

SOUTHERN INYO FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Thursday, August 21, 2025

The Governing Board of the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District held a regular business meeting on Thursday, August 21, 2025 at 6pm at the Hurlbut Rook Community Center.

I. Call to order and determination of quorum

Present: Robin Flinchum, Chair, Spencer McNeal, Secretary, Colette Zelwer, Treasurer, Eliza Woodall, Director, Cameron Mayer, Director, Bill Lutze, Mike Jerry, Larry Levy, Ross Dykman, Christiana, John Muccio, Patrick Donnelly (via Zoom).

II. Good of the Order

III. Public Comment: 3 minutes per participant

IV. Consent Agenda (Items that are considered routine and are approved in a single motion)

- A. Approve minutes from the July regular meeting.
 - a. Approved pending a small change to Section VII.B.a.
- B. Approve last month's changes to Illness Injury Prevention Policy (Board Policy 3010)
- C. Mayer moves to accept consent agenda. Zelwer seconds. Carries 5-0-0.

V. Correspondence

- A. We will take 10 of the old community center chairs and the museum is taking 45. Levy and Lutze will coordinate the retrieval of them and the tables with Rose.

VI. Board, Officer and Committee Reports

- A. Board Member Reports
 - a. Board Chair Report
 - b. Treasury/Budget Report
 - b.i. Not much to report: still waiting on final reconciliation for previous FY, not much spending so far in this FY
 - b.ii. In terms of future planning: need more info on future budget needs before we can put together a proposal for assessment increase
 - b.iii. Operating expenses in the FUTURE when new stations are built?
 - b.iii.1. Flinchum: need to analyze utilities cost, and project for larger/multiple buildings in future
 - b.iv. Capital improvement plan needed? Have we ever had one?
 - b.iv.1. We have a list of assets; capital improvement plan may have been done 20 years ago (?)
 - b.iv.2. Hard to do for something we don't yet have
 - b.v. We should also be budgeting for some amount to be added to our reserves in the future
 - b.v.1. Per Jerry, AMB and FIRE share the reserve pool
 - b.v.2. Need to clarify what the actual amount in our reserve is: \$242k or \$342k? Jerry will find out.
 - b.v.2.a. \$40k of this is earmarked for PPE
 - b.vi. Zelwer needs help with creating financial/capital improvement/assessment plan
 - b.vii. Decision: Mayer and Flinchum will be on assessment/budget committee
 - b.viii. Follow-up: Zelwer will reach out to County for guidance and information
- B. Fire Chief's Report
 - a. 1 call – MVA, 4 responders.
 - b. We have the two trucks back from Phil Worsman.

- c. A site inspection of the new SIFPD firehouse in Charleston View was conducted 8/21 with County representatives and District Supervisor to discuss infrastructure needs
 - c.i. County wants Bonanza Peak solar project to pay for as much as possible as part of their Community Benefit arrangement; includes site prep, surveying, soil samples, EIR (since they'll already be out there doing many of these things anyway)
- C. Administrative Report
 - a. Report on new laptop for Administrator - \$720 (well under approved \$2k limit).
 - b. The District now has a free Amazon Business Prime Membership for the next 2 years through CSDA.
 - c. All policies and docs posted to website have to be WCAG compliant by Jan 2027. Jerry is working on converting agendas, meeting minutes to proper format; Policies manual and Bylaws documents have already been completed.
 - d. Payroll last month had an error: the county accidentally paid Jerry's salary in advance; he won't get paid this month to compensate.
 - e. Applied for a Leary Firefighter \$25k grant to help with SCBA. Will be pursuing more grants with the additional hours Jerry now works.
 - f. SIFPD did not win the State Farm grant previously applied for.
 - g. Jerry's employment contract has been created, will need to be added to September 2025 regular meeting agenda for approval.
- D. Fleet Mechanic's Report
 - a. State of Motor Pool
 - a.i. 2 functioning AMB, 1 in-service Fire Truck, 1 tender, command vehicle.
 - a.ii. Still working on brush truck repairs.
 - a.iii. Returned vehicles: take equipment and bed from old truck and move to new truck.
 - a.iii.1. Need to move the trucks from their current location, but since that land is under lease, no immediate rush.
 - a.iv. S-73 has bad transmission and coolant line. Lutze and Levy thinks it's work fixing. McNeal makes motion to approve spending up to \$7k to repair it. Woodall seconds. Carries 5-0-0.
 - a.v. Jerry has repaired/replaced all the dead emergency lights on the tender!
- E. Committee Reports
 - a. Water Kiosk
 - a.i. Levy assembling pieces for floor drain.
 - a.ii. Otherwise holding steady.
 - a.iii. Working on long term planning.
 - b. Fundraising
 - b.i. Fall event planning
 - b.i.1. First meeting on Sunday 8/24.
- F. Long-Term Planning
 - a. Fire Stations
 - b. Recruitment
 - b.i. Woodall presented proposed verbiage for website, some changes suggested. Final web page will be reviewed and approved by Board at September Board meeting before going live. Follow-up: Woodall will make changes to document, email to Board and SIFPD for review and then meet with Jerry to put web page up for board approval.

VII. Old Business

- A. Update from Patrick Donnelly on Bonanza Peak project
 - a. Hasn't finished drafting our letter (discussed at August Board meeting), but has talked to County Planning dept and they agree that existing Environmental studies/docs are inadequate (they don't mention lithium battery storage).
 - a.i. They agree additional CEQA work will need to be done, whether EIR or lower level of analysis TBD.
 - a.ii. Entire process will therefore be slower than thought originally.

