

# Aspen Fire Protection District



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## Board of Directors Regular Meeting March 11th, 2025

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 Parker Lathrop at 5:05pm.**

### Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: Parker Lathrop, Dave “Wabs” Walbert, Emily Taylor, Charles Cunniffe (joined at 5:15pm via phone and then zoom)
- Board of Directors Absent: John Ward
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Rick Balentine, Jake Andersen (at 5:37pm), Nikki Lapin, Jan Legersky, Ali Hammond, Jan Schubert, Shannon (Shaggy) Fink, Amanda Perusse, Ken Josselyn, Arnold Nimmo, Adam Cohen, Ryan Warren, Scott Arthur, Michael Holmes (at 6:06pm)
- Staff/Volunteers online: Max Lyall and Zach Abley
- Public/Others: Lawrence Bond online

**MOTION: Motion made by Wabs to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on February 11th, 2025.**

**Second: Emily Taylor**

**Discussion: None**

**Vote: All approved.**

**Public Comment:** None

### AVFD Inc.:

Kevin Smiddy raised concerns about securing additional funds for AVFD Inc., given that donations are now split among three organizations: Aspen Wildfire Foundation (AWF), Aspen Fire Honor Guard (AFHG), and AVFD Inc. This shift has resulted in fewer funds for AVFD Inc., which was previously the sole non-profit within the District’s wheelhouse.

To address this:

- Ryan Warren is developing an SOG to help guide donation processes. He will first present it to the Officer’s group for approval, followed by a final review by the Board.
- A dedicated AVFD Inc. page should be created on [www.aspenfire.com](http://www.aspenfire.com), linking to either an AVFD Inc. webpage or an informational document once finalized.
- The donation page on [www.aspenfire.com](http://www.aspenfire.com) should be updated to direct users to a selection page, allowing them to choose which organization they wish to support (AVFD Inc., AWF, AFHG, or the District).

**5:15pm – Charles Cunniffe joined the meeting via speaker phone**

### Financials – Provided in the board packet

- 2024 has been completed and sent to the auditor for review. Some items of notes:
  - We did not spend as much as we thought, and were able to bill the State for more than expected.
  - Alarm monitoring prices have gone up, this was an unexpected expense
  - Fire Place line items were off due to rents being reconfigured and several units being empty for longer periods of time than expected.
  - Fire place garage electric final bill of 2023 was billed in January of 2024

### Board member comments/action items:

- Wabs – The board would like to say sorry to Scott Arthur for his recent loss.
- Fire Chief Job Description was provided in the Board packet for final review and approval.

**MOTION: Motion made by Emily Taylor to approve the Fire Chief Job Description as was provided in the Board packet.**

**Second: Wabs**

**Discussion: None**

**Vote: All Approved**

### **5:37pm – Jake Andersen arrived to the meeting**

- The Board packet included proposals from three PR companies for review, with the goal of selecting one firm. The selected firm would assist the Aspen Fire Protection District in exploring future funding possibilities.

Recommendations & Considerations:

- Beyond Your Base is highly recommended and has competitive pricing.
- As timing is critical, the decision should be made as soon as possible.
- While options exist, we should be strategic and focus on the one or two most essential services, rather than pursuing an extensive scope just because we can.
- Funding is available from the canceled election and the decision not to hire a firm for the Chief position search.

**MOTION: Motion made by Emily Taylor to proceed with the PR company Beyond Your Base to assist Aspen Fire Protection District in exploring future funding possibilities.**

**Second: Wabs**

**Discussion: Thank you for doing your due diligence on finding multiple companies to make sure that the value is there for the money.**

**Vote: All approved**

### Staff Report for September:

**Fire Marshal Report** - provided in the board packet and reviewed by Fire Marshal, Jan Legersky.

- The Prevention team has been making progress on compliance, with contractors submitting inspection reports to Brycer.
- They are working on implementing FirstDue for inspection reports and addressing energy system policies with the city.
- Staff attended various training courses, including preparation for inspector exams and fire code classes.
- They continue to see an increase in plan reviews and inspections.

**Operational Report** provided in the board packet, reviewed by Deputy Chief Jake Andersen

- Recent incidents included managing a water main break and responding to a small fire caused by a towel left against a fireplace.
- Great Search & Rescue training by Firefighters Ben Gottlieb and David Richardson with the Mountain Chalet They did a great job.

