

Aspen Fire Protection District



420 E Hopkins Avenue ▪ Aspen, CO 81611 ▪ 970-925-5532 ▪ www.aspenfire.com

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes January 13th, 2026

The Board of Directors of the Aspen Fire Protection District met for their regular meeting. The meeting was open to the public in person and virtually via Zoom.

Meeting called to order by Wabs at 5:01pm.

Introduction of new legal counsel, Aaron Berne, and new Aspen Fire Board Member, Jennifer Goldfarb.

Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: Dave “Wabs” Walbert, Charles Cunniffe, Emily Taylor, Jennifer Goldfarb, Parker Lathrop (arrived at 5:03pm)
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Jake Andersen, Nikki Lapin (online), Scott Arthur, Jan Legersky, Jan Schubert, Amanda Perusse, Jake Spaulding (online), Ali Hammond (online), and Ben Smith (online)
- Public/Others: Aaron Bern (legal council)

MOTION: Motion made by Charles to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on December 9th, 2025.

Second: Emily

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved.

Parker Lathrop arrived at 5:03pm.

Public Comment: None

AVFD Inc.: None

Financials – Provided in the board packet

a. **The Board reviewed the year-end financial statements.**

Discussion focused on wildfire cooperator incident reimbursements, including clarification of revenue received versus amounts billed and outstanding accounts receivable. Staff explained that reimbursements include both payments already received and amounts still pending.

b. **Additional discussion**

Addressed budgeting assumptions for wildfire deployments, retirement benefit structures (including FPPA, 401A, 457B, and LOSAP), and differences between administrative and career staff retirement contributions. The Board also reviewed payments related to employee housing, including initial and remaining obligations.

Board member comments/action items:

Board members discussed evacuation route concerns, the need for improved community egress, and the importance of continued messaging regarding evacuation infrastructure improvements.

Action Item:

a) Accept Donation for Wildland Type 6 Engine from Aspen Wildfire Foundation; Authorize Contract

Execution

Staff presented a request for Board action to formally accept a donation from the Aspen Wildfire Foundation for the purchase of a Wildland Type 6 engine. It was noted that several donors had committed funding for the apparatus, similar to prior donor-funded wildland equipment acquisitions. Staff advised that formal Board acceptance of the donation was required, along with authorization to execute the associated production contract.

Legal counsel confirmed that Board action was appropriate to both accept the donation and authorize contract execution.

MOTION: Motion made by Charles Cunniffe to Approve the acceptance of the donation of the Wildland Type 6 engine from the Aspen Wildfire Foundation

Second: There was no second made for this motion

Discussion: None

Vote: All Approved

MOTION: Motion made by Parker Lathrop to approve the authorization to execute the contract for the Wildland Type 6 Engine

Second: Charles Cunniffe

Discussion: Board members discussed potential benefits and limitations of the technology, future cost considerations, and the importance of careful contract review given the pilot nature of the program.

Vote: All Approved

b) Accept Donation from Aspen Wildfire Foundation for Seneca Drones; Continue Contract Negotiations

Staff provided background on a proposed donation from the Aspen Wildfire Foundation to support a Seneca firefighting drone program. Discussion included operational use cases, regulatory and airspace considerations, coordination with federal partners, and the importance of ensuring that no public funds would be committed prior to finalizing contract terms. Legal counsel advised that acceptance of the donation could be structured contingent upon successful contract negotiations and compliance with applicable law.

MOTION: Motion made by Charles to approve and accept the donation from the Aspen Wildfire Foundation for the Seneca Drones, conditional upon successful contract negotiations.

Second: Parker Lathrop

Discussion: None

Vote: All Approved

Staff Report:

Staff reports were reviewed as provided in the board packet. Highlights included:

a. Fire Marshal Report – reviewed by Fire Marshal, Jan Legersky

The Fire Marshal reported on December activities, including inspections, compliance efforts, and planning for upcoming X Games operations. The Board was briefed on an increase in fire investigations during the year, with a noted trend involving lithium-ion battery-related incidents.

Additional discussion included aging fire alarm systems, obsolete panels, and the need for replacement when parts are no longer code-compliant. The Fire Marshal also informed the Board of upcoming efforts to address radio coverage and bi-directional amplifier (BDA) system compliance in certain buildings.

b. Operations Report – reviewed by Fire Chief, Jake Andersen

Operations staff reviewed notable December incidents, including a significant propane tank gas leak that required evacuation and mitigation. Additional highlights included storm response, community assistance calls, firefighter-led station projects, community events, and holiday outreach activities.

