



# FIRE BOARD HANDBOOK





# **FIRE BOARD HANDBOOK**

Reviewed by the  
Highlands Fire District  
Board of Directors

January 21, 2025





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## Our Mission

We are dedicated to serving our communities and region through preparedness, prevention, and emergency response.



## Our Vision

The Highlands Fire District will be recognized for the highest standards, levels of trust, innovation, and accountability while exceeding community expectations.

We will succeed by developing and maintaining strategic partnerships, hiring and promoting quality people, and positioning the District for fiscal sustainability, both now and in the future.

## Our Values

### Preparedness

- We value preparedness through education, training, physical and mental readiness, and the health and safety of our members.
- We are committed to personal and team development through education and training.
- We constantly improve our physical and mental preparedness to better execute our mission.

### Respect

- We value respect, demonstrating sound character, integrity, honesty, and accountability.
- We hold ourselves and others accountable.
- We take pride and ownership in the organization and in the service we deliver.

### Initiative

- We value initiative through leadership, expertise, and personal courage.
- Good leaders know when to lead, when to follow, and when to be part of the team.
- We value the expertise and leadership of all members of the organization.

### Duty

- We value duty, service before self, and commitment and loyalty to teamwork.
- The needs of our customers and teammates always come before our own.
- We are loyal to our customers and the organization.
- We accomplish everything as a team.

### Empathy

- We value empathy by performing in a considerate, compassionate manner.
- We are compassionate and considerate to our customers and teammates.



# Fire Board Guidelines

## Introduction

**B**oards of Directors (Fire Boards) of the Highlands Fire District (Fire District) have approved this handbook to enforce upon themselves and future Fire Boards guidelines that are needed to govern with excellence. This handbook also serves as a guide to help new members of the Highlands Fire Board of Directors understand their roles and expectations relating to their performance and participation on the Fire Board. Many sources such as the Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.), Arizona Fire District Association (AFDA) publications and educational seminars, and other related sources were consulted to establish these guidelines.

## First Official Acts

**A**s your first official acts, Directors shall complete required paperwork. Pursuant to A.R.S. §§ 38-231 & 38-232, Directors shall take and subscribe to an *Oath of Office* at or before commencement of their term of office and before entering the duties of the office. Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01(H), Directors shall review open meeting law (OML) materials at least one day before taking office and sign a *Statement of Compliance*. Each Director shall provide their signature to the County Treasurer Office to become authorized signers on District warrants.

In addition, Directors shall complete *Director Contact Information* form; *Confirmation of Personal Auto Insurance* form ensuring coverage of a personal vehicle when used while on Fire District business; annually sign a *Conflict of Interest Disclosure* form to declare any potential conflicts of interest; and *Acknowledgement of Fire Board Guidelines* form shall be signed subsequent to reading and understanding the guidelines discussed in this handbook. All of the forms are available in the Appendix of this handbook.

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-803 (I), Directors are also required to attend professional development training provided by Arizona Fire District Association (AFDA) within one year of election or appointment to office.

## Orientation

**T**he Fire Chief shall offer an orientation session to provide directors with a basic understanding of the Fire District. The following topics may be discussed:

- Familiarization and introduction of staff
- Chain of command
- Explanation of Arizona Revised Statutes
- Whom the Fire District serves
- Description of response areas
- Tour of the Fire District and fire stations
- Tour, explanation, and demonstration of various apparatus and equipment
- Explanation of the Arizona Fire District Association; Register at [www.azfiredistricts.org](http://www.azfiredistricts.org) to access the AFDA Handbook (The Red Book)

The Fire District will provide board members a tablet and email address to be used for District business. Monthly Board Packets are distributed in electronic format accessible through the iPad.

## Code of Conduct

**D**irectors should have a broad perspective and possess a willingness to search out effective solutions to complex problems. It is not in the best interest of the Fire District for directors to focus on a single issue or have a bias point of view. Directors shall always place the Fire District's best interest above their own personal interests.

Directors should keep on task and not be unduly influenced by those who have more dominant personalities. Every Director represents the interests of the Fire District equally. Directors are obligated to operate within the parameters that the Fire Board sets for itself.

Directors should not interpret opposing votes to the majority as a personal issue. In turn, all Directors need to realize that the will of the majority prevails.

The "prudent person" legal doctrine applies to individual Directors as well as the Fire Board as a collective body. The level of the Fire Board competency will be compared to what a similar prudent Fire Board or Director should do. Directors are expected to act and conduct themselves professionally when representing the Fire District.

Directors shall not use their position, or information obtained as a Fire Board member, for personal gain or for the financial benefit of themselves or members of their family, or friends.

The focus of the Fire Board should be policy decisions, its implementation, and the finances of the Fire District. Directors should not become involved in the day to day operations of the Fire District.

## Legal Responsibilities

**D**irectors are legally and ethically accountable for the operation of the Fire District and are responsible for acting on behalf of the Fire District's service recipients, taxpayers, and staff to ensure smooth and efficient operation of the Fire District.

There are a multitude of state laws that substantially affect the manner in which the Fire District must conduct business. A explanation of what a Fire District **SHALL** do and **MAY** do is listed below.

The Fire District **SHALL**:

- Submit an annual report per A.R.S. § 48-251(A)
- Prepare, post, publish, adopt, certify, and submit an annual budget per A.R.S. §§ 48-252 & 48-805.02.
- Perform, accept, and submit an audit of the annual report per A.R.S. §§ 48-253 & 48-805.02(G)
- Fill vacancies on the Fire Board within 90 days per A.R.S. § 48-803(B)
- Hire a Fire Chief per A.R.S. § 48-803(E)
- Elect from its members a Chairperson and Clerk per A.R.S. § 48-803(F)
- Attend professional development training per A.R.S. § 48-803 (I)
- Hold public meeting at least once each calendar month per A.R.S. § 48-805(A)(1)
- Determine the compensation payable to district personnel per A.R.S. § 48-805(A)(2)
- Require all current and prospective employees and volunteers to submit a full set of fingerprints for the district to obtain a state and federal criminal records check per A.R.S. § 48-805(A)(3)

- Produce, review, and reconcile monthly financial reports and cash flow projection reports; report any indication of statutory violations related thereto per A.R.S. § 48-807(P).

