



# SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

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

## REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona • Multi-purpose Room  
Tuesday, October 21, 2025 • 3:00 PM

## MINUTES

### 1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

#### A. Salute to the Flag of the United States of America

Pursuant to notice, a Regular Meeting of the Sedona Fire District (SFD) was called to order by Board Chair Helen McNeal at 3:00 PM on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. A quorum of the Board was present and the meeting, having been duly convened, proceeded with business.

#### 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 11 law enforcement officers who died nationwide since the last Board meeting.

#### 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; Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Deputy Fire Marshal; Todd Miranda, Battalion Chief; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance; William Whittington, Board Attorney; Christi Weigand, Recorder to the Fire Board; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager; Josh Clouch, IT Systems Specialist; SFD staff, family, and friends present for staff recognition.

### 2. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

#### A. 5 Years of Service

- Jordan Alessi
- Anthony Haechler
- Kyler Lee
- Ryan Thibault

Chief Mezulis recognized Firefighters Jordan Alessi, Kyler Lee, Ryan Thibault, and Anthony Haechler for their five years of service with the Sedona Fire District. He highlighted each of their noteworthy career credentials and thanked them for their service to the District. Firefighter Anthony Haechler was present at the meeting. Chief Mezulis presented him with a 5-year service pin and Mr. Haechler addressed the Board, SFD Executive staff, and his wife, expressing gratitude. The other three firefighters, not present at the meeting, will receive their 5-year pins at a later date.



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## 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

- 1) Regular Meeting Minutes – September 16, 2025

**Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes for September 16, 2025. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.**

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

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

Mr. Gabe Buldra reviewed the September Monthly Financial Report Key points (see Board packet), reporting total revenue of \$1,055,000.00, over budget by \$440,000.00. Property tax collections made up a large percentage of that, as the District is collecting revenue quicker than has occurred historically. Non-levy revenue was over by \$188,000.00, wildland and ambulance revenue were predominant drivers of the month's overage. Total September expenses were reported at \$1,812,000.00, over budget by \$16,900.00, driven by personnel as the largest variance that was due to wages and benefits.

Mr. Buldra reported \$2,238,000.00 in year-to-date total revenue, over budget by \$839,000.00. Year-to-date expenses totaled \$5,754,000.00, under budget by \$255,000.00. The District is in line with the budget, having spent 24% with 76% remaining. Mr. Buldra pointed out a small decrease of \$278,000.00 in the cash position year-over-year comparison, resulting from current bills and payments, but added the District is still on track with the planned reserves. Other assets increased from \$23 to \$27 million, and total liabilities decreased from \$33.8 to \$32.8 million.

**Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the September 2025 Financial Report. Ms. McNeal seconded, there was no further discussion, and 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



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- Staffing
- Promotions
- Significant Issues
- 4) Administration
  - News
  - Upcoming Events

Assistant Chief Jayson Coil reported to the Board as follows:

## **Human Resources and Administration**

**Personnel Record Modernization:** The digitization of all personnel files is underway to improve compliance and retrieval efficiency.

**Recruitment:** Pre-boarding for the 2025 firefighter class is near completion and they start on November 3rd. The IT Systems Specialist process is advancing to interviews this month (October) after rigorous screening. Assistant Chief Coil noted there were approximately 120 applicants and 10-15% made it past the first cut.

**Policy and Process Updates:** HR continues refining policies and workflows. An employment law firm provided a generic version of an employee handbook to help guide policy refining efforts. The firm will perform a review of SFD policy revisions upon completion to ensure consistency with legal requirements.

**Professional Development:** HR leadership is supporting regional training efforts, with presentations on organizational leadership and workforce development. The HR manager is presenting the pitfalls of mid-level management at the BC (Battalion Chief's) academy.

## **Operations and Logistics**

**Readiness and Training:** On-duty Engineer candidate training continues to be supported. On and off duty training policies have been reaffirmed to ensure safety and compliance.

**Equipment and Standards:** Deployment of new air monitoring equipment is complete and structural hose testing is planned. PPE program data has been overhauled for accuracy, with updated standards aligning to NFPA for cleaning, enhancing the system management.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, asked if the air monitoring is for SFD facilities or if it is portable. Assistant Chief Coil clarified that it is portable, handheld, and most use would be for carbon monoxide monitoring.

