Approved by the SFD Fire Board on 8/18/26.

SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336
Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • FAX: (928) 282-6857
www.sedonafire.org

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ • Multi-purpose Room
Tuesday, July 21, 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, July 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 the nine 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; Diana Christensen, Scott Springett, Lance Waldrop, Members.

Others Present: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal; Sara Simonton, JVG Senior Consultant (remote); Bill Whittington, Board Attorney, BPCWS, PLLC.; Jeff Wassell, Battalion Chief; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager; Keona Freeman, Human Resources Manager. Absent: Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief; Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. 15 Years of Service

– Jeremy Lilly, Engineer/CEP
– Jonathan Scaife, Captain/EMT/TRT

Chief Mezulis recognized Captain Scaife and Engineer Lilly for their 15 years of service with the Sedona Fire District. He highlighted their noteworthy career credentials, thanked them for their service to the District, and presented Captain Scaife with his 15-year service pin. Engineer Lilly was not present at the meeting and is to receive his pin at a later date.

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 speak at the meeting.

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B. Consent Agenda: Discussion/Possible Action

1) Regular Board Meeting Minutes – June 16, 2026

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Scott Springett, Board Member, seconded. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, and Diana Christensen, Board Member, abstained from voting; neither was present at the June 16, 2026, Regular Meeting. The motion was passed unanimously by the voting Board members with no further discussion.

C. Financial Report and Updates – Sara Simonton, Senior Consultant

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

Sara Simonton, JVG Senior Consultant, reviewed the June 2026 Monthly Financial Report (see the Board packet and presentation). June total revenue was $865K, $20K over budget. Tax Levy revenue was over budget by $92K, ambulance revenue was up $100K, interest was $64K over budget, and wildland was down $67K. Expenses totaled $1.8M, over budget by $60K. Total expenses were under budget for the fiscal year. Year-to-date revenues totaled $27.7M, over budget by $1.6M. Revenues were much higher than budgeted, driven by $1.6M in non-levy revenue. Ambulance revenue was over $766K and interest income was over $1M. Expenses totaled $23.7M, under budget by $183K. Personnel were over by $418K, largely associated to wildland and overtime. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, asked Mrs. Simonton to briefly discuss wildland costs and revenue. Mrs. Simonton explained that when resources are sent on assignment outside of the District, wildland costs are later offset by reimbursement associated with wildland personnel, labor, and travel. At fiscal year-end, District expenses were at 99%, 86% due to personnel costs. The FY 2026 over FY 2025 increases include $2.9M in cash position and $1.5M in other assets. Liabilities only increased by $400K, thus the District ended the fiscal year with about a $4M increase in net cash position. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, commented that the District is proud of the cash reserves, as it has big needs for the monies. Chief Mezulis added that the Board has put SFD in a position that allows movement on big projects, including the radio towers, Station #4, and potentially Station #5 in the future.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the June 2026 Monthly Financial Report. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

D. Monthly Staff Report

1) Operations Activities – Fire Chief, Ed Mezulis on behalf of Assistant Fire Chief, Jayson Coil

Significant Events

– Chief Coil, serving as an Incident Commander, is assigned to the Fish Hook Fire, with his team, on the Colorado/Wyoming boarder.
– SFD Pocket Fire resourcing contributions included a rapid extrication module truck with a crew of four, Medical Unit Leader, Division resource, and Safety Officer. The District resources, outside of the fire, focused on supporting efforts in the community.
– SFD served as an adjunct resource to the Pocket Fire by responding to heat related emergencies.

Human Resources

– Twenty-four firefighter candidates are scheduled for interviews.
– Chief Mezulis congratulated three administrative employees for a year of service.

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– The PFFA trust healthcare provider significantly increased rates. Staff had a short turnaround time to process information for all employees in the payroll software systems.