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-805(B), the Fire District **MAY**:

- Employ any personnel and provide services deemed necessary for fire protection
- Construct, purchase, lease, lease-purchase or otherwise acquire apparatus, equipment, lands, buildings, or furnishings necessary to carry out the District's mission.
- Lease, lease-purchase or grant a lien on any or all of its present or future property to pay amounts to the public safety personnel retirement system.
- Issue bonds to finance the acquisition of property
- Adopt, enforce, and amend a fire code approved by the District's qualified electors
- Procure fire protection services from a private fire protection agency or fire department of a neighboring city, town or district
- Retain a certified public accountant to perform an annual audit of district books
- Retain private legal counsel
- Accept gifts, contributions, bequests and grants and comply with any requirements of such.
- Pay membership dues to Arizona Fire District Association
- Adopt a fee schedule for fire protection services
- Place a question on the general election ballot as to whether the fire district shall change its name
- Enter into intergovernmental agreements or contracts per established regulations
- Sell or otherwise dispose of any real property, facilities or equipment if the district board determines the real property, facilities or equipment to be surplus per established regulations

## Additional Duties

In addition to responsibilities required by law, the following duties have been adopted by past Fire District Boards:

- Establish the mission and vision of the Fire District; ensure an effective organizational strategic plan
- Provide support and guidance for the Fire Chief; evaluate the Chief's performance annually
- Ensure the organization produces economically justifiable decisions; ensure financial solvency, integrity, and performance of the Fire District
- Enhance public image and be an advocate for the Fire District
- Ensure the funding for adequate resources establishing the Fire District's tax rate annually
- Approve all major contracts and agreements necessary to the Fire District's mission
- Approve expenditures over the Fire Board established limit
- Approve the disposition/disposal of surplus property
- Approve warrants
- Approve an insurance policy to cover the Fire District's assets, personnel, and Fire Board. Directors are covered under the Fire District's General Liability, Management Liability, and Umbrella Liability Insurance policies as "insureds" while they are acting on the Fire District's behalf
- Institute fair human resource policies and guidelines to manage personnel
- Consult legal counsel as deemed necessary; determine procedures to follow and approve final disposition of legal issues
- Review the Fire Board's own performance; taking steps to improve performance

## Commitments

Directors shall be committed to the following practices to accomplish their responsibilities to the best of their ability:

- Attend and actively participate at Fire Board meetings, work sessions, public hearings, and special events
- Review Fire Board Packets prior to each meeting in order to arrive prepared; ensure adequate and current information is obtained to make informed decisions; keep informed of developments relevant to issues brought before the Fire Board
- Keep disagreements impersonal
- Work to accomplish the mission of the Fire District; unite for a common cause; respect the opinions of fellow Directors and Fire District staff; refrain from being publicly critical of fellow Director's opinions
- Exercise independent judgment on matters brought before the Fire Board
- Be loyal to the Fire District, its staff, and other Directors
- Do not discuss confidential proceedings of the Fire Board outside the Fire Board meetings
- Accept, respect, and support majority decisions of the Fire Board; recognize authority is vested in the Fire Board as a group and not in individuals
- Recognize that the Fire Board's job is to ensure that the Fire District is well managed, not to manage the Fire District
- Avoid interfering with the duties of the Fire Chief or undermining the Chief's authority; recognize chain of command
- Declare any conflicts of interest between the member's personal life and their Fire Board position; avoid voting on issues that are or are perceived to be a conflict of interest
- The Fire Board position shall not be used for personal advantage or the advantage of family or friends

- Regularly attend AFDA conferences to learn more about Fire Board roles and responsibilities
- Work with Fire District staff, the Fire Board, and the community to ensure smooth, efficient, and responsible operation of the Fire District
- Call to the attention of the Fire Board any issues that will have an adverse effect on the organization
- Refer constituent and staff complaints to the proper level in the chain of command
- Self-evaluate; the Fire Board should evaluate its own effectiveness to assure fulfillment of responsibilities and to maintain a strong organization

## Conflict of Interest

The Fire Board of Directors occupy positions of public trust. They shall strictly adhere to the spirit and letter of the laws of the State of Arizona, including situations pertaining to conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest, actual or perceived, may be potentially damaging to the Fire District. Conflict of interest relates to ethical behavior as well as personal gain. A conflict of interest exists when a personal or professional concern of a Director affects his/her ability to put the welfare of the organization before personal benefit. Directors shall conduct their personal affairs in such a manner as to avoid any possible conflict of interest with their duties and responsibilities as Directors of the Fire Board.

Conflict of interest guidelines shall be applied to transactions between the Fire District and interested persons and shall apply to the sale, lease, or exchange of property to or from interested persons and the Fire District, the lending or borrowing of monies to or from interested persons by the Fire District or the payment of compensation by the Fire District for services provided by interested persons. A potential conflict of interest arises when a Director holds a financial interest in or may receive any personal benefit from a business entity furnishing services, materials, or supplies to the Fire District.

Financial interest shall include, but not be limited to, any position of a Director or a member of his or her family (including spouses, parents, siblings, children and their spouses), as an owner, officer, board member, partner, trustee, controlling shareholder, member, employee or beneficiary. If the amount of business transacted with any publicly-held company has no material effect on the total results of such company, ownership of shares in such company shall not be deemed a financial interest by any Director.

