



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, September 15, 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 3:07 PM on Tuesday, September 15, 2026. A quorum of the Board was present. Ms. McNeal led the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence was held for the three firefighters and five 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 (remote), Scott Springett, Lance Waldrop, Members.

Others Present: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief; Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief; Kirk Riddell, Fire Marshal; Sara Simonton, JVG Senior Consultant; Bill Whittington and Devon White, Board Attorneys, BPCWS, PLLC.; Scott Schwisow, Project Manager; Jeff Wassell, Battalion Chief; Greg Eberlein, Captain; Christi Weigand, Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief/Recorder; Josh Clouch, IT Systems Specialist. Absent: Jayson Coil, Assistant Fire Chief; Jordan Baker, Division Chief.

Chief Mezulis briefed the Board regarding the 9-11 Ceremony and stated that he received positive public feedback and many retirees and volunteers attended.

II. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS/STAFF RECOGNITION

A. 10 Years of Service

- Adam Deringer, Engineer/CEP

B. 5 years of Service

- Cascade Detrick, Firefighter/CEP/TRT
- Dillon Risner, Firefighter/CEP
- Jacob Tavrytzky, Firefighter/HRT/CEP/TRT

Chief Mezulis recognized Firefighters Adam Deringer (10 years), Cascade Detrick (five years), Dillon Risner (five years), and Jacob Tavrytzky (five years) for their years of service with the Sedona Fire District and highlighted their noteworthy career credentials. All four Firefighters were not present at the meeting and will receive their service pins at a later time. Helen McNeal, Board Chair, congratulated the Service Award recipients, noting they attended new employee orientation classes together.

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



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Members of the public did not comment at the meeting.

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. August 18, 2026, Governing Board Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. August 18, 2026, Governing Board Executive Session Meeting Minutes

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Corrie Cooperman Board Clerk, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, to include the August 18, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes and August 18, 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

Sara Simonton, JVG Senior Consultant, reviewed the August 2026 Monthly Financial Report (see Board Packet). Total revenue was \$361,000, over budget by \$11K. Tax levy revenue was under budget by \$15K, due to property tax collections. Non-tax levy revenue was over budget by \$26K, primarily driven by ambulance billing collections and interest earnings. Total expenses were \$15K under budget. Year-to-date total revenue was \$819K, over budget by \$47K. Non-tax levy was over budget by \$63K. Year-to-date total expenses were \$4.5M, under budget by \$51K. The District has spent 18% of the budget, which is on target for the fiscal year. Cash position was \$17.8M, including \$13.7M of capital reserve cash on hand.

Ms. Simonton noted strong performance on revenues and that expenditures are being well managed.

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

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the August 2026, Monthly Financial Report. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

VI. MONTHLY STAFF REPORTS

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

Significant Events

- Chief Coil is the only SFD employee currently deployed. Division Chief Baker was deployed to eight different fires. Trucks deployed to the fire will result in a revenue increase.
- Numerous heat-related emergency calls occurred, as expected this time of year.
- Fire billing has been streamlined and digitized to increase efficiency.
- A type 6 engine is out on assignment earning \$30K in revenue for each two-week assignment.
- SFD Captains collaborated and implemented Station assignment changes for crews to enhance their growth and development, learn new areas, and strengthen crew dynamics, ultimately boosting customer service.

Human Resources

- The new hires (Firefighters) start on October 19th. The New Hire Potluck is scheduled the same day. Christi Weigand (Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief) will send an email to the Board to determine who will be in attendance and if a quorum will be present.



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- The Arizona Fire District Association solicited input from the District for an economic impact study of the Arizona fire districts. This will assist with informing the legislature on the needs of fire district financing. Chief Mezulis thanked JVG for providing a template for data population and reporting which streamlined the process.

Administration

- Scott Schwisow (Project Manager) and Ellyse Deldin (Administrative Manager) continue to work on the property auction, developing a new in-house process utilizing the site used for other District auctions. Legal provided consultation. The auction is almost ready to launch.
- A new web designer has been selected. Staff will be more involved with the new website, new potential is possible with the CPR program, and the swag accounts might be digitized.
- Christi Weigand (Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief) and Board Legal Counsel updated and digitized the Request for Public Comments form.
- Ellyse Deldin continues to focus on digitizing, reviewing, and cleaning up contracts.