**Policy Alignment:** A meeting was conducted to discuss uniform and PPE policies to provide clarity and make them easier to follow and administer.

## **Facilities & Infrastructure**

**Station Maintenance:** Maintenance is ongoing at Stations #1 and #6. HVAC control systems are in the works.

**Legal & Contractual:** There are three communications and technology agreements in progress. Two are close to completion and one is being worked on for completion.



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## Strategic & Organizational Development

**Performance Management Initiative:** Early work continues to develop a performance management framework to support accountability and professional growth.

**Transparency & Records Compliance:** Public records processes are under review.

**Regional Collaboration:** Regional collaboration with wildland (groups) is ongoing with the federal level changes.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, asked Assistant Chief Coil if there were any insurance updates. Mr. Coil noted his recent participation in an IAFC podcast, commenting that standards were relaxed to align with available resources until a catastrophic failure occurs, and insurance companies continue to adjust profitability strategies. He further discussed compliance strategies at the county level for insurance approval in Phoenix, the first wildfire-prepared home sale process, and noted that science-backed standards are stringent.

Diana Christensen, Board Member, asked the name of the podcast. Mr. Coil stated it was the IAFC Wildfire Wednesdays podcast.

### E. Community Risk Reduction Activities – Deputy Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell

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

Deputy Fire Marshal (DFM) Kirk Riddell reviewed the September Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Activity Report, noting a positive rise in numbers, including a solar panel fire investigation. DFM Riddell reported that the Rainbow Trailer Park Smoke Alarm Walk was rescheduled to November 21, 2025. He also informed the Board of CRR preparations of an upcoming proposal to adopt the 2024 International Fire Code to achieve regional standardization. The Code also integrates newer technologies to better accommodate modern-day standards and includes interface code.

Board Member Lance Waldrop asked if CRR received any requests for Firewise consultations from short-term rental (STR) owners. DFM Riddell stated they had not. Mr. Waldrop explained that his residential neighborhood leads the City in STRs, noted concerns that properties were not being properly maintained, and commented some neighborhoods are nearly saturated up to 70%. He further expressed potential impacts to insurance increases. Chief Mezulis commented, noting that a current Minnesota lawsuit involves a family that died in a STR fire where the house was not up to fire code. The case may provide more avenues “with teeth” to address STR code upkeep. Mr. Waldrop acknowledged it was a “leading question”, expressed appreciation for his question being answered, and stated that he wanted to ensure it is documented and stated on the record. DFM Riddell remarked that he could not issue tickets within city limits. Mr. Waldrop reported that the City of Sedona advised him of a newly created position specifically for STR code enforcement. DFM Riddell commented that seven City (code enforcement) employees recently completed the Firewise class. Board Member Diana Christensen asked if Yavapai County had an equivalent position. DFM Riddell stated they did, as does Coconino County.

### F. Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

- 1) EMS Activities and Updates
- 2) Fleet Activities and Updates



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### 3) Other Program Updates

Division Chief Buzz Lechowski briefed the Board on Medicare billing, stating it has been placed on temporary hold, as recommended. Chief Mezulis clarified his recommendation was based on the PMW Law Firm's sound and national recommendations, which have historically been accurate. Mr. Buldra explained that SFD would lose a 22.5% add-on if claims are processed now. He further noted that a delay would not be critical to operations if it continued for a few months and add-on monies could be included in future budgets.

DC Lechowski worked with Yavapai County to discuss joint efforts to make community health more accessible in rural Arizona. A lack of County satellite resources includes Sedona, so collaborative efforts are being explored in the greater Verde Valley area. DC Lechowski noted a local need, as SFD may be the only encounter with individuals where a gateway to resources could be provided. Ms. McNeal asked how this fits with the Verde Valley Caregiver's (Coalition) grant. DC Lechowski stated he believes they would work with the County and vice versa, depending on the need. Chief Mezulis noted additional meetings will occur in the future to better understand services, build resources, and hopefully show the need for additional resources in the Sedona area. Homelessness resources were also noted, where the distinction between lifestyle choice and genuine need were discussed. Chief Mezulis discussed the challenges associated to the federal systemic definition of homelessness, stated individuals can be referred to the Hope House, and described challenges with the federal VA programs. He noted that the purpose of SFD involvement is to ensure SFD crews ask the right questions to be able to refer individuals to the appropriate (community) resources.