Directors shall be required to file a statement with the Fire Board stating that the disclosure guidelines have been reviewed, which shall include a list of all potential conflicts of interest (see attached form at the Appendix of this handbook). A Director shall promptly disclose to the Fire Board any actual or potential conflict of interest on the part of any Director that arises subsequent to the filing of such a statement shall be disclosed promptly to the Fire Board by such member. The disclosure statement shall be filed unless it is determined for good cause that such disclosure statement should be kept confidential. The legal counsel for the Fire Board shall approve any decision to keep confidential any such disclosure statement.

Directors who have an actual or potential conflict of interest shall not participate in consideration or discussion of a proposed matter in which such Director has a potential or actual financial or personal interest (unless for special reasons the Fire Board by a vote of a majority of its disinterested members requests information or interpretation) or vote on the matter.

A Director with a potential or actual conflict of interest in a matter brought before the Fire Board may be counted in determining the presence of a quorum at any meeting during which such matter may or will be considered by the Fire Board. The provisions of A.R.S. § 10-2550, or any successor statute, shall apply to any situation, contract, or transaction in which a Director may have an actual or potential interest.

A Director shall not use or disclose confidential information received while serving the Fire District, especially if the personal use of such information would be detrimental to the Fire District.

## Fire Board Officers

**T**he function of the Fire Board Officers is to assist the Fire Board in doing its job, and not as powers unto themselves. Officers are responsible for the integrity and functioning of the Fire Board and for ensuring the integrity of related documentation.

Officers of the Fire Board are in the service of the Fire Board and are bound by Fire Board's desires and by the limits of their authority. Officers may not act in place of the Fire Board except when specifically delegated by the Fire Board as a whole.

### BOARD CHAIRPERSON

- Leads meetings of the Fire Board
- Assist staff in developing agendas for Fire Board meetings
- Provides signature on contracts or other instruments pertaining to Fire District business
- Creates and maintains a spirit of unity amongst diverse people on the Fire Board
- Facilitates the group process
- Ensures the Fire Board works effectively and ethically with the Fire Chief and staff
- Maintains Fire Board discipline by adhering to Fire Board agreed upon conduct
- Contact and consult legal counsel and insurance representatives as deemed necessary
- Serves or delegates a board member to serve as Chairperson of the Public Safety Retirement System (PSPRS) Local Board and/or Volunteer Pension Board

### BOARD CLERK

- Performs the duties of the Chairperson in his or her absence
- Participate as a vital part of the Fire Board's leadership

## Officer Elections

**T**he district board shall elect from its members a chairperson and a clerk. The election must occur a district board meeting that first occurs in the month immediately following each general election per A.R.S. § 48-803(F). At the meeting, interested candidates will be identified, nominations will be made and accepted, and an election will be held.

### TERMS OF OFFICE

Elected Officers shall take office on January 1st, and the term of office shall be two years.

### REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

An officer may be removed, if at least two Directors propose the removal of the officer and at least three Directors vote for such removal. Directors who propose the removal of an officer must follow the established procedures to place this item on a meeting agenda.

### RESIGNATION

An officer may resign by giving the Fire Board written notice of his or her resignation. The Fire Board must officially accept this resignation by placing the item on the agenda and holding a formal vote. No election may be held to replace an officer until the resigning officer's resignation is officially accepted.

### ELECTION FOR VACANT OFFICES

When a vacancy occurs, a special election will be held to fill the vacant position. This election can be held at the same meeting that the officer was successfully removed, or if a written notice of resignation is accepted. In the case of an officer's death, the election will be held at the next meeting of the Fire Board. The newly elected officer will serve the remainder of the one year term.

## Delegation to Chair

**A**t times it may be necessary for certain tasks and decisions to be delegated to the Fire Board Chairperson. This may only be done for specific items that cannot wait until the next Fire Board meeting for a decision. The Chairperson will authorize the final decision, and the decision will be promptly communicated at the next Fire Board meeting for action by the Fire Board.

## Board to Staff Linkage

**T**he Fire Board shall hire a Fire Chief who shall be the Chief Administrator and Operations Officer responsible for all administrative functions and emergency services. The Fire Chief shall make hiring recommendations for Chief Officer positions subject to the approval by the Fire Board. The Fire Board should be careful not to micromanage the Fire District themselves but should ensure that acceptable standards of prudence and ethics of operations are being met. The Fire Board should be sure to avoid usurping the Fire Chief's responsibilities for management decisions as this could impede progress rather than enhance it. The Fire Board should set limits rather than becoming directly involved. They must believe in the Fire Chief and his staff and trust that day to day decisions will be consistent with the mission of the organization.

The Fire Board's challenge is to be reasonably certain that nothing goes awry and at the same time, to grant as much unimpeded latitude as possible to staff members with the skills and talents to get the work done. Staff members need freedom from the Fire Board's friendly intrusions to do their work efficiently. The Fire Board should oversee the general performance and fulfillment of the mission by doing their job, not the job of staff.

The Fire Board should realize that staff members will be more responsive and effective knowing that the Fire Board supports them and understands their needs. A good working relationship between the Fire Board and staff will produce the desired results. The relationship between the Fire Board and the Fire Chief is one of the most important in the Fire District. The Fire Chief becomes the Fire Board's bridge to the staff.

An effective Fire Board is absolutely essential to an effective organization. The enthusiasm and participation of the Fire Board contributes to the effectiveness of the whole organization.

The Fire Chief is accountable to the Fire Board as a whole for the Fire District's performance and not to the officers, board committees, or individual members. Only the Fire Board, by majority vote, has authority over the Fire Chief. This does not prevent interaction between these entities as long as the Fire Chief is instructed by the Fire Board as a whole. Information may be requested by a Director or member of a committee. However, the Fire Chief may question, modify, or deny the request, if in his/her judgement, it is inappropriate or will require an inordinate amount of staff time.

