



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, December 16, 2025 • 3:00 PM

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

A. Salute to the flag of the United States of America and a moment of silence to honor American men and women in service to our country, firefighters, and police officers.

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, December 16, 2025. A quorum of the Board was present and the meeting, having been duly convened, proceeded with business. Ms. McNeal led the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence was held for four law enforcement officers that died nationwide since the last Board meeting.

B. Roll Call of Board Members

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

Others Present: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief; Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Deputy Fire Marshal; Eric Lewis, Battalion Chief; Todd Miranda, Battalion Chief; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance; William Whittington, Board Attorney; Tomas Montoya, BPCWS, PLLC; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager; SFD staff, family, and friends present for staff recognition. Division Chief Buzz Lechowski was absent.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. New Firefighter Badge Pinning:

Kevin Ahlers, Firefighter/EMT

Brian Burke, Firefighter/CEP

Brandie Smith, Firefighter/CEP

Chief Mezulis presented the background and noteworthy career credentials of each firefighter. Kevin Ahlers was pinned by his significant other, Brian Burke was pinned by his mother, and Brandie Smith was pinned by SFD Battalion Chief Todd Miranda. DC Baker presented Firefighter Burke with the "Top Rung" award. Ms. McNeal expressed gratitude to the new firefighters and thanked them for their service in advance.

Ms. McNeal called a brief, five-minute intermission for attendees to congratulate the new hires. The meeting was recessed at 3:12 PM and reconvened at 3:18 PM.



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III. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Public Forum/Call to the Public

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

Members of the public did not comment at the meeting.

B. Consent Agenda: Discussion/Possible Actions

- 1) Regular Meeting Minutes – November 18, 2025

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, to include the Regular Meeting Minutes for November 18, 2025. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by four members of the Board with no further discussion. Ms. Cooperman abstained from voting, due to being absent from the last Board meeting.

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

- 1) Discussion/Possible Action: Review and approval of the November 2025 Monthly Financial Report

Gabe Buldra reviewed the JVG November Monthly Financial Report (see Board Packet). He pointed out expense variances. Personnel expenses were over by \$33K, mainly attributed to academies and training overtime. Building and land cost overages totaled \$11K due to Station #3 HVAC, garage door, and roof repairs. The recent audit resulted in a slight overage in managerial costs. Mr. Bulda discussed factors that contributed to non-levy revenue being overbudget by \$766K, which includes wildland income, ambulance revenue, and investment earnings. Cash position increased \$1M over the prior year and assets increased from \$23.2M to \$26.5M

Mr. Bulda reported that the audit is going smoothly and the plan is for Lydia (auditor) to present it at the January (2026) meeting.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the November 2025 Financial Report. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

D. Monthly Staff Report

- 1) Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil
 - a. Significant Events
 - All-Hazard
 - Emerging Issues
 - b. Human Resources



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- Staffing
- Promotions
- Significant Issues
- c. Administration
 - News
 - Upcoming Events

Assistant Chief Coil updated the Board as follows:

Administration

- The Administrative Generalist position was updated and opens on December 22nd for four weeks.
- Compiling all SFD contracts and agreements.
- Continuing to evaluate workflows and update as needed with the intent to build frameworks and implement doctrine to increase effectiveness.

Human Resources

- Educated staff on the OBBBA “No Tax on Overtime”.
- The awards notice was sent out (2025 Annual Awards).
- IT Systems Specialist recruitment opens Monday (Dec 22, 2025) for four weeks.
- One SFD staff member completed the Notary certification.

Logistics

- Turnout replacement is underway for 11–13 sets for an estimated cost of \$54K.
- The backup extrication tool was delivered.

Wildland Fire Program Highlights

- BK (Bendix King) held radio training for the wildland program.
- Conducting seasonal after-action reviews to capture lessons learned and inform future training and operational improvements.
- Planning a Task Force Leader course to prepare personnel to increase competency in positions and promotion processes.

TRT

A complex technical rescue was conducted with partner agencies in Long Canyon on December 10th. The individual was significantly wounded with broken bones and internal injuries. TRT Leadership is reviewing training and equipment to ensure SFD can be successful and achieve a high degree of certainty during rescues, if a helicopter is not available.

Stakeholder and Other Agency Engagement

Chief Coil stated he attended the invitation-only NATO C2COE, Command and Control Center for Excellence, in Rotterdam this year with 250 other participants. He was the only fire representative. A write-up will be submitted to Chief Mezulis. Multi-domain operations were discussed, including how to maintain proficiency for non-common parts of the job and technology to assist with operations.



