

Aspen Fire Protection District



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Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes May 12th, 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 5:00pm.

Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: Dave “Wabs” Walbert, Emily Taylor, Parker Lathrop, Jennifer Goldfarb, Charles Cunniffe
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Jake Andersen, Nikki Lapin, Jan Legersky, Jan Schubert, Amanda Perusse, Zach Abley (online), Ali Hammond (online) Jake Spaulding (online), Scott Arthur, Eliza Robison, Sander Olson, Sara Fioretti, Dan Palmer
- Public/Others: Aaron Bern (legal council)

Parker left at 5:35 returned 5:37

Motion made by Parker Lathrop to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on April 10th, 2026.

Second: Emily Taylor

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved

Motion made by Parker to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on April 10th, 2026.

Second: Emily Taylor

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved.

Public Comment: None

AVFD Inc.: None.

Financials – Provided in the board packet

Board discussion included:

- **Income statement reviewed**
 - Treasures fee are 5%.
 - Total administration ahead YTD budget. Firefighting budget ahead of budget as well.
 - Sales tax collected YTD 2.5M, ahead of pace, estimating 6.5M total for 2026. However, would only collect 5.4M in fiscal year 2026 since the last two payments will hit 2027. Trending sales tax has been around 42%, however, will be slower over the next few months due off season.

- **FPPA – no questions/comments**

Board member comments/action items:

- Ski Co. Contract –Club Commons unit in Snowmass will house our seasonal staff (6 months). Lease will align with other AFPD rentals.
- Raceway Housing – Buyer offered 25k and preferential housing to AFPD. The 25k is a somewhat political move to show support. Board would like to wait and see before deciding on our involvement.
- Rabbit Road Pictures Contract– Sander Olson was introduced. Sander is bringing 150k of equipment (cameras, lighting, audio, stands,) that will be needed in incident response and AFPD general communications. This expense can be used as a rental with equipment upon and contract. The renter (Sander) will upkeep and maintain equipment, keep insurance.
- Chromatic Ventures – currently using, renewal.

Amended Budget & Staffing Proposals

A. Seasonal Wildland Staffing

MOTION: Motion made by Charles Cunniffe to approve Ski Co Contract, Rabbit Road Picture Contract and Chromatic Ventures renewal. No action was needed for Raceway Housing at this time.
Second: Parker Lathrop
All approved

Staff Report:

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

Fire Marshal Report - Reviewed by Fire Marshal Jan Legersky

- Lumberyard inspections – may hire their own inspectors.
- Staff completed training on new roofing codes.
- Preparations are underway for the Food & Wine Classic and summer tent season.
- The Up In The Sky event was discussed, with additional scrutiny due to expected dry conditions in August. A fire safety consultant will be utilized, and the event will be billed directly for those services.
- Increasing permit fees was discussed. Jan is awaiting fee guidance from the county and expects to present recommendations to the Board in July or August.

Operations Report - Reviewed by Fire Chief Jake Andersen

- Chief Andersen reviewed staff report photos and discussed wildfire trainings.
- The department recognized new members by “ringing the bell” for receiving new badges.
- The “Hearts and Minds” initiative now requires personnel to work out at least one hour per day.
- Adam Cohen was recognized for his participation during Disabled Veterans Week,
- Office space on the second floor is currently being shared until units at Station 62 are reclaimed.

Organizational Updates

- A new organizational chart was presented, outlining positions planned for hiring this year.
 - Internal communication remains a priority, with leadership emphasizing transparency regarding ongoing efforts and departmental direction.
 - The hiring process is active weekly. The Board discussed whether some positions could be postponed; however, leadership emphasized that the current season presents elevated risk and that the hires directly support operational readiness.
 - Discussion also included maintaining department culture through initiatives such as Andersen 360, pulse surveys, and a larger department-wide survey planned later in the year.
 - Leadership stated that hiring decisions have been deliberate to support organizational growth and operational demands.
 - New temporary wildland employees and volunteer firefighters are being utilized to assist with home assessments, as the current backlog exceeds 170 properties.
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Administrative and Training Update