The Fire Chief has the right to expect the Fire Board to be clear about the rules and then play by them, to speak with one voice, and to get their job done. The Fire Board has the right to expect the Fire Chief to keep them informed by presenting a report at each regular Fire Board meeting and corresponding with them when necessary. The insights of the Fire Chief on the day to day operations of the Fire District are essential to Fire Board decision making. Here is a simplified, but effective explanation of the Board vs. Chief responsibility:

- Board: Makes Policy (What and Why)
- Chief: Implements Policy (What, When, and How)

## Meetings

**S**tate law requires that Fire Board meetings be held a minimum of once a month. The Highlands Fire District Board of Directors normally holds regular monthly meetings on the third Tuesday of each month. In accordance with A.R.S. §38-431.01, all meetings are to be conducted openly, and all persons so desiring shall be permitted to attend. In addition, communication between Directors shall take place in public.

In case of an actual emergency, a meeting, including an executive session, may be held on such notice as is appropriate to the circumstances per A.R.S. § 38-431.02 (D). If an emergency meeting is held, a public notice describing specific matters to be discussed, considered, or decided must be posted within 24 hours of the meeting.

The Fire Board shall adhere to Open Meeting Laws (OML) as set forth by Article 3.1 of A.R.S. regarding public meetings and procedures. Basic information pertaining to OML may be referenced in the Appendix of this handbook. In addition, Chapter 7 of the *Arizona Agency Handbook* covers OML, which is available on the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors website at <https://coconino.az.gov/105/Clerk-of-the-Board>



## Agendas

State law requires that public notice of the time, date, and place of Fire Board meetings be posted and agendas are available at least 24 hours in advance of a meeting.

State law also requires that the agenda list the specific matters to be discussed, considered and/or decided at the meeting. The agenda must significantly describe information reasonably necessary to inform the public of the matters to be discussed and/or decided. This does not permit agenda non-specific items to be discussed.

Directors who wish to have an item included on an agenda shall submit the item to the Chairperson as early as possible, but at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting to facilitate compliance with posting requirements. Staff shall prepare a draft agenda for the Chairperson's approval. This schedule will ensure that agendas will be posted and available to the public and the Fire Board as required by law.

## Board Packets

Staff will produce and distribute a Fire Board Packet relative to each meeting. Board packets will consist of information pertaining to the items to be addressed at the meeting. The information is made available prior to the meeting so Directors have the time to review the data prior the meeting.

## Minutes

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01(B), the District shall provide for the taking of written minutes or a recording of all their meetings, including work sessions, emergency meetings, and executive sessions. All minutes shall include: 1) the date, time, and place of the meeting; 2) attendance of the members; 3) a general description of the matters considered; and 4) an accurate description of all legal actions proposed, discussed or taken, including a record of how each member voted.

## Voting

Each Director, including the Chairperson, has one vote. The vote on any question shall be taken by ayes and nays. If the Chairperson is unable to accurately determine the result of a voice vote, a roll call vote may be taken. It shall be out of order for Directors to explain their vote during a roll call. A majority vote is considered as the majority of votes cast, disregarding abstentions. A majority vote is required for the adoption of any motion.

## Fire Board Committees

Fire Board committees may be established to review issues and make constructive recommendations to facilitate Fire Board decisions. Board committees are to help carry out the Fire Board's responsibilities, not to help with staff level issues. They should aid in the process of governance, not management. Board committees will only be used when other methods have been deemed inadequate as they may interfere with the wholeness of the Fire Board's job. If these committees are not handled properly, the one voice governance and integrity of the Fire Board/Fire Chief delegation process may be threatened. Care should be taken to preserve the Fire Chief's role and the holism of the Fire Board.

The Fire Board should only establish a Board committee when absolutely necessary and clearly needed to assist the Fire Board in their decision making. Written statements of the committee's responsibilities, guidelines, goals, and an established time line should be prepared by the Fire Board prior to the committee's establishment. Board committees will be responsible for reporting to the Fire Board at regular monthly board meetings, or more frequently if needed, on their progress and findings.

Each member of a committee must make a serious commitment to actively participate in the work of the committee. If necessary, an appropriate staff member may be assigned to work with a committee as well.

All committees will be responsible for adhering to legal requirements. State Open Meeting Law requires the posting of agendas and the production of appropriate minutes.

Board committees may not speak or act for the Fire Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time related purposes.

## Board Participation on Staff Committees

The Fire Chief may establish a committee to assist with staff work and issues. When Directors join staff work/issue related committees, the question as to who staff members are working for may arise and confuse the Fire Board/Fire Chief role. The Fire Board may then be delegating through more than one channel. Director's advice to these committees should not be confused with Fire Board authority. Directors should only participate on staff committees when they are working on board level issues.

## Appointment Process

In accordance with A.R.S. §38-291, a Fire Board position shall be deemed vacant before the expiration of a term of office after the occurrence of any of the following events:

- Death of the person holding the office.
- Insanity of the person holding the office, when judicially determined.
- Resignation of the person holding the office and the lawful acceptance of the resignation.
- Removal from office of the person holding the office.
- The person holding the office ceases to be a resident of the Fire District.
- Absence from the state by the person holding the office beyond the period of three consecutive months.
- The person holding the office ceasing to discharge the duties of office for a period of three consecutive months.
- Conviction of the person holding the office of a felony or an offense involving a violation of official duties.
- Failure of the person elected or appointed to such office to file the official oath of office at least one day prior to the commencement of office.
- Decision of a competent tribunal declaring void the election or appointment of the person elected or appointed to the office.
- Failure of the person to be elected or appointed to the office.
- Violation of A.R.S. § 38-296 by the person holding the office.

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 48-803(B), if a vacancy occurs, Directors shall attempt to fill the position with the best qualified candidate within 90 days. If the Board does not appoint a member within that 90 day period, the County Board of Supervisors shall appoint a member within 60 days after expiration of the 90 day period. A member must be over the age of 18 and be a registered voter living within the Fire District. Candidates should have the ability to make significant contributions to the work of the Fire Board and the organization.