Administration

– The Legal RFQ (Board Attorney) is wrapping up.
– Staff are finalizing the rollout for a new uniform vendor which will reduce employee costs and produce a quicker streamline to the product.
– Staff continues to review all contracts to update or modify them.
– The newly obtained liability insurance vendor saved the District $30K.
– An SFD Engineer also serving in IT is digitizing information and modernizing capabilities.
– SFD social media is pushing 2.4 million views on posts: three second views at 634K and one minute views at 147K. Most views were likely attributed to the Pocket Fire. Staff received community feedback indicating the community felt more comfortable with the fire event due to SFD's social messaging and information sharing. Social media has become the most appropriate mechanism to reach the public. Policies and rules are being developed, e.g. what's appropriate to post, rules for deleting/commenting/posting internally and externally. The overall intent of the District is informed messaging that provides information and updates.

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

Activity Report

– Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell reviewed the monthly CRR Activity Report (see Board Presentation). Training with the new Fire Inspector is ongoing and nearly complete.
– CRR conducted 32 plan reviews in June. Notably, building in Sedona continues at a steady pace.
– CRR is focusing on residential Firewise assessments. There were no public presentations in June.

Fire Investigations

– A weed burner is believed to potentially be the cause of a fire in the Village of Oak Creek during Stage II fire restrictions. The fire burned outside of a fence and nearly burned into a wash.
– A fire started in a garage crawl space at a home on Father's Day. Bad wiring is believed to be the potential cause.
– Fire Marchal Riddell conducted an investigation in Rimrock as part of a local joint task force of investigators from Sedona, Cottonwood, and Verde Valley. The fire occurred on an acre parcel on a windy day with gusts of 30-35 mph. The fire burned five acres, including a car and a shed.
– CRR fire investigators assisted with a single fatality fire in Clarkdale. SFD CRR worked on supplemental aspects of the investigation. Mr. Riddell explained that investigators must wear suits for hazard safety, may work up to four hours, and must take breaks every 30 minutes.

Fire Marshal Riddell added that CRR participating in a joint taskforce balances resourcing for the region and provides direct, valuable experience for fire investigators. It also increases their investigation capacity to identify causes which matters to residents when they work with insurance companies to recover costs and loss.

Notable and Upcoming Events

– CRR participated in First Responder's Camp in conjunction with the City of Sedona and Sedona PD. The camp shows participants day-to-day experiences of both law enforcement and fire.

Board Member Lance Waldrop asked if any of the Firewise inspection requests were from owners of short-term rental (STR) operations or corporate enterprises. Mr. Riddell stated he did not believe so. Mr. Waldrop noted that his neighborhood is saturated with 80% of STRs and further commented that STR property upkeep may be limited; whereas, long-term residents might maintain defensible space. Further, the District does not have enforcement capacity where the

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City does, residents may be susceptible to losing insurance coverage or premium increases, and risk reduction is important.

3) Operational Support – Fire Chief, Ed Mezulis on behalf of Division Chief, Buzz Lechowski

EMS Activities and Updates

– A meeting was held with the President's Council which includes the Northern Arizona Healthcare (NAH) President to discuss recent updates. NAH is discussing property opportunities with the City and exploring ideas, such as expanded services. Their financial position is good, but they will be impacted by Medicare and Medicaid. The one request from fire service was to return cardiology services with a 24/7 cath lab. Resourcing and housing presented challenges, thus services were moved to a larger area. The committee includes engaged local residents that are helping NAH make informed decisions. Notably, there are no plans to change emergency room services, it will remain active.
– State direction on DEA mandates is still pending. However, preparations are underway, including the identification of innovative and cost-effective solutions for narcotics storage. Continuous EMS improvement and innovation includes gear distribution strategies and polar cooling devices for heat emergencies.
– A substantial cardiac arrest call had a positive outcome that Chief Mezulis attributed to SFD crew training and education. The individual was shocked 10 times and worked on for 45 minutes before transporting him.

Fleet Activities and Updates

– Fire truck purchase updates will be provided in 2-3 weeks.
– The Braun ambulance remount is scheduled for next month.

