

Aspen Fire Protection District



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

Board of Directors Regular Meeting May 13th, 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 John Ward at 5:11pm.

Roll Call:

- Board of Directors Present: John Ward, Parker Lathrop (zoom), Dave “Wabs” Walbert, Emily Taylor (zoom), Charles Cunniffe
- Board of Directors Absent: Charles Cunniffe
- Staff/Volunteers Present: Rick Balentine, Jake Andersen, Nikki Lapin, Jan Legersky, Ali Hammond
- Staff/Volunteers online:
- Public/Others: Lawrence Bond (zoom)

MOTION: Motion made by Wabs to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting on April 8th, 2025 and Special Meeting on April 15th, 2025.

Second: Parker Lathrop

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved.

Public Comment: None

MOTION: Motion made by John Ward to move into an executive session pursuant to CRS 24-6-402(4)(b), (e) and (f) for the purposes of receiving legal advice from the AFPD Attorney on specific legal questions; determining positions relative to matters that may be subject to negotiations; developing strategy for negotiations; and instructing negotiators, and personnel matters where no employee who is the subject of the session has requested an open meeting, more specifically related to the AFPD’s Chief Executive Officer / Fire Chief contract.

Second: Wabs

Discussion: None

Vote: All approved.

Moved into Executive Session at 5:13pm.

Returned from Executive Session at 5:57pm

Roll Call: John Ward (left at 5:57), Parker Lathrop (zoom), Emily Taylor (zoom), Dave “Wabs” Walbert

Executive Session Decision: The Board will move forward with negotiations with the identified candidate, Jake Andersen, for the position of Fire Chief/CEO of the Aspen Fire Protection District.

AVFD Inc.: None

Financials – Provided in the board packet

- Discussion on 45211 – communications, radios and software costs. Jake will talk to Jan Schubert for clarification and get back to the Board on the information.
 - Part of the reason for the increased costs is due to general rising expenses, but another significant factor is the required purchase of the ESO software last year, following their acquisition of Emergency Reporting. Unfortunately, ESO has not met our needs in the areas of training and prevention. As a result, we are now in the process of purchasing additional software solutions to address those specific gaps.

Board member comments/action items: none

Staff Report:

Fire Marshal Report - material was not available at the time the board packet was sent out. Fire Marshal, Jan Legersky, provided this information at the meeting.

- Met with Jon Peacock and Charlotte Anderson regarding the Airport Expansion Project to discuss options to help keep things moving during their tight timeline.

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

- Review of a picture of a structure fire that was started by stain soaked rags and was right next to a gas meter. We were able to get on scene quickly and shut it down before it became a major incident.
- Recent valley chiefs meeting took place today (5/13/25) with members from CRFR up to Aspen attending
 - Discussed how much traction there is right now with the Battalion Chiefs and even Lieutenants running with ideas
 - Recently had 30 of them in a room for a strategy and tactics session where one of the Carbondale members started a conversation “Tactics on Tap” that started out in the station with on duty members and then moved to White House Pizza to continue the conversation with off duty members.
- Several members attended FDIC

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

- Software changeover to Vector is happening for training. The two previous software companies (Emergency Reporting and ESO) were not accurately capturing and tracking training. This new software will help with tracking and data as it relates to ISO. It is also the same software being used up and down the valley, all the way to Parachute, and has the ability for all of us to integrate on the same platform. Will have more information on it in the next Board packet.
- Class of 2025 update: They have completed their Academy and graduated last week. A highlight of their training was LT Max Lyall, who was a co-lead instructor for the entire academy and had a huge hand in making it successful for all attendees.
 - 1 recruit had all his certifications and was a lateral hire who didn’t need to complete the academy, just his in-house task force booklet, which is almost complete. Hoping to badge soon.

- 1 recruit had all fire certifications except EMT and Wildland. He is finishing EMT in the next 2-3 weeks and then will go through the wildland program, followed by his in-house task booklet. Hoping to badge his summer or fall.
- The 4 who just finished academy will start their EMT, Wildland and in-house task booklets with the anticipation to finish in December /January.
- Another recruit, who started with this class, had to switch to the August/Fall Academy. He is currently doing his EMT, and then front loading his wildland and taskbook before doing the academy at the end. Hoping to badge in December/January.
- Brandon Potter is a lateral volunteer hire who is going through recertification. Has already passed his FFII written and practical and preparing for Hazmat. After completing those and a live fire, he will be fully recertified.
- Another recruit from the class of 23 is finishing up his academy as well.
- We will be bringing on 9 new recruits at the end of the year, which brings our total to 50.

Wildfire Community Action Fund (WCAF) and Aspen Wildfire Foundation (AWF)

- Successful prescribed burn on Sunnyside, hoped to burn 800 acres and met that mark, with nothing going out of the boundaries!
- Draft at end of packet for AWF strategic plan

Human Resources – Hiring Plan was reviewed by Human Resources Director, Nikki Lapin.

- Once the contract negotiations between the Board and Jake Andersen are complete for the Aspen Fire Chief/CEO position, Nikki will then begin the process to fill the Deputy Chief position.

CEO/Fire Chief and Good of the District:

- Beyond Your Base PR firm update about potential tax questions for the District for the November ballot
 - First meeting was on 4/30/25 with several Aspen stakeholders which provided several great recommendations which will be going out soon as questions in emails, texts and/or mailers.
 - 3 more meetings scheduled for public outreach: June 17th, June 24th and June 28th.
- WRCB update – State code board that write codes for the State of Colorado as it pertains to building codes and vegetation codes:
 - Final public meeting took place in Carbondale recently. Unfortunately, the State turned down funding to the DFPC to hire people to help districts implement and enforce the rules
- Honor Guard update:
 - Recent trip to NYC to visit the 9/11 museum, we had a guided tour that was set up by Honor Guard member, Roy Holloway.
 - Visited the One World Trade Center and the FDNY training facility “the Rock” on Randall’s Island
 - Aspen Wildfire Foundation had a fundraiser while we were there, it was really successful
- Insurance Summit update:
 - Event is 1 month away
 - Registration is full at 42 seats!
- Wildfire Risk Assessments
 - Ali and Shaggy have been extremely successful in getting the word out about this, and getting much more response with requests, and they are unable to keep up. Looking for ways to get them some help and support on this, and will bring options to the Board next month for review.

- Current waitlist has 21 assessments plus 5 HOA's waiting to become FireWise. At the rate of 3 assessments per week, they are already booked out for 7 weeks.

Old Business: **None**

New Business:

As we begin exploring potential tax-related questions, we're actively engaging the community. We've held meetings and plan to distribute polling materials and mailers in June to gather feedback. We've also reached out to key stakeholders, like the school district, to coordinate efforts and avoid competition, especially as they're considering ballot measures. We've pledged mutual support, and I've had productive conversations with the city manager, county manager, and others who are generally supportive and understand our needs.

One issue we may face later this year is the dip in property values that occurred around mid-2024. Since property valuations are frozen at that time for the 2026–2027 cycle, we could be locked into a low point, which would impact our future property tax revenues. This is compounded by the residential assessment rate dropping from 6.7% to 6.15% due to recent legislation. The preliminary valuations in August will give us a clearer picture, but until then, we're somewhat in the dark.

That said, real estate reports show a 35% increase in property values already this year, so the market has rebounded—we just may have gotten caught at the bottom when it comes to official assessments. We're monitoring this closely and will work to get projections as early as possible to avoid any surprises.

MOTION: **Motion made by Wabs to adjourn.**
Second: **Emily**
Discussion: **None**
Vote: **All approved**

Adjourned at 6:44 pm

***** 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.**