



Approved by the Board 8/19/25

Sedona Fire District

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
Telephone (928) 282-6800 FAX (928) 282-6857

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 – 2860 Southwest Drive – Sedona – Multipurpose Room
Tuesday, July 8, 2025 / 3:00 PM

~ M I N U T E S ~

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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

B. Roll call of Board Members

Pursuant to notice, a Regular Meeting of the Sedona Fire District (SFD) was called to order by Board Chair Helen McNeal at 3:03 PM on Tuesday, July 8, 2025. A quorum of the Board was present and the meeting, having been duly convened, proceeded with business.

Board Present: Helen McNeal – Chair; Corrie Cooperman – Clerk; Diana Christensen; Lance Waldrop – (joined the meeting late due to scheduled SFD meeting); Scott Springett – Members. **Other Present:** Ed Mezulis – Fire Chief; Assistant Chief Jayson Coil; Deputy Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell; Division Chief Buzz Lechowski; Division Chief Jordan Baker; Bill Whittington – Board Attorney; Tricia Greer – Acting Recorder. **On-line:** Sara Simonton, JVG Associates. **Absent:** JVG Finance Director Gabe Buldra

Ms. McNeal led the Pledge of Allegiance and requested a moment of silence to honor the four firefighters and six law enforcement officers who died nationwide in the line of duty since the last meeting. Ms. Greer provided a roll call of Board Members.

II. EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION – YEARS OF SERVICE & BADGE PINNING

A. Recognition of Fleet Services Manager Michael Sheehan – 15 Years of Service

Fire Chief Ed Mezulis introduced Michael Sheehan who started with the district as a Temporary Mechanic in 2010, became full-time in 2012, and was promoted to Fleet Services Manager in 2022; Mr. Sheehan is marking his 15th year at SFD; he has received numerous SFD awards including Admin/Support Employee of the Year in 2024 and the Distinguished Service Award in 2022. Ms. McNeal stated, on behalf of the Board, her appreciation for all Mr. Sheehan has done for the district and looks forward to the wonderful things to come for him in the future; Ms. McNeal said he has made a huge difference and she is grateful for his service.

Human Resources Manager Keona Freeman then introduced new SFD employees – HR Specialist Gwen Witherspoon and Administrative Services Manager Ellyse Deldin. Ms. Freeman said the new employees will be formally recognized at next month's Board meeting along with our Administrative Clerk Audrey Escobar.

III. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

A. Public Forum:

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

There were no requests from the public to speak.

B. Consent Agenda – Discussion/Possible Actions:

1. **June 17, 2025 Regular Meeting and Public Budget Hearing Minutes**

Ms. McNeal entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented; Board Clerk Corrie Cooperman so moved and Ms. McNeal seconded. There was no discussion; the motion unanimously passed.

C. Staff Items:

1. June 2025 Monthly Staff Report

a. Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil

- 1) Significant Events**
 - a. All-Hazard**
 - b. Emerging Issues**
- 2) Human Resources**
 - a. Staffing**
 - b. Promotions**
 - c. Significant Issues**
- 3) Administration**
 - a. News**
 - b. Upcoming Events**

Assistant Chief Jayson Coil said the number of extreme heat calls is putting our crews at risk; these calls require a large number of responders in challenging circumstances. He reminded the public and tourists of consequences of not being prepared in our extreme environment. Chief Coil thanked the Board for helping SFD be prepared by approving funds for safety and other essential equipment. Ms. McNeal asked if the State of Arizona has refused to close hiking trails in extreme heat; Chief Coil replied that would not be the State's authority and the US Forest Service has no mechanism to do so; in the Phoenix area, the City of Phoenix has the authority to close trailheads.