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Chief Coil also briefed the Board regarding his role in the Dragon Bravo Fire review, commissioned by the Secretary of Interior. Notably, it is the first time that a review has been commissioned of a wildfire at that level (of government). A committee of 12 individuals will provide recommendations and findings. Diana Christensen, Board Member, requested clarification as to how many agencies are involved and if it only involved fire agencies. Chief Coil stated four different agencies are involved at different levels of government and the Dragon Bravo Fire in its entirety, from discovery until the end of the event, is being reviewed. A public report will be issued upon the conclusion of the review.

- 2) Community Risk Reduction Activities – Deputy Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell
 - a. Inspection Activities
 - b. Fire Investigations
 - c. Notable and Upcoming Events

Deputy Fire Marshal (DFM) Kirk Riddell updated the Board as follows:

- Staff are still learning the First Due software.
- SFD CRR participated in the Verde Valley and Copper Canyon Fire Districts’ car seat event. Forty car seats were checked by four firefighters. Certification requires participation in events every two years. Notably, the car seat validation class is three days.
- SFD CRR and Station #1 participated in the Stuff the Bus event in conjunction with the City of Sedona and Toys for Tots.
- The Rainbow Trailer Park Smoke Alarm Walk was cancelled for a second time, due to inclement weather. DFM Riddell assisted five individuals that had signed up.

- 3) Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski
 - a. EMS Activities and Updates
 - b. Fleet Activities and Updates
 - c. Other Program Updates

Chief Mezulis updated the Board, for Division Chief (DC) Lechowski, as follows:

EMS

- Medic school placement continues as a strategic planning investment. Three (SFD employees) are currently attending class. DC Lechowski is working with Labor to address increasing interest in medic programs and identify a selection process.
- A SFD Labor RBO committee is working with Dr. Lotz to reduce gear needs and change how gear is carried to reduce the weight of what is carried into the backcountry.

Fleet

- DC Lechowski has requested that an RBO committee provide input on fire truck items related to safety or response. A fire truck is budgeted for this year and the committee’s input has been requested prior to the submission of a proposal to the Board.
- A fleet employee obtained a CDL.



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Other

- Impactful, EMS-related items are anticipated during the next legislative session, similar to past years. SFD is networking statewide to stay informed.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, asked how many employees can be put through an EMS program. Chief Mezulis clarified three, which takes into account budget, coverage, and resourcing.

- 4) Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker
 - a. Training Report
 - b. Wellness

Division Chief Jordan Baker updated the Board as follows:

Training

- Seventeen individuals and four class instructors attended the three-day Engineer's Academy. DC Baker thanked those that covered shifts and the Battalion Chiefs that filled shifts. The necessary coverage affected personnel costs.
- Nine individuals completed Engineer Taskbook evaluations over the course of two days.
- New hire orientation was conducted over a three-week period. DC Baker thanked Chief Mezulis for allowing him to modify training and added he has received feedback that the modifications have been beneficial.
- One captain was sent to Blue Card training, the incident command system. SFD now has two additional instructors which will increase resourcing.
- Multiple individuals are seeking secondary education. DC Baker noted that fire science degrees provide (Operational) employees the next step to achieve company officer roles. He further added that two individuals are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs which is the next step to becoming a Battalion Chief.
- B Shift Live Fire Training is scheduled at the end of this week. It integrates blue card training.
- Scheduling for joint training with Sedona PD is underway. Updates will be provided at a future meeting.
- Extrication training is scheduled for the beginning of January which includes new techniques and refresher training.
- A potential online platform training change may occur. SFD is exploring options and reaching out to neighboring agencies for input on systems and platforms.
- The Engineer's Assessment Center is coming up in February. It is logistically complex and 16 participants are testing, potentially the most individuals that have tested at one time.
- Chief Miranda is instructing the two-day Task Force Leader class in January, which is a prerequisite for the Battalion Chief position.

Wellness

- Solve Global is starting monthly visits and will be onsite on January 13th at Station #4.

Diana Christensen, Board Member, asked DC Baker to clarify information regarding engineer's training; specifically, to confirm the number of participants and how many positions. DC Baker confirmed 16 attendees, noted it is part of the promotional process, and that SFD does not currently have open positions. He added that the training creates a three-year wait list, is highly competitive, and incentivizes employees.

Chief Mezulis added the SFD cycles the process every third year and establishes a promotional list. Twelve individuals that are Engineers or higher are in the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) and can leave at any time. An additional five to eight individuals that hit 20 years



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and can also leave at any time. SFD will have a fresh promotional list of individuals. Individuals in DROP have a hard expiration date. The known retirement date assists SFD with future planning, as the known exodus starts in 2028 and is substantial through 2031. Ms. Christensen asked if they can leave before 2028 and Chief Mezulis confirmed they can. SFD has 26 fully pensioned employees that can leave right now, one third of the operational workforce. Ms. Christensen asked if they can work at other agencies. Chief Mezulis clarified some of the DROP rules, promotional scoring, and optional mechanisms to determine promotional candidates.

