



# HIGHLANDS FIRE DISTRICT

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING MINUTES 01/20/26

A regular meeting of the Fire Board was held on **Tuesday, January 20 2026, at 5:00 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 5:00 PM.
2. **Roll Call.** Chairperson Jay Smith, Clerk Carl Nelson, Director Brad Bippus\*, Director Tom Hanecak, and Ira Allen were present.

Fire Chief Todd Miller, Battalion Chief Mitch Lopez, Ms. Jayme Jones, 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.** There were no visitors from the public in attendance.
5. **Call to the Public.** There were no comments from the public.
6. **Approval of Minutes**

A. DECEMBER 16, 2025 REGULAR MEETING. The Board reviewed the minutes of the December 16, 2025 meeting. Chief Miller pointed out that "mitigation of wildfire" does not make sense and to restate his comment concerning the mitigation of fuels. **A MOTION was made by Clerk Nelson and was seconded by Director Allen;** the motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

7. **Approval of Financial Report presented by James Vincent Group.** Mr. Filosa presented the November Financial Report, which highlighted the following:

- Revenue for December was \$427,677, which is \$19,178 over budget.
- Expenses for December were \$421,727, which is \$32,143 under budget.
- Revenue year-to-date was \$3,337,734, which was \$102,844 under budget.
- Expenses year-to-date were \$2,083,174, which was \$253,651 under budget.

**A MOTION was made by Director Hanecak and was seconded by Clerk Nelson 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 Ahrendt reported that the Union will be conducting a compensation study to be presented to the budget committee.

- B. BATTALION FIRE CHIEF'S SUMMARY REPORT – Battalion Chief Lopez presented the Battalion Chief's Report. He reported 44 calls for service in December. See written report for details.
- C. FIRE CHIEF'S SUMMARY REPORT – Fire Chief Miller presented the Chief's Report for December. He recognized Engineer Matt Gross and staff for their effort to improve the landscaping around the Station 23 and Administrative Offices. Their work has been noticed and complimented by residents. Stakeholders met to discuss the future of Bear Jaw; additional meetings will be held to determine a path forward. Fire Chief Miller is in the process of hiring a new Administrative Assistant III. See written report for details.
- D. FIRE BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY REPORT – Chairperson Smith had no additional comments.
- E. CORRESPONDENCE – Ms. Jones presented correspondence from legal counsel. She received a response regarding the legality of Dan Stoffel's vote on the appointment of Ira Allen to the Board after his resignation from the Board. Ms. Anding, Deputy County Attorney, cited case law that supports the legality of the Board's action.

## 9. Topics of Discussion and Possible Legal Action

- A. COMPLETE FIRE CHIEF'S EVALUATION. The Board reviewed Fire Chief Miller's Performance Evaluation and ratings. After discussion, **A MOTION was made by Director Hanecak and was seconded by Clerk Nelson to approve Fire Chief Miller's "Outstanding" performance and Step Increase as presented.** The motion was unanimously APPROVED with Director Allen abstaining from the vote. An annotation is noted for the record that Director Allen abstained due to his recent appointment, as he was not a seated member of the Board during the relevant rating period.
- B. IDENTIFY FIRE CHIEF'S GOALS FOR 2026. The Board reviewed four goals for Fire Chief Miller to accomplish in 2026.
  - 1) Working with Labor and the Board, develop a plan for future staffing - Assess Bear Jaw/wildland crew configuration, one additional firefighter, a second Administrative Assistant position, Staff Captain position. (3-5 year plan)
  - 2) Complete requirements of the Flagstaff Leadership Program
  - 3) Identify key policy revisions and complete accordingly, then evaluate revision of all administrative guiding documents (HR Policy, Executive Directive, SOP, Numbered Memo, Fiscal Policy).
  - 4) Revamp Performance Evaluation
    - a) Complete switchover to software program
    - b) Identify changes/improvements to dimensions evaluated
    - c) Evaluate 360 evaluation component
    - d) Evaluate tie in to pay scale/merit raises (Spring 2027)

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The board discussed and agreed to four Fire Chief goals for 2026, with a fifth goal focused on improving communication throughout the organization to be developed further in coordination with the Board Chair. After discussion, a MOTION was made by Director Allen and was seconded by Clerk Nelson to approve the goals as discussed. The motion was unanimously approved.

- C. (D. on agenda) DISCUSSION ON BEAR JAW/WILDLAND FIRE RELATED PROGRAM. Fire Chief Miller explained that he is planning discussions with stakeholders associated with fuels mitigation and will update the Board and community when more information is known.
- D. (C. on agenda) REVIEW FIRE BOARD HANDBOOK AND BYLAWS. The Board was presented with the *Fire Board Handbook and Bylaws* for their review. Ms. Jones suggested the Bylaws be revised to clarify that, "Upon expiration of a member's term or their resignation they shall continue to discharge the duties of the office until a successor is either elected or appointed and qualified per A.R.S. § 38-291...". Director Allen informed the Board that proposed amendment to the Bylaws shall be acted upon at the next regular meeting. Ms. Jones confirmed that the revised amendment will be on the February agenda as well as the approval of the Fire Board Handbook.
- E. UPDATE REGARDING THE CELL TOWER LEASE. Fire Chief Miller informed the Board that district property was inspected to identify a potential location for the cell tower. Two maps were produced for the Board's review. Fire Chief Miller consulted staff and Director Hanecak, who was assigned to this project as the Board liaison, and Exhibit Option B was selected. The Board discussed the road to access the cell tower.
- F. 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 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jayme Jones