



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • FAX: (928) 282-6857
www.sedonafire.org

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, September 16, 2025 • 4:30 PM

MINUTES

1. 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 4:30 PM on Tuesday, September 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.
- B. Moment of Silence to Honor 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 two Timber Mesa firefighters who recently died.

- C. 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; Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Deputy Fire Marshal; Todd Miranda, Battalion Chief; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance; Bill Whittington, Board Attorney; Christi Weigand, Recorder to the Fire Board; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; SFD staff, family, and friends present for staff recognition; Lance Enyart, LEA Architects, LLC.; Josh Campbell and Jason Santor, CORE Construction.

2. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. 25 Years of Service

- Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, read Chief Mezulis' distinguished career credentials, noting that in 2022 he proudly became Sedona's first "home grown" Fire Chief. Ms. McNeal emphasized his strong regional collaboration with stakeholders and his unique accomplishments, unlike his predecessors before him, of getting the District on the path to a new Station #4 building and Station #5 in the future. She noted that he is a role model to other firefighters for what is possible within the Sedona Fire District. Ms. McNeal presented Chief Mezulis with a 25-year service pin and expressed gratitude for the his lengthy and distinguished service to the District.



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- Don Arwine, Captain/CEP

Chief Mezulis presented Captain Arwine with a 25-year service pin, highlighting his noteworthy career credentials and his former service in the United States Army. The Chief thanked him for his service to the Sedona Fire District.

B. 10 Years of Service

- Donny Minardi, Firefighter/CEP

Chief Mezulis presented Firefighter Donny Minardi with a 10-year service pin, highlighting his noteworthy career credentials, and thanked him for his service to the Sedona Fire District.

C. Fire Inspector John Wesbrock Badge Pinning

Chief Mezulis read highlights of Mr. Wesbrock's fire service career, presented him with the Fire Inspector pin, and officially welcomed him to the Sedona Fire District.

D. Paramedic Certification Recognition

- Mark Essary, Firefighter/CEP
- Indiana Palmer, Firefighter/CEP/TRT
- Dillon Risner, Firefighter/CEP

Chief Mezulis acknowledged and commended Mark Essary, Indiana Palmer, and Dillion Risner for achieving their paramedic certification, noting the complexities and scheduling modifications required to successfully complete it. Division Chief (DC) Buzz Lechowski noted the out-of-box thinking required for three firefighters to attend the certification courses at once, adding three more firefighters are currently enrolled in the certification process. DC Lechowski presented Mr. Essary and Mr. Palmer with a stethoscope (Mr. Risner was not present but will also receive one).

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Public Forum/Call to the Public

- 1) Public Comments
- 2) Possible Executive Staff Response to Public Comments

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

B. Consent Agenda: Discussion/Possible Actions

- 3) Regular Meeting Minutes – August 19, 2025
- 4) Executive Session Minutes (confidential) – August 19, 2025

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Member Scott Springett seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.



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

- 1) Discussion/Possible Action: Review and approval of August 2025 Finance Report

Gabe Buldra reviewed the August Monthly Financial Report key points (see Board packet), noting total revenue of \$487,000, which was over the budget by \$121,000. Total August expenses were reported at \$1,670,000, under budget by \$125,000, with savings across most categories except for communication and IT (due to software purchases). Mr. Buldra reported \$1,184,000 in year-to-date total revenue, which is over budget by just under \$400,000. Non-levy revenue continues to be strong in ambulance collection, wildland deployment, and interest earnings. Total expenses for the past two months were at \$3,928,000, which is \$258,000 under budget. Mr. Buldra advised that 16% of the budget has been expended with 84% remaining. He concluded by adding that August ended with \$16.36 million cash on hand, an increase of approximately \$767,000 over the prior year. Other assets increased from \$23.2 to \$26.9 million, and total liabilities slightly increased from \$32.9 to \$33 million.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the August 2025 Financial Report. Member Waldrop seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

D. Monthly Staff Report

- 1) Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil
- 2) Significant Events
 - All-Hazard
 - Emerging Issues
- 3) Human Resources
 - Staffing
 - Promotions
 - Significant Issues
- 4) Administration
 - News
 - Upcoming Events

Assistant Chief Coil reported ongoing efforts to align processes and review policies. This includes identifying where processes are needed, e.g. commercial requests for information and the associated cost recuperation and staff time for completion. Ongoing efforts also include Guidance documents more suitable for field use in Operations.