Ms. McNeal asked why the City of Sedona is shuttling people to trailheads during times of very high temperatures. Chief Mezulis said limiting shuttles does not stop trail use, as people would illegally park at the trailheads and the City of Sedona does not have the resources to monitor every trail. Ms. McNeal wondered if the Board should address this issue with the City. Chief Coil said, if so directed, staff could talk to the City about shuttle scheduling. Division Chief Buzz Lechowski said it is difficult to stop tourists from hiking who have saved money to visit here; they need education regarding the heat index based on elevation; he also stated the City of Phoenix has signs warning of dire consequences of hiking in 100-plus degree temperatures and also prohibiting dogs on the trails in extreme health (as pets have died). Ms. Cooperman asked if signs would help; Chief Coil said he could reach out to the Forest Service regarding signs and then asked the new Administrative Services Manager Ellyse Deldin, based on her past experience as a backcountry ranger, if signs would help; she replied the signage itself is not always the most effective because people could opt to not read them; staff at Grand Canyon and Death Valley built more robust preventative search and rescue programs; signs, more personnel at trailheads, and changes to the shuttle schedule may help. Chief Lechowski added there are preventative programs in our area, which run out of resources in the summer. Ms. McNeal stated we owe it to our Firefighters to explore options to mitigate this situation with the City of Sedona and partners and asked staff to begin those discussions.

Chief Mezulis asked HR Manager Freeman to cover HR events. Ms. Freeman said she was very excited about the incoming new administrative staff, as well as Fire Inspector (who is now in pre-employment). She also said a Firefighter Assessment Center will be held at the end of July to fill vacancies. She attended the SHRM national conference last week in San Diego; the keynote speaker was former US President Joe Biden who addressed the importance of not only taking care of employees, but also to have resources available for their families, as it is very difficult to focus on work when employees are worried about their families.

b. Community Risk Reduction Activities – Interim Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell

- 1) Inspection Activities**
- 2) Fire Investigations**
- 3) Notable Events**

Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell said June has not been as busy as preceding months for Community Risk Reduction. He told the Board there was one fire on a deck in West Sedona off Rodeo Road, which was, fortunately, noticed by a neighbor and reported. The fire began due to planters being used as ashtrays; he reminded the public of the fire danger of using organic material such as dried out potted plants as ash receptacles. He said the Stage 2 fire restrictions are ongoing.

Fire Marshal Riddell and Firefighters attended the July 4th event at the City pool to bring attention to

summertime safety. He also said the Police Department recently ran a call on a dog in distress and used the FIDO bag to give the dog oxygen; he does not know the outcome of the call. Ms. Cooperman commended staff for attending the 4th of July splash event to help the public.

Fire Marshal Riddell gave a safety message regarding monsoon season and the possibility of creeks flash flooding – “turn around, don’t drown” and asked the public to never drive around barricades into flooded roadways. Chief Mezulis said local fire agencies are in the process of signing an Intergovernmental Agreement to establish a common fee schedule for CRR services; he received positive feedback from the agencies and contractors regarding the proposed schedule; however, contractors requested a six-month introduction period to acquaint citizens with the changes. Chief Mezulis said this is not for full cost recovery, but to help offset the costs of extra services agencies provide.

c. Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

1) EMS Activities and Updates

2) Fleet Activities and Updates

3) Other program updates

Chief Lechowski said the summer season is for EMS compliance. He acknowledged Assistant Chief Jayson Coil’s assistance with insurance. Also, Engineer Brian Espiau helped him with a compliance issue with the State of Arizona for Electronic Patient Care Reporting; Chief Lechowski said SFD was not deficient or non-compliant in our reporting, but the system had a software change and our reports were not being correctly received. Chief Mezulis said SFD is recognized by the State as a premiere EMS agency, and the software company had an update, but did not notify appropriate staff of changes. The State informed SFD they were not receiving correct information, and as SFD wants to maintain its premiere status, Chief Lechowski spent a great deal of time tracking down issues and going line by line to sort out discrepancies.

