



Sedona Fire District

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
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REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, August 19, 2025 • 3:00 PM

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to notice, a Regular Meeting of the Sedona Fire District (SFD) was called to order by Board Chair Helen McNeal at 3:04 PM on Tuesday, August 19, 2025. A quorum of the Board was present and the meeting, having been duly convened, proceeded with business.

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

Ms. McNeal led the Pledge of Allegiance and requested a moment of silence for the 17 law enforcement officers and six firefighters who died nationwide since the last Board meeting.

B. Roll Call of Board Members

Board Present: Helen McNeal, Chair; Corrie Cooperman, Clerk; Diana Christensen, Lance Waldrop, Scott Springett, Members.

Others Present: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief; Kirk Riddell, Deputy Fire Marshal; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance; Bill Whittington, Board Attorney; Christi Weigand, Recorder to the Fire Board; Tricia Greer, Acting Recorder to the Fire Board; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager; Kris Ahern, Training Division Assistant (ASEA representative); David Rodriguez, Captain (IAFF L3690 representative); Josh Clunch, IT Systems Specialist; SFD staff, family, and friends present for staff recognition.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

Chief Mezulis presented pins to the 20-year staff members present, honored those who could not attend the meeting, and introduced the new employees.

A. 20 Years of Service

1. Kris Ahern, Training Division Assistant
2. Mark Beneitone, Captain/EMT
3. Keith Christofferson, Engineer/CEP/TRT
4. Keona Freeman, Human Resource Manager
5. Brent Johnson, Engineer/CEP/HRT
6. Eric Lewis, Battalion Chief
7. Joseph Pace, Firefighter/CEP
8. Michael Pace, Captain/CEP/TRT
9. Alfonso (Jon) Puyana, Firefighter/CEP
10. David Rodriguez, Captain/CEP
11. Josh Wells, Captain/CEP/TRT

B. New SFD Employees

1. Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Services Manager

2. Audrey Escobar, Administrative Clerk
3. Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief
4. John Wesbrock, Fire Inspector
5. Gwen Witherspoon, Human Resource Specialist

III. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

A. Public Forum:

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

No members of the public requested to speak.

B. Consent Agenda – Discussion/Possible Actions:

1. July 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes
2. July 14, 2025, Special Board Meeting Minutes
3. July 14, 2025, Executive Session Minutes (confidential)

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

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

1. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and approval of June 2025 Finance Reports
2. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and approval of July 2025 Finance Reports

Mr. Buldra presented the June and July 2025 Finance Reports (see Board Packet).

June 2025 Financial Report

Mr. Buldra noted that tax levy revenue exceeded monthly projections. The year-to-date actuals were slightly behind, but less than 1% collection which is satisfactory. Non-levy revenue surpassed expectations, primarily driven by ambulance and wildland services. Budgetary expenses were reviewed noting what was under budget and variances.

After concluding the June 2025 financial summary, Mr. Buldra went over fiscal year (2025) financial activity. Fiscal year revenues were over budget attributed to ambulance, wildland, and investment earnings. Expenses were under budget by \$795K, driven by personnel, community, communication/IT, and managerial expenses. He emphasized that overall revenue was over budget and expenses under budget. The District expended ninety-seven percent of the budget with 3% unspent. Percentage of expenses year-to-date were recapped. Mr. Buldra concluded by expressing encouragement that the cash position increased by \$1.5M over the prior year. Despite ongoing expensive capital projects, asset growth from \$23.5M to \$26.8M and the cash position will aid funding for the capital projects. He further explained that liabilities are actually down approximately \$1M year-over-year.

July 2025 Financial Report

Mr. Buldra explained that July concluded \$21K over budget. He added that the collection of prior year levy generally occurs during the first three months of the fiscal year. Non-levy revenue was over budget, also driven by ambulance, wild land, and investment earnings. He discussed expenses, noting they are under budget by \$430K and a large personnel variance in the reporting due to Worker's Comp invoice timing. Budget expenditures were reviewed. Mr. Buldra pointed out that personnel is running higher and that it is uncommon to spend monies on projects the first month of the fiscal year. He further pointed out that wildland deployments also tend to drive up the District's personnel costs. Cash on hand increased, assets stayed up, and liabilities flattened out.