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

Activity Report

Fire Marshal Riddell reviewed the CRR Activity Report for August 2026 (see Board Presentation). He commented that CRR did not conduct any fire investigations and that activity continues to be busy.

Inspection Activities

- Residential plan reviews are steady; whereas, the commercial plan reviews are in a pending status, because they are substantially big.
- CRR presented a safety talk at Sedona Shadows to discuss smoke alarms, Firewise, and evacuations. The presentation was well received.
- CRR also provided a similar presentation at Boca, but notably, there are more short-term rentals affecting the locals in that neighborhood.

Notable and Upcoming Events

- 10/3/26: Slide Rock Festival and Community Outreach with Sedona PD at the Hub
- 10/9/26: Sunset Mobile Home Park Smoke Alarm Walk
- 10/10/26: Wheels Up Airport Days
- 10/24/26: Wildcat Carnival and Fire v. Police Basketball Game
- 10/31/26: Uptown Trick or Treat for Halloween

Other

In May 2026, SFD adopted the 2024 International Fire Code and amendments. Since that time, additional items were identified as areas of clean up associated with older code references. The State Fire Marshal has approved the proposed additional changes. The Code will be brought to the Board in October for possible approval. Fire Marshal Riddell commended John Wesbrock (Deputy Fire Marshal), Christi Weigand (Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief), and Board Attorneys Devon White and Bill Whittington for their hard work on the fire code review. Chief Mezulis added that they deconflicted 25 years of code.

Fire Marshal Riddell advised the Board that a 2026 CRR Fee Schedule change will be proposed at the next meeting. The change is in regard to the Residential New Construction Fee, which does not accommodate Sedona Fire District, as the District conducts business differently from the Verde Valley and Copper Canyon Fire Districts. The fee is currently 40% of the permit fee. Yavapai County must complete their plan review before providing the District with the amount. It subsequently holds up the permits for two to eight weeks, unfairly affecting builders, developers, and homeowners. Thus, CRR will propose a flat fee to streamline the process and mitigate barriers to successful and timely building in the Sedona area.



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Lance Waldrop, Board Member, thanked Fire Marshal Riddell for attending a local short-term rental (STR) meeting. Mr. Riddell stated that he spoke with the City and STR managers to provide information regarding the problems SFD has encountered with STRs, noting that the group was receptive.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, asked Mr. Riddell to talk more about the upcoming events he previously discussed for future Board Member, Malcom Boyd, so he can better understand them in context. Mr. Riddell provided in-depth explanations of each event (see Board recording).

C. Operational Support: Buzz Lechowski, Division Chief

EMS

Ambulance Billing

The ambulance billing contract was changed to a one-year contract. An evaluation was performed to determine if other vendors may be more beneficial. The District is transitioning to a different company that offers new services, e.g. better revenue collections and reporting.

Chief Mezulis commented that the change ties to the District's Strategic Plan and noted the unique demographics of the District; the majority of residents are on Medicare. He added that the current company was not collecting to the highest potential and there is a possibility of upwards of \$250K in additional collections revenue.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, thanked Division Chief Lechowski, Ellyse Deldin (Administrative Manager), and Kris Ahern (Training Division Assistant) for their hard work assessing and selecting a new vendor.

Fleet

Division Chief Lechowski drove the ambulance to Washington with Reese from SFD Fleet. The ambulance rebuild should be completed within 90 - 100 days.

A survey will be sent to all medics regarding ambulance configuration, e.g. safety, service, and ergonomics. The District plans to develop the box component specifications; notably, the last ambulance refurbish occurred in 2018.

Other

Chief Mezulis and Division Chief Lechowski met with the Verde Valley Caregivers to discuss gaps in care that they can provide that is out of scope for SFD. The District will work jointly with Verde Valley Fire, to include how to document incidents while maintaining confidentiality.

D. Training and Development: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief, on behalf of Jordan Baker, Division Chief

Training Report

- The New Hire Academy is on October 19th and the potluck is scheduled for the same day. Other agencies will conduct a portion of the training with SFD.
- Extraction instructors are in Washington attending inexpensive training that provides them with the opportunity to frequently use extraction tools on different types of vehicles.
- Nine employees attended the Arizona State Fire School; SFD now has additional Live Fire and Driver Training certified instructors.
- Two individuals will finish their 12-month probation period this month.
- All Engineer company standards are being revamped to integrate feedback from Engineers.
- SFD attended a joint training with Sedona PD at the Jordan Road property before demolition.