- 5) Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis
 - a. Fire District Financials
 - b. Capital Project Updates
 - c. Call Volume & Response Review
Incident Summary and Year-to-Date Comparison
Response Times
 - d. Purchase Orders over \$10K

Chief Mezulis updated the Board as follows:

Fire District Financials

Chief Mezulis expressed appreciation to Board for their support specific to the radio project and stated he wanted to share historical information and highlights. The former Fire Chief initiated a comprehensive systems analysis of the SFD radio system, later delivered to Chiefs Cole and Mezulis in 2022. The Pegasus report resulted, which is 249 pages. The report was centered around the development of additional radio sites, facilities, improvements, concerns, network layers, and the radio system. The report estimated a cost of \$24.6M. An SFD manager advised the estimate was accurate but alternative measures he later identified decreased the estimated cost to \$8.5M. SFD partnered with Zetron and the work to accomplish the modifications is still ongoing. Chief Mezulis closed the District Financials discussion by noting it is a legacy project and the intent of the historical project highlights he shared was to provide the Board with insight as to what steered SFD to work towards the current point of the project.

Capital Projects

- SFD is working on Station #5 details to submit to the state. The estimated time before SFD is in a position to discuss spending is two years, due to the state and federal vetting process. The Station #5 estimate is informative to future budget discussions and the capital budget has the funding within the next few years.
- The SFD Project manager is working with CORE Construction on the Station #4 project and eliminated \$100K off the first flush estimate. Built in contingencies are approximately \$1.7M on the first conceptual cost estimate and they have (CORE Construction) indicated that the cost estimate SFD received is their “worst case” scenario. Highlights of the estimated timeline include a City meeting on January 7th for a pre-construction review. Following that, a public meeting will be scheduled with a LEA posterboard assembly where the public can discuss concerns or ask questions. If outcomes are positive, detailed work will commence in April or May, providing CORE with the ability to initiate ordering of long lead time items, e.g. garage doors and electrical boxes. This ensures such items can be stored and are ready for



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construction. The asbestos abatement will occur in the Spring, crews can perform structure training, the guaranteed maximum price will be provided in July or August, then it's "off to the races". CORE anticipates completion in October of 2027. Chief Mezulis noted he is estimating actual completion in November of 2027. Lance Waldrop inquired about parking. Chief Mezulis stated drilling went down 18 ft, revealing that the previous orchard is a wonderful medium, meaning the potential exists to reduce costs for excavation and lot preparation. Ms. Cooperman asked how Chief Mezulis anticipates the city's approval timeline. Chief Mezulis responded as public safety partners, both entities can work collectively to ensure the process stays on track.

Call Volume and Response

- Chief Mezulis reviewed the volume and response times (see Board Packet). Chief Mezulis noted an increase in false alarms, in which he explained Deputy Fire Marshal Riddell quickly follows up, because it takes resources away from emergencies. Ms. Cooperman asked if SFD is fining them (for false alarms) and Mr. Riddell explained he attempts to work with them so monies otherwise spent on fines can be applied to fixing the issues and preventing further false alarm calls.
- Chief Mezulis reminded the Board that this will be the last month of collectible data for a few months due to the upcoming transition from NFIR to the federally-mandated NERIS system. Reporting and data information wasn't released until this month, specifically impacting system codes, data input, and quality control.

IV. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval of the Change Order for the Zetron Radio Infrastructure Project in the amount of \$1,396,025.00.

Chief Mezulis referred to the Board Agenda Communication form (see Board Packet) and the summary provided earlier in the meeting (see District Financials in the Chief's Report above). Mr. Mezulis explained more detail:

- The project allows SFD to replace and improve components and modernize it to P25 compliance, resulting in a functional and modernized system. The Pegasus report noted a 10-year build out plan with incorporated opportunities to add sites to improve layers and expand coverage. SFD was not prepared for that when it was brought to the Board in June 2024. New opportunities in different locations have been presented since that time and were not initially anticipated.
- Contingencies for opportunities were budgeted for this year and next. The cost is \$1,396,000, but the actual burden not budgeted is \$692K. It is anticipated that other capital-related IT projects on the books for the next few years may lower the year three financing to \$300K. The Board's approval would allow SFD to build the components within the current project already approved and have the components ready to add in to expand coverage at the same time. It keeps the project moving and aligns with channel redundancies in coverage aligned with the City. Notably, a change order will be presented to the City Council, due to added channels and coverage not anticipated.

