation.

***Mr. Montgomery then moved to direct the Fire Chief to move dispatching services to the Cottonwood Center and work with legal counsel, as directed in Executive Session; Mr. Jablow provided a second, and the motion was unanimously approved.*** Mr. Montgomery feels our relationship with Cottonwood will be prosperous and successful, with the two agencies working together.

## **2. Reconsideration of Extension of ARS 38-961 Workers Compensation benefit for Firefighter Travis Powell.**

Mr. Montgomery said this item is the reconsideration of ARS 38-961 benefit extension to Firefighter Travis Powell. Chief Kazian said that in 2012, the Arizona Legislature passed a statute affording public safety employees benefit coverages when on Workers Compensation for work-related illness or injury. These benefits include the employee’s cost of pension, health care, and freezing sick leave usage, are extended to the employees for six months and then, the elected Board must decide whether to extend the benefits for another six months; there is a 12 month cap for the benefit. He said one of our incredible employees, Travis Powell, who has given almost 15 years of service to the district, is battling his second bout of leukemia, deemed a Workers Comp case under presumptive legislation. Chief Kazian publicly apologized for his failure of Firefighter Powell at last month’s meeting, by only presenting facts, and not adding his personal recommendation to extend the benefits; he believes Firefighter Powell would always put the public above himself, and certainly warrants reconsideration to extend the 961 benefits; he said this is a strong recommendation. He apologized for not speaking his mind publicly. Chief Kazian further stated to our firefighters and staff that he does have their backs, and is here for them. He clarified that the cost to the district would be about \$19,000 and is not for pension costs alone, but also includes continuation of his salary above what Workers Comp and all the rolls ups include; he said the pension cost is around \$3,000. Chief Kazian said, secondarily, staff was directed by the Board to work on policy for future cases, and his recommendation is to work with labor through RBO to create a policy that makes sense for our organization, after the high emotions of this situation are down. He said firefighting is a difficult job and they find themselves at risk to get hurt or ill on a daily basis. Firefighter Powell has been under hospital care for 174 days, and hoping to be home at day 100, but is not expected to be released for another 30 days or more. Chief Kazian said the district owes Firefighter Powell this extension, as he has given to the community for many years. He apologized to the membership for his failure to lead at a critical juncture last month, and said it is critical for employees to understand how committed he is to SFD’s future and to make it sustainable for everyone, and strongly recommended the Board make it right for Firefighter Powell.

Mr. Hazime said, as mentioned, the Board has a fiduciary responsibility, but with its previous decision only gave Firefighter Powell and his family one month to prepare for these changes; he is in favor of extending benefits for the six months, to hopefully give him a little breathing room and be able to come back to work; he said this was a unique case with no policy to guide the Board, and believes there is nothing more important in this organization than our employees; he concurs with the Chief to create a new policy for future cases to prevent this from happening again. Mr. Hazime said he feels strongly that last month’s decision was not the best

for Firefighter Powell, who is fighting for his life. He said the Board has supported Firefighter Powell through the last 18 months, and asked the Board to reconsider its decision.

Mr. Montgomery then granted Brent Johnson the opportunity to make a statement. He remarked, as follows: *My name is Brent Johnson. I'm a Firefighter with Sedona Fire, and I'm also the V.P. for the Firefighters Association. Right off the bat, I want to say thank you for your comments, Chief, that's... I'm kind of beside myself. We've been working together and we agreed on this subject and it's not often you hear words like that. It's very emotional to hear. So, the subject we're talking about, I've got a lot of opinion on, and I know there are expenses that go into these things. Your position as a Board is a very difficult one. You have to take those human factors into account and financial factors. It's a very serious situation. You're accounting for an entire budget for a community. So, the fact you are willing to come back and take another look at this means a lot, because these are tough and heavy decisions for you to consider. So, thank you for that. And there's a lot of things that go into this decision for Travis's sake. The extended stay away from his home, close to the care facility he's at... these are expenses that are hard to cover and the decision to not continue for the next six months fully supporting, would have some serious impacts on him. I know this because I've spoken to him. These are the real human factors we need to consider. It is not just, ideally, the right thing to do, but it has very strong financial impacts on their lives, as well, that I want you guys to consider when you have your vote. It will put him in a very, very tight financial position and possibly something that he's not able to sustain. These are not the stresses someone recovering from cancer needs to have on his plate. The hope is that in several months, he will be able to return home, be in a better financial position, and this will be that gap that helps take him to that point. It's a very direct impact on his welfare. So, I want you to consider that, and also there's another aspect of this, which is...us, you know, when we see this, we can't help but go, my gosh, what if that's me? What if that's my brother, my sister that gets hurt, that gets burned in a building, cancer, broken pelvis from a fall off a cliff... who knows? We want to know that those considerations are going to be taken into account when it's our bodies in the hospital bed. We want to know we are given the same consideration to think, we need to give everything for these people because they are willing to put their lives on the line for us, and it's emotional, but it's something we need to take seriously financially, I get that – but also, the human factor. I'm just asking you to reverse that vote in favor of Travis. Thank you.*