Chief Lechowski stated the new SFD paramedics are testing for the National Registry tomorrow, which means we will soon have three more paramedics on the roster and there are three more training in the Fall. Regarding Fleet services, Fleet Manager Mike Sheehan is, as always, keeping SFD vehicles on the road. Chief Lechowski informed the Board that he and Chief Mezulis are beginning work on capital items and had recently been informed new fire trucks would cost about \$980,000; two years ago, the fire trucks we purchased were \$750,000 each. Venture capitalists now own fire truck manufacturing companies almost as monopolies and it takes years to receive trucks after purchase; SFD needs two engines. He said this Board and future Boards must be aware of the purchasing and receiving challenges of acquiring fire engines – staff is researching options, such as purchasing every other year and receiving the next year. Staff hoped to get by with only two backup ambulances, but with our high mileage (SFD’s newest ambulances have 174,000+ miles and one with 197,000+, even with SFD rotating them between stations). Also, he reported the smaller shop truck approved by the Board is now in service, and the Telecommunications Manager Suburban had a winch and new bumpers installed and will be in service. He reported SFD will soon sell five retired vehicles on a new auction website.

Regarding GIS, Chief Lechowski is working with GIS Analyst Matt Spinelli (who is currently at the GIS industry conference for public safety) to find better ways to visually display response information to the public and the Board, such as the EMS emergencies due to heat exposure.

Board Chair McNeal asked the status of a new process on interfacility transports with Northern Arizona Healthcare; Chief Lechowski said the first stage is going well, and he will attend a program evaluation meeting in two weeks; feedback from the Battalion Chiefs is the process is running smoothly and helping our relationship with NAH. Chief Mezulis added that the hospital has recognized there were personality issues and put resources and an on-site supervisor in place; he will let the Board know after the full evaluation at the end of six months.

Board Member Diana Christensen expressed her shock at the cost of fire trucks and the length of manufacture/delivery time. Chief Mezulis said the International Association of Firefighters is working with members of Congress to investigate this issue, as it is a nationwide problem. Chief Mezulis said the former “mom and pop” fire truck manufacturers have been bought out and combined into a few companies. Agencies nationwide have paid approximately \$4 Billion in public assets and cannot get fire trucks in a timely manner even though 3,000 new trucks are made each year.

d. Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

1) Training Report

2) Wellness

Division Chief of Training Jordan Baker announced ISO OSHA training to meet internal standards is being held; this is to limit training in extreme heat with additional heat exposure at long outdoor calls. He announced the Captain Position Task Book will be coming out this week, replacing the previous 10-year old version; just as in the Firefighter Task Book, it will contain a QR code so issues and outdated equipment can be reported directly from the field. He will sit down with Captains and Battalion Chiefs to get the necessary signatures, and standing committees continue to monitor the task books for necessary updates; the Engineer Task Book will come out next year. He announced the 2025 Engineer Academy is scheduled in September; this will be a three day academy to help prepare personnel for the position and the assessment center, which will be held in early 2026. Probationary Firefighter evaluations (at 6 months and 12 months) are coming up in the Fall.

A year and half ago, SFD held its first venomous reptile removal and relocation training (even though we have been removing snakes for many years); Captain David Rodriguez is the program manager, and another training will be held with live snakes at 9:00 AM on July 10th. Staff needs knowledge of which kinds of snakes are Federally protected and not allowed to be removed under threat of up to a \$10,000 fine for each occurrence – personally to our employees and additional fines for the organization.

Chief Baker said the Firefighter assessment center is scheduled at the end of July. The subsequent New Hire Academy will be held in November this year; Chief Jordan said this will be the fourth academy since he took the Training position. Chief Baker announced 13 SFD personnel will attend State Fire School in Mesa in September; this is a great opportunity for our more junior employees to get good training and network with Arizona peers. Under Wellness safety, Chief Baker continues to order new equipment to replace SFD's aging gym equipment. Also, SFD just held its annual Functional Movement Screenings for Operational employees to evaluate and recommend range of motion and flexibility exercises for safer and easier performance of duties; this will also be scheduled for Administrative and Support employees. He is working with our in-house cadre of wellness instructors on the SFD quarterly wellness letters with information on fitness and wellness. Board Clerk Cooperman said she was impressed with all that is being done in the Training Division. Board Chair McNeal expressed her appreciation and added she sees a significant change in energy and accomplishment in all divisions.

e. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

1) Call Volume & Response Review

a. Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison

b. Response Times

c. Incident Volume Compared to Previous Year by Incident Type by Stations

2) Purchase Orders over \$10,000 (if any)

Fire Chief Mezulis voiced his appreciation to staff for managing last month's Board meeting during his vacation. He reported the Request for Quotations (RFQ) process was held yesterday to determine the best choices for architectural and contractors for the proposed Station 4 project. He said the end result is finding firms to help us affordably build a station that will help the community for the next 50 to 100 years.

