



Approved by the SFD Fire Board on 5/19/26.

SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • FAX: (928) 282-6857
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SPECIAL BOARD MEETING: PUBLIC BUDGET WORKSHOP

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ • Multi-purpose Room
Wednesday, May 6, 2026 • 2:00 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 Special Board Meeting of the Sedona Fire District (SFD) was called to order by Board Chair, Helen McNeal, at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, May 6, 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 firefighters and 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; Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance (remote); Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager; Captain Greg Eberlein.

II. BUDGET WORKSHOP

A. Public Forum/Call to the Public

Speakers are limited to three-minute oral presentations but may submit written comments of any length for Board files. Board Members may not discuss items not specifically identified on the agenda. Therefore, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01(I), Board action taken as a result of public comment is limited to directing staff to study the matter, responding to any criticism, or scheduling the matter for further consideration and decision at a later date.

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

Members of the public were not present at the meeting.

A. Discussion/possible direction to the Fire Chief and staff regarding the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Sedona Fire District budget.

Chief Mezulis asked if the Board was opposed to Scott Schwisow and Captain Greg Eberlein attending the meeting. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, stated that she was not opposed.

Ms. McNeal proposed the attendees review the budget page by page and asked if Chief Mezulis or Gabe Buldra had input before the review started. Mr. Buldra expressed that the meeting presents an opportunity for the Board to ask questions regarding nuances of the budget before tentative adoption is requested in a few weeks. Chief Mezulis added that new staff added different perspectives and the division heads are more seasoned to fine-tune the budget. Reduction of costs and truing up year-over-year spending was a focus. Additionally, the capital plan captures costs this fiscal year and an update for a downward capital ask for next year. The current mill rate embeds more dollars towards capital



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than has been done in the past. It was based on an 18% healthcare cost, which dropped to 13%. If approved at the current mil rate, more money can be put into capital next year than originally programmed. Chief Mezulis stated that the numbers were not in the document because the trust provided the information the day prior to the meeting.

Chief Mezulis added that a 2.8 mill rate captures the capital spending; whereas, if the capital is not included, the rate is around 2.78. Mr. Buldra confirmed. Chief Mezulis further added that increasing the capital provides more bandwidth by allowing for a more progressive approach to facilities and capital projects. It also slows the diminishing number, spreads it out further over a timeline, and gives more of a net than spending it down sooner. The intention is to align with the strategic goals of the district to complete projects while there is momentum, projects that have been on the back burner for two decades.

The Board reviewed the budget line by line, clarifying category definitions, making corrections, and notating several large increases and decreases. Throughout the meeting it was discussed and clarified that many of the amounts were shifted to different categories following the fine-tuned review by staff. Diana Christensen, Board Member, emphasized the importance of explaining the shifts to ensure that the reasons for such changes are well understood by anyone reviewing the budget, to include the public. Helen McNeal also expressed concern that substantial differences need to be clear for public inspection, since they may deviate from past years.

The meeting minutes officially reflect, for the record, that substantial differences appear in the budget following numerous shifts between categories.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 PM.

/s/Original signed by Corrie Cooperman 5/19/26

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date