Ms. Cooperman moved to accept the financial reports for June and July 2025. Ms. McNeal seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

D. Staff Items:

1. July 2025 Monthly Staff Report

- a. Operations Activities
- b. Significant Events
 - i. All-Hazard
 - ii. Emerging Issues
- c. Human Resources
 - i. Staffing
 - ii. Promotions
 - iii. Significant Issues
- d. Administration
 - i. News
 - ii. Upcoming Events

Chief Mezulis covered the Operational update, noting that Assistant Chief Coil was on the Washington fire and previously the Laguna fire. He explained that personnel have been actively engaged in wildfire assignments throughout the region. The Type 3 team recently returned and the Rapid Extraction Module (REM) is expected to return tomorrow from the Dragon Bravo Fire. At present, there are no outstanding resource orders. Resources supported the local Woods Fire which is now complete.

In addition to fire assignments, Assistant Chief Coil's primary focus this month has been onboarding new personnel. With many new faces joining the team, onboarding has been a significant effort. The team is also continuing to work collaboratively on policy development and the SharePoint rollout.

Ms. Cooperman inquired about the Woods Fire and how it was going. Chief Mezulis clarified that the Woods fire is concluded and reiterated the status of Assistant Chief Coil and the REM unit. He added that a recent Red Rock News article highlighted the work of both the REM and Woods fire resourcing.

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

- a. Inspection Activities
- b. Fire Investigations - none
- c. Notable Events

Deputy Fire Marshal (DFM) Kirk Riddell reported the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) division maintained an operational status quo. DFM Riddell explained that a new fire inspector started which will increase the completion of inspections. He advised there were no fire investigations last month.

DFM Riddell discussed IROL, a third-party compliance monitoring and reporting system for fire life safety inspections. He noted IROL pre-screening capabilities and deficiency reporting that eliminate the need for manual report review, thus improving efficiency. DFM Riddell thanked Brian Russell for his role in initiating IROL.

Station 1 and Station 3 participated in the First Responder Camp, a four-day event hosted by the City of Sedona and Sedona Police Department. Eighteen children, ages 8 to 14, attended where SFD crews provided insight into the fire lifestyle. The children received fire extinguisher training, experienced a mock EMS drill, and the event concluded with a vehicle display, which was well received—especially the ladder truck. The program was a success and is expected to expand next year, potentially splitting into multiple sessions based on age groups.

3. Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

- a. EMS Activities and Updates
- b. Fleet Activities and Updates
- c. Other program updates

Chief Mezulis covered the Operational Support update. He discussed Fleet updates, explaining operations are steady. Training and development are ongoing as a new employee is progressing to work independently, resulting in growing confidence and increasing capabilities within the team.

Four vehicles have been decommissioned and prepared for auction. New selling opportunities have emerged through fire truck remanufacturers. Chief Mezulis further reported that the manufacturer of the District's Type 1 fire engines provided updated pricing, noting an increase in cost from \$750,000 to just over \$1 million. However, build times have improved, decreasing from 48 months to 37 months, which is a positive development in terms of delivery timelines.

Chief Mezulis discussed enhanced tracking of ambulance mileage to address potential inaccuracies, occurring reportedly among private ambulance providers. A Verizon-hosted tracking solution is being evaluated in collaboration with IT. He noted that SFD is currently operating under a state waiver.

The District is also reassessing its approach to ambulance remounts and the introduction of a new ambulance to the fleet, to include reviewing alternative builders. Board Member Lance Waldrop asked if the District gets two to three uses out of a coach. Chief Mezulis explained that two remounts is best practice, also noting the consideration of mileage and technology upgrade. Mr. Waldrop discussed costs regarding remounts versus purchasing a new coach. Chief Mezulis clarified that an evaluation is underway.

Chief Mezulis covered EMS operational key points, e.g. inter-facility transfers, training partnerships, and a new internal committee initiative to improve policy and process. Notably, Medical Director Dr. Lotz, has joined internal committee efforts and is offering valuable insights that enhance operational decision-making.