Chief Mezulis then reviewed the incidents and response data slides. He noted the uptick of activity for Station 5 in Oak Creek Canyon during summer months. The Station Response data presented by GIS supports what staff already knew, which is that Stations 1 and 3 are appropriately located to handle the bulk of those areas' calls, with Station 4 also handling most of its; and recognized the decision by the previous Board to build Station 6 in a balanced location to support both Stations 4 and 3. He said as the complexities of our calls increase, this data set will help make sure neighborhoods are appropriately covered.

Ms. McNeal said staff and Board talked at the last Board meeting about breaking down incidents with types of calls per station. Chief Lechowski pointed out on response times the only discretion we have is the time between when the call comes in and when our crews leave the station – the rest is up to traffic and what is going on in the community at the time. And, as always, it should be noted that we do not have a hospital facility in Sedona and

must transport patients to Cottonwood, Flagstaff, or even Phoenix, which contributes to the length of calls and mileage on our ambulances. Chief Mezulis said if the City of Sedona requests help, the GIS data sets could be used for traffic studies or road configuration in the future.

Chief Mezulis also noted long distance truck drivers have limited numbers of hours they can drive and he feels emergency agencies should also look at those standards for employee and patient safety.

Board Member Christensen asked for staff to repeat the cost of an ambulance remount; Chief Lechowski responded it was \$220,000 (not to exceed \$250,000) to refurbish and get a new chassis, new lighting, and upgraded harness seat belts to safely move around the cabin with patients; new ambulances are about \$330,000 or \$450,000 to \$500,000 for four wheel drive diesel units.

2. Discussion/Possible Action: Emergency Dispatch Services Agreement with City of Cottonwood – July 2025

Chief Mezulis said this Emergency Dispatch Services Agreement is a transition to a new model similar to agencies in the Phoenix metro area and is a modification of governance at the dispatch center. He reiterated that SFD is a customer of the City of Cottonwood as part of the dispatch center, but the desire is to be a partnering agency. The dispatch center restructured its billing for SFD and all other regional agencies. SFD has seen a steady annual 5% increase in costs since the SFD dispatch center closed years ago resulting in a 45% to 50% cost increase. This Agreement moves toward a reduction in costs. He said, ultimately and ideally, a representative from each agency would serve as a dispatch center governing board member, which is a more efficient system; after the radio system is upgraded, agencies are also evaluating the potential of a regional IT Center. Chief Mezulis recently spoke with Yavapai County Sheriff Rhodes about the results of a feasibility study on improving dispatch centers; it showed the system is currently working, but there are opportunities of increasing efficiency through combining regional dispatch; there are three dispatch centers on the Prescott side of the county and three in the Verde Valley area; he said moving from customer to partner affords an opportunity to build a better, more efficient center. Chief Mezulis is focused on keeping our dispatching affordable and practical for our citizens.

Chief Mezulis commented the pricing in the Agreement is to the benefit of SFD and gives an opportunity to make headway over the next year; he recommends approval of the agreement with the terms of the contract, noting the agencies are working toward a different kind of plan; Ms. Cooperman said she was on the Board when the SFD dispatch center closed and she recalls the 5% increase annually was also part of that contract. Division Chief Lechowski is the dispatch center liaison. Chief Mezulis said – although he needs to verify with Finance Director Gabe Buldra – this agreement returns the fee structure to what SFD paid in 2019 and with the 5% year over year increases, we will not return to the amount paid last year for several years. He said we also have an opportunity to move forward in our partnering with the new Fire Chief of Cottonwood. *Ms. McNeal entertained a motion to approve the new Emergency Dispatch Services Agreement with the City of Cottonwood; Ms. Cooperman so moved, a second was provided by Board Member Scott Springett; the motion was unanimously approved.*