Characteristics to consider will be their ability to listen, analyze, think clearly and creatively, work well with people individually and in a group. They should be willing to prepare for and attend Fire Board meetings, ask questions, take responsibility and follow through on given assignments, and evaluate themselves. They should possess honesty, sensitivity and tolerance to differing views, community building skills, personal integrity, and a sense of humor.

To search for the best qualified candidate to fill the position the Fire Board may send out a Fire District wide mailing to the registered voters, post announcements at public access areas in the district, place an ad in the local paper, advertise in water bills, etc., informing them of the vacancy and encouraging them to apply. After the closing date, the Fire Board will review the applications. The Fire Board Chairperson will ask the top candidates to attend a work session of the Fire Board for the purpose of conducting interviews. Directors will appoint, by majority vote, a candidate to fill the remainder of the vacant term. The Chairperson shall notify the candidate of their appointment.

## Board Travel

Directors traveling off-district for training or District business purposes shall be reimbursed their actual cost for travel expenses. The use of District vehicles may be requested; although, vehicles may not always be available. When a Director uses their personal vehicle, mileage will be paid at the IRS approved mileage rate or the amount paid per fuel receipts. Upon returning from an event, Directors shall complete a *Board Travel Reimbursement Request* form and attach itemized receipts for meals and lodging. The District shall not reimburse Directors for alcohol nor extraneous expenses on lodging and meal receipts.



# Fire Board Bylaws

BYLAWS  
of the  
**Highlands Fire District**  
Board of Directors

The Board of the Highlands Fire District, considering the provision of Title 48, Chapter 5 of the Arizona Revised Statutes, hereby adopts the following bylaws for the regulation and governing of the Fire District. These bylaws shall not supersede the Arizona Revised Statutes governing Fire Districts.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of the District shall be the Highlands Fire District providing service in compliance with Arizona Revised Statutes.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of the Highlands Fire District shall be to provide emergency services for the protection of persons, property, and values within the defined boundaries of the Fire District, areas covered under contractual agreement, and other unincorporated areas.

ARTICLE III - BOARD OF THE DISTRICT

SECTION 1. MEMBERS

Members of the Fire District Board shall be those individuals elected or appointed in accordance with A.R.S. §§ 48-802, 48-803, and 48-805. The number of such members shall be five and each shall serve four-year terms per A.R.S. § 48-803(G). Upon expiration of a member's term, they shall continue to discharge the duties of the office until a successor is either elected or appointed and qualified per A.R.S. § 38-295. If a vacancy occurs on the Board other than from the expiration of a term as defined by A.R.S. § 38-291, the remaining board members shall fill the vacancy by appointment of an interim member to serve out the term within ninety days after the date the vacancy occurs per A.R.S. § 48-803(B).

An employee of a fire district or the spouse of an employee of a fire district shall not hold membership on the governing board of the fire district that employs that employee in accordance with A.R.S. § 48-805.03.

SECTION 2. MEETINGS

Regular monthly public meetings shall be held on the third Tuesday of each month at 5:00 PM. A meeting agenda shall be posted at least twenty-four hours in advance of the time scheduled for said meeting in two public places and on the District's website at [www.highlandfire.org](http://www.highlandfire.org). Public access to the meeting room will be allowed 15 minutes prior to the meeting. Meetings may also be available through video conferencing; accordingly, an access link will be provided on the agenda.

Under special circumstances, a meeting may need to be cancelled and rescheduled to an alternate date. Notification of changes will be given to all Board members in a timely manner. Special Meetings, Executive Sessions, and Work Sessions shall be held at the call of the Chairperson or at the request of two members of the Board. The Chairperson shall give at least two days' notice of all meetings to all members of the Board. In the absence of the Chairperson and Clerk at a meeting, a quorum of the Board shall elect, by majority vote of those present, a Chairperson for that meeting. Action by the Board shall be by majority vote of those members present.

Robert's Rules of Order (newly revised) shall be used as a guide to the conduct of Board meetings. District Board Policy shall be referenced for correct procedures for Board responsibilities. In accordance with A.R.S. 38-431.01, all meetings are to be conducted openly and all persons so desiring shall be permitted to attend. In addition, communication between Board members shall take place in public. To ensure compliance with the Open Meeting Law, Board members shall not correspond through e-mail to a quorum of members.

The order of business at the Board meeting is generally as follows; however, it may be changed at the discretion of the Board Chairperson:

- (a) Call to Order
- (b) Roll Call
- (c) Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation, Mission & Vision Statements, & Fire Board Responsibilities
- (d) Welcome Visitors
- (e) Call to the Public
- (f) Recognition & Special Awards, if applicable
- (g) Approval of Minutes
- (h) Financial Reports
- (i) Summary Reports for the Union, Chief Officers, & Board Chairperson & Correspondence
- (j) Topics of Discussion & Possible Action
- (k) Board Member Comments
- (l) Adjournment

SECTION 3. QUORUM

The presence of at least three members of the Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business at any meeting of the Board. The act of a majority of such quorum shall be deemed an act of the Board.

#### SECTION 4. MOTIONS AND VOTING

To make a motion, a Board member states, "I move that..." and then clearly describes the proposal. It is important to say precisely what the words of the motion are to be. The group votes on the exact language, not on a vague idea. When a motion is made, it must be seconded to be considered by the group. Once a motion is seconded, it is then before the Board for debate and action. After the discussion is complete, the Chairperson shall call for a vote. Each Board member, including the chairperson, has one vote.

The vote on any question shall be taken by ayes and nays. If the Chairperson is unable to accurately determine the result of a voice vote, he/she may, or at the request of any Board member shall, call for a roll call vote. It shall be out of order for members to explain their vote during a roll call.

