Aspen Fire Protection District

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Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes
August 11, 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 Charles Cunniffe at 5:08pm.

Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: Charles Cunniffe, Jennifer Goldfarb, Emily Taylor, Parker Lathrop arrived at 5:16pm.
- Absent: Dave "Wabs" Walbert
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Jake Andersen, Nikki Lapin, Jan Schubert, Eliza Robison
- Public/Others: Aaron Bern (legal counsel)

MOTION: Motion made by Emily Taylor to approve the minutes July 14, 2026 as presented.
Second: Jennifer Goldfarb
Discussion: None
Vote: Pass

Public Comment: None.

AVFD Inc.: None.

Financials – Provided in the board packet

- The Wildfire Community Action Fund will be exhausted by current projects; once that happens, costs will shift to the general fund (line item 41210 – contract labor and special projects). Current mitigation work is running at about $2,600 per acre, which the Board considers good value.
- The Board agreed that if wildfire-fund costs are fully used, remaining expenses will come from the general fund (Emily Taylor, Jennifer Goldfarb; all in favor).
- FPPA 2nd Quarter Report: no questions or comments.

MOTION: Motion was made by Emily Taylor that if the wildfire-fund costs are fully used, remaining expenses will come from the general fund hold budget line item.
Second: Jennifer Goldfarb
Discussion: None
Vote: Pass

Board member comments/action items:

- The Wildfire Foundation fundraiser drew a great turnout – over 24 teams and roughly $30,000 in sponsorships, with an estimated $50,000 gross and about $40,000 net.
- The Gala is on Friday, August 14th; cocktail-hour tickets remain, though dinner is sold out.

Staff Report:

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

Fire Marshal Report - Reviewed by Chief Andersen

- Several large construction projects are coming up during the airport closer in 2027.
- The motor speedway accident investigation remains under review.

Wildfire Mitigation – Andy Fisher

- Shadow Mountain mitigation in brush is complete; work is now moving through North 40 and Burlingame. The team is securing private land access adjoining public lands — 30 agreements are now signed. This reflects strong leadership from Chief Andersen.

Housing

- The Basalt Midland residences have closed. The Housing Committee meets Thursday to discuss placement, considering needs tied to new positions as well.

Seneca / Drone Program

- Seneca crews arrive next week to begin training on private land, with all three crews scheduled. The District is applying for an FAA Certificate of Authorization (COA) for airspace access while the airport is closed.

Training & Certifications

- Rope rescue training occurred; ladder training is planned for August.
- EMS training covered shock.
- The current recruit class is on track to complete their task books, with most anticipated badging towards the end of 2026 and beginning of 2027.
- Valley-wide training consortiums span Aspen to Parachute, including a State Fire Officer I inspection class and a Fire Officer I course.
- The Certified Public Manager program is being offered through Denver University; the Training Division is excited about next steps.

Recruitment, Academy and HR Updates

- Class of 2027 volunteer applications are being reviewed and will move to interviews; the Volunteer Representative task book is being reviewed so candidates learn the district's culture before going to academy.
- New Training Division applicant interviews are scheduled for the last week of August and first week of September.

CEO / Fire Chief Report – Jake Andersen

- Aviation insurance: once the drone program is fully running, the District plans to retain outside aviation legal counsel to help ensure FAA compliance, meeting a few times a year. The District owns the Seneca software and drones; Andy Fisher has been a strong addition on these projects.
- Parker Lathrop noted that other advisors may be better suited to the operations side than the development side and suggested exploring options.

- Wildfire mitigation efforts, years in the making, are progressing faster than expected; the goal is fuel reduction, not necessarily a change in fire behavior. The goal is fuel reduction which decreases fire behavior substantially.
- The pace of work should ease after the current hiring push and pile burning wrap up, moving toward a more measured 2027.
- Community engagement continues to grow, reinforcing a sense of partnership.
- The Board discussed encouraging donations for mitigation work and publishing a list of upcoming needs.
- The Wildfire Foundation (a 501(c)(3)) does not guarantee mitigation of any specific donor's property; the District's mitigation work is not dependent on donations. The Board will consider a plan for donations tied to mitigation.
- Next month: a clearer breakdown of how funds move between the Aspen Wildfire Foundation (AWF) and the District's actual mitigation work is requested.

Sales Tax Revenue

- Collections are on track for roughly $6.4 million; some months are running higher or lower than projected. The impact of the airport closure on future collections remains uncertain.

Upcoming Events

- Foundation fundraising activities continue.
- AWF Embers and Elegance Annual Fundraiser – August 14.

2027 Preliminary Budget

- Budget work is underway with a target date of October; the District is awaiting updated real property values, expected by the end of October.

Old Business

Plans to move some personnel from Station 61 to Station 62 once hiring is completed and Pitkin County Dispatch moves into new building in Basalt.

New Business

A newsletter is in progress; the district is looking for feedback and hopes to increase internal and external communications.

MOTION: Motion made by Parker Lathrop to adjourn.
Second: Jennifer Goldfarb
Discussion: None
Vote: All approved

Adjourned at 6:10 pm

***** 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.**