

Aspen Fire Protection District



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

Board of Directors Work Session Meeting Minutes April 14th, 2026

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

Meeting called to order by Parker Lathrop at 4:13pm.

Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: Dave “Wabs” Walbert (online, arrived in person at 4:24), Emily Taylor, Parker Lathrop, Jennifer Goldfarb.
- Board of Directors Absent: Charles Cunniffe
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Jake Andersen, Andy Fisher (online), Nikki Lapin, Amanda Perusse
- Public/Others: Aaron Bern (legal council), Ann Terry, CEO of SDA, Chere Phillips (CSDPLP)

Public Comment: None

Work Session Discussion – Special District Association (SDA)

Presenters:

- Ann Terry, CEO – Special District Association (SDA)
- Representative from Colorado Special Districts Property & Liability Pool

Overview

SDA representatives provided an informational presentation and discussion covering:

- Structure and purpose of **special districts in Colorado**
- Board **roles, responsibilities, and statutory authority (Title 32)**
- Governance best practices and policy development
- Legislative advocacy and SDA support services

Key Discussion Points

Board Governance & Roles

- The Board is responsible for:
 - Setting **policy and strategic direction**
 - Establishing and approving the **budget**
 - Hiring, evaluating, and supporting the **Fire Chief**
- Emphasis on maintaining separation between:
 - **Board oversight** (policy level)
 - **Operations** (Chief and staff)

Bylaws & Policies

- Recommendation to:
 - Keep **bylaws simple and functional**
 - Use **policies** for more detailed and adaptable guidance
- Avoid overly complex governance structures

Public Meetings & Transparency

- Importance of:
 - Open meetings and compliance with statutory requirements
 - Clear structure for public comment
 - Transparency notices and public accessibility

Public Trust

- Identified as the Board's most critical asset
- Built through:
 - Open communication
 - Professional conduct
 - Unified decision-making after votes
- Avoidance of:
 - Personal conflicts
 - Gossip or undermining Board decisions outside meetings

Common Issues in Fire Districts

- Challenges often arise from:
 - Board involvement in operational matters
 - Personnel/HR complaints bypassing chain of command
 - Misuse or misunderstanding of **executive sessions**
 - Internal conflicts within combination (career/volunteer) departments

Conflict of Interest

- Defined primarily as **financial conflicts** under statute
- Situational guidance:
 - Board members must recuse themselves when directly benefiting
 - No statutory limit on number of retired members serving
 - Active operational roles (e.g., volunteer firefighters) can create governance complications

Board Composition & Community Involvement

- In small communities:
 - Board members often serve in multiple roles
 - Acceptable if no statutory conflict exists
- Transparency and disclosure are key to maintaining trust

Legislative & Advocacy Update

- SDA actively advocates on:
 - Property tax policy impacts on districts
 - Protection of funding mechanisms (e.g., municipal bonds)
 - State and federal recognition of special districts
- Discussion included recent legislative efforts affecting district revenues and benefits programs

Additional Discussion

Board members asked questions regarding:

- Structure and use of bylaws vs. policies
- Conflict of interest scenarios
- Volunteer and retired personnel serving on boards
- Best practices for governance and maintaining operational boundaries

MOTION: Motion made by Parker Lathrop to adjourn.

Vote: All approved

Adjourned at 5:14pm

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