Mrs. Cooperman said last month, she recommended we extend Firefighter Powell's benefits for six months, mainly because in his first go around with cancer, that was done, and it did not seem good to change course the second time around. She said the cost is rather low for extending benefits for six months in terms of the human factor. Chief Kazian visited every station and had heartfelt discussions with personnel about this matter, and he wants everyone to know we take care of our employees; he appreciates the Board's reconsideration.

***Mrs. Cooperman moved to rescind the prior action at the January Board meeting regarding Travis Powell. Mr. Montgomery seconded and the motion unanimously passed.***

***Mrs. Cooperman then moved to grant the extension of ARS 38-961 benefits for Firefighter Travis Powell for an additional six months. A second was provided by Mr. Hazime, and the motion was unanimously approved.***

Mr. Whittington then reminded the Board they did not approve the Consent and Waiver under Item III.B.1, and said he does represent other parties in the IGA for the Communications Center. ***Mr. Montgomery then moved to approve the Consent and Waiver for Mr. Whittington's law firm, Mrs. Schoen seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.***

### **3. Proposed House Bill 2351 Re: Fire Chief – PSPRS; Eligibility Update.**

Chief Kazian stated no action is needed on House Bill 3351. Mr. Montgomery said this is an item that SFD co-sponsored to correct an issue with the retirement system. Chief Kazian said we will continue to work to maintain successful passage of the proposed Bill to limit the liability of the fire district and maintain an opportunity for a true retirement benefit for Arizona Fire Chiefs.

#### **C. Consent Agenda – Discussion/Possible Action:**

##### **1. January 28, 2014 Executive Session Minutes.**

**2. January 28, 2014 Regular Board Meeting Minutes.**

*Mr. Montgomery moved to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented; Mrs. Cooperman provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.*

**D. Public Forum:**

**1. Public Comments.**

There were no additional requests from the public to speak.

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

There was no Executive Staff response needed.

**E. Business:**

**1. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and Approval of:**

**a. January 2015 Financial Report.**

Mr. Montgomery said the Financial Report is in the Board packets, and there were “no surprises”. Mrs. Cooperman said it looked higher than expected in several categories. *She moved to approve the January Financial Report, as submitted; Mr. Hazime seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.*

**2. Monthly Staff Report – Fire Chief Kris Kazian.**

- a. Call Summary for Month and Year to Date.**
- b. Calls by Still District Summary for Month and Year to Date.**
- c. Emergency Response Times Summary for Month and Year to Date.**
- d. Regional Communications Center Dispatch Activity for Month and Year to Date.**
- e. Update of Special/Significant Activities and Incidents.**
- f. General Update of Recent SFD Activities, Happenings, and Events.**
  - i. Change in SFD Business Office Hours.**
  - ii. St. Patrick’s Day Parade – 3/14/15.**
  - iii. Battalion Chief Jayson Coil – Chairperson, State Wildland Committee.**
  - iv. Update of Wildland Prevention Public Safety Announcement.**
  - v. Update on Firefighter Testing Process.**
  - vi. Update on Human Resources Manager Hiring Process.**
- g. SFD Training Report.**
- h. Community Risk Management Update.**
- i. Donations to SFD.**
- j. Update of Grant Activity.**
- k. Correspondence/Thank You Letters to SFD.**