Other key highlights discussed by Chief Mezulis included the expansion of the PS Tracks system, a new module to enhance narcotics tracking, local GIS group partnerships and operational streamlining efforts, and a GIS Summit to be hosted by SFD in October. Ms. McNeal asked if a date has been set for the GIS Summit. Chief Mezulis explained that an exact date has yet to be confirmed.

Chief Mezulis concluded by noting the CPR class revamp, Arizona Department of Health Services leadership impacts to operations, potential changes to Medicaid and Medicare, and the evaluation of the PulsePoint software.

4. Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

- a. Training Report
- b. Wellness

Division Chief (DC) Jordan Baker reported on completed and upcoming training, noting computer-based training is prioritized in the summer months due to high outdoor temperatures. Currently, personnel are completing annual ISO and OSHA-required training. Additionally, venomous reptile training, led by Captain David Rodriguez, was recently completed by 10–15 individuals, including the district's three most recent hires. All floor personnel have now either completed or are close to completing this training. Captain Rodriguez was commended for formalizing and delivering such valuable training. DC Baker also reported that seven SFD personnel are attending State Fire School in early September with the goal to prepare them for the engineer's Spring assessment.

DC Baker discussed quarterly Blue Card training, which focuses on command and control during emergency incidents. Chief Lewis is currently the district's only certified Blue Card instructor. To support future sessions and assessment centers, one additional instructor will be certified in September and another in November.

DC Baker noted that SFD is hosting the Engineers Academy, scheduled for September 22–24. Seventeen individuals have applied—exceeding expectations—and the team is working to accommodate all applicants alongside four instructors.

The district recently completed functional movement screenings for operations personnel, supported by Solve Global, a Phoenix-based physical therapy organization included in the district's new health insurance package. Following the district's internal screening, 50 employees opted to participate in Solve Global's additional assessments. The organization provided a summary of common injury risks and recommended exercises to

address them. Solve Global is now collaborating with the district's Peer Fitness Committee, offering content for quarterly wellness newsletters and exploring opportunities for enhanced training for committee members. This partnership aims to improve injury prevention and overall wellness among staff.

DC Baker reported that the district has transitioned from using an external vendor to internal management of exercise equipment maintenance. A Peer Fitness Committee member now oversees preventative maintenance and repairs, allowing for faster response times and direct communication. This change has already proven beneficial, with recent repairs completed at Station 1.

DC Baker also noted that Solve Global offers individual support to employees at no cost. Staff can contact the organization directly for guidance on physical concerns, such as shoulder pain or mobility issues, and receive personalized care through in-person or virtual visits. Additionally, Solve Global sends biweekly wellness emails that prompt self-checks and follow-ups, helping staff stay proactive about their health.

5. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

- a. Call Volume & Response Review
 - i. Incident Summary and Comparison
 - ii. Response Times
 - iii. Purchase Orders over \$10K
 - iv. Thank you letter from the Pine Flats Property Owners' Association – Donated \$500 for wildland fire expenses

Chief Mezulis reviewed the Fire Chief report (see Board packet), commending DFM Riddell for monitoring and his efforts in tracking and mitigating false alarms. He briefly covered possibilities for AI integration in dispatch, the District meeting response time industry standards, and how unit travel times can enhance informed decisions. He concluded by discussing EMS response and EMS ambulance road time, pointing out the importance of monitoring the latter. Chief Mezulis discussed the nuances of the data and how it might be used to determine if another ambulance is needed.

IV. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION:

A. Memorandum of Understanding for Administrative and Support Employee Association (ASEA)

Chief Mezulis briefed the Board, stating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) process was collaborative this year. The goals of labor leadership and Chief Mezulis were to maintain SFD's position as an attractive organization to work for, one that promotes recruitment and retention, is competitive, and supports membership. He emphasized that the totality of the agreed-upon changes to benefits and wages meets the above-mentioned goals. Succession planning was also heavily discussed, noting the number of employees reaching 20 years of service and that most of the executive team is within five years of retirement. Future goals include efforts to prepare operational and non-operational staff for enhanced opportunities to achieve the next level.

