



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 • 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, January 20, 2026. 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 eight 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, Members. Lance Waldrop, Member, was absent.

Others Present: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Deputy Fire Marshal; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance; Lydia Hunter, Beach Fleishchman, PLLC; Tomas Montoya for BPCWS, PLLC; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager. Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief, was absent.

II. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Public Forum/Call to the Public

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

Members of the public were not present at the meeting.

B. Consent Agenda: Discussion/Possible Actions

- 1) Regular Meeting Minutes – December 16, 2025

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, to include the Regular Meeting Minutes for December 16, 2025. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.



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

- 1) **Discussion/Possible Action:** Review and possible approval of the December 2025 Monthly Financial Report.

Mr. Bulda reviewed the December 2025 Monthly Financial Report (see the Board packet and presentation). December total revenue was \$2.997M. A positive variance of \$233K was noted. Property tax collection was behind. Non-levied revenue performed well at \$266K over projected, attributed to \$110K in Proposition 207 (marijuana excise tax) monies, ambulance revenue, and interest income. Month expenses totaled \$4.17M, under budget by \$52K. Year-to-date revenue totaled \$17.5M. Revenues are over budget by \$1.1M, where \$100K is related to overage and property tax. Variance in personnel is being driven by wildland deployments. Budget expenditures are at 50%. Total liability slightly increased from \$33.3M to \$33.6M.

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

- 2) **Discussion/Possible Action:** Presentation and possible approval of the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Financial Audit.

Ms. Lydia Hunter of Beach Fleischman, PLLC. presented the FY 2025 Annual Audit results (refer to Board packet). She reported that the Sedona Fire District received an unmodified opinion, the highest and cleanest level of assurance an auditor can issue. Ms. Hunter reviewed key components of the audit, including the District's implementation of a new accounting standard, required communications, internal controls, and the completeness of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. She noted that the District earned the GFOA (Government Finance Officers Association of Arizona) certification last year and indicated that the District is expected to receive the certification again this year.

Helen McNeal asked for a motion to accept the FY 2025 Annual Financial Audit. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

D. Monthly Staff Report

- 1) **Operations Activities – Assistant Chief Jayson Coil**

Chief Mezulis updated the Board, for Assistant Chief Coil, as follows:

Recruitment

- SFD received 190 applications for the front desk (Administrative Generalist) position.
- IT recruitment is ongoing and interviews will be conducted this month.

Human Resources

- Payroll has produced tax statements related to the new federal tax requirements for overtime.
- The awards ceremony preparation is underway. The ceremony is scheduled for March 7th at Campo De Ensueño in Camp Verde.



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- Twelve individuals submitted applications for the engineer's test scheduled in February and firefighter recruitment will start in late Spring 2026.

Education & Training

- Several staff attended the AFDA (Arizona Fire District Association) Conference.

Other

- SFD is aligning purchasing processes.
- Physical season has commenced and will be conducted for the next couple of months. A new bike-based VO₂ max test was developed with Dr. Wesley.
- Wildland pre-season preparations are underway, to include checking personal protective equipment and pack testing.

2) Community Risk Reduction Activities – Deputy Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell

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

- First Due learning continues. Preplans may roll out by the end of the month for crew use.
- The IFC State Fire Marshal approval is still pending; the State Fire Marshal retired and other fire districts are submitting approval requests simultaneously. The IFC adoption and public hearing is now targeted for March.
- CRR participated in the Toys for Tots Bikes for Tikes Rodeo at Weston School in December.
- The Run Sedona event is on February 7th. Attendance is expected to possibly reach 12,000.

3) Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

Division Chief (DC) Buzz Lechowski updated the Board as follows:

EMS

- Individuals with qualified Taskbooks for Battalion Chief (BC) will shadow DC Lechowski and BC Wassell at the Run Sedona event as a learning opportunity.
- The Medical Director is attending EMS RBO committee meetings providing guidance and freedom to make changes, especially in the backcountry realm.
- DC Lechowski met with hospital staff and provided deliverables to SFD to review. Patient transports increased in the last three or four years. Efforts include minimizing patient and SFD risks.
- The EMS Week Open House in the Village of Oak Creek is in May.