**Training and Recruitment report** –provided in the board packet, reviewed by the Division Chief of Training, Scott Arthur

- The department has been conducting various training exercises, including mountain rescue, thermal imaging, ladder and rope work, and trench rescue in collaboration with local contractors.

- Recently badged Firefighter Lance Ammerman on 3/5/25. He is the last of his class of 2024 to be badged, except for Sean Fredette, who is currently on medical leave, but still committed to completing the training.
- Class of 2025 has 4 people in academy right now and 1 who is going to try and complete his academy in the fall.
- Class of 2026 – we are going to try and do recruitment earlier, around mid-summer, with the intent of the new class being solidified and into the firehouse earlier, so everyone gets to know everyone before going to academy in January of 2026.
- NFA was just shut down by the government, which will be a huge blow to the fire service right now.

**Wildfire Community Action Fund (WCAF) and Aspen Wildfire Foundation (AWF)** –provided in the board packet, reviewed by Ali Hammond

- Sunnyside Info Meeting
  - The meeting was successful, and a recording is available for distribution to HOAs or anyone who needs it.
- Friendraiser Event – April
  - A New York City-based group of contacts will host this event while the team is in NYC for the Aspen Fire Honor Guard (AFHG) trip.
  - This event strengthens the Aspen–NYC connection and is expected to provide strong contacts and return on investment for the summer.
- Shannon Fink – Position Discussion
  - A review of Shannon’s temporary position and accomplishments over the past year took place.
  - The Chief recommends transitioning him into a full-time role, integrating it into the district budget.
  - Ali and Shaggy highlighted his strengths, achievements, and the value he adds to the organization.

**MOTION: Motion made by Wabs to move Shannon “Shaggy” Fink from a temporary full-time position to a permanent full-time position within the department.**  
**Second: Emily Taylor**  
**Discussion: Legal council confirmed that we do not need to post for this position as we had already budgeted for this Full Time Employee position and are creating a long-term position, by changing a temporary full time position to a full time position.**  
**Vote: All approved**

**Human Resources** – Hiring Plan was given to all board members and reviewed by Human Resources Director, Nikki Lapin.

- The board discusses the hiring process for a new CEO/Fire Chief. Nikki presented a timeline for the internal hiring process, which includes posting the job internally until March 31st, reviewing candidates in early April, conducting interviews in mid-April, and potentially finalizing the selection by May 21st. The board agrees to proceed with this timeline. The process will include a 14-day public notice period for finalists before appointment. The goal is to have the new chief in place by August 1st when the current chief leaves.

**CEO/Fire Chief and Good of the District:**

- Irma Prodinger Administrative Trust
  - Aspen Fire Protection District was named in her trust to receive a percentage of her estate. Board discussed how best to utilize these funds. It was recommended to split evenly between AVFD Inc and AFHG. Once funds are received, respective organizations will write thank you notes to the trust.

**MOTION: Motion made by Emily Taylor to split the trust donation to give 75% to AVFD Inc and 25% to AFHG**  
**Second: Wabs**  
**Discussion: None**  
**Vote: All approved**

- WRCB Update – will meet in Glenwood Springs on May 9<sup>th</sup> as a final meeting before going before the State. Let Chief Balentine know if you would like to attend.
- Aspen Fire Honor Guard update
  - Will be providing colors for the DAV on 3/31 and 4/5, as well as the Shining Stars on 3/27.

- DAV update
  - Email is circulating with sign-up times to help with the DAV unloading and loading at the Aspen Airport during the week of 3/30-4/5. Please make sure to sign up to help if you can.
- DFPC Fire Hawk RFI
  - Deputy Chief Andersen will be submitting a proposal to the DFPC for the Firehawk helicopter, expressing interest in a regional home in Central Western Colorado, without committing any resources at this time.

**Old Business: None**

**New Business:**

- Seneca Drone helicopter testing partnership – they are developing water-carrying drones for firefighting and would provide Aspen Fire with a free unit for testing and development purposes. More to come on this as it develops.
  - Recommended by the Board to reach out to the Drone program in the New Castle/Rifle area as well.

**MOTION: Motion made by Wabs to adjourn.**

**Second: Emily Taylor**

**Discussion: None**

**Vote: All approved**

**Adjourned at 7:09 pm**

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