Chief Mezulis summarized the ASEA MOU changes:

- evaluated industry sick and vacation leave accrual rates;
- adjusted (rates) upward for administrative staff;
- modified office hours;
- increased uniform allowance;
- increased gym membership allowance; and
- included physical training time per week.

The MOU was cleaned up to include formatting and removing specific references to the Employee Handbook.

Ms. McNeal asked if there were questions regarding the ASEA MOU. There were no questions.

Ms. McNeal moved to approve the ASEA MOU, for the period from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027. Ms. Cooperman seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

B. Memorandum of Understanding for IAFF Local 3690 Sedona Chapter

Chief Mezulis briefed the Board on the changes to the IAFF Local 3690 MOU:

- eliminated references to specific employee handbook policy;
- sick leave adjustment based on industry analysis;
- adjusted the paramedic stipend;
- stipend for technical rescue team members; and
- a “to be determined” addition for specialty instructors.

Chief Mezulis also discussed RBOs, given the new healthcare provider change last year. He provided insight into the worker’s compensation and similar PFFA trust models, pointing out how such models are advantageous for the fire districts, e.g. more nimble, less shareholders, and cost reduction. Chief Mezulis expanded on RBOs for insurance and a potentially new Captain II position. He emphasized the importance of recognizing internal talent and working towards an organization employees will want to work for in 20 years.

Ms. McNeal asked if there were questions regarding the IAFF Local 3690 MOU. Ms. Cooperman commented on all of the work effort put into both MOUs. She further noted the Chief and staff’s involvement in the creation process and keeping employees safe. Ms. Cooperman thanked all involved in the process. Chief Mezulis thanked the Board in turn. Mr. Waldrop expressed gratitude for the succession planning efforts and the collaboration with Labor. He further noted the importance of inspiring, coaching, and nurturing new leaders.

Ms. McNeal moved to approve the MOU for the IAFF L3690, Sedona Chapter, for the Sedona Fire District. Ms. Cooperman seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

Ms. McNeal recognized value and pride regarding work and collaboration efforts. She further expressed thanks for the MOUs.

C. Authorize the Fire Chief to initiate action to divide District-owned property, located at Station 4 on Jordan Road in Coconino County, and take all necessary actions to prepare said property for public surplus sale pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(B)(18), including contracting with professional services and engaging in a legal public sale process.

Ms. McNeal pointed out a typo in the agenda. The Discussion/Possible Action item should be amended to Forest Road.

Chief Mezulis discussed the property evaluation, future needs assessment, bidding, and the attempts made to work with the City to sever and transfer it. He added that the City was not interested, and private investors have recently solicited information regarding the property. Chief Mezulis proposed Board authorization to take the necessary steps to prepare the property to be surplus and later vote on designating it as surplus at a future Board meeting. This would include surveying the property, requesting a parcel number assignment from the County, and publishing it in the newspaper to go to public auction. He further noted that interested buyers have stated that current lease agreements would be honored and this process could help with Station 4 cost recovery. Chief Mezulis discussed the auction information and future need for the Board’s direction as to the amount to start the auction at, e.g. full appraised value or at 75% of appraised value. He noted maximum is 75% of appraised value of what the District can go down to.

Board Member Christensen asked what the appraised value is. Chief Mezulis stated he believes it is approximately \$480K and that he will verify it.

Mr. Waldrop asked the amount of money the City compensates the District on the lease contract. Chief Mezulis reported it is \$2,750.00 annually.

Ms. Cooperman asked for the timeline for parcel separation, if approved by the Board, given that there are interested investors.

Chief Mezulis clarified that anyone can bid on the property and those that have expressed interest must understand this is not a quick process, to include the County's process and timelines. The County's process and timing is unknown.

Ms. McNeal entertained a motion to authorize the Chief to initiate action to divide the district owned property located at Station 4 on Forest Rd., in Coconino County, and take all necessary actions to prepare said property for public service sale pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(B)(18), including contracting with professional services and engaging in a legal public sale process.

Ms. Cooperman asked if the Board is also approving engaging in the sale process to prepare. Chief Mezulis clarified that his interpretation is that the first step is for him to bring to the Board the proposal to surplus the property.