Chief Mezulis reiterated that the approval is via change order and requested input from Gabe Buldra, Finance Director. Mr. Buldra noted that the Board should be aware of the total and potential costs in the third year, but pointed out the potential savings discussed by Chief Mezulis and the investment



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earnings the capital fund is earning. The fund has a conservative amount and overages assist with items outside of the budget. The capital plan ultimately has adequate funding to support the totality of the radio project expense.

Ms. Christensen asked for a review of the entire budget for the project and for each year. Chief Mezulis explained the original scope of work was \$2.94M and this additional request (add ons and upgrades) brings the total to \$3.9M. Amounts of \$1.65M were budgeted for this year and next with built in contingencies. Ms. Cooperman commented that Chief Mezulis mentioned that the original report estimate was approximately \$24M, which was brought down to \$8M, but \$3.4M was just discussed. She asked for clarification. Chief Mezulis clarified that the original (Pegasus) report quoted \$24M which included many components such as staffing and policy writing. The report later estimated \$8.4M after the subsequent recommendations of SFD. However, SFD further indicated the organization could achieve such recommendations for \$3.9M. Ms. Cooperman commented that it's quite excellent that it is significantly less. Chief Mezulis stated he's very excited to report that the totality of the upgrade is substantially less than the Pegasus report. Chief Mezulis then discussed more project detail, adding he hopes to report that the radio system is upgraded by this time next year.

Ms. Christensen asked for further clarification on the costs and Chief Mezulis summarized the breakdown, restating that the total cost is \$3.9M and because of contingencies, the additional funding asked of the Board is not to exceed \$692K. Chief Coil commented on the contract and project details. Chief Mezulis then clarified additional cost detail, including Zetron's offer to provide third year financing at 0% for the \$692K.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the Change Order for the Zetron Radio Infrastructure Project in the amount of \$1,396,025.00. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

- B. Possible approval to initiate the fire code adoption process to replace the current 2012 IFC with the 2024 IFC.

DFM Riddell provided background information, stating SFD is currently utilizing the 2012 fire code. The code changes every three years and reflects changes such as solar and battery solar systems. The code has been updated four times since the 2012 version. SFD would be joining Verde Valley, Copper Canyon, and the rest of the state with the goal of implementing a standardized code set. Chief Mezulis clarified that the motion is just to initiate the process to adopt the 2024 code. Process components include State Fire Marshal approval, which has been submitted; a public comment period of 20 days; and additional statutory requirements that must be achieved. The intent is to bring the 2024 code to the Board in January for approval and adoption. Ms. McNeal asked for clarification on the January timeline, given that public comment is a factor and State Fire Marshal approval is required. Chief Mezulis summarized the dependencies, adding that if it cannot be achieved, the formal approval would be moved to the February meeting.



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Diana Christensen, Board Member, moved to approve to start the process to consider replacing the current 2012 IFC with the 2024 IFC. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

V. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

A. 2026 Fire Board Meeting Design

Chief Mezulis discussed the historical reasons for changing the meeting start time from 4:30 PM to 3:00 PM and further added that organizationally, the evaluation of the totality of processes was identified via the draft strategic plan. Thus, the Board meeting format was reviewed by staff and the Chief to assess form of function of other public entities and special taxing districts. The proposals were also derived from staff based on aggregate feedback from Board members.

Chief Mezulis proposed a modification to the meeting structure by transitioning from monthly staff updates to quarterly updates. Considerations for the transition include:

- Enhanced conciseness in updates, thus shortening the meeting timeframes;
- Tightening up the process as a component to advertising for a volunteer to serve as an elected Board member which was derived from a local governance meeting where challenges finding electeds were discussed; and
- Integrating a template in early 2026 that informs how information will be delivered.

Each Board Member provided input. Ms. McNeal summarized the aggregate feedback identifying efficiency, focus on Board responsibilities, and realigning meetings when the new strategic plan is in place. She closed by commenting that the discussion resulted in the beginning of a consensus; updates may not be quarterly, but can be more compact, succinct, yet still informative; and that other examples and models exist.

B. 2026 Board Bill Pay Calendar

Ms. McNeal referred the Board to the 2026 Bill Pay Calendar and encouraged that they review it, due to differences in the assigned dates.

C. Board Calendar (Final)

Ms. McNeal presented the final Board Calendar, noting no further feedback was received after its initial, draft presentation to the Board at a previous meeting.

D. February 17, 2026, Regular Board Meeting - Start time 4:30 PM

Ms. McNeal noted that the Engineer Assessment Center is scheduled during the same time as the February meeting. The Board agreed to change the meeting start time to 4:30 PM to accommodate the overlap.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

/s/ Original signed by Corrie Cooperman on 1/20/26

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date