4) Training and Preparedness – Division Chief, Jordan Baker

Training Report

Training concluded last week that started with a company officer led portion in the firehouses. All 15 companies did classroom training with their crews. A simulation lab was conducted at Station #4 where crews ran through computer scenarios in different roles for the Blue Card ICS system.

A three-day training exercise was conducted at the vacant bank building, located at 401 Jordan Road, for six to seven hours each day. The structure was filled with smoke (no live fire) to create zero-visibility conditions, providing firefighters with realistic search and rescue training scenarios. The training gave crews their first opportunity to operate within the building. The exercise received positive feedback and provided valuable experience in search, rescue, response, and firefighter recovery operations under challenging low-visibility conditions. Training guidelines and lessons learned will be reviewed to increase proficiency. Notably, the training was conducted in an SFD-acquired structure, a rare, yet beneficial opportunity.

The Arizona State Fire School is scheduled for September. The event offers a variety of training opportunities, including leadership, live fire, forcible entry, vehicle extrication, and instructor certification programs. Nine individuals will attend. The conference provides an affordable and valuable professional development opportunity, particularly for newer firefighters.

Two individuals are going through 12-month evaluations in October; subsequently, the District will not have anyone on probation after that time.

Taskbooks went live last week. Seven individuals initiated the process. The Taskbooks have been redone from Firefighter to Battalion Chief. Standing committees will review them every six months. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, reviewed one and commented that it was very impressive and well done. The Engineer promotional exam is scheduled for February (2027). All 15 District Engineers will serve on a committee with the goal of reviewing and updating Individual Competency Standards, making corrections for the individuals initiating the new Taskbook, prior to the next Assessment Center.

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Wellness

The Monthly Newsletter is on its third month. Crews and some administrative support employees are cycling through monthly workouts with a focus of safety. The overall intentions of the Wellness Program are to keep employees in shape, be ready to perform the job to serve the citizens, prevent injury, and decrease workers' compensation to decrease premiums and on-duty injuries. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, commended Division Chief Baker for implementing long-term wellness strategies and understanding they are associated with risk, workers' compensation, and long-term disability considerations, which have costs associated with them. He emphasized that the health and wellness concept is also integrated into the new Station #4 plans. Division Chief Baker added that feedback was solicited from the Wellness Committee in the Station #4 planning.

E. Fire Chief Report – Fire Chief, Ed Mezulis

Fire District Financials

Chief Mezulis commented that he is on the State Worker's Compensation Board for Securis with multiple fire districts within the network. The Board's current goal is to set up a standard package with a rate that outlines discounts and increased costs. Annual rating criteria may include annual firefighter physicals, established wellness programs, cancer prevention programs, and providing firefighters with two sets of turnout gear. Such measures are peer-reviewed and scientifically proven to reduce health risks and workers' compensation costs. SFD is focusing on discounts, already meets many of the proposed standards, and is well positioned under the new model.

Capital Project Updates

Station #4

The Committee participated in a virtual walk-through of Station #4. It provided an opportunity to make minor changes to the plans. A meeting will take place within two weeks (with CORE Construction). The demolition and long-lead items will be brought to the Board in August as a guaranteed maximum price (GMP). If the Board is comfortable with the numbers, the District can start the demolition and long-lead items. Helen McNeal, Board Chair asked if it was possible for the Board to see the virtual walk through at the next meeting before the GMP finalization. Chief Mezulis stated he would see how that could be facilitated.

Radio Project

The project is on its nineth and likely final iteration of frequency testing which has held up progress. The last equipment shipment is expected to arrive this week. Chief Mezulis reminded the Board that initially, it was advised that the frequency worked. However, additional iterations were needed but delayed due to the federal government shutdown.

Station #5

Work continues, including a pre-intrusion meeting with ADOT to discuss highway intrusion. The property cannot be parceled until ADOT approval is received. APS confirmed power can be provided to the property. Water is accessible through a well. There is minimal concern regarding archaeological or environmental impacts because it's been used as a dump site. Following ADOT approval for an improved incursion to the highway, a yellow book survey can be conducted to pin and assess the property. Then, a process for a lease with the Forest Service can begin. Land cannot be bought outright from the federal government but they will negotiate a 30-year lease with the District. Subsequently, the process starts to purchase it. Once that occurs, the goal is to start the design and lock in the cost of the property. They indicated SFD could have a station on the land for five years. The final approval may then go through to purchase the land and the District would get to purchase land at the cost of appraisal plus appreciation, not the improvements to the land.