A majority vote is considered as the most of votes cast, disregarding abstentions. A majority vote is required for the adoption of any motion.

Board members who have an actual or potential conflict of interest shall not participate in discussion or vote on these matters.

#### SECTION 5. POWERS

The public business, property, and affairs of the Highlands Fire District shall be managed by the Board which shall have and may exercise all the powers of the District as provided by Arizona Law, and to do all such lawful acts and things that are not defined by law or by these bylaws that may be directed or required to be done by the electorate.

#### SECTION 6 REMUNERATION

Members of the Board shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred in the performance of duties required by law per A.R.S. § 48-803 (C).

### ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS OF THE BOARD

#### SECTION 1. BOARD OFFICERS

The officers of the District Board shall be the Chairperson, who shall be the Executive Officer, and the Clerk, who shall be the Executive Officer in the absence of the Chairperson. All such officers shall have general authority to perform within the policies set by the Board and to perform all acts necessary or advisable in connection with the activities and responsibilities of the Board for the operations of the District.

#### SECTION 2. ELECTION AND TERMS OF OFFICE

The district board shall elect from its members a chairperson and a clerk. The election must occur a district board meeting that first occurs in the month immediately following each general election per A.R.S. § 48-803(F). At the meeting, interested candidates will be identified, nominations will be made and accepted, and elections will be held. The newly elected officers shall take office on January 1st; the term of office shall be two years.

An officer of the board may be removed if at least two Board members propose the removal of the officer and at least three members of the Board vote for such removal. An officer may resign at any time by giving the Board written notice of his/her resignation. Upon the death of an officer the office shall be deemed to be vacant as of the date of death.

When a vacancy occurs, there shall be an election to fill the vacant office on the board. This election shall be held at the meeting where the officer was successfully removed, when a written notice of resignation is accepted, or in the case of an officer's death, at the next meeting of the Board. The newly elected officer will serve the remainder of the term.

### ARTICLE V - CHIEF OFFICERS AND BOARD

#### SECTION 1. CHIEF OFFICERS

The Board shall hire a Fire Chief who shall be the Chief Administrator and Operations Officer responsible for all administrative functions and emergency services. The Employee Policy Manual approved by the Fire Board shall constitute the Fire Chief's conditions of employment.

The Fire Chief shall make hiring recommendations for the position of Chief Officers subject to the approval by the Board.

#### SECTION 2. DUTIES OF THE BOARD AND FIRE CHIEF

The Board and the Fire Chief shall perform duties and exercise powers in compliance with their positions. The Board shall develop a mission for the District and the Fire Chief shall be responsible for carrying out this mission by managing the District's resources.

### ARTICLE VI - DISTRICT FINANCIAL REPORTS

#### SECTION 1. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the District shall be a twelve month period beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30 of the following year.

## SECTION 2. DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with A.R.S. § 48-251, the District shall submit an annual report in the form prescribed by the State Auditor General, 240 days of the close of the District's fiscal year. The report will be sent to the County Board of Supervisors, County Treasurer, and associated financial institutions.

## SECTION 3. DISTRICT BUDGET

In accordance with A.R.S. § 48-252, the District shall submit the annual budget most recently adopted by the District to the County Board of Supervisors and the County Treasurer no later than July 10 of each year. The annual budget shall contain detailed estimated expenditures for each fiscal year and salaries payable to employees of the District. The budget summary shall be posted in three public places, and a complete copy of the budget shall be published on the District's official website for twenty days before a public hearing at a meeting called by the Board to adopt the budget. Following the public hearing, the District Board shall adopt the budget.

## SECTION 4. DISTRICT ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

In accordance with A.R.S. §§ 48-253, the District shall have its annual reports audited in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards by a certified public accountant.

## ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the bylaws may be proposed in writing at any regular meeting of the Board. Such proposed amendments shall be acted upon at the next regular meeting of the Board or at a special meeting called for that purpose. An affirmative vote of the majority of Board members present shall constitute adoption of the amendments. Notice of intent to present amendments to the Bylaws for adoption shall be contained in the notice of the meeting.

All bylaws adopted shall conform to Arizona State law. Any bylaws not in such conformity shall be invalid and State Law shall replace same.

Adopted by the Board of Directors on November 5, 1998.

Amendments approved:      April 14, 2015  
    February 19, 2019  
    January 21, 2020  
    February 20, 2024  
    January 21, 2025



# Appendix

## OPEN MEETING LAW 101 Arizona's Open Meeting Law in a Nutshell

Information compiled by:  
The Ombudsman – Citizens' Aide  
Last revised January 2023

### Two core concepts

“All meetings of any public body shall be public meetings and all persons so desiring shall be permitted to attend and listen to the deliberations and proceedings.” A.R.S. § 38-431.01(A).

“It is the public policy of this state that meetings of public bodies be conducted openly and that notices and agendas be provided for such meetings which contain such information as is reasonable necessary to inform the public of the matters to be discussed or decided.” A.R.S. § 38-431.09(A).

### Why do we have an Open Meeting Law?

1. To protect the public.
  - a. To avoid decision-making in secret.
  - b. To promote accountability by encouraging public officials to act responsively and responsibly.
2. To protect public officials.
  - a. To avoid being excluded (notice).
  - b. To prepare and avoid being blind sided (agenda).
  - c. To accurately memorialize what happened (minutes).
3. Maintain Integrity of government.
4. Better informed citizenry.
5. Build trust between government and citizenry.

### What constitutes a meeting?

A meeting is a gathering, in person or through technological devices of a quorum of a public body at which they discuss, propose or take legal action, including deliberations. A.R.S. § 38-431(4). This includes telephone and e-mail communications.