Chief Kazian said the January Fire Chief’s Report the Board received is an abbreviated version. Staff is still working on formatting the information under national guidelines, and more categories will be provided next month. Engineer Brian Espiau and Division Chief Lechowski are working to present the factual information in easy to understand categories that coincide with information we report to the Federal government. Chief Lechowski said response times are not included, and previously, we were not reporting that information in accordance with industry standards; he said, typically, that is presented in fractiles, and used the example, the district will respond to 80% of incidents within 8 minutes or less; he said this would be a specific goal, rather than just reporting an “average” response time, because one call to a remote area could skew the response time averages for the whole month; it is not a good measure of across the board effectiveness. Chief Lechowski said we are moving towards accreditation as a future goal, and better reporting will help. Chief Kazian stated we are looking at models of urban response versus rural settings, and noted rural settings cannot have a realistic expectation of meeting all calls within 8 minutes, but most of the time SFD does.

Additionally, the report gives a breakdown by station for the month’s responses. He also noted several significant events, including a chimney fire in Oak Creek Canyon on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, and a fire behind a fireplace at a residence in the Chapel area on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Our crews provided fantastic responses to both these fires. Chief Kazian said as Fire Marshal Johnson previously reported the cause of the fire at the Sedona Taco Bell is still undetermined. Fire Marshal Johnson said he could safely use the word “suspicious” and there are reasons but it

is left open for additional information, and the criminal investigation is at approximately the same place. SFD is working closely with Sedona Police Department on this case. Chief Kazian emphasized the cooperation and expertise of the Sedona Police, as well as the investigators from Sedona Fire.

Chief Kazian noted several building projects in Sedona including the Nexus complex at Highway 89A and Roadrunner, and Weber's grocery store in the Village plans to upgrade its facility. He recently attended the Good Morning Sedona event, which he attends quarterly and the Chamber of Commerce reported in one month, the bed tax generated more than \$200,000 of additional revenue for the City, and correlates to how much money tourists spend in Sedona, and SFD sees an increase in incident traffic with increased calls; for the month of January, SFD responded to 375 calls compared to 306 calls last January.

Under the Grants Update, SFD received a grant for \$20,000 to produce a Public Safety Announcement on Wildland issues, and recently met with our videographer and a subject matter expert.

Chief Kazian informed the Board that SFD business hours have changed from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM to 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Thursday, as we recently lost a part-time employee, and were scrambling to cover the front desk for an additional hour.

Chief Kazian reported the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Uptown Sedona will be on Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, and Board Member Corrie Cooperman will represent the district. Fire Marshal Johnson is working on the parade application and Battalion Chief Ed Mezulis is coordinating SFD's participation. He congratulated Battalion Chief Jayson Coil, for his selection as the Chairperson for the State Wildland Committee. He also said SFD had 103 applicants for a Firefighter Hiring List testing process, with 63 taking the written test, and 23 passing; 21 candidates participated in the skills assessment and it will produce a strong list for future hiring, although there are no current positions. Chief Kazian said staff would soon give its recommendations on the Reserve program. He reported SFD held a thorough process for hiring a new Human Resources Manager, and after a two-day assessment center, staff believes a good choice has been made; her name is Jane Witt, and she currently works at Verde Valley Medical Center; she will begin on March 16<sup>th</sup>, and is well versed in HR and highly experienced.

Mrs. Schoen commented under the category of donations, she had two comments; her husband, Arnie, recently passed away, and she wanted to thank everyone at SFD for their thoughts, and the lovely bouquet of flowers the Firefighter Association sent; she noted a donation was received in her husband's name for the fire district.

### **3. Discussion/Possible Action: Reschedule SFD Fire Board Meetings – Item Requested by Board Member Scott Jablow.**

Mr. Jablow asked the Board to consider rescheduling Sedona Fire District Board meetings to the third Wednesday of each month, as he recently attained a seat on City Council and will have conflicts on the fourth Wednesday. He said, initially, there was no conflict because City Council was not using the fourth Wednesday. He said he would like to stay on the SFD Board as he is dedicated to the organization. Mr. Montgomery stated he has no problem with the third Wednesday, but it would push everything up in the month for staff; he also said the Board could consider the first Wednesday of the month, but then all report information would be more than a month behind. Chief Kazian said the staff is fine with scheduling Board meetings on the third Wednesday of the month, but has a concern about the delay in reporting information if the first week is chosen. Mr. Montgomery commented the third Wednesday would not be a conflict for Attorney Bill Whittington.

