South Arkansas Fire Protection District

BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date: August 31, 2026
Time: 0900 hours
Location: 611 Oak Street, Salida, CO 81201

Board Members Present

- Harold Starbuck
- Art Hutchinson (attended remotely)
- Sheldon Morgan
- Phillip Gamache

Board Members Absent and Excused

- Rich Edgington

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Harold Starbuck at 0900 hours.

2. Approval of the Agenda

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

3. Approval of July Board Meeting Minutes

- Motion to accept the July Board Meeting Minutes.
  - Motion by: Sheldon Morgan
  - Second by: Phil Gamache
  - Vote: Passed unanimously

4. Open Session

No public comment was made.

5. Reports

Marilyn Marchand, South Arkansas Fire Protection District Financial Coordinator, gave the following report virtually:

- Implementation of a new visual financial reporting format intended to provide clearer budget and financial trend information for the Board.
- Ongoing delays within the DFPC fire billing and reimbursement process, which continue to impact agencies across Colorado. Staff reported that the District remains current on billing entry efforts and continues to work through state-related processing delays.
- Updates regarding communications with statewide fire service organizations concerning reimbursement timelines and administrative challenges associated with the current DFPC billing system.
- An overview of deployment activity and the associated operational impacts of an exceptionally active fire season. Staff noted increased activity levels and corresponding resource demands.
- Discussion regarding administrative software and technology solutions that may improve deployment tracking, billing documentation, and overall operational efficiency. The Board expressed support for continued evaluation of potential options.
- Confirmation that monthly financial statement approvals are no longer required and that formal financial approvals will occur on a quarterly basis.

Fire Chief's Report

Chief Aaron Jonke discussed several critical issues:

- DFPC Billing System:
  - Staff continues working through a significant DFPC billing backlog.
  - District personnel have entered more billing documentation at this point in 2026 than had been entered during the same period in 2025.
  - Billing delays remain primarily related to state approval processes.
- 2026 Fire Season
  - The 2026 season was reported as the busiest wildfire season on record.
  - District staff continue managing a high operational tempo and increased administrative workload related to deployments and reimbursement tracking.
- DFPC Audit:
  - The audit remains ongoing.
  - Communication from the state continues to be limited while the audit process proceeds.
- Director Election Timelines:
  - Harold Starbuck - term expires 2027
  - Rich Edgington - term expires 2027
  - Art Hutchinson - term expires 2029
  - Sheldon Morgan - term expires 2029
  - Phillip Gamache - term expires 2029
  - Staff will coordinate election-related paperwork with Chaffee County and Fremont County and will provide future updates.

Division Chief of Wildfire

Division Chief Bainbridge reported the following:

- Grants:
  - FRWRM:
    - Grant reimbursement of approximately $63,730 was received.
    - A Bobcat Toolcat procured through grant funding was scheduled for delivery and training.
    - The only remaining component pending delivery is the brush hog attachment.
    - Staff discussed future watershed and ditch corridor mitigation projects aimed at protecting agricultural infrastructure and improving wildfire resilience through grant-funded work.
  - Common Ground:
    - Quarterly reporting requirements were completed and submitted.
    - SAFPD submitted an additional grant application for mitigation activities.
    - SAFPD partnered with the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) on a project to install lockable fire pit covers at dispersed campsites to reduce fire risk during fire restrictions.
- Fire Conditions:
  - Local fire conditions have improved due to recent moisture.
  - Lightning activity remains present, but fuels are becoming less receptive.
  - Significant fire activity continues in portions of the northern United States.

6. New Business

- Motion to enter Executive Session (closed to the public).

  Pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402 to receive legal advice, discuss negotiation strategy and intergovernmental agreements, and address personnel matters.
  - Discussion on personnel matters
  - Apparatus purchases
  - 124 E Street strategy
  - Motion by: Phil Gamache
  - Second: Art Hutchinson
  - Vote: Unanimous
- Motion to adjourn Executive Session and reconvene in Regular Session.
  - Motion by: Sheldon Morgan
  - Second: Art Hutchinson
  - Vote: Unanimous

- Motion to amend the budget in the amount not to exceed $14,500.00 towards software, utilities, and clothing line items.
  - Motion by: Phil Gamache
  - Second: Sheldon Morgan
  - Vote: Unanimous
- Resolution No. 2026-03 - A resolution designating authorized signers for the District's Collegiate Peaks bank account.
  - Motion by: Phil Gamache
  - Second: Art Hutchinson
  - Vote: Unanimous
- Resolution No. 2026-04 - A resolution designating the main administrative user for the District's High Country bank account.
  - Motion by: Sheldon Morgan
  - Second: Art Hutchinson
  - Vote: Unanimous
- Resolution No. 2026-05 - Colorado Retirement Association membership resolution.
  - Motion by: Phil Gamache
  - Second: Sheldon Morgan
  - Vote: Unanimous

7. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:54.
  - Motion to adjourn: Sheldon Morgan
  - Second: Phil Gamache
  - Vote: Passed unanimously

Submitted by: Art Hutchinson, Secretary Treasurer. Scanned signature removed.