### Who must comply with Open Meeting Law?

Public bodies. "Public body" means the Legislature<sup>1</sup>, all boards and commissions of this state or political subdivisions, all multimember governing bodies of departments, agencies, institutions and instrumentalities of the state or political subdivisions, including without limitation all corporations and other instrumentalities whose boards of directors

<sup>1</sup> While the text of the Open Meeting Law makes it apply to the Legislature and its committees, the Arizona Supreme Court held that whether the Legislature or its members violated the Open Meeting Law is a non-justiciable political question. In other words, the open meeting law cannot be enforced against the Legislature via the courts. See Puente vs. Arizona State Legislature.

are appointed or elected by the state or political subdivision. Public body includes all quasi-judicial bodies and all standing, special or advisory committees or subcommittees of, or appointed by, the public body. Public body includes all commissions and other public entities established by the Arizona constitution or by way of ballot initiative, including the independent redistricting commission, and this article applies except and only to the extent that specific constitutional provisions supersede this article. A.R.S. § 38-431(6).

"Advisory committee" or "subcommittee" means any entity, however designated, that is officially established, on motion and order of a public body or by the presiding officer of the public body, and whose members have been appointed for the specific purpose of making a recommendation concerning a decision to be made or considered or a course of conduct to be taken or considered by the public body. A.R.S. § 38-431(1).

The Secretary of State, Clerk of the County Board of Supervisors, and City and Town Clerks must conspicuously post open meeting law materials prepared and approved by the Arizona Attorney General's Office on their website. A person elected or appointed to a public body shall review the open meeting law materials at least one day before the day that person takes office. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(G)

### What is Required under the Open Meeting Law?

#### *1. Notice*

Public bodies must post a disclosure statement on their website.<sup>2</sup> The disclosure statement states where the public body will post individual meeting notices. A.R.S. § 38-431.02(A)(1) through (4).

The open meeting law requires at least 24 hours notice of meetings to the members of the public body and the general public. A.R.S. § 38-431.02(C).

Notice must be posted on the public body's website, unless otherwise permitted by statute. Notice must also be posted at any other electronic or physical locations identified in the disclosure statement and by giving additional notice as is reasonable and practicable. A.R.S. § 38-431.02(A)(1) through (4).

#### *2. Agenda*

Agendas must contain information reasonably necessary to inform the public of the matters to be discussed or decided. A.R.S. § 38-431.09(A).

Agendas must be available at least 24 hours before the meeting. A.R.S. § 38-431.02(G).

#### *3. Public's Rights*

<sup>2</sup> Special districts formed under Title 48 may instead file a statement with the clerk of the board of supervisors "stating where all public notices of their meetings will be posted."

The public has a right to:

- Attend
- Listen
- Tape record
- Videotape

Public has no right to:

- Speak
- Disrupt

#### 4. Calls to the Public

An open call to the public is an agenda item that allows the public to address the public body on topics of concern within the public body's jurisdiction, even though the topic is not specifically included on the agenda. A.R.S. §38-431.01(H).

Although the Open Meeting Law permits the public to attend public meetings, it does not require public participation in the public body's discussions and deliberations and does not require a public body to include an open call to the public on the agenda. *See* A.R.S. §38-431.01(H) and Ariz. Att'y Gen. Op. No. I78-00.

An individual public officer may respond to criticism, ask staff to review an item, or ask that an item be placed on a future agenda, but he or she may *not* engage in dialogue with the presenter or collectively discuss, consider, or decide an item that is not listed on the agenda. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(H). Note that individual members of the public body may respond to criticism by individuals who addressed the public body during the call to the public, but the public body may not collectively discuss or take action on the complaint unless the matter is specifically listed on the agenda. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(H).

Public bodies may impose reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on speakers. A.R.S. §38-431.01(H). Restrictions must be narrowly tailored to affect a compelling state interest and may not be content based. Ariz. Att'y Gen. Op. I99-006.

A member of the public body may not knowingly direct a staff member to communicate in violation of the Open Meeting Law. A.R.S. 38-431.01(I).

*In sum:*

- *Calls to the public are permitted, but not required.*
- *Should be added as an agenda item.*
- *Public body may limit speaker's time.*
- *Public body may set ground rules:*
  - *civility*
  - *language*
  - *treat everyone the same*

#### 5. Executive Sessions

Public bodies may hold private executive sessions under a few limited circumstances. In executive sessions, the public is not allowed to attend or listen to the discussions, and the public body is not permitted to take final action. A.R.S. § 38-431.03(D).

Members of the public body may not vote or take a poll in executive sessions. A.R.S. § 38-431.03(D).

There are seven authorized topics for executive sessions:

1. Personnel (must provide 24 hours written notice to employee).
2. Discussion or consideration of records exempt by law from public inspection.
3. Legal advice – with public body's own lawyer(s).
4. Discussion or consultation with public body's lawyer(s) to consider pending or contemplated litigation, settlement discussions, negotiated contracts.
5. Discuss and instruct its representative regarding labor negotiations.
6. Discuss international, interstate, and tribal negotiations.
7. Discuss the purchase, sale, or lease of real property.
8. Discuss matters related to school safety operations, plans, or programs.
9. Discuss "security or safety of buildings, facilities, operations, critical infrastructure information and information technology maintained by the public body."

Notice and Agenda: Agendas for executive sessions may describe the matters to be discussed more generally than agendas for public meetings in order to preserve confidentiality or to prevent compromising the attorney-client privilege. A.R.S. § 38-431.02(I). Nonetheless, the agenda must provide more than a recital of the statute that authorizes the executive session. Id.

#### 6. Minutes (A.R.S. §§ 38-431.01(B), (C), (D) and -431.03(B))

Public bodies must take meeting minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions. May be recorded or written.