Mrs. Cooperman commented she believes it is important to have a seasoned Board Member for the upcoming budget process. Mrs. Schoen asked what if the City changes its schedule again, would the Fire Board again be asked to reschedule its meeting; Mr. Jablow replied, no, he would resign. Mrs. Schoen stated she is supportive of keeping Mr. Jablow on the Board, as Mrs. Cooperman stated, but is concerned about the City not being willing to change. Mr. Jablow said the City is not making the request, he is doing so and because the City has more than one meeting in the course of a month. Mr. Montgomery said if we can make the change work, he is in favor of helping Mr. Jablow, and agreed it is not a good time to have a new Board meeting with the budgeting cycle beginning. Mr. Montgomery asked if there were any objections, and then stated by consensus, the Board agreed to change the Fire Board meetings to the third Wednesday. Chief Kazian pointed out the

March meeting was previously scheduled on the third Wednesday, as there was a conflict with the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association Conference, and asked Recording Clerk Tricia Greer to make the change of meetings on the website calendar and send a list of the rescheduled dates to the Board.

**F. Items from Staff:**

**1. Discussion/Possible Action: Purchase Order #9609 to Telewave, Inc. in the amount of \$14,638.32 for Telecommunications Transmitter Combining System.**

Division Chief Scott Schwisow said this is a sole source, budgeted item to address telecommunication interference issues. *Mrs. Cooperman moved to approve Purchase Order #9609 to Telewave, Inc. in the amount of \$14,638.32; a second was provided by Mr. Jablow. The motion unanimously passed.*

**2. Discussion/Possible Action: Purchase Order #9611 to NetMotion Wireless, Inc., in the amount of \$10,764.14 for Mobile Data Software.**

Division Chief Schwisow said this software will provide more persistence in connectivity for equipment, and again, is covered by a sole source purchase. *Mrs. Cooperman moved to approve Purchase Order #9611 to NetMotion Wireless in the amount of \$10,764.14, Mrs. Schoen seconded and it was unanimously approved.*

**3. Discussion/Possible Action: Fire Danger and Civic Group Signs at Station 6.**

Chief Kazian informed the Board we received construction drawings yesterday for the fire danger sign, and are hoping to get a quote for the sign by the March Board meeting. He said the civic groups are slowly and certainly telling us they are not interested anymore; however, a cost estimate will help them make a decision. The cost of the sign will be under the Chief's spending authority without further Board approval. He said the Board may need to give further direction about SFD removing the old civic group sign; Mr. Montgomery pointed out several representatives of the organizations attended the meeting last month and stated their support of building a new sign. Chief Kazian said they did offer support, but that was without their Boards' approval. Mr. Jablow commented although the original intent was to do both signs at the same time, the civic groups should realize the sign may be removed, but could be added in the future at the organizations' expense.

**4. Update: Receipt of Net Assessed Valuation Reports from Coconino and Yavapai Counties for Fiscal Year 2015/2016.**

Chief Kazian said staff is required by law to provide a two year budget, and SFD projects budgets out about seven years; however, circumstances, such as the recent Fields court decision, will cost the district an additional \$190,000 to the budget for public safety pension. Currently, there are two cases in litigation regarding pensions that may further increase the budgets. He said these are the sort of unexpected expenses that impact budgets. Chief Kazian said, in 2015, we will see the implications of Proposition 117 which was approved by Arizona voters in 2013; Prop 117 caused fire districts to change from using Full Cash Value (FCV) to Limited Property Value (LPV) for property taxes; we were unsure how Prop 117 would affect us, but the County told us we would expect to get 5% in future years, and so, we used that to project future budgets for setting the mil rate and taxing; however, we received our Net Assessed Value from the Counties, which is required by law to be reported by February 10<sup>th</sup>, and Fire Chiefs around the State started calling each other to ask what happened because the numbers were so low.