DC Lechowski reported that DHS does not yet have a new Director. Committees are active and still changing protocols, curriculum, etc.

Interfacility transports and potential risks are under review. Limited hospital care capabilities affect the number of patient transports. Crew risk versus transporting more expediently are part of the considerations. Individual care needs continue to be factored into decision making and data is being reviewed. Ms. McNeal asked if DC Lechowski is sensing any interest in making the Sedona center more robust. He noted the Cancer Center will be moved in 2027 resulting in potential additional space, but that expansion of the ER is not a consideration at this time. Community comment opportunities will enable stakeholders to gauge what they express is needed. DC Lechowski stated he would keep the Board informed and Ms. McNeal asked that he please do so. Ms. Cooperman commented that numbers are likely going up with people from surrounding communities coming to the Sedona facility. He confirmed it is and that approximately 8,000 people access the facility within a year, while the facility only has four beds. Ms. Cooperman commented the numbers would speak to the need to expand.

DC Lechowski concluded by discussing the ambulance remount within the current budget year and aspirations to complete one next fiscal year. He also commended Battalion Chief Todd Miranda for serving as a speaker at the Arizona Burn Symposium and delivering a well-received, impressive speech. Ms. McNeal then praised Mr. Miranda.

### G. Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

- 1) Training Report
- 2) Wellness



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## Training

Division Chief (DC) Jordan Baker reported the completion of the three-day Engineer's Academy. Seventeen individuals participated and the Battalion Chiefs assisted with resource coordination. Feedback indicated the training was comprehensive and beneficial. DC Baker commended the training team for a job well done. The 12 month probationary written and practical evaluations are complete. Onboarding preparations for the three new firefighters are underway. Eight individuals have applied for the Engineer position task and review. DC Baker reviewed the Task Book and evaluation process, noting the written and practical evaluations are underway and it increases the resource pool. The six month probationary written and practical evaluations are scheduled. New Employee Orientation starts on November 3, 2025. It includes 150 hours of comprehensive training within three weeks. Four six month evaluations will be completed (those coming off six month probationary periods).

## Wellness

Solve Global will start conducting regular site visits on the second Tuesday of the month, starting in January 2026. Employees can make appointments to have a free evaluation. Ms. Cooperman asked if the cost was integrated into the (SFD) fee. DC Baker stated there was no additional cost.

## Recruitment

Firefighter Jordan Alessi is chairing the recruitment committee and attended a professional day at Cliff Castle Casino with other SFD staff. Handouts with QR codes and employment information are utilized. The group is eager and looking for opportunities to reach out.

The Trailblazing Academy, hosted by a Cottonwood Firefighter, is an all-female academy for those interested in joining the fire service. SFD Firefighter Peyton will be representing the District.

### H. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

- 1) Fire District Financials
- 2) Capital Project Updates
- 3) Call Volume & Response Review
  - Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison
  - Response Times

### 4) Purchase Orders over \$10K

Chief Mezulis stated an email was sent to the Board with the final documents for the Braun lawsuit.

## Fire District Financials

Chief Mezulis reviewed the PSPRS Tier Comparison handout (see Board Packet). He described challenges with Tier 3, noting that the younger generation is not staying with employers for 10 - 20 years and what may disincentivize them. He commented that one option being explored is targeting 30-year-olds, or in that range. A key objective of the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona is to work with the Arizona Legislature to re-evaluate Tier 3. Chief Mezulis noted the reason for the pension review (to the Board) is to show how benefits incentivize or give people purpose and that it is not a one-size-fits-all approach because they're paying different rates and there are different motivators.



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Chief Mezulis reviewed the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) Tier Comparison (see Board Packet), noting most non-operational employees are in Tier 3, with only one or two in Tier 1. He explained the shift in payout and noted SFD has two separate pension programs that have seven Tiers within them.

