



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, February 17, 2026 • 4:30 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 4:30 PM on Tuesday, February 17, 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 Arizona Department of Public Safety Ranger 56 Pilot/Aviation Supervisor Robert Skankey and State Trooper/Paramedic Hunter Bennett, four firefighters, and seven 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; Scott Springett, Lance Waldrop Members. Diana Christensen, 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 (remote); Tomas Montoya for BPCWS, PLLC; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief (remote); Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager. Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief, was absent.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. 20 Years of Service

Carla Dufort, CRR Administrative Specialist

Chief Mezulis recognized CRR Administrative Specialist Carla Dufort for her 20 years of service with the Sedona Fire District. He highlighted her noteworthy career credentials, thanked Carla for her service to the District, and presented her with a 20-year service pin. Board Chair Helen McNeal and Board Clerk Corrie Cooperman also thanked her for her customer service, professionalism, and dedication.

III. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Gabe Buldra presented a high-level overview of the Budget process as follows (refer to the Board Packet):

- The budget process is in its early stages. Staff are working on budget worksheets following a kickoff meeting last week.
- The assessed values from both counties were received, reflecting a 5.04% increase overall. Yavapai County came in at just over 5% and Coconino County at just over 3%.
- Diligence is required during budget development; primary revenue sources are constrained. Proposed (State) legislation could impact fire district funding.
- The PSPRS contribution increase is nominal, impacting the budget approximately \$40,000.00 (using current payroll numbers), and the ASRS contribution decreased. A COLA increase of 2.8% is estimated at \$473,000.00. Worker's compensation has averaged a \$100,000.00 increase each year, over the last



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five years. Amounts for health insurance have not been received; the PFFA trust guarantees a maximum increase year over year, estimated as 3.5% (to be confirmed later).

- The budget timeline was reviewed. A detailed review will occur in April, a request for tentative budget adoption in May, and the final budget adoption at the June 16th meeting, following the 20-day posting period and public meeting. The Board will determine if a separate budget meeting is necessary in April, as done in the past.

IV. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Public Forum/Call to the Public

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

Members of the public were not present at the meeting.

B. Consent Agenda: Discussion/Possible Actions

- 1) Regular Meeting Minutes – January 20, 2026

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, to include the January 2026 Regular Meeting minutes. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no discussion.

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

- 1) Discussion/Possible Action: Review and possible approval of the January 2026 Monthly Financial Report.

Mr. Bulda reviewed the January 2026 Monthly Financial Report (see the Board packet and presentation). January total revenue was \$1.189M, \$51K under budget. Expenditures were \$2.068M, \$18K over budget. Tax levy revenue was \$889K, under budget by \$85K. Non-levied revenue was \$300K, \$34K over budget; the variance is driven by interest income performance and ambulance revenue. Buildings and land continue to trend over budget; facility maintenance is needed. The overtime (budget) higher costs can be attributed to annual trainings. Year-to-date (YTD) total revenue is \$18.7M through January, over budget by \$1.082M. Expenses (YTD) are at \$14.099M, \$59K under budget. Non-Levy revenue (YTD) is over by \$1.067M. Personnel expense variances are associated with wildland employment. The District has expended 59% with 41% remaining. Total cash on hand is \$1.19M over the prior year. Other assets increased from \$23.89M to \$26.27M.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the January 2026 Monthly 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



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

Recruitment

- Final background and clearance for Administrative Generalist position is underway.
- A resignation in Operations occurred which will be filled in the new testing cycle.
- The IT recruitment netted one candidate that did not show up for the interview. Review of opportunities to move forward to best suit the needs of SFD is underway.

Other

- The Administrative Manager is performing process improvement, teaching technology to employees for the betterment of the organization, and cleaning up the budget process.
- Assistant Chief Coil and BC Miranda are working on wildland deployment contract language with the state associated to payment and billing. Development and changes are happening, but it is unclear how it may impact contract work.

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

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

- CRR provided activity data: 58 inspection, 52 plan reviews, one fire investigation.
- CRR is busy with plan reviews, due to building and conversions; approximately 60 (percent) are residential and 40 (percent) are commercial. This includes large projects, garage conversions, and new builds.
- January's fire investigation was a welding-caused fire that resulted in water damage due to sprinkler ignition.
- The Sedona Film Festival is next week. Chief Mezulis noted that the St. Patrick's Day parade is next month. An email was sent to the Board to solicit who wishes to attend.
- Fire Inspector Wesbrock attended a conference in January which focused on fire safety, e.g. performing at schools, teaching children as they are dressed up. Focus is shifting to more broad public education.

3) Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

Division Chief Lechowski updated the Board as follows:

Event

- The Run Sedona Event had 4K entrants with a 600-person waiting list. New logistical problems occurred, due the volume of individuals around the start, finish, and event spaces. Five incidents occurred. SFD will partner with stakeholders next year to perform an incident exercise.

