HIGHLANDS FIRE DISTRICT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES • 07/21/26

A regular meeting of the Fire Board was held on **Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 5:01 PM** at Fire Station 23, Administration Board Room, 3350 Old Munds Hwy, Flagstaff, AZ. The meeting was also available through Zoom Video Conferencing.

1. **Call to Order**. Chairperson Smith called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

2. **Roll Call.** Chairperson Jay Smith, Clerk Carl Nelson, and Director Ira Allen were present. Director Tom Hanecak and Director Brad Bippus were absent.

   Fire Chief Todd Miller, Battalion Chief Josh Pond, Mrs. Erica Lyons, and Mr. Dominic Filosa* were present as well as several members of staff.

*Attendance through Video Conferencing.

3. **Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation, Mission and Vision Statements, and Board Responsibilities.** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by a short invocation. The District's mission, vision, and Board responsibilities were reviewed.

4. **Welcome Visitors.** - The Board welcomed Mr. Peter Smith to the Board meeting.

5. **Call to the Public.** Mr. Smith stated he submitted nomination papers for the fall election and shared his experience as part of the volunteer board for Kachina Village before the district was formed.

6. **Approval of Minutes**. JUNE 16TH, 2026 REGULAR MEETING. The Board reviewed the minutes of the June 16th, 2026 meeting. A **MOTION** was made by Clerk Nelon and was seconded by Director Allen to approve the minutes as presented; the motion was unanimously **APPROVED**. JUNE 16TH, 2026 EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES – Chairperson Smith stated the approval of the June 16th, 2026 executive session minutes will be tabled as Director Bippus will provide them for the August Board meeting.

7. **Approval of Financial Report presented by James Vincent Group.** Mr. Filosa presented the June Financial Report (see written report for full details). He reported that June revenue exceeded budget due to higher-than-anticipated tax collections and interest revenue. He reported June expenses were under budget, primarily due to lower personnel costs, including regular, overtime, and wildland wages. From a year-to-date perspective, the revenue was slightly over budget, while year-to-date expenses remained under budget, largely due to personnel cost savings. A **MOTION** was made by Clerk Nelson was seconded by Director Allen to approve the Monthly Financial Report as presented. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED.**

8. **Summary Reports & Correspondence**

   A. IAFF LOCAL CHAPTER 1505 SUMMARY REPORT – Captain Modrell reported results of the 50th Pancake Breakfast which he stated had lower than average attendance estimated at nearly 400 people. He stated the amount of raffle items and tickets sold helped balance out the revenue for the event, and that the event overall felt like a great success amid the Pocket Fire.

B. BATTALION FIRE CHIEF'S SUMMARY REPORT – Battalion Chief Josh Pond presented the Battalion Chief's Report. He reported 68 calls for service in June, which is consistent with the historical average for this time of year. He provided an overview of recent incidents, including a traumatic injury rescue and a cardiac arrest at a wedding reception. He also discussed the Battalion Chief Office's logistical support during the Pocket Fire, including staffing severity engines and coordinating a regional six-apparatus structure protection task force focused primarily on Kachina Village and Forest Highlands. He commended staff for supporting the task force and severity engines while maintaining daily operational staffing. He concluded with an update on EMS and extrication training and recognized Firefighter Jesse Finney for completing his Water Tender Task Book. See written report for additional details.

C. FIRE CHIEF'S SUMMARY REPORT – Fire Chief Miller presented the Fire Chief's Report. He recognized the service anniversaries of Firefighters Jessey Finney, Riley Darnell, and Ian Titcomb for one year of service; Battalion Chief Josh Pond for 20 years of service; and Battalion Chiefs Chris Pond and Mitch Lopez for 21 years of service. He recognized Firefighter Kaden Dunlap for completing his Engineer Task Book. He discussed several meetings including a core team meeting to review the GFR CWPP and a DFFM meeting to discuss the Pumphouse Project for thinning. He stated he applied and was selected to serve on the Board for the Flagstaff Leadership Program. He thanked staff for their response and performance during the Pocket Fire and recognized their commitment to the District and surrounding communities. He also expressed appreciation for the community's support and positive feedback during and after the incident. He reported no new injuries or accidents. See written report for additional details.

D. FIRE BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY REPORT – Chairperson Smith had no additional comments.

E. CORRESPONDENCE – Fire Chief Miller presented a Certificate of Appreciation from the Northern Arizona Type 3 Incident Management Team, an article about the Task Force which was collaboratively put together by City of Flagstaff, Summit Fire District, Pinewood Fire District, and Highlands Fire District during the Pocket Fire, a thank you card from a local community member, and correspondence from the Regional Training Battalion Chief.

9. Topics of Discussion and Possible Legal Action

A. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COCONINO COUNTY TREASURER'S OFFICE TO TRANSFER THE APPROVED ALLOCATION OF PINEWOOD FIRE DISTRICT'S REMAINING CASH ASSETS HELD IN THE BEAR JAW ACCOUNT – Fire Chief Miller reviewed the Board's prior decision to distribute the Bear Jaw assets in two phases: cash assets in Phase One and equipment, property, and surplus sale proceeds in Phase Two. He presented a resolution confirming the previously approved distribution of the remaining Bear Jaw cash assets, with 70% retained by Highlands Fire District and 30% allocated to Pinewood Fire District. The resolution authorized the Coconino County Treasurer's Office to transfer Pinewood Fire District's share of $811,226.36. A **MOTION** was made by Director Allen was seconded by Clerk Nelson to approve the resolution authorizing the Coconino County Treasurer's Office to transfer the approved allocation of Pinewood Fire Districts' remaining cash assets held in the Bear Jaw account. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

B. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE ALLOCATION OF THE DISTRICT'S AVAILABLE GENERAL FUNDS AND THE DISTRICT'S REMAINING CASH ASSETS HELD IN THE BEAR JAW ACCOUNT

TO CAPITAL FUNDING AND/OR GENERAL RESERVE FUNDING – Fire Chief Miller reviewed the District's remaining FY 2026 cash assets and its share of the Bear Jaw funds. He presented options for allocating the funds to a new general reserve fund and/or the capital fund and discussed the benefits of each approach, including the potential to reduce future transfers from the general fund to the capital fund. Clerk Nelson requested a written summary to help the Board better understand and evaluate the figures presented. Director Allen expressed interest in developing a broader vision for the District's future wildland responsibilities and capabilities before a decision is reached on where to allocate the funds. At the request of Director Allen Fire Chief Miller agreed to prepare a report outlining the District's current wildland resources, to outline his vision for wildland preparedness, and to outline how the District will respond to wildland fire situations without as much external support. Chairperson Smith suggested holding a Board work session to compare the Board's priorities with the Fire Chief's preparedness plan, identify the ideas they would like to move forward with, and consider whether funding could be included in the budget to support them. Director Allen discussed potentially seeking community input. Chairperson Smith noted that survey results are a subjective data point to consider as their results are influenced by current conditions or recent weather events.

C. DISCUSSION REGARDING BEAR JAW EQUIPMENT ASSETS – Fire Chief Miller reported that Highlands and Pinewood Fire Districts are continuing to identify the remaining Bear Jaw equipment and property and determine which items will be included in future surplus sales.

D. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING COCONINO COUNTY ATTORNEY AS THE DISTRICT'S LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR FY 2027 – Fire Chief Miller stated that the County Attorney's Office asks the District each year to renew the agreement authorizing it to provide legal representation. He noted that the assigned Deputy County Attorney has provided excellent service to the District and recommended approving the resolution. A **MOTION** was made by Director Allen was seconded by Clerk Nelson to approve the resolution authorizing Coconino County Attorney as the District's legal representation for FY 2027. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

E. DISCUSSION REGARDING UPDATES TO MOU BETWEEN HIGHLANDS CHAPTER OF THE UNITED FLAGSTAFF FIRE FIGHTERS, IAFF LOCAL 1505, AND THE DISTRICT – Fire Chief Miller presented a draft of the updated MOU and noted that the previous agreement had expired. He explained that two items remain under revision and that the draft was included in the Board packet to allow members time to review the proposed changes. A finalized MOU is expected to be presented to the Board for consideration and possible approval within the next one to two months. Chairperson Smith asked whether the final agreement would be reviewed by the County Attorney's Office, and Fire Chief Miller confirmed that it would.

F. DISCUSSION REGARDING COMPANY EMAIL AND DEVICES ISSUED TO BOARD MEMBERS – Mrs. Lyons discussed establishing a consistent method for distributing Board communications and materials to support compliance with Open Meeting Law and public records retention requirements. She reviewed the benefits of using District-issued email accounts and optional District-issued tablets, including centralized record retention and retrieval and maintaining separation between Board-related communications and members' personal email accounts and devices. Following the discussion, the Board agreed that members would use their HFD email accounts for District business moving forward. Mrs. Lyons stated that the District will determine the next steps for transitioning all Board communications to District-issued email accounts and will assist Board members with email access and the setup of District-issued tablets, as needed.

G. DISCUSSION REGARDING CELL TOWER LEASE – Fire Chief Miller reported that the Deputy County Attorney had reviewed the cell tower lease agreement and recommended revisions to its language. The revised agreement will be forwarded to the cell tower company for legal review. Once the agreement is finalized, Chief Miller stated he will provide the Board with a copy in advance of its formal presentation for approval, to allow members time to review the document and reach out should they have any questions.

H. DISCUSSION REGARDING FEASIBILITY STUDY – Fire Chief Miller provided an update on the proposed feasibility study involving Highlands, Pinewood, and Summit Fire Districts. He noted that the FY 2027 budget includes funding for Highlands' share of the study. He stated that the Districts could begin the process of requesting proposals from firms that conduct feasibility studies and asked how involved the Board would like to be in selecting a firm. He suggested that one Board member participate in the review process and that the final three firms be presented to the full Board for consideration and selection. Fire Chief Miller added that representatives from the Pinewood and Summit Fire District boards would also be invited to participate. Chairperson Smith stated that he would be willing to support the District Board in the process.

I. DISCUSSION REGARDING 2027 ELECTION – Mrs. Lyons reported that the District is current on all requirements and requests from the County Elections Office for the 2027 election. She noted that the seats currently held by Chairperson Smith and Clerk Nelson are up for election. Five individuals have submitted nomination paperwork and are expected to appear on the ballot; therefore, the District does not anticipate that the election will be canceled. Mrs. Lyons stated she would update the Board with any information provided by the County Elections Office as to how the District may support candidate forums or other community engagement opportunities related to the Board election.

J. REVIEW FIRE BOARD TASK CALENDAR. The Board reviewed the Board Task Calendar.

10. Board Members Comment. There were no additional comments.

11. Adjournment. A **MOTION** was made by Clerk Nelson and was seconded by Director Allen to adjourn; the motion was unanimously **APPROVED.** The meeting adjourned at 6:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica Lyons
Administrative Assistant III