- a.iii. Our negotiation for Community Benefit arrangement is really tied to the CEQA and identified harms.
 - b. Additional issue: Trump administration will not approve new solar or transmission lines on BLM/Federal lands. The Bonanza Peak project is contingent on that being allowed (although the solar field is on private land). Unknown how that will resolve.
 - b.i. We won't be making our final ask until CEQA process is complete and we properly understand the risks.
 - c. Donnelly talked to Moss Landing Fire Marshall who indicated he hadn't heard of any incidental harm (residents getting sick etc) from lithium battery fires there. These fears may be overstated?
 - d. County Supervisors are coming to Tecopa on Tuesday Oct 21 for Supervisor meeting (time unknown, probably 2pm?); they are considering holding a special meeting in Charleston View later that day with SIFPD, County planning officials and Bonanza Peak.
 - e. Levy Levy: Has Bonanza Peak considered flooding issues in the valley? Donnelly: would have been considered in original plan.
 - a. Discuss possibility of holding a special meeting in Charleston View in October
 - a.i. After supervisors meeting on 10/21. After they set the time of their meeting we can set the time of ours.
 - a.ii. Follow-up: Donnelly will follow up with County and advise the Board.
 - a.iii. Follow-up: Mayer will reserve meeting space at Mission, determine whether SIFPD needs to bring Starlink/Owl for remote participation.
 - b. Discuss and consider resuming regular meetings in Charleston View
 - b.i. Will begin holding them once a quarter after the October special meeting.
- B. Update on radio communications
- a. Finally rec'd high-gain antennas! But still having some issues...Chief troubleshooting what building/environmental issues are causing the problem. IbeX repeater is only 30W output (county gave up 100W license). County will need to reapply for 75W or higher license.
 - a.i. Dispatch currently pages on both systems to be sure calls are received.
 - b. Sat. phones cost has increased to \$175/month - do we need to keep them, if we have Starlink and radios? Decision: Jerry will cancel one of the sat phones.
- C. Update on SCBA equipment
- a. Levy working on getting quotes: cheapest option would be to get oldest possible models but these will be obsolete sooner and then can't be worked on.
 - b. Refurbished models are half the price, would allow us to get newer models.
 - c. Could possibly refurb our existing ones to bring them up to spec.
 - d. Decision: Levy to continue investigating.
- D. Update from exploratory committee on future special tax assessment as a ballot measure
- a. Tabled
- E. Discuss and consider an organizational task management system for the District
- a. Jerry, Zelwer and Woodall met to discuss, have decided on something between project management and to-do list, but more sophisticated than a spreadsheet.
 - a.i. Self-hosted to save money on hosting/licenses.
 - a.ii. Zelwer will investigate options.
- F. Discuss and approve proposed SIFPD buildout plan of new fire stations
- a. Flinchum moves to accept fire stations draft plan as amended in this meeting. Mayer seconds. Carries 5-0-0. Jerry will send email to Meaghan McCamman.
 - b. All future submissions made to the County regarding this project will be made through Lutze or Jerry. Lutze will contact Meaghan to make sure that is the case.

VIII. New Business

- A. Address concerns from Ross Dykman
 - a. His large land holdings (~400 acres) incur special assessment taxes, but only lives on a small portion of those. Can we identify parcels that could be excluded from the assessment?
 - a.i. Levy: we can look at how the land is classified: mining should be taxed at \$1/acre. Is the land correctly classified?

- a.ii. Follow-up: Ross will provide parcel numbers so SIFPD can look into the question.
- b. Ross also has concerns that SIFPD won't respond to calls out there. Previous Fire Chief said they would NOT. Ross has his own plans for mine extractions/rescues, but wants a commitment that we'll at least respond to the mine portal/emergency meet-up location/road.
 - b.i. Suggests an SIFPD training/tour & access; needs to create new maps.
 - b.ii. Decision: Lutze agrees to training/orientation at the mines for SIFPD volunteers, will schedule for the Fall. Can't offer mine-extraction, but can absolutely provide assistance at designated locations. SIFPD will need maps, gate codes, list of access points etc .
 - b.iii. Follow-up: Ross will provide mine area maps, gate codes etc.
- B. Review and make any needed changes to SIFPD bylaws
 - a. Changes made. Will be approved at September meeting.
- C. Nominate candidates for vacant office positions and hold board officer elections
 - a. Board nominated Woodall for Secretary. Zelwer moves to approve the nomination. Mayer seconds. Carries 5-0-0.
 - b. Board nominated Mayer for Vice Chair. Zelwer moves to approve the nomination. McNeal seconds. Carries 5-0-0.
- D. Discuss and consider retention policy for meeting recordings
 - a. Tabled

IX. Evaluate Distribution of Workload

- A. Remove from future agendas

X. Good of the Order

XI. Public Comment: 3 minutes per participant

XII. Suggested Agenda Items for Next Meeting

XIII. Adjournment & Schedule next Regular Board Meeting: Thursday September 18 at 6PM in Tecopa. Woodall moves to adjourn, Mayer seconds. Meeting adjourned at 9:18.

Prepared by:

Mike Jerry, District Administrator/Secretary

I, Robin Flinchum, Chair, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Meeting Minutes of the August 21, 2025 Regular Business Meeting, Board of Directors, Southern Inyo Fire Protection District.

Robin Flinchum, Board Chairperson

Eliza Woodall, Board Secretary