Board Member Diana Christensen asked for clarification that ASRS is for non-operational employees and SFD cannot change the Arizona State Retirement System. Chief Mezulis clarified that no, it cannot be changed and added that it can be contributed to within different professions and government entities.

Mr. Gabe Buldra presented information about past issues with the pension system, pension debt, pension refinancing, legal changes, assets, liabilities, and contribution rates.

## Project Updates

Chief Mezulis informally presented the Station #4 model, provided to SFD just prior to the meeting. More information, to include pricing, should be available by December (2025).

Chief Mezulis presented the LMR Upgrade Status Report (refer to the Board Presentation) and project status timeline.

Chief Mezulis referred the Board Members to the Chief Report Response Times section, commenting that they are generally consistent.

## 4. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval of the new Community Risk Reduction fee schedule that aligns with the IGA with the Copper Canyon and Verde Valley Fire Districts.

Deputy Fire Marshal Kirk Ridell explained that the intent of the changes is to align the fee schedule with the Verde Valley and Copper Canyon Fire Districts. The changes streamline fees and are clearer for contractors, e.g. contractors are paying three different prices for the same thing. Each fee was reviewed and made consistent across the above-mentioned Districts. Mr. Ridell added that the other two District Boards have already approved the fees. Ms. Cooperman thanked Mr. Ridell for the many hours invested in the fee schedule review. Assistant Chief Coil asked when the fee schedule was last updated. Mr. Ridell stated in 2017. Chief Mezulis further explained that it is important to be proactive and supportive of the SFD customers and that having sound reason for charging the fees is good customer service. He added that contractors expressed the need to have time before the fees change; January 2026 aligns best with their needs.

**Ms. McNeal entertained a motion to approve the new CRR fee schedule that aligns with the IGA with the Copper Canyon and Verde Valley Fire Districts. Ms. Cooperman so moved. Ms. Christensen seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the motion was passed unanimously by the Board.**

- B. Possible approval to expend funds in an amount not to exceed \$49,250.00, to the Pegasus Telecommunications Consulting Group, to support the FCC licensing work required to continue the communication system upgrade.

Ms. McNeal asked Chief Mezulis if he wanted to comment. He reiterated that the amount is a “not to



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exceed price” and that \$17,500.00 of it would be invoiced to the Sedona Police Department. Chief Mezulis explained that new frequencies are critical to the project and it is a convoluted process. He expressed his support to have subject matter experts evaluate and assist with the frequencies. Chief Mezulis referred the Board to the Board Agenda Communication form (see the Board packet) to view the description as to why the licensing work is needed.

**Ms. McNeal moved to approve to expend funds in an amount not to exceed \$49,250.00, to the Pegasus Telecommunications Consulting Group, to support the FCC licensing work required to continue the communication system upgrade. Mr. Waldrop seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the motion was passed unanimously by the Board.**

- C. Possible approval of the Strategic Alliance for Volume Expenditures (SAVE) Cooperative Purchasing Agreement.

Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager, explained that the SAVE Cooperative Purchasing Agreement would allow SFD to utilize other agency contracts to obtain their pricing and terms of service. It is an efficient, easy way for SFD to secure cheaper prices, goods, and services. Ms. McNeal asked if SFD would still have the ability to purchase at a cheaper price outside of it. Ms. Deldin clarified that SFD is not bound to buy from it, it is another tool to utilize. Mr. Buldra explained that the Agreement expands the District’s capabilities and simplifies procurement because other agencies have already completed the competitive bid process.

**Ms. Christensen moved to approve the Strategic Alliance for Volume Expenditures (SAVE) Cooperative Purchasing Agreement. Ms. Cooperman seconded the motion. Ms. McNeal clarified the motion. Ms. Cooperman seconded the motion, there was no further discussion, and the motion was passed unanimously by the Board.**

## 5. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

- A. SFD Annual Calendar

Ms. McNeal provided the Board with a draft version of the SFD Annual Calendar (see Board packet). The goal of the document is for the Board to be aware of upcoming events. She requested any additions be submitted to her in two weeks.

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:58 pm.

*/s/ Original signed by Corrie Cooperman on 11/18/25*

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date