



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, April 21, 2026 • 3:00 PM

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

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, April 21, 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 seven law enforcement officers that died nationwide since the last Board meeting.

A. 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; Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal; Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance; Tomas Montoya for BPCWS, PLLC.; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager. Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; and Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief, were absent.

II. PUBLIC HEARING – Pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805.02(A)

A. Presentation and discussion of the proposed adoption of the 2024 International Fire Code and amendments, substituting in place of the existing, previously adopted 2012 International Fire Code.

The Public Hearing officially began at 3:03 PM.

Chief Mezulis remarked that all legal guidelines have been met, including posting of the notice, and that the District did not receive any questions, inquiries, or public input. Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell reported that the District received a letter of approval from the State Fire Marshal for the adoption of the 2024 (IFC) and amendments. He briefly presented the back history, noting the District is currently utilizing the 2012 International Fire Code adopted in 2017.

B. Public Input

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, asked if any members of the public wished to comment on the fire code. There were no members of the public present.

C. Close of Public Hearing

The public hearing officially closed at 3:06 PM.



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III. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval of Resolution #2026-01 – Adopting the 2024 International Fire Code with Amendments, to become effective May 1, 2026, pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(B)(7).

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the adoption of the 2024 International Fire Code with amendments, to become effective May 1, 2026, pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(B)(7). Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. Ms. McNeal asked if there were any further comments. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, noted that the 2024 IFC is well vetted and approved by the State Fire Marshal. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

IV. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

Badge Pinning/Promotions: Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal and John Wesbrock, Deputy Fire Marshal

Chief Mezulis highlighted the noteworthy career credentials of Fire Marshal Riddell and Deputy Fire Marshal Wesbrock and issued their promotional badges and pins. He remarked that Mr. Riddell has been serving as the Interim Fire Marshal, did a phenomenal job, and celebrated 36 years with SFD last week.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, commented that CRR has never functioned at a better rate or been more engaged with the community.

V. BUDGET WORKSHOP

- A. **Reminder: Special Board Meeting/FY 2027 Budget Workshop – May 6, 2026, at 2:00 PM**

Mr. Gabe Buldra, JVG Financial Director, updated the Board on the budget event calendar and status (see Budget Workshop presentation slides), noting the May 6th Special Board meeting will be a thorough review and tentative adoption will be requested at the May Regular Board meeting.

VI. REGULAR BUSINESS

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.

B. Consent Agenda: Discussion/Possible Actions

All matters under Consent Agenda are considered by the Board to be routine (i.e. Minutes and/or signatory authority for bank accounts) and will be enacted by a single motion approving the Consent Agenda. If discussion is desired on any particular consent item, a Board Member may ask that item be removed from the Consent Agenda to be considered separately.

- 1) Regular Meeting Minutes – March 17, 2026
- 2) Executive Session Minutes – March 17, 2026



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Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, to include the March 17, 2026, Regular Meeting minutes and Executive Meeting minutes. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no discussion.

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

Mr. Buldra reviewed the March 2026 Monthly Financial Report (see the Board packet and presentation). March total revenue was \$962K, \$184K over budget, driven by \$62K in property tax collection and \$122K in non-levy revenue. Expenses totaled \$1.7M, over budget by \$47K. Personnel expenses totaled \$1.5M over budget by \$123K, driven by wildland deployment and operational overtime. Year-to-date revenues are at \$20.2M, over budget by \$1.2M, property tax collection netted a positive variance of \$61K. Expenses totaled \$17.5M, under budget by \$83K. The District has expended 74% year to date, with 26% remaining. Personnel is the highest cost at 86% of total costs, followed by operations at 6%, and IT and managerial were both at 4%. The cash position was up \$187K. Other assets increased from \$23.9M to \$26.7M, reflective of capital assets. Liabilities increased from \$33.3M to \$33.9M, driven by payroll expenses and pension liabilities.

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

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the March 2026 Monthly Financial Report. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, 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:

Administration

- The wildland billing process is being automated and modernized.
- Three staff attended the Arizona Wildfire Academy for business management classes.
- The Administrative Manager is sorting and deconflicting utility rates and waste management contracts.
- Contracts are being reviewed, most specific to IT.
- The District is adopting new PStrax modules to include facilities and other areas which will increase tracking abilities and replacement planning.
- The budget is being fine-tuned and changed.

HR

- Open enrollment started. This is the largest healthcare increase ever seen, e.g. 90%, in some Districts. Sedona Fire District has not had a lot of large claims, employees are staying healthy, and worker's compensation is better utilized.
- The IT position is being re-evaluated after the District was unable to fill the position.