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Legislative Update

A bill was introduced that is not specific to the District but has potential to impact it. The bill was introduced to limit the ability for school districts to meet and confer, have unions, and collective bargain. Police and fire were later added. It is intended to be placed before voters in November. If approved, the legislation would impact many of the District's processes.

Other

The Arizona Fire District Association hired an individual to conduct a comprehensive economic evaluation of fire districts statewide. The first phase is expected to be completed in late Fall. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the current economic status of Arizona's fire districts and use that to change, improve, or alter how fire districts are funded in the State. Chief Mezulis will discuss the report with the Board when it becomes available.

SFD began discussions with CAFMA, Prescott Fire, and potentially Copper Canyon and Verde Valley to conduct a shared wage study. The total cost is $40K, which would be split among the participants. Chief Mezulis stated he wants to be a part of steering what the study evaluates. He commented that Phoenix-area departments and regional districts are offering lucrative packages that are causing human resource "thefts". Recruiting has changed; the District receives a significantly smaller number of applications. It is expensive to train firefighters, but less expensive to maintain relative wages and benefits. Chief Mezulis anticipates the study to be completed in October.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Possible vote to go into Executive Session for legal advice pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3) and for consultation with the designated representative to consider its position and instruct its representative in reference to the possible disposition of real property pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(7), regarding the District-owned parcel #APN: 401-17019M, located at the Station #4 Annex on Forest Road in Coconino County.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to go into Executive Session for legal advice pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3) and for consultation with the designated representative to consider its position and instruct its representative in reference to the possible disposition of real property pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(7), regarding the District-owned parcel #APN: 401-17019M, located at the Station #4 Annex on Forest Road in Coconino County. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

Mrs. McNeal advised the current audience a recess would be taken to allow individuals to leave the meeting room prior to the Executive Session starting. Recess began at 4:34 PM.

Executive Session began at 4:40 PM.

The Public Session was reconvened at 4:54 PM.

V. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Possible approval of declaring the District-owned parcel #APN: 401-17019M, located at the Station #4 Annex on Forest Road in Coconino County, as surplus for public auction, pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(18).

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to authorize the Chief to declare the District-owned parcel #APN: 401-17019M, located at the Station #4 Annex on Forest Road in Coconino County, as surplus for public auction, following the directions provided to him in Executive Session, pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(18). Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

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B. Possible approval of an expenditure for a new tower at the Sedona Airport, north tower site, in an amount not to exceed $200,000.00.

The current tower needs substantial repairs. A new tower would accommodate the current infrastructure and future upgrades. It is an erector style tower priced at $26K. The unknown costs are the concrete footer, as prices are fluid, and specialized brackets or equipment. The capital budgeted amount is $200K.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve an expenditure for a new tower at the Sedona Airport, north tower site, in an amount not to exceed $200,000.00. Diana Christensen, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

C. Possible approval of an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding: IAFF Local 3690, Sedona Chapter.

The L3690 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was recently modified to include an executive group as a negotiating body and incorporates Division and Battalion Chiefs. The MOU amendment pertains to DROP contributions and the sick and vacation buyout program. Diana Christensen, Board Member, asked about minimum vacation requirements and accrual rates to ensure the District is not incentivizing cashouts, unless individuals are required to take a minimum amount of vacation time. Chief Mezulis confirmed that they are required to take a minimum amount of vacation.

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding: IAFF Local 3690, Sedona Chapter. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

VI. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, and Board Members Scott Springett and Lance Waldrop shared their takeaways from the Arizona Fire District Association conference.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:11 PM.

/S/Original signed by Corrie Cooperman 8/18/26
Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk Date