HIGHLANDS FIRE DISTRICT

Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes · 06/16/26

A regular meeting of the Fire Board was held on **Tuesday, June 16, 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 5:01 PM.

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

   Fire Chief Todd Miller, Battalion Chief Casey Modrell, 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 Deputy County Attorney Nick Hodder who joined the meeting at 5:17pm.

5. **Call to the Public.** There were no comments from the public.

6. **Approval of Minutes**. MAY 19, 2026 REGULAR MEETING. The Board reviewed the minutes of the May 19, 2026 meeting. A **MOTION** was made by Director Allen and was seconded by Director Bippus to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

7. **Approval of Financial Report presented by James Vincent Group.** Mr. Filosa presented the May Financial Report (see written report for full details). He reported that May revenues exceeded budget expectations, due to stronger-than-anticipated tax collections. He reported May expenses remained below budget, primarily due to personnel costs, which included regular wages, overtime, and wildland payroll. He concluded that year-to-date revenues remain slightly below budget and that expenditures continued to trend significantly under budget, driven by personnel savings associated with Bear Jaw staff assignments. A **MOTION** was made by Director Bippus and 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 Blue reported that the Union is focused on preparations for the annual Pancake Breakfast scheduled for July 5th.

   B. BATTALION FIRE CHIEF'S SUMMARY REPORT – Battalion Chief Casey Modrell presented the Battalion Chief's Report. He reported 74 calls, which was average for May. He reported several significant emergency responses during the month, including a commercial vehicle accident involving hazardous materials on Interstate 17, a commercial vehicle rollover requiring technical rescue assistance, and an ATV accident involving serious injuries. In each incident, Highlands Fire District personnel worked alongside regional public safety partners to provide patient care, scene management, and transportation support. He reported that the Battalion Chief Office focused on leadership coordination, regional operational collaboration, staffing planning with the academy wrapping up, and supporting the successful completion of probationary evaluations for new firefighters. See written report for additional details.

C. FIRE CHIEF'S SUMMARY REPORT – Fire Chief Miller presented the Fire Chief's Report. He recognized the five-year anniversary for Engineer Jacob McIntyre, all the staff who helped make the Engineer promotional process possible, Firefighter Jesse Finney on completing his Water Tender task book, and Firefighter Jaron Kirk on his graduation from the GFR Academy, class 26-01. He reported on meetings he attended within the community, with community partners, at the GFR Academy for their graduation ceremony, and noted completing a survey for the Greater Flagstaff CWPP. He stated Regional District Chiefs met with County Supervisors to discuss the need for additional funding for the Districts. He highlighted a meeting with the Ecological Restoration Institute at NAU and discussions about having a community meeting to talk about fuels mitigation work that has happened in this area. He also provided an update that Coconino County will not renew the emergency services agreement for Fort Tuthill. He concluded by reporting that there were no new workplace injuries or vehicle accidents during the reporting period. See written report for additional details.

D. FIRE BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY REPORT – Chairperson Smith reported that he, Director Allen, and Fire Chief Miller met with two members of the Pinewood Fire District Board and Fire Chief, and noted that the matter would be discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.

E. CORRESPONDENCE – The District received correspondence presented from the Flagstaff Family Food Center thanking the District for participating in the Cooler Runnings event.

9. Public Hearing

A. Public hearing of the FY 2027 Budget – The Public Hearing opened at 5:26 PM and immediately closed with no public members in attendance.

10. Topics of Discussion and Possible Legal Action

A. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION TO ADOPT AND CERTIFY THE FY 2027 BUDGET PER A.R.S. § 48-805.2. – Fire Chief Miller stated that the budget remained unchanged from the draft version previously presented to the Board at the May 2026 meeting and subsequently posted for public review. A **MOTION** was made by Director Allen and was seconded by Director Bippus to approve the resolution to adopt and certify the FY 2027 budget per A.R.S. § 48-805.2. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

B. CONSIDERATION TO ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION PER A.R.S. § 38-431.03(A)(3) FOR LEGAL ADVICE WITH THE ATTORNEY OF THE PUBLIC BODY REGARDING EMPLOYEE HEALTHCARE BENEFIT AGREEMENTS AND RELATED CONTRACTUAL MATTERS. A **MOTION** was made by Director Bippus and was seconded by Director Allen to adjourn to executive session. The motion was unanimously

APPROVED; the Board went into executive session at 5:29pm. Chairperson Smith entertained a motion to reconvene into regular session; the **MOTION** was moved by Director Allen and seconded by Director Bippus. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**; the Board reconvened to regular session at 5:56pm.