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- Firefighter recruitment is now open. The RAM Program is seeing success with 16 interested individuals and it has been well received.
- The Employee Handbook framework is being significantly revised and will soon go to legal and the union for review.
- Staff are working on finalizing the SharePoint rollout to include the business use perspective to ensure an end user satisfactory experience.
- The CRR job descriptions were updated to realign requirements with actual job duties. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, asked about wildland. Chief Mezulis commented that Assistant Chief Coil's Dragon Bravo Fire deployment was extensive and one individual is currently in North Carolina on assignment. Chief Mezulis noted that he attended the Cooperator's meeting in Prescott where they discussed recent grass growth that will eventually dry and create fuel. However, weather is predicted in the next few weeks and an earlier and heavier monsoon is expected later in the year.

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

Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell updated the Board as follows:

- Fire Marshal (FM) Riddell thanked the staff and Board attorney that assisted with the Fire Code adoption process.
- The CRR Activity Report was discussed and reviewed (see Board presentation). FM Riddell noted two fire investigations involving a lithium-ion battery in a dog grooming vacuum and a dumpster fire.
- FM Riddell and Deputy Fire Marshal Wesbrock presented two wildland sessions at the Oak Creek Country Club in VOC with 50 and 100 attendees. The sessions generated a lot of community input and requests for Firewise assessments. More HOAs and realty groups are also requesting Firewise assessments. Mr. Riddell noted a transition he is seeing in the community; the general public views Firewise beyond just a concern, but more now as a responsibility. The Chapel-area neighborhoods are building a coalition and preparing to perform substantial (Fire Wise) work to their neighborhoods and there is huge interest in VOC.
- The CCR completed the Rainbow Mobile Home Park Smoke Alarm Walk. Six rescue retrievers and 32 smoke alarms were installed. FM Riddell thanked the Red Cross, B Shift/Station #5, Helen McNeal (Board Chair), and the Arizona Burn Foundation for helping at the Walk.
- The Sunset Mobile Home Park has requested another Alarm Walk.
- Upcoming events: Cocodona, Spring Clean Ups.

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, asked if any investors or owners of short-term rentals (STR) have requested Fire Wise. FM Riddell responded that they have not. Mr. Waldrop stated that his neighborhood leads the city in STR concentration at nearly 88%. He explained that landscaping, e.g. maintaining hedge growth and defensible space, is not being performed or there is a lack of awareness for the need to do so. Thus, Mr. Waldrop wants that documented for public use and further noted other communities that are being proactive about it. Diana Christensen, Board Member, inquired if attempts have been made to do educational outreach with STRs. Mr. Waldrop responded that it may be difficult with corporate enterprises, but potentially possible. Further discussion ensued regarding possible restrictions, including the City of Sedona requiring Fire Wise. Chief Mezulis commented that SFD does not have statutory authority, that it would depend on the City's willingness to do so. He provided an example where a residential structure fire occurred in which the corporation could not be reached. An uptick in calls relating to propane tank leaks and smoke detector batteries, due to owners not maintaining rental properties, was also discussed. Ms. McNeal suggested that Fire Wise may present an opportunity to address the matters considered.



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3) Operational Support – Division Chief Buzz Lechowski

EMS

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

- DC Lechowski attended the ambulatory and billing conference in Las Vegas, NV to obtain information regarding ambulance billing and Medicare timelines.
- A new protocol system is being implemented due to the CARES Program.
- Most legislation that would impact EMS seems to be fading; however, state government is at a standstill
- The paramedic test was completed last month, marking the first time the District had to conduct a test. The test was implemented due to numerous employees interested in becoming paramedics.
- Quarterly EMS training was conducted last month.

Fleet

- The generator project is near completion with one installation remaining.
- DC Lechowski is working with the fire truck manufacturers to obtain answers, e.g. timelines and costs.