E. Community Risk and Reduction Activities – Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell

- 1) Inspection Activities
- 2) Fire Investigations
- 3) Notable and Upcoming Events



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Deputy Fire Marshal (DFM) Kirk Riddell noted the new Inspector is on board and that activity is status quo. One (fire) investigation occurred that will be reviewed at the next Board meeting. DFM Riddell provided a briefing on upcoming events, to include:

- Firewise Home Ignition Zone Course: September 25, 2025, 8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
- Life and Fire Safety (LAFS) education program: September 29, 2025, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
- Community Outreach Event at the Posse Grounds Hub: October 4th, 3:00 PM – 5:30 PM
- Smoke Alarm Installation Event: October 11, 2025, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

F. Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

- 1) EMS Activities and Updates
- 2) Fleet Activities and Updates
- 3) Other Program Updates

Division Chief (DC) Buzz Lechowski remarked on the pictures included in the meeting presentation, noting one of the Cottonwood Dispatch Center and two of the community CPR classes. He noted the CPR classes are regularly requested by groups to include the occupational medical office used by the District (as seen in the presentation). He briefly discussed a recent experience; the classes helped the office prepare for medical emergencies.

DC Lechowski reported ongoing work with the hospital and NAH, such as adding new drugs to the SFD drug boxes and interfacility transfer issues. Fleet provided short-term assistance to a neighboring department by supplying one apparatus, at no cost to taxpayers (only wear and tear on the vehicle). Fleet is also working with Chief Mezulis and DC Lechowski on auctioning and selling surplus items tasked to be purchased and replaced.

GIS is returning to core duties of analytics and mapping, while assisting administration with Arc GIS products. SFD will host the first Northern Arizona Regional Arc GIS Summit next month. SFD initiated the Summit concept, which will focus on the goals of regional collaboration, resource interface time, and idea sharing.

DC Lechowski further reported that SFD was on standby to assist with the recent Timber Mesa incident, noting that the team is mobilized when incidents occur and a need is recognized, e.g. peer support, other district support, with clinicians, fire agency partnerships, or law enforcement assistance.

G. Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

- 1) Training Report
- 2) Wellness

Division Chief (DC) Jordan Baker reported that one new Blue Card instructor has been certified. SFD has a total of three instructors now, and one is scheduled to attend the certification class in November. Four instructors provide an optimal instructor-to-student ratio for both quarterly and new employee trainings.

DC Baker reported that 11 individuals were sent to State Fire School and 10 attended classes that focused on engineering. The classes focused on hydraulic pumps, such as pump theory, where individuals observe a pump to view how it works on a fire engine, and then troubleshoot if a problem is



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encountered. DC Baker acknowledged the Battalion Chiefs for accommodating staffing and working on scheduling, which are challenging, to allow individuals to attend the classes.

Board Member Diana Christensen asked why the eleventh individual did not focus on engineering. DC Baker clarified that the individual is currently an engineer and focused on company officer leadership, as he is looking to attend the Captain Assessment Center in two-and-a-half years. He acknowledged the individual taking the initiative to pre-plan and attend leadership classes.

DC Baker stated that 17 SFD employees are enrolled in the Engineer's Academy, again noting the Battalion Chiefs' assistance. The three-day Academy is internal and occurring at SFD. The first day includes senior captains explaining new engineer expectations. The second and third days are conducted at the Cottonwood training center. Four full-time instructors staff the Academy during all three days and additional instructors attend the Monday session.

DC Baker discussed probation evaluations, noting that four six-month evaluations will occur at the end of this month through October. Further, four one-year evaluations will occur in October. He commented that all probation employees are doing great.

DC Baker discussed his role with the Sedona Verde Valley Regional Training Center, stating that he will be assisting with the facilities. The Training Center is dedicated grounds to conduct live fire evolutions, extraction training, and classroom work. He noted that the City of Sedona is growing and it's becoming difficult to find places to train and accommodate scheduling perimeters.

Needed improvements of the Training Center are underway, including the removal of old apparatus that has not been moved in 12-14 years, moving storage facilities, and making the space more usable. DC Baker emphasized that multi-agency drills and regional training result in all being better equipped during an emergency response. The facility will be inspected at the end of this month to ensure it can be used and likely will require an additional one to two months of effort to make it more operable. The Regional Training Officers' Committee has met. Areas of improvement were identified and assistance was provided to gather bids.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, commented that it sounds like SFD is doing the heavy lifting.

Chief Mezulis clarified that DC Baker is investing time while the collective costs for improvement are covered by the Verde Valley Fire Chief's Association. He noted that discussions to address the facility have been ongoing for 25 years, the Center is woefully outdated, and the overall regional yield is an appropriate training ground. DC Baker further clarified that infrastructure improvements are at no cost to SFD, but being performed by vendors that have volunteered to assist. He commented that Verde Valley, Cottonwood, and Copper Canyon have been instrumental in helping the efforts move forward.

DC Baker concluded by reporting that SFD management is working to forecast the number of individuals testing in the Engineers Assessment Center, the content review and revision of the policy manual is ongoing, and the administrative staff functional movement screening received great feedback.

H. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

- 1) Capital Project Updates
- 2) Call Volume & Response Review
 - Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison
 - Response Times
- 3) Purchase Orders over \$10K

Chief Mezulis provided an update on the communications upgrade, stating that the project shifted from



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design to concept, with a few issues being addressed. A project status can be presented to the Board after the vendor provides a detailed timeline in October/November. Chief Mezulis reminded the Board that the project is a partnership with the City of Sedona and the vendor. Details must be worked out to create a successful path to complete the system upgrade by the end of summer 2026.

Chief Mezulis briefly went over the data charts (see Board presentation).

4. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval of the Station #4 construction project contract for Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) services with CORE Construction.
- B. Possible approval of the Station #4 construction project contract for Architectural services with LEA Architects, LLC.

Chief Mezulis addressed the Board, stating that LEA Architects and CORE (CMAR) representatives were present at the meeting and available for questions, noting that an Executive Session was included in the meeting agenda, if needed.

Scott Schwisow, Project Manager, briefly went over the process, noting the completion of the RFQ process and vendor selection, in which LEA Architects and CORE Construction, would in turn, lead SFD through the design process and ultimately build Station #4. Quotes were received from both vendors. Contract discussions commenced, input from Mr. Bill Whittington, Board Attorney, was included, and a final agreed-upon contract draft was completed for each of the vendors for the Board to review for approval.

Mr. Schwisow offered an opportunity for each vendor to briefly address the Board before any questions were addressed. Lance Enyart, LEA Architects, LLC., expressed excitement and gratitude for the opportunity to work with SFD. He briefly went over the contract drafting process, noting it is a fair, standard form of agreement, used all the time, and they worked with Mr. Whittington to add adaptations and supplements.

Jason Santor, Director of Preconstruction, CORE Construction, stated they are thankful for the opportunity to serve the District. He noted that they recognize the hard work invested in the project thus far, emphasizing they will be stewards of the District's dollars, provide professional service, and set up the operations team for success. Mr. Santor reiterated that CORE Construction also worked on the contract with Mr. Whittington to ensure it is fair and that expectations are understood.

Ms. McNeal opened the floor to Board member questions. Ms. Cooperman addressed Mr. Enyart (LEA Architects), expressing concern regarding the contract section that stated the design phase could take up to 12 months. She requested clarification on the design timeline. Mr. Enyart clarified, stating the time for actual design is closer to six or seven months when the reviews through the city process and plan review are taken into consideration. Chief Mezulis commented, noting prework Mr. Schwisow has performed that may potentially shorten the timeline.

Ms. Cooperman then pointed out a decimal error on an hourly wage in the CORE Construction contract. Chief Mezulis reassured the Board that the error would be corrected.

Board Member Diana Christensen asked how the Trump tariffs were being managed. Mr. Santor responded noting the unpredictability, but that CORE Construction created a quarterly market conditions report, specific to Arizona, that monitors costs. CORE will later develop option studies to determine what may be impacted by tariffs and perform proactive cost monitoring.



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Ms. Cooperman asked Mr. Whittington, Board Attorney, if he had anything to add prior to voting to approve the contracts. Mr. Whittington commented that both companies (LEA Architects and CORE Construction) were excellent to work with, ethical, and transparent.

Ms. McNeal asked the Board Members if there were any legal questions for Mr. Whittington such that they would proceed into Executive Session.

Ms. Cooperman asked Mr. Whittington if he had a need to go into Executive Session. Mr. Whittington commented no, stating the contract was worked through carefully with LEA Architects and CORE Construction management.

Ms. McNeal moved to approve the Station #4 construction project for Construction Manager at Risk, CMAR services, with CORE Construction in the amount of \$136,578.00. Ms. Corrie Cooperman seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

Ms. McNeal moved to approve the Station #4 construction project for architectural services with LEA Architects, LLC. in the amount of \$988,555.00. Ms. Corrie Cooperman seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Possible vote to go into Executive Session for 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 Station #4 construction project contract for CMAR services with CORE Construction.
- B. Possible vote to go into Executive Session for 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 Station #4 construction project contract for Architectural services with LEA Architects, LLC.
- C. Executive Session for personnel matters, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1), regarding the Fire Chief's evaluation and contract for services; 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 for personnel matters, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1), regarding the Fire Chief's evaluation and contract for services; 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. Mr. Waldrop seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Executive Session began at 5:46 PM.

- D. Reconvene into public session.

The Public Session was reconvened at 6:45 PM.

6. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval of Chief Mezulis' evaluation and contract for services.



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Ms. McNeal moved to approve Chief Mezulis' evaluation. Mr. Waldrop seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

Ms. McNeal moved to approve Chief Mezulis' contract for services. Ms. Cooperman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

7. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Updates or ideas were not provided by the Board members.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 PM.

/s/ Original signed by Corrie Cooperman on 10/21/25

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date