Public session meeting minutes must include:

- Date, time and place of meeting;
- Names of members of the public body present or absent;
- A general description of matters considered; and
- An accurate description of all legal actions proposed, discussed or taken (including a record of how each member voted), and the names of members who propose each motion. The minutes shall also include the names of the persons, as given, making statements or presenting material to the public body and a reference to the legal action about which they made statements or presented material.

Executive session minutes must include:

- Date, time and place of meeting;
- Names of members of the public body present or absent;

- A general description of matters considered;
- An accurate description of all instructions given; and
- Such other matters as may be deemed appropriate by the public body.

The minutes or a recording of the public session must be open for public inspection no later than three working days after the meeting, except as otherwise provided in the statute. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(D).

A city or town with a population of more than 2,500 persons must:

- Post a recording or statement describing legal actions taken by city or town public bodies (except for subcommittees or advisory committees) on its website within three working days. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(E)(1).
- Post approved city and town council minutes on its website within two working days following approval. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(E)(2).
- Post a recording or statement describing legal actions taken by subcommittee or advisory committee on its website within 10 working days. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(E)(3).

Minutes of executive sessions must be kept confidential except from certain individuals. A.R.S. § 38-431.03(B).

How long meeting minutes are maintained is determined by the public body's record retention and destruction schedule authorized by Arizona State Library and Archives.

Persons in attendance may record any portion of a public meeting, as long as the recording does not actively interfere with the meeting. Acceptable recording equipment includes tape recorders, cameras, or other means of reproduction. A.R.S. § 38-431.01(F).

### ***7. Where to turn for help***

#### Self-help resources available:

The Arizona Ombudsman – Citizens' Aide handbook and other open meeting law resources <http://www.azoca.gov/open-meeting-and-public-records-law/open-meetings/>

The Arizona Ombudsman's website, [www.azoca.gov](http://www.azoca.gov)

Arizona Agency Handbook, Chapter 7, and other resources <https://www.azag.gov/sgo>

#### Questions/File a complaint:

Arizona Ombudsman-Citizen's Aide 602-277-7292

#### File a complaint/Enforcement authority

Attorney General

County Attorney's Office



# **FIRE BOARD FORMS**



### DIRECTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EVENING PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER PHONE NUMBERS (please specify what they are): \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL : \_\_\_\_\_

BEST TIME TO BE REACHED: \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE?: \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER'S ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EVENING PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

RELATIONSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER BOARD MEMBERSHIPS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL INTERESTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### OATH OF OFFICE

STATE OF ARIZONA,  
COUNTY OF COCONINO

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and laws of the State of Arizona; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, and defend them against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of the office of the Fire Board of the Highlands Fire District according to the best of my ability, so help me God (so I affirm).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Subscribed and sworn before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

## CONFIRMATION OF PERSONAL AUTO INSURANCE

I, \_\_\_\_\_, verify that I will maintain legal minimum limits of automobile liability insurance on any personal vehicle used during my affiliation with the Highlands Fire District, and that my insurance coverage shall be the primary coverage for any and all liability for personal injury or property damage incurred by me to third parties and that I shall also be responsible for collision coverage for my personal vehicle while using the vehicle as a condition of affiliation with the Highlands Fire District.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FIRE BOARD GUIDELINES

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have read and become familiar with the Highlands Fire District Board Member Handbook and By-laws.

I understand that the guidelines are intended to provide me with general information concerning my position on the Highlands Fire District Board. I understand that this Handbook is not an employment contract.

I understand that in order to maintain flexibility in the administration of policies, a majority vote of Fire District Board Members can change, revise, or eliminate any of the guidelines described in the Handbook, or can add supplemental information as needed. A majority vote of the Fire District Board Members, may also, in the event of a financial catastrophe, eliminate any financial obligations expressed even if budget appropriations have been made.

I further understand that in the event the actual terms and provisions of policies and procedures appear to be in conflict with any information given in the Handbook, the majority of the Fire District Board Member's interpretation thereof, will govern.

By signing this form I acknowledge the above information and agree to adhere to the terms and conditions of the Handbook and By-laws.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Each Member of the Board of Directors of the Highlands Fire District is required to disclose any outside activities or interests that present a potential or actual conflict with the interests of the Highlands Fire District.

I have read the guidelines on conflicts of interest adopted by the Highlands Fire District Board of Directors and agree to comply with the terms. I affirm that to the best of my knowledge and belief I am not involved in any activity and have no interest or relationship that conflicts or suggests a potential conflict with the interests of the Fire District, as defined in the guidelines, except as disclosed below.

During my term as a member of the Board of Directors of the Highlands Fire District, I agree to disclose promptly to the Board of Directors of the Highlands Fire District any future situation that might involve or appear to involve me in any conflict of interest with the Highlands Fire District. Disclosure may be made to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Highlands Fire District.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please list and describe any interests or relationships that may present a potential or actual conflict of interest or from which you may derive a potential or actual benefit:

### BOARD TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST

MEMBER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PURPOSE OF EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_

PLACE: \_\_\_\_\_

EVENT DATES FROM: \_\_\_\_\_ TO: \_\_\_\_\_

DID YOU UTILIZE A DEPARTMENT VEHICLE? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST:

TRANSPORATION

MILEAGE \_\_\_\_\_ x MILEAGE RATE \$ \_\_\_\_\_ OR FUEL RECEIPTS.

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MEALS

ACTUAL COSTS FOR MEALS WILL BE REIMBURSED, PLEASE PROVIDE RECEIPTS.

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

LODGING

ACTUAL COSTS FOR LODGING WILL BE REIMBURSED, PLEASE PROVIDE RECEIPTS.

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Statement of OML Compliance per A.R.S. §38-431.01(G)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have been elected or appointed to the  
Print Name  
Highlands Fire District Board of Directors, and hereby acknowledge that I have reviewed the open  
meeting law materials as posted on the Coconino County Clerk of the Board website at least one  
day before taking office pursuant to A.R.S. § 38-431.01 (G).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