4) Training and Preparedness – Division Chief Jordan Baker

Chief Mezulis updated the Board for Division Chief (DC) Jordan Baker as follows:

- Three people are off 12-month probation.
- The training center work is near completion. Most of the items can be mobilized if the City of Cottonwood decides it cannot be used.
- Quarterly Minimum Company Standard Evaluations are complete.
- DC Baker is working on an Engineer New Position Task Book that's been modified based on the last engineer's test.
- A-Shift annual recreational off-highway vehicle association (ROVA) training was completed.
- Fire Rescue One, a new fire training platform for federally mandated classes, will soon roll out. The platform is more cost-effective, regularly updates training classes, and is more intuitive.
- The six-month firefighter probationary process will be completed in May.
- Eight administration personnel attended the Sedona Fire District/Sedona PD Fight or Flight course, in conjunction with a Stop the Bleed course.
- The second recruitment RAM event is scheduled for May 16th at Station #3. Fifteen to 16 attendees were interested in the last event. The District expects up to 20 at the next event. Participants sign up in advance. The recruitment test for hiring must be completed by June 14th.
- The SFD social media accounts have the following activity: 20K Facebook followers, approximately 1.2K Instagram followers. Social-media-savvy firefighters were given access to the accounts to put out fresh content.
- A Wellness Committee newsletter is being developed.
- Solve Global visits SFD monthly, where staff can schedule functional tests to receive recommendations.
- Treadmills were purchased for administration personnel.

D. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief Ed Mezulis

Chief Mezulis updated the Board as follows:

Financials

- Refer to the Budget Workshop discussions.



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Capital Projects

- The Station #4 estimated schedule forecasts guaranteed maximum pricing to be completed in June, demolition in July, and the “classic” golden shovel ribbon cut in August or September. All dates are subject to change if any unanticipated issues arise.
- The asbestos remediation went well. The building, other than an electrical room, is completely certified for training and is asbestos free. Public concerns were initially raised; however, the District did not receive any concerning complaints.
- Fuel is coming down, which will be the biggest driver in potential price changes.
- The Station #5 Slide Rock proposal was denied, as discussed at the last SFD Board meeting. A subsequent meeting was held with the Operations Director, his assistant, and the Northern Arizona Director. They again stated they weren't interested in working with the District. SFD pivoted to the Forest Service to talk about land discussed in the past. Meetings were scheduled and they are willing to discuss several pieces of property, including a quarry property located across from Slide Rock State Park.
- The property approved for purchase, adjacent to Station #1, is pending legal designation of the defined executor.
- Diana Christensen, Board Member, asked the status of the Annex remodel. Chief Mezulis stated that the cost will be rolled into a few other higher dollar projects, as it is not an independent project that aligns with capital needs.

POs Over \$10,000.00

- One air conditioning unit for \$31.5K.

Other Items

- Chief Mezulis discussed a recent Sedona PD incident involving a First Amendment auditor. The incident yielded 2K comments on social media attacking the police chief and comments aimed at Chief Mezulis. The incident directly impacted SFD; the dispatch phone number was posted and 911 was overwhelmed. Dispatch calls went from 150 to 2,000 per day, which severely impacted resourcing.
- Partnerships with the City are ongoing and SFD is attempting to push forward; however, local politics are challenging. Threats have been made to City officials and the police, including death threats. Chief Mezulis reiterated that he has been assaulted on the SFD Facebook page and nasty messages were sent via Facebook messenger. He concluded by stating this is a regional impact.

VII. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

A. **Possible approval of the Addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding: Executive Officer's Sub-Group Representation and Negotiation Authority.**

Chief Mezulis provided historical information. Resolution #2003-05 was the original impetus to the SFD IFF and Governing Board Memorandum of Understanding and changed throughout the years. The purpose of the addendum is to formally recognize and establish the executive officers as a distinct subgroup within the existing Local 3690 bargaining framework, solely for the purposes of representing and negotiation. This structure is intended to prevent conflicting representation, preserve clarity in negotiations, and recognize the unique community of interest held by the executive chief officers. The MOU has been reviewed by labor and management and recognized by the IFF and the PFFA.



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Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the Addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding: Executive Officer's Sub-Group Representation and Negotiation Authority. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

B. Possible approval of the Sedona Fire District's 2026 - 2031 Strategic Plan.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair thanked Chief Mezulis for organizing the staff and the input from the strategic planning group. Ms. McNeal noted that she raised a concern to the planning group after realizing none of the goals specially address staff, who are vitally important to SFD's success. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, posed questions regarding verbiage of the services to the community goal. Diana Christensen posed a question about the specificity of roles and responsibilities. After further discussion, Chief Mezulis discussed the planning committee efforts following a pause in planning, due to new staffing. He gave the Board the options to send the strategic plan back to the committee or amend it with collective changes made by the Board. Chief Mezulis further noted that specified tasks would be a subsequent step to the process to identify roles and responsibilities. The Board agreed to amendments and an opening cover letter.

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the Sedona Fire District's 2026-2031 strategic plan, as amended in discussion. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

There were no Board updates or ideas to discuss or present.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 PM.

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

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk

Date