



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

GOVERNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING

Station #1 • 2860 Southwest Drive • Sedona, AZ

Tuesday, August 18, 2026 • 3:00 PM • Multi-purpose Room

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 or District) was called to order by Board Chair, Helen McNeal, at 3:00 PM on Tuesday, August 18, 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 five firefighters and six law enforcement officers that died nationwide since the last Board meeting.

B. Board Member Roll Call

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; Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal; Gabe Buldra, JVG Financial Director; Bill Whittington, Board Attorney, BPCWS, PLLC.; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; David Rodriguez, Captain; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief/Recorder; Ellyse Deldin, Administrative Manager. Absent: Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. 10 Years of Service

- Nicholas Granada, Firefighter/CEP
- Richard Winn, Firefighter/CEP

Chief Mezulis recognized Firefighter Granada and Firefighter Winn for their 10 years of service with the Sedona Fire District. He highlighted their noteworthy career credentials and thanked them for their service to the District. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, also thanked Mr. Granada and Mr. Winn and expressed her deep gratitude for their service. Both Firefighters were not present at the meeting and will receive their 10-year service pins at a later time.

III. PUBLIC FORUM/CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Speakers are limited to three-minute oral presentations but may submit written comments of any length for Fire Board files. Board Members may not discuss items not specifically identified on the agenda. In the event an item is not specifically identified on the agenda, 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.

A. Public Comments

B. Possible Executive Staff Response to Public Comments

Members of the public did not wish to make comments at the meeting.



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

IV. CONSENT AGENDA: DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

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.

A. July 21, 2026, Governing Board Regular Meeting Minutes

B. July 21, 2026, Governing Board Executive Session Meeting Minutes

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, commented that the Board minutes have been concise, representative of discussions, and informative.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, to include the July 21, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes and the July 21, 2026, Executive Session Meeting Minutes. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

V. FINANCIAL REPORTS

A. Monthly Financial Report and Updates: Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance

Gabe Buldra, JVG Director of Finance, reviewed the July 2026 Monthly Financial Report (see Board packet). Revenue totaled \$459K, over budget by \$36K. Tax collection reflected historic trends. Non-levy revenue was \$388K, over budget by \$36K, attributed to ambulance revenue and interest income. Expenses totaled \$2.6M, under budget by \$35K. Mr. Buldra pointed out two variances. Personnel had a small variance of \$17.9K, predominantly driven by wildland deployment wages and in-district overtime. The second was a variance of \$20K attributed to buildings and land, noted as a result of regular maintenance. The district has spent 10% of the budget with 90% remaining. The month ended with \$19.16M total cash on hand, an increase of just under about \$1M year over year. Other assets increased from \$25.8M to \$27.5M, associated to investments and capital assets from the prior year. Liabilities increased from \$33.9M to \$34.1M, driven by year-end payroll accruals, etc. Mr. Buldra further noted that pension adjustments will affect the next couple of months as the books are closed out.

B. Discussion/Possible Action: Review and possible approval of the July 2026 Monthly Financial Report, in accordance with A.R.S. § 48-807(P).

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the July 2026 Monthly Financial Report. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

VI. MONTHLY STAFF REPORTS

A. Operations Activities: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief, on behalf of Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief

Significant Events

- Chief Coil remains assigned to the Oregon wildfire deployment and has been extended. The REM vehicle is returning from Oregon, with travel underway.
- BC Todd Miranda remains deployed and may receive an extension due to an ongoing resource draw across the Southwest.
- Post-fire flooding impacts in Oak Creek Canyon and Dry Creek Wash occurred. Public concerns regarding creek discoloration and ash runoff were addressed; they are expected effects of post-fire flooding.



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

- Worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service to evaluate threats and hazards. Chief Coil submitted a document to the Forest Service to justify SFD's position regarding shutdowns and restrictions for public safety.
- Responded to the Turkey Fire and Heart Fire, both believed to be lightning-caused and located in remote areas. The Turkey Fire received significant aerial and ground resource support to achieve containment. Sedona Fire District provided water tenders on the Turkey Fire for several hours.

Human Resources

- Conditional offers were extended to four candidates. The candidates are currently undergoing background checks, psychological evaluations, uniform sizing, and other pre-employment requirements. The tentative start date for the new recruit academy is October 19.
- An analytical review of staffing levels and overtime trends is being conducted to identify future staffing and operational triggers.

Administration

- Negotiations continue with Verizon and T-Mobile regarding cellular tower lease agreements. Verizon contract processing was delayed after a company reorganization resulted in the loss of previous points of contact; the contract has been resubmitted. T-Mobile negotiations experienced additional delays due to newly requested contract revisions. Administrative staff continues to dedicate significant effort toward resolving both agreements.