Fleet

- Training of the new mechanic is ongoing and he is excelling.
- The ambulance remount will be presented today (for approval).
- A new Verizon fleet management program allows unit and mileage tracking, email alerts, and triggers. Thus, maintenance schedules and state compliance can improve. Testing is underway.



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EMS

- GIS is assisting CRR and obtained a drone pilot's license. This may enhance mapping and provides visual aids.
- SFD is working with the Medical Director to roll out a new drug box for engines, new quantities and a couple new drugs.
- Preparations for backcountry and heat season are underway.
- Recent meeting attendance includes Northern Arizona EMS Council and regional dispatch communications.

4) Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

Division Chief Baker updated the Board as follows:

Training

- The Engineer's Academy is underway which includes a written test, oral board interviews, and practical evaluations.
- Battalion Chief Miranda held a taskforce leader class which follows the NWCG leadership requirements and meets the SFD Battalion Chief classroom portion. Six individuals attended. One individual initiated the County Chief Taskbook.
- Fire Engineering Training is a new online platform SFD will utilize. The onboarding process with the vendor was initiated. The new training platform will be rolled out to the organization following two remaining meetings.
- Quarter 1 MCSS evaluations are scheduled for March.
- Collaboration with the Verde Valley agencies continues for the training center approval. A local roofing company donated labor and materials. Additional work is needed, but it is looking good and usability is increasing.

Wellness

- Physicals and Solve Global physical therapy are ongoing.
- A mentorship program has been conceptually discussed for two years. Firefighter Leslie volunteered to be the Chair of the Recruitment and Mentorship Committee. Prospective recruits will jointly participate in a crew workout and discuss the application process and oral interviews with assigned mentors. Information was posted on social media.

E. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Financials

- JVG discussed the Budget Workshop process.
- Regionally, the Copper Canyon and Verde Valley labor groups wrote a letter of support for joint powers authority (JPA). Chief Johnson will conduct meetings with the Boards and hold public meetings to adopt and work towards the JPA in July. The structure is expected to take a year. Managerial and administrative staff would align and the mil rates per district would remain the same. There would be two Boards and a joint meeting with representatives from each Board. Such consolidation is occurring throughout the state.

Capital Projects

- The SFD request to parcel the Uptown parking lot was denied. Chief Mezulis will continue to work with the City.
- Station #4 progress continues. SFD anticipates to get 60% of the drawings by mid-March. A public viewing has been planned.



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- The Station #5 request was submitted to the Regional Park Director. It is under his review and will subsequently be forwarded to other state stakeholders to review.
- The maintenance goal for the District is to shift from reactive to proactive, essentially enhancing planning and building durability over time.

Legislative Update

- Bill prioritization is the current focus at this juncture in the legislative process.
- Chief Mezulis discussed the tax-related bills and the optional route where initiatives are placed before voters. He noted that SFD can employ public educational strategies if any initiative affects the District.
- The bill addressing Tier 3 pension plans is getting a lot of support which would benefit the majority of SFD employees in the next 10 years.

IV. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

A. **Possible approval of PO# 065 to Core Construction in the amount of \$123,158.00 for asbestos remediation at 401 Jordan Rd. as part of the Station #4 construction project.**

Chief Mezulis noted that bringing each cost before the Board will not become standard practice. SFD is waiting for CORE to deliver the guaranteed maximum price (GMP) for Board approval.

The asbestos remediation ensures the schedule continues to move forward, slightly reduces the GMP, and it clears the building out sooner than later. If approved the abatement would start in March, in which crews can train and tear down the building in April, May, and June. The other option is to include asbestos remediation in the GMP, which pushes it back in the schedule during the summer months and the training opportunity is lost.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, inquired how the abatement takes place. Chief Mezulis explained that the work area will be fenced off, a tent (or like structure) is used to isolate/encapsulate the appropriate area, and water onsite mitigates dust.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve PO# 065 to Core Construction in the amount of \$123,158.00 for asbestos remediation at 401 Jordan Rd. as part of the Station #4 construction project. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no discussion.

B. **Possible approval of PR# 064 to Braun Northwest Inc. for the purchase of a new Ford chassis and the refurbishment of ambulance #542 in an amount not to exceed \$235,570.00.**

Division Chief (DC) Lechowski explained the re-chassis process noting ambulances are sent to Washington where the patient compartment is removed and replaced by a new 2026 chassis. Improvement examples provided by DC Lechowski include safety standards, UV lighting, and fan ventilation. He noted some of the refurbishment costs have gone up, in part, due to statutory changes.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve PR# 064 to Braun Northwest Inc. for the purchase of a new Ford chassis and the refurbishment of ambulance #542 in an amount not to exceed \$235,570.00. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.



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V. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board members did not have updates or ideas for future meetings.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:42 PM.

/s/ Original signed by Corrie Cooperman on 3/17/26

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date