Information provided by Division Chief of Training Scott Arthur

- April fire training focused on wildland recertification and National Red Card certification.
 - The department completed building construction training in partnership with the White Elephant project, following the process from groundbreaking through ribbon cutting to better understand building construction and firefighting implications.
 - May fire training began with photovoltaic cell roofing systems.
 - Medical training updates included Mo teaching a new trauma, triage, and mass casualty course.
 - Staff reviewed the wide range of specialized trainings crews are currently completing.
 - Recruitment for the Class of 2027 is anticipated, with interviews expected to begin in mid-fall.
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Current Class Updates

- The Class of 2026 graduated and passed all required testing.
 - Upcoming training includes wildland, medical, EMT, and EMR coursework.
 - Leadership noted this has been one of the most engaged recruit classes in recent years.
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Wildfire Mitigation and Preparedness

Reviewed by WCAF Director Ali Hammond

- The chipping program currently has 33 residents signed up, and a fall chipping program is being considered.
- Home assessment waitlists continue to grow; updated language has been added to the website and assessment pages to address expectations.
- Current mitigation projects include Shadow Mountain, which presents challenges related to terrain, property ownership, and partnerships. The project is expected to be phased and will address oak brush, timber, beetle kill, hauling, and tree removal.
- One HOA has hired a herd of goats to help clear understory brush alongside sawyer crews.

- Public comments from the past month were highlighted and reviewed.
 - During Historic Preservation Commission discussions, AFDPD continued recommending fire-resistant roofing alternatives instead of wood shingle roofing materials.
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Human Resources Report

Reviewed by Human Resources Director Nikki Lapin

- Six conditional offers have been made and accepted for seasonal wildfire positions. A hiring list is currently active.
 - Outside agencies will participate in the Battalion Chief assessment center process.
 - Lieutenant hiring assessments were scheduled for the following day, followed by firefighter position assessments.
 - The Wildfire Lieutenant position will be reopened.
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CEO / Fire Chief Report

Presented by Fire Chief Jake Andersen

a) Sales Tax Collection Updates

- The Board discussed how the recent sales tax increase has been applied to businesses.

b) Temporary Wildland Firefighter Positions

- An internal volunteer firefighter volunteered to become a Temporary Wildland Crew Lead to assist with program startup efforts.
- Leadership also discussed the potential need for an additional temporary position related to Seneca operations.
- The value of maintaining both Battalion Chief and Lieutenant leadership coverage for wildland operations was emphasized.

Discussion ensued regarding staffing and program development.

- Leadership stated there is no additional financial risk, as the positions are already budgeted.
- The department is seeking to hire a temporary full-time Wildland Crew Leader in addition to the previously approved Wildland Lieutenant position.

Motion: Approve a temporary Seasonal Wildland Lieutenants

Jen motioned to approve; seconded by Emily.

Motion passed 4–1.

- Parker voted nay, expressing concern that the program should be built first rather than structured around a specific individual. Parker also noted that adding three people simultaneously to build a program could be challenging and wished the issue had been raised six months earlier.

- Chief Andersen explained the operational need for the positions to ensure seven-day leadership coverage.

Additional discussion included:

- Ali and Shaggy will now focus more heavily on helping communities become Firewise through stakeholder coordination, project implementation, public events, and onboarding a new executive director.
- The Board expressed that both Ali and Shaggy should have input during the hiring process.
- Three local individuals have applied for seasonal wildland positions, with one additional local candidate potentially interested.
- The department expects to fill approximately six to seven bedrooms within the lease agreement.
- The Seneca-related staffing discussion will remain on hold pending additional information.

c) BOCC / City of Aspen Council Meetings

- Upcoming meetings with the BOCC and Aspen City Council will focus on future projects, proposals, and potential cost-sharing opportunities while maintaining strong interagency relationships.

d) Wildfire Risk Assessments

- Leadership reviewed assessment volume and future planning needs.

e) Mindbloom Program

- Funds allocated within the health and wellness budget are being considered for a pilot mental health program.
- A proposed contract is expected to be presented at the next meeting.
- The program would involve medically supervised ketamine-assisted therapy.

f) Upcoming Community Events

Upcoming wildfire preparedness and community outreach events include:

- Wildfire Preparedness Open House at AFD Station 61
- Seneca Conference
- Pano Wildfire Mitigation Panel
- Wildfire / ACES / Aspen Public Radio event on June 4 at the Wheeler Opera House

Old Business None

New Business None

MOTION: **Motion made by Emily Taylor to adjourn.**

Second: **Jennifer Goldfarb**

Discussion: **None**

Vote: **All approved**

Adjourned at 7:05

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