Fleet

- Specifications for the ambulance remount were received, but with mistakes. Pricing should be provided shortly and is expected to be within budget and the capital plan.
- SFD will launch a committee, one year ahead of time, to look at purchasing a new ambulance and to remount another one.
- Met with the Pierce Manufacturing representative to review the requests and spec out the engines to ensure change orders are minimized; thus, taking less time to manufacture.

GIS

- Work continues with Yavapai County dispatch on addressing corrections.
- Processes are being streamlined internally, e.g. forms.
- The drone program was reinvigorated.
- A workgroup was created to ensure captured data can help in the future.



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4) Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

Division Chief Jordan Baker updated the Board as follows:

Training

- The B Shift Live Fire and C Shift Extrication trainings were conducted.
- The 2026 SFD Annual Training Plan was distributed last week.
- Quarterly Blue Card (incident command) training is coming up.
- The Engineer Assessment Center is in February. There are 12 applicants.
- The Taskforce Battalion Chief level classes are scheduled to be conducted next week. Five to six are enrolled. Seven individuals have Taskbooks open, the most SFD has had.

Wellness

- Solve Global was onsite last week, received positive feedback, and may need to be onsite more often.

E. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Chief Ed Mezulis updated the Board as follows:

Fire District Financials

Chief Mezulis expressed he was proud of the audit outcome and thanked the auditing firm.

Capital Project Updates

- A (Station #4) pre-construction meeting was held with the City. The only concerns expressed were associated with Firewise vegetation adherence per zoning requirements. Attendees were assured Firewise standards would be met. A meeting was recommended to work jointly to educate the community. ADA accessibility was also addressed and will be worked through.
- Coring continues, no blasting or heavy rock work is required.
- The LEA initial conceptual estimate timeline is on track and they recommend a public viewing in March.
- A response was received from the City regarding the (Station #4) parking lot assessment parcel number. Chief Mezulis followed up. Further information is pending. Annex building conceptual drawings of the new office space are underway and will be presented to the Board. Estimates are higher than anticipated. New concepts for the use of space are under consideration.
- The City's planned multi-use walkway requires removing the (Station #4) handicap ramp. To accommodate the City's needs, further discussions are required for clarification.
- The Station #5 grant proposal will be submitted to the State Parks within the next couple of weeks.

Additional Information

- A proposal is pending to fix the Station #3 drainage issues.
- Other fire districts are facing struggles with data collection following the recent NERIS conversion. ESO, the SFD vendor, is addressing format changes.
- AFDA is tracking 79 legislation bills that could impact finances, EMS, Community Risk Reduction, or taxes. Regular updates to the Board will be provided. Examples include mortgage-free exemption of property tax and the Coconino County request to evaluate the creation of a special taxing district for courts and public safety (law enforcement). Captain Rodriguez, serving as the Local 3690 President, is participating on the Professional Firefighters of Arizona Fire District Funding and Campaign Committee, representing northern Arizona rural fire districts, and working with AFDA and AFCA to explore potential opportunities and strategies for improving fire district funding.



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IV. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. **Possible approval of PO# 20049 to Swift LLC. in the amount of \$70,707.84 to purchase turnout gear for Operational and Community Risk Reduction (CRR) staff.**

Chief Mezulis noted that the suggested standard is two sets of turnouts for every firefighter which is a cancer mitigation strategy. It is a budgeted purchase and part of a year-over-year continuing program to maintain replacement turnouts for staff.

Helen McNeal moved to approve PO# 20049 to Swift LLC. in the amount of \$70,707.84 to purchase turnout gear for Operational and Community Risk Reduction staff. Scott Springett, 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. **The start time for the Regular Board Meeting on February 17, 2026, was changed from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM.**

Ms. McNeal announced a reminder that the Board Meeting start time on February 17, 2026, was changed from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:16 PM.

/s/ Original signed by Corrie Cooperman on 2/17/26

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date