E. Fire Chief Report: Ed Mezulis, Fire Chief

Capital Project Updates

Station #4

The long-lead items and demolition plans and costs were secured by the Board. The tentative date (for



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demolition) is September 28th.

Station #5

Station #5 is in a holding pattern. Scott Schwisow (Project Manager) and Ellyse Deldin (Administrative Manager) are working on details, e.g. well installation, power. The District cannot move forward until feedback from the Forest Service's S299 form is received. Chief Mezulis commented that there may be timeline impacts following the General Election in November.

Radio Project

All materials have been received.

The District is working through FCC frequency authorizations. Bob Motz (Telecommunications Manager) is working to coordinate the installation of the purchased rectifiers and batteries. Scott Schwisow is working on final details for the airport tower replacement, such as concrete for the pre-designed tower installation, FCC and FAA clearances, and GPS mapping.

Purchases Over \$10K

- Battalion Chief Wassell purchased turnouts
- Station #6 landscaping and mitigation of tree root overgrowth affecting the septic system
- New web designer

Legislative Update

- The Arizona Fire District's economic impact study is directly tied to how this legislative session is going to develop.
- The City Manager has resigned. It impacts forward momentum for SFD and there is no decision maker.
- Legislatively, the District has little authority to address STRs. The District is working on a data set to show how SFD supplements property management services, e.g. propane tank issues, fire pits left burning, overgrown vegetation. There is a notable increase in calls for service. For example, crews had to breach a door after attempting to reach the property manager for approximately 30 minutes to ensure a smoke alarm going off was not due to a fire. Fire Marshal Kirk Riddell has been collaborating with the City, property managers, and realty groups to address and discuss such issues. The District is taking a different approach for the benefit of our community and firefighters.

VII. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

- A. Possible approval to expend funds to Core Construction in an amount not to exceed \$13,980,547.00 for the Station #4 construction project, representing Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) #3; and approval of the overall construction cost of \$15,997,023.00, inclusive of GMP #1, GMP #2, and GMP #3.**

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, stated she would open with the motion, then open up for discussion.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the expenditure of funds in an amount not to exceed \$13,980,547.00 for the Station #4 construction project, representing Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) #3; and approval of the overall construction cost of \$15,997,023.00, inclusive of GMP #1, GMP #2, and GMP #3. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, seconded.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, asked for discussion.

Chief Mezulis initiated the discussion with a summary for the Board:

- GMP #1 and GMP #2 have already been approved by the Board. The GMP #3 amount is \$13,980,547.00, bringing the total, as mentioned in the motion, to over \$15M. Construction continues and the District's remaining balance to fund or finance is \$13,980,547.00.



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- Mr. Buldra previously advised Chief Mezulis that JVG is working with National Bank of Arizona to obtain loan documents.
- Chief Mezulis disclosed that he has met with Stifel; they primarily process bonds and also manage some loan processes. Further, a fee is charged to look for different banks and loans.
- JVG also has avenues for funding. The Chief further commented that JVG will evaluate financing and provide a recommendation at a later meeting for the Board to consider as to how the District may fund or finance the project. Mr. Buldra indicated to Chief Mezulis that \$10M in financing is an initial estimate, but that it is in the process of being confirmed.

Chief Mezulis asked Sara Simonton, JVG Senior Consultant, when it is appropriate that the Board make a decision on how to fund the rest of the GMP. Ms. Simonton commented that she anticipates that the Board will have the documents at the next meeting, at which time they can review them and work through it. She further added that JVG typically sees loans for fire districts with a 15-year lease purchase for \$10M at about a 4% - 4.5% interest rate. The District's capital plan budget allocates \$6M from SFD funds, noting capital funding reserves have about \$13.5M, almost \$14M, in which the \$6M would be taken from there and the loan would possibly be for \$10M.

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, commented that National Bank of Arizona is referenced in the provided materials and that it financed Station #6. Chief Mezulis stated that was correct.