3. Discussion/Possible Action: Board Agenda Communication regarding Requisition #10208 with The HVAC Company for Air Conditioning Units at Fire Station 4, Airport Mesa, Schnebly Hill and Mingus Mountain in the not-to-exceed amount of \$189,000

Chief Mezulis stated upon evaluation of HVAC systems at remote and station tower sites, it was confirmed the system was outdated and needed replacement; staff has been aware of this for a few years, and as part of the radio upgrade previously approved by the Board, SFD started with the replacement of generators, now, this HVAC project, and in the next few months, a requisition for the system's battery replacement. The quote from The HVAC Company is at State Contract price, and although this exceeds what was budgeted this year, a portion of this project was budgeted last year and did not occur; those dollars were rolled into capital funds. Chief Mezulis said this was analyzed and approved by Finance Director Gabe Buldra. This project is for radio systems' infrastructure support for the upgrade. Board Member Lance Waldrop commented this is critically important, and the sites are also used by other agencies and clients; the HVAC system has to be top quality, over-powered, and have a duty capacity of 120% in an emergency situation. Chief Mezulis agreed and said this is an alternating duplex system, so that if one cooling system "tires", the redundant system takes over.

Chief Mezulis commented some expenses (like painting or concrete pads) will be lesser amounts not requiring

Board approval; after that, a big purchase will be for radio cabinets and systems, but is dependent on FCC licensing with the City of Sedona. SFD identified the need for a site at the high school; the school is supportive and gave choices for the location; he said another example is the airport site; airport staff is currently evaluating repair to the tower to support current equipment. JVG Financial associate Sara Simonton announced she was available for any budgetary questions from the Board. Ms. Cooperman stated it is an obvious necessity. As there were no other questions, ***Ms. McNeal entertained a motion to approve Requisition #10208 with the HVAC Company in an amount not to exceed \$189,000; Board Member Diana Christensen so moved; Mr. Waldrop seconded and the motion unanimously passed.***

D. Board Member Items:

1. Discussion/Possible Action: Schedule Special Meeting for the Selection of an Architect and Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR); and June 2025/Fiscal Year End Financial Report

Ms. McNeal asked the Board to schedule a special meeting to choose the Construction Manager at Risk and the Architectural services for the Station 4 construction project; she noted the June Financial Report would be covered at the August Board meeting. She said staff and Board members (not a quorum) had two review sessions to review the quotes received. Mr. Waldrop commented a recommendation is being prepared for the Board. Ms. McNeal suggested the meeting be scheduled for Monday, July 14, 2025 at 11:00 AM. Chief Mezulis commented an Executive Session for legal advice might be required, but he does not anticipate it being a long meeting. The Board agreed to the date and time by consensus. Attorney Bill Whittington added that the statutory provisions must be included in the Agenda.

2. Discussion/Possible Action: Biennial Election of SFD Fire Board Chairperson and Clerk

Ms. McNeal said the Fire Board's Rules of Procedure stipulate the election of a Chairperson and a Clerk every two years; typically, this is done in January with a new Board; however, she postponed it until this month, so the new members would have a chance to understand how the Board works and the opportunity to consider who they would want to elect. Ms. McNeal then opened the nominations for Chairperson of the Board for the next two years; ***Mr. Waldrop nominated Helen McNeal to continue as the Board Chair; Board Member Scott Springett provided a second.*** Ms. Cooperman commented she agreed with the nomination of Ms. McNeal as she brings skills and dedication to the position. ***Ms. McNeal then called for the vote which was unanimously approved.***

Ms. McNeal then opened the floor for nominations for the Board Clerk position for the next two years; ***Ms. McNeal nominated Corrie Cooperman to continue in the position of Clerk as she has been instrumental in keeping the Board moving forward; Ms. Christensen provided a second, and upon a call, the motion was unanimously approved.***

3. Updates and Ideas for Future Meetings

Ms. McNeal reminded Chief Mezulis of a report on what staff has done to evaluate service contracts and the process for major contracts; Ms. Christensen agreed and said it is incumbent on the Board to ensure the process is clean with good government provisions and no conflicts of interest. Chief Mezulis said a review of best practices for contracts will be agendaized at a future Board meeting.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was then adjourned at 4:45 PM.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

:tg