Station 5 Project

- The District submitted a SF-299 Forest Service application to enter into a lease for the proposed Station #5 site. Staff and the architect developed a preliminary schematic.
- Forest Service review is underway, with feedback expected next week. If approved, the project will move into foundational plans and drainage reviews. The timeline remains unchanged and is a two-year process. A contract with a NEPA contractor would be the next step. process. Overall progress remains positive.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, asked Chief Mezulis for an update regarding the current Station #5 lease holders. Chief Mezulis stated that the District has not engaged them, nor have they asked for updates. Ms. Cooperman noted that they have been good partners of the District and it is appreciated.

- The District completed a mental health and resiliency training via a fire district grant received by Arizona Fire Medical Authority. All operational personnel completed the training and administration staff participated in a specialized session. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the practical value of the training and its relevance to personal and professional wellbeing.
- Administrative and non-operational staff completed a defensive driving course as part of the district's ongoing risk management and safety initiatives. Annual driver training for operations personnel remains scheduled for November.
- Preparations continue for the sale of the Uptown parking lot property. A new property appraisal was completed. The District experienced a minor delay due to the requirement for a survey certificate; staff did not know was required. The property will be listed through Public Surplus. Chief Mezulis anticipates that the property will be ready for auction listing within the next few weeks.

C. Community Risk Reduction Activities: Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal

- Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell reviewed the monthly CRR Activity Report (see Board Presentation), noting residential and commercial inspections are approximately the same as the previous month. Plan reviews continue to be submitted; 38 were conducted in July.



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

Fire Investigation

- A fire in a historic commercial building occurred in the back corner of the unit. A leaf blower was left plugged in overnight to dry the flooring out. The building was saved by a fire sprinkler.

Notable and Upcoming Events

- CRR participated in the City's 4th of July event and held a charter school public education event at Station #6. Fire Marshal Riddell thanked the crews for their participation.
- Fire Marshal Riddell reached out to the City department that addresses short-term rentals (STRs), noting that Sedona has a combination of about 2K – 2.4K STRs within the encapsulation area of the city, making up 20% of the population. He is giving a five-minute presentation to STR managers on September 8th. Mr. Riddell commented that SFD had two instances in the past month requiring assistance from the police department to force entry into STRs because the posted contact information for maintenance or emergencies did not respond. He further noted an access issue where a subdivision was severely overgrown, requiring SFD crews to abandon the engine and ambulance to walk up to the property.

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, asked if there were any Firewise inquiries from any owners, operators, corporate entities, or otherwise, that run, own, or manage STRs within the community. Fire Marshal Riddell stated no that all inquiries have been from private residents. Mr. Riddell further commented that he is planning to email and send letters to STRs via a city STR contact program. Chief Mezulis commented that these are entities buying up STRs and that despite hotels that follow regulations, STRs are commercial residential properties, making enforcement challenging.

D. Operational Support: Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief

EMS

- The district's third paramedic student passed his test last week and is starting their first day in the mentorship program this week. The mentorship pairs newly certified paramedics with experienced mentors. Three personnel are starting paramedic classes.
- Through strategic budgeting, the district has been able to maximize training opportunities by overlapping candidate selection and tuition funding across fiscal years.

Fleet

- The district's ambulance remount project is progressing, with the vehicle scheduled for delivery to the manufacturer in Washington next week. Staff will transport the vehicle directly to the facility, reducing costs and providing opportunities for hands-on observation of the remount process and manufacturer operations.
- Upon removal of the ambulance box, staff plan to return the existing chassis for potential resale, which may provide greater financial return than the manufacturer's trade-in offer.

Other

- Resilience training is being developed and lined up with new hire orientation. It includes a regional partner's academy where new firefighters can bring their significant other. Topics include financial management, impacts of shift work, being resilient and supportive, and mental wellbeing. Retirees will participate in a roundtable discussion to share their experiences.
- Division Chief Lechowski attended the Arizona Ambulance Association meetings which included discussions regarding legislative bills that will impact ambulances and other broader fire and public safety services.
- Analysis and discussions regarding the new DEA requirements continue, including hospital partnership, potential medical doctor involvement, and the security, licensing, and financial components of medicine. Further, legislation language to allow DEA licensing was fast tracked.



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

E. Training and Development: Jordan Baker, Division Chief

Training

- The New Hire Academy begins October 19th and includes a three-week orientation and a potluck for SFD employees to meet the four new hires.
- The Partner's Academy also provides an opportunity for experienced spouses to mentor spouses new to the fire service environment.
- Efforts to regionalize the SFD training academy are underway in conjunction with Copper Canyon and Verde Valley Fire. A meeting was held with their training representatives and was promising. The vision is to develop an academy for regional new hires that incorporates specialized training delivery from representatives from each agency.
- Regional staff integration opportunities may be presented in the coming weeks which enhances personnel interaction and mutual aid and equipment use in the Cottonwood and Camp Verde areas.
- Fire school is scheduled for September. Crews interested in promoting are capitalizing on leadership and engineering classes they will be attending.
- Firefighter Vargas is serving as a lead instructor for the Valley Academy for Career and Technology Education. It is a program where students can obtain college credit towards fire career certification.
- C-Shift Live Fire training is scheduled for December.
- Driver training for Operations is scheduled for November (classroom) and December (hands-on).