The Board was also briefed on annual departmental recognitions, including Firefighter of the Year (Andy Reid), Call of the Year (Hometeam BBQ), the renaming of the Good of the Department Award in honor of Roy Holloway and the addition of the Exceptional Integrity Award – The Wabs Award.

c. Training Report – Reviewed by Division Chief of Training, Scott Arthur

December training included the annual hazardous materials refresher and EMS protocol updates.

January training will focus on chimney and attic fires, including hands-on use of fog nail technology.

Total combined fire and medical training hours for 2025 were reported as 5,438 hours.

Recruitment and academy updates were provided for the Class of 2025 and Class of 2026, including volunteer onboarding and lateral transfers.

d. Wildfire Mitigation and Preparedness – Reviewed by Director of Wildfire Resiliency, Ali Hammond

Staff discussed anticipated wildfire conditions for the upcoming season, fuels reduction planning, interagency coordination, and potential wildfire modeling initiatives. The Board was informed of ongoing collaboration with regional partners and future funding considerations related to mitigation projects.

e. Human Resources Report – Reviewed by Human Resources Director, Nikki Lapin

HR updates included progress on hiring timelines, an internal posting for an HR Assistant position, development of job descriptions for future roles, and ongoing year-end audits related to benefits and payroll.

CEO / Fire Chief – Jake Andersen

- a. Provided an update on financial services support, reporting that three firms responded to the District's recent Request for Proposals; however, none were determined to be a suitable fit for the District's current needs. As an interim measure, staff are evaluating the use of a local bookkeeping and payroll support service with experience working with the Aspen Wildfire Foundation. This approach would provide short-term operational support while longer-term options are considered.
 - a. The Board expressed support for pursuing interim assistance and suggested consulting with the District's auditor for additional recommendations.
- b. Addressed the increasing frequency of lithium-ion battery-related fires, noting incidents involving e-bikes, electric vehicles, and consumer electronics in residential, commercial, and parking garage settings. These incidents represent an emerging hazard for the fire service and may warrant future consideration through public education, code amendments, and enforcement strategies.
- c. An update was provided on current wildfire conditions and national trends. The Chief reported elevated fire danger indices associated with drought conditions, reduced snowpack, and early fuel dormancy. Nationally, wildfire activity has increased, with resources being pre-positioned earlier than typical in multiple regions. As a result, competition for wildfire response resources is expected to be significant, placing increased importance on local preparedness and rapid initial attack.

- d. Reviewed aviation and wildland response readiness, reporting that the District's aircraft refueling program at the Aspen Airport remains operational, with agreements in place and equipment available. Training for airport and fire personnel is ongoing. Coordination continues with state and federal partners, including the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control, to address evolving aviation leadership and operational requirements.
- e. Staffing and organizational development related to wildfire response were also discussed. The Chief noted plans to increase seasonal wildfire staffing while emphasizing the need to scale operations responsibly based on funding, leadership capacity, and operational readiness. Coordination with neighboring agencies is ongoing to support regional response efforts and shared mitigation objectives.
- f. Reported on collaboration with municipal, county, and regional partners regarding fuels reduction and wildfire mitigation projects. Several potential projects have been identified, and staff are evaluating wildfire behavior modeling and data collection to better inform mitigation priorities. Future Board consideration may be requested regarding funding for modeling initiatives.
- g. Noted a significant increase in annual training hours compared to prior years, reflecting expanded operational capacity and preparedness. Staff are developing performance metrics and reporting tools to better demonstrate organizational progress, community impact, and employee engagement, with additional information to be presented to the Board in future meetings.

Old Business

None

New Business

Mr. Berne introduced himself, noting he has been with Karp Neu Hanlen for nearly ten years and has lived in Aspen since 2006. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to support the District and its mission.

Ms. Goldfarb provided a brief personal and professional background, noting that she and her family relocated to the Roaring Fork Valley approximately five years ago. She described her professional background in entrepreneurship and startup environments, including founding her own company, and her current work supporting other founders. Ms. Goldfarb shared her involvement in several local nonprofit organizations and her growing engagement in wildfire mitigation efforts, expressing enthusiasm for serving on the Board and contributing to the District's mission.

MOTION: Motion made by Charles Cunniffe to adjourn.

Second: Parker Lathrop

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved

Adjourned at pm 6:23pm

***** A board packet of this meeting can be requested by contacting the Executive Administrative Assistant at amanda.perusse@aspenfire.com or by calling 970-925-5532.**