South Arkansas Fire Protection District

MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 26, 2026

Time: 0900 hours

Location: 611 Oak Street, Salida, CO 81201

Board Members Present

- Harold Starbuck
- Art Hutchinson
- Sheldon Morgan
- Phillip Gamache

Board Members Excused

- Rich Edgington

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Harold Starbuck at 0905 hours.

2. Approval of the Agenda

- Motion to accept the agenda as presented.
  - **Motion by:** Sheldon Morgan
  - **Second by:** Phillip Gamache
  - **Vote:** Passed unanimously

3. Approval of December 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

- Motion to accept the December 2025 Board Meeting Minutes.
  - **Motion by:** Art Hutchinson
  - **Second by:** Phillip Gamache
  - **Vote:** Passed unanimously

4. Open Session

No public was present.

5. Reports

Sarah Marques of Walke and Associates provided an update on deposits, current balances, and insurance refunds from the previous policy provider.

Laurie Todesco of South Arkansas Fire Protection District detailed both received and outstanding amounts from the current billing cycle.

Financial Report

- Motion to accept December financials.
  - **Motion by:** Phillip Gamache
  - **Second by:** Sheldon Morgan

- **Vote:** Passed unanimously

Fire Chief's Report

Chief Aaron Jonke discussed several critical issues:

- Legal Representation
  - Seeking new legal representation based on recommendations from the Special District Association (SDA). Chief Jonke presented a neutral comparison of two law firms for the Board's consideration.
- Pay Policy
  - Outlined updates to the Wildland Team pay policy, including revised pay structures, holiday pay, and potential medical and retirement benefits. The benefits package for administrative staff was also discussed.
  - Appendix A - 2026 Pay Rates; Appendix B - 2026 Payroll Schedule; and Appendix C - 2026 Meal Per Diem Rates were discussed under New Business.
- Regional Fire Service Feasibility Study
  - Chief Jonke proposed initiating a regional fire services feasibility study for the county, emphasizing a collaborative, data-driven approach to evaluating operational capacity, funding, and governance.
- Firehouse Property and Apparatus Assessment
  - A property appraisal for the 124 E Street station was identified as necessary to support long-term planning. Potential benefits of the property include employee housing opportunities and eligibility for grant funding.

Assistant Fire Chief Report

Chief Rohrich did not have any administrative items to discuss.

Division Chief of Wildfire

Division Chief Bainbridge reported the following:

- Grants
  - A 12-week mitigation project was awarded through the COSWAP grant, covering approximately 40 acres of work in Piñon Ridge Estates and along County Roads 110 and 107.
  - FRWRM grant notice was expected in the first week of February.
- Community Initiatives
  - Ongoing mitigation efforts focus on high-risk areas such as Methodist, with plans to expand to other subdivisions and collaborate with BLM to address property lines and funding for additional work.
  - Mitigation work has improved insurance availability and rates for residents, with local insurance agents offering to speak at public meetings about the benefits.

6. New Business

- Motion by the South Arkansas Fire Protection District Board of Directors to permanently adopt the IRS mileage rates.
  - **Motion by:** Sheldon Morgan
  - **Second by:** Phillip Gamache
  - **Vote:** Unanimous

- Motion by the South Arkansas Fire Protection District Board of Directors to approve Appendix A - 2026 Pay Rates; Appendix B - 2026 Payroll Schedule; and Appendix C - 2026 Meal Per Diem Rates.
  - **Motion by:** Sheldon Morgan
  - **Second by:** Art Hutchinson
  - **Vote:** Unanimous

7. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn the meeting at 0957 hours.
  - **Motion by:** Sheldon Morgan
  - **Second by:** Phillip Gamache
  - **Vote:** Passed unanimously

Submitted by: Art Hutchinson, Secretary Treasurer

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