Ms. Christensen asked if the Board is required to sell the property if a vote occurred. Chief Mezulis clarified that the current intention is to make it available for sale, then voting to make it surplus, then a bidding process.

Ms. McNeal asked if there were questions.

Ms. Christensen asked if the Board is required to accept the bids. Mr. Whittington stated that the Board could reserve any amount they want, assuming at least 75%.

Ms. McNeal asked if there were any more questions. There were no more questions.

Ms. McNeal asked for a second on the motion. Mr. Waldrop seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

D. Update on public inquiry regarding electric vehicle (EV) powering at SFD stations.

Ms. McNeal provided an update regarding an inquiry about employees plugging Teslas into fire stations and using power, as it could be considered a misappropriation of public funds. Ms. McNeal also noted that the District was unsuccessful to date, in obtaining grants to purchase chargers.

Chief Mezulis conducted a comprehensive review, and as a solution, individuals will be charged a \$350.00 annual fee, to be charged \$175.00 every six months via a payroll deduction. The monies will be deposited into the General Fund from which the APS bill is paid.

Ms. McNeal stated that she really wanted to make sure the Board was aware of this and the District would seek funding for purchasing chargers that would be publicly available, so there is no question about the use of power for charging at SFD stations.

Ms. Christensen asked how the figure was obtained. Chief Mezulis explained that the amount was derived by considering current meter charges of \$0.12/kW at a 100-volt Station circuit and usage for 48 hours. He further discussed potential future charger purchases and consolidating APS accounts. The above-mentioned solution is a stop gap until future charger installation can occur.

Ms. McNeal asked if there were any questions. There were no questions.

V. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Ms. McNeal asked for ideas for future meetings or if there were Board member updates.

Mr. Waldrop provided an update on his exploration of tactical electric vehicles, noting he saw a demonstration at last month's conference in Glendale. He said he will provide a full report. Chief Mezulis noted that it may add value to fire District's command vehicle needs, EV technology is improving, and the importance of having a solid knowledge base. Mr. Waldrop stated that he wants operations to be in front of this.

Ms. Christensen discussed the recent fire that broke out two miles from her home. She further explained that she received numerous calls, noted that communication seemed convoluted, and individuals did not know about the fire. She noted the Red Rock News and a small, local school board member were steady sources while the

County communications are not always clear. She encouraged more conversation as to how we (SFD) can influence that, noting that SFD gets painted with the same brush and it is a negative reflection on the fire service overall, as communications could improve. Chief Mezulis commented that concerns were identified and SFD personnel were only strategic observers (on this fire). He further stated he has identified opportunities to better assist the county in their communications and there are plans to meet with them. The SFD front office staff were thanked by the Chief for their communication efforts during the fire. Ms. Christensen stated that this is a good opportunity to take a visible leadership position in improving communications locally.

Ms. McNeal expressed thanks to Christi (Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief), for providing the MOUs and other documentation. She further requested that she provide the Board members with copies of the new, finalized budget.

Ms. McNeal also noted that she wanted to ensure the Board members received the information about the State of the County meeting on September 16th, which is the same day as the Regular Board meeting. She suggested that the Board Meeting be changed to start at 4:30 PM to give everyone enough time to travel back from Prescott. All agreed to the time change.

Ms. McNeal further noted Nikki Check's Townhall meeting on September 10th at Station 3 and the September 11th ceremony and pancake breakfast at Station #6. Chief Mezulis noted that next year will be a bigger 9/11 celebration in remembrance of the 25th anniversary.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Possible Vote to go into Executive Session on personnel matters pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1) in regards to the Fire Chief's evaluation and legal advice pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3) and instructions to attorney pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(4) regarding the same.

Ms. McNeal moved to go into Executive Session on personnel matters pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1), in regards to the Fire Chief's evaluation and legal advice pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3) and instructions to the attorney pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(4) regarding the same. Mr. Waldrop seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Executive Session began at 4:54 PM.

B. RECONVENE INTO PUBLIC SESSION

The Public Session was reconvened at 5:04 PM. No further action was required.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was then adjourned at 5:04 PM.

/s/ Original signed by Corrie Cooperman on 9/16/25

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date