Wellness

- Monthly workouts are ongoing. A step challenge is in the works; steps are recorded for a week. Participants can be in a group. The winning group donates to a charity of their choosing; the charity will front the money.

Other

- The police versus fire charity basketball game is scheduled for October 24th at the Mingus Union High School at 6:00 PM.
- Division Chief Baker, Chief Mezulis, and Battalion Chief Miranda attended a tour, with other agencies, of the West Fork area down to Dry Creek Road to view existing flooding impacts and to provide insight on areas of concern.

F. Fire Chief Report: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief

Capital Projects

- The Station #4 and Station #5 projects are progressing, see (VI)(A) above.
- **Radio Project**

All consoles and batteries have been received and are onsite. The rectifiers are scheduled for delivery in mid-September. The batteries must be installed in conjunction with the rectifiers; there are three pallets of them, each weighing 70 pounds, and each site requires a dozen batteries. Once installed all AC and triple redundancies for all sites will be installed. Then, mapping for radio installs will begin, and ultimately the radio tower installs. A two-phase install approach is anticipated. Issue resolution, the FCC licensing deal, and FAA authorizations are in the works.

- **Property Adjacent to Station #1**

The Sundowner (restaurant) did not express concerns. Large event parking is needed at Station #1 which is the current plan. Other potential uses include a new fleet shop or storage. Chief Mezulis expressed thanks to the Board for authorizing the purchase of the land, as it presents new opportunities.



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

Purchases Over \$10K

- Station #6 landscape to remove overgrown brush and groundcover fixes damaged by erosion and digging for grinder pump fixes.
- Hose testing

Legislative Update

- Chief Mezulis is attending a meeting with the Attorney General's Office and a group of fire chiefs this week to discuss potential action against the fire truck manufacturers.
- The Speaker of the House initiated an ad hoc committee with Mary Dalton, the Timber Mesa Fire Chief, and another individual to evaluate fire district funding.
- AFDA hired a consultant to perform a financial need assessment.
- All the above-mentioned information will provide valuable insight and real data for the next legislative session.

Chief Mezulis presented the CORE Construction virtual reality tour of the future Station #4 (see the Board meeting recording). He noted that it provided an opportunity to identify design changes when it was first presented to the District.

VII. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval to expend funds in an amount not to exceed \$1,893,318.00, to CORE Construction, for building demolition, site work, professional services, and the purchase of long-lead items as part of the Station #4 construction project.**

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the expenditure of funds in an amount not to exceed \$1,893,318.00, to CORE Construction, for building demolition, site work, professional services, and the purchase of long-lead items as part of the Station #4 construction project. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, initiated discussion and requested information from Chief Mezulis. Chief Mezulis commented that the demolition will occur regardless of the project outcome, the permits were approved, and therefore, demolition can start next month. He noted costs are staying as described with no expectations to be higher. Approval of the monies allows the project to stay on task. Regarding long-lead items, Chief Mezulis stated the brick order takes 14 weeks. If ordered now, it will be available onsite when the flat work is done. If the expenditure is not approved, it will not shut down the project, but it will delay the construction timeline. He further expressed his surprise at what other items were considered long-lead, such as electrical panels and steel door frames.

Chief Mezulis clarified that the expenditure approval does not approve the entirety of the project. It approves preparation of the site and the long-lead items.

Ms. McNeal called a vote to approve the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, thanked him for his collaboration with the Sedona Police Department to conduct training at the Jordan Road site.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, requested that Chief Mezulis include upcoming events in his monthly communications, e.g. CRR, if the Board wants to participate or for those they need to know about. Chief Mezulis agreed.



SEDONA FIRE DISTRICT

2860 Southwest Drive, Sedona, Arizona 86336

Telephone: (928) 282-6800 • www.sedonafire.org

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Possible vote to go into Executive Session for personnel matters, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1), regarding the Fire Chief's evaluation.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, entertained a motion to go into Executive Session. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, moved to go into Executive Session for personnel matters, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1), regarding the Fire Chief's evaluation. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

Ms. McNeal called a recess to allow time for the applicable meeting attendees to leave the room prior to starting the Executive Session. Recess began at 4:24 PM.

Executive Session began at 4:31 PM.

- B. Reconvene into public session.

The Public Session was reconvened at 4:42 PM.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:42 PM.

/s/Original signed by Corrie Cooperman

9/15/26

Corrie Cooperman, Governing Board Clerk

Date

Approved by SFD Governing Board 9/15/26