Chief Kazian said this is the fourth budget cycle he has been at SFD, and has always said if the Assessed Values increase, the mil rate may be able to go down; however, although SFD's Full Cash Values increased by 14.16% with Yavapai and Coconino Counties combined, we now use LPV and Sedona got a net 2.2% overall AV increase; using the previous formula for FCV would have allowed our mil rate to go down to \$2.09, we are now looking at \$2.39 mil rate which included the SRCC, so we may have a little more latitude. Using the new formula, we projected a mil rate of over \$3.00 by FY 2022. He said there could be upcoming 0% years, which will mean the mil rate will "sky rocket" and we could be at the \$3.25 mil rate cap sooner. Chief Kazian said we are in a "danger zone", and the actions recommended today relating to SRCC tempered this quite a bit; this is the harsh reality for most fire districts. It will be very important for us to understand Prop 117 and how it will affect us in the coming years, and how it will be a "game changer" for many fire districts. Prop 117 came into effect when fire district AV were at the lowest point possible, and it will take at least 10 years to recover; it is a voter enacted act and cannot be amended by legislation, and any legislation to increase the \$3.25 cap has only a

slim chance of succeeding; he said maybe after the public sees the domino effect of Prop 117 causing fire districts to collapse, action may be taken. Mrs. Cooperman asked if there any chance the legislature is considering going back to the FCV rather than LPV; Chief Kazian said that was part of Prop 117. Also, he said to compound the impact, commercial property went from the 25% previously taxed to the lowest it is slated to go at 18%, and commercial tax being lowered, is pushing a higher tax burden to homeowners.

Chief Kazian informed those present he just received a text that the 9-1-1 service from Phoenix appears to be restored. He pointed out that our SRCC being the only Comm Center working in Northern Arizona today may have been our proximity to the Century Link building, which is across the street.

#### **G. Items from Board Chairman Ty Montgomery:**

##### **1. Monthly Update: Fees for Legal Services Provided to SFD.**

Mr. Montgomery said January's legal fees for Mr. Whittington were \$1,547 and \$23,000 for the year, which is far under the \$60,000 budgeted amount.

##### **2. Discussion/Possible Action: Format and Timeframe for Fire Chief's Annual Evaluation.**

Mr. Montgomery sent the Board suggestions for the method for the Fire Chief's evaluation. He then asked for discussion by the Board of options. Mrs. Cooperman said we have hired Ms. Witt for our HR Manager starting in March, and she believes it makes sense to delay the Fire Chief's review until Ms. Witt has a chance to get her "feet on the ground" with the job, and then, come up with a review process. Mrs. Schoen expressed her support of Mrs. Cooperman's suggestion, and the reason to pay for an HR Manager is to get professional advice and with her experience, she may have other options. Additionally, she believes the timing of the Chief's evaluation right now may not be appropriate, considering the decision made tonight and the blame being placed on the Chief from some of the comments made. Mr. Jablow expressed his agreement with what Mrs. Cooperman and Mrs. Schoen expressed, and believes we should wait, and a 360 degree evaluation from the whole department may not be fair; he said the new HR Manager may have other ideas. Mr. Hazime said his concern to wait for the new HR Manager is how long it may take for her to be prepared to work with the Board, and provide professional answers; he commented a 360 degree may not have to include everyone in the department, and HR could help design a process; he believes it is important for the Chief to receive feedback from the Board regarding his personal development. Chief Kazian said Ms. Witt's first two weeks will be her introduction to the organization, and establish her priorities; he would aim for April at the soonest to include this on the Board Agenda for discussion with Ms. Witt, although it could be June or July; he would appreciate the Board's input to gauge his success or failures. Mr. Montgomery commented evaluations are not meant to be punitive, but rather to help employees and he already believes Chief Kazian is doing a good job.

#### **IV. FIRE MARSHAL'S SAFETY MESSAGE**

Fire Marshal Gary Johnson thanked Fire Inspector Kevin Sullivan for notifying the media and public about a fire extinguisher recall, and displayed the Kidde brand model; he said the fire district needs to pay attention to not only fire extinguisher recalls, but those on vehicles, and other items, such as dishwashers, which can cause fires. It is important for the fire district to be proactive.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

*Original signed by Corrie Cooperman*

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Corrie Cooperman, Clerk of the Board

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