C. CONSIDERATION TO ADOPT PENSION FUNDING POLICY AND FORMALLY ACCEPT THE DISTRICT'S LIABILITIES UNDER THE PSPRS RETIREMENT SYSTEM'S ACTUARIAL VALUATION REPORT PER A.R.S. § 38-863.01. – Fire Chief Miller stated that the Board is required annually to acknowledge the actuarial data published by PSPRS and to adopt and publish the District's plan for funding its PSPRS obligations. Mr. Filosa stated the District is presently overfunded for its projected liabilities because the District previously opted to refinance the unfunded liabilities. The object of the pension funding policy is to outline the District's goal to remain fully funded. Mrs. Lyons stated JVG has already built these costs into the FY 2027 budget. A **MOTION** was made by Director Bippus and was seconded by Director Allen to adopt pension funding policy and formally accept the district's liabilities under the PSPRS retirement system's actuarial valuation report per A.R.S. § 38-863.01. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

D. CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ALLOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF REMAINING CASH ASSETS OF THE BEAR JAW FIRE AND FUELS INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT. – Chief Miller reported that he, Chairperson Smith, and Director Allen met with two Pinewood Fire District Board members and the Pinewood Fire Chief. The group agreed to distribute the remaining Bear Jaw cash assets with 70% allocated to Highlands Fire District and 30% allocated to Pinewood Fire District. Chief Miller stated that the distribution would not affect Highlands Fire District's FY 2027 budget but would affect Pinewood Fire District's FY 2027 budget once its share is received. He recommended that the Board consider how to use Highlands Fire District's portion of the funds at a future meeting. Chief Miller recommended approval of the resolution authorizing the 70% allocation to Highlands Fire District and the 30% allocation to Pinewood Fire District. He concluded that the District is working on a list of physical property associated with the Bear Jaw IGA and will provide additional updates to the Board at the next meeting. A **MOTION** was made by Director Allen and was seconded by Director Bippus to approve the resolution authorizing the allocation and distribution of remaining cash assets of the Bear Jaw Fire and Fuels Intergovernmental Agreement. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

E. CONSIDERATION TO ADOPT HR POLICY 30.02 COMPENSATION SCALE – Chief Miller presented HR Policy 30.02 Compensation Scale to the Board. He explained that the FY 2027 compensation scale reflects the wage adjustments included in the FY 2027 budget which was previously approved by the Board. He noted that, because the compensation scale is included within an HR policy, Board approval is also needed to formally adopt the policy. A **MOTION** was made by Director Allen and was seconded by Director Bippus to approve HR Policy 30.02 Compensation Scale. The motion was unanimously **APPROVED**.

F. CELL TOWER LEASE UPDATE – Fire Chief Miller provided an update on negotiations with the cell tower lease company regarding the proposed contract and noted that Director Hanecak had provided input. Chief Miller stated that the company agreed to all contract revisions requested by the District, including construction of an asphalt access road to the cell tower that the District would maintain. He reported that the final contract had been submitted to Deputy County Attorney for legal review and would be presented to the Board after the legal opinion was received. Director Allen asked if the construction of the cell phone tower would impact any bicycle paths the county may develop in the area. Chief Miller stated the cell phone tower is being built on a 50ft x 50ft concrete pad company property, not county property, and would be enclosed by fencing to ensure safety.

G. DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMUNITY MEETINGS – Fire Chief Miller asked whether the Board had specific direction regarding community meetings. He discussed possible meeting formats and topics, including educational presentations, community fuels-mitigation efforts, District finances, and open community discussions. Chairperson Smith noted that community meetings hosted by other districts often address broader community issues rather than focusing exclusively on fire district matters. He stated that this approach could help strengthen relationships between the District and community members and provide enough topics to support recurring meetings. Director Allen expressed support for Highlands Fire District taking a leadership role in community-building activities and suggested a potluck format. Fire Chief Miller suggested contacting community partners to determine whether they would be interested in hosting meetings at District facilities. The Board supported the district begin with meetings twice each year and reevaluate the frequency as needed.

H. REVIEW FIRE BOARD TASK CALENDAR – The Board reviewed the task calendar.

11. **Board Members Comment.** There were no additional comments.

12. **Adjournment.** A **MOTION** was made by Director Bippus and was seconded by Director Allen to adjourn; the motion was unanimously **APPROVED.** The meeting adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica Lyons
Administrative Assistant III