Mr. Bill Whittington, Board Attorney, asked if Chief Mezulis needed the motion to be contingent upon financing. Chief Mezulis responded, stating that he did not believe so, due to the District's cash reserves, bond rating, and that the District is in a good position to borrow money. He further commented that he believes the Board and JVG have done their due diligence to ensure the District is in a financial position to manage this. He noted that \$700K in contingencies are built in and CORE presented past projects in which all were under their GMP; the only overages they experienced were due to add-ons. The District's committee, CORE, and LEA comprehensively worked on the design in preparation for the station build, thus, it is not likely additional costs will be incurred.

Ms. Cooperman noted that there was a separate line item for photovoltaics, i.e. solar, and asked if that was included in the \$16M. Chief Mezulis confirmed that the line item was included; however, the cost is \$300K extra. It was opted to include the conduit and the pre-work in the GMP #3 for covered solar parking that would offset electrical costs and be covered outdoor storage for the wildland fleet. Nonetheless, due to the cost, it was extracted from the GMP. The built-in contingencies may provide a way for the District to ultimately include it in the construction, which is to be determined.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, commented that she has heard that JVG is expecting the Federal Reserve to change. She asked Ms. Simonton if that was part of the reason for the (loan documentation) delay. Ms. Simonton responded, stating that JVG contacted National Bank of Arizona last week, and the representative stated they were just finalizing the loan. Mr. Whittington asked if Chief Mezulis wanted contingency based on the loan documents. Chief Mezulis asked him to clarify if an interest rate increase is the reason he presented the option of contingent financing. He clarified that the reason had nothing to do with the rate, but is associated to available cash and if the District wishes to communicate to the vendors that payment obligations are contingent upon the District's ability to obtain a loan. Chief Mezulis and Sara Simonton stated that they did not have concerns about obtaining a loan.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, stated the motion was on the table and there was a Seconder. She called for a vote. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

B. Possible approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement for Provision of Services by the Coconino County Elections Department.

Chief Mezulis commented that the IGAs between both counties are offset; therefore, the reason why only one IGA is proposed for approval. It is the District's statutory requirement to hold elections.



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However, the approval of the IGA opts for the County to perform elections services in lieu of the District conducting them independently without assistance.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement for Provision of Services by the Coconino County Elections Department. Lance Waldrop, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

C. Possible approval of the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for professional legal services of general counsel, pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(B)(11).

Chief Mezulis thanked Christi Weigand (Executive Assistant to the Fire Chief) for developing the RFQ. He stated that the RFQ relates to the Board's request last year to review all professional services. He emphasized that legal representation is a critical component to the Board's success and the District's forward momentum. Chief Mezulis also thanked Helen McNeal, Board Chair, for collaborating with Christi to create the document. The initial draft was reviewed in a previous meeting. If the RFQ is approved, a schedule will be finalized for the release of the RFQ.

Lance Waldrop, Board Member, moved to approve the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for professional legal services of general counsel. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER UPDATES AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, commented that the 9-11 event was special, moving, and beautifully done.

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 Annual Evaluation.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, made a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of personnel matters, pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(1), regarding the Fire Chief's evaluation. Corrie Cooperman, Board Clerk, 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 4:30 PM.

Executive Session began at 4:36 PM.

B. Reconvene into public session.

The Public Session was reconvened at 5:11 PM.

Helen McNeal stated that she was happy to report that Chief Mezulis received an excellent evaluation. The Board is very happy with his performance and with the fact that his own assessment of his performance correlated greatly with the assessment of the Board. Thus, the Board and the Chief are all aligned with the great direction that Sedona Fire is heading towards.

Ms. McNeal read the five 2026-2027 objectives the Chief will be evaluated on next year. She commented that the Chief also shared with the Board how each of these objectives align with the Strategic Plan and key activities that he intends to undertake.

Objectives

- (1) Enhance response time data, analytics, and performance reporting.
- (2) Strengthen recruitment and retention strategies.



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- (3) Develop a formal succession planning and leadership development strategy.
- (4) Improve the capital project timeline, accountability, and communication.
- (5) Enhance community and city wildfire preparedness partnerships.

X. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

A. Possible approval of the Fire Chief Annual Evaluation.

Helen McNeal, Board Chair, moved to approve the Fire Chief Annual Evaluation. Scott Springett, Board Member, seconded. The motion was passed unanimously by the Board with no further discussion.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 PM.

/s/Original signed by Corrie Cooperman

10/20/26

Corrie Cooperman, Governing Board Clerk

Date

APPROVED by the Sedona Fire District Governing Board 10/20/26