Approved by
Mid Rogue Fire District Board of Directors
on 2026

Mid Rogue Fire District Board Meeting: May 27, 2026
5:30 p.m. – In Person– Merlin Community Park - 100 Acorn Street, Merlin Oregon
Live Streamed at www.youtube.com/@MidRogueFD

Rural Fire Protection District Attendance:
Directors Present: Tom McGowan, Vincent Ownbey, Ralph Weidling, Mark Jones, Randy Benetti Sr.
Members Absent:
Recorder: Kassie Austin
Guest Presenters: None

1. **Call to Order**
   a. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.
   b. The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Approval of Agenda**
   The board reviewed today's agenda items. *Director Benetti made a motion to approve the agenda with. The motion was seconded by Director McGowan. Upon roll call, Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti - yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones - yes. Motion carried 4-0.*
3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 11, 2026**
   The board reviewed the meeting minutes from the May 11, 2026. Director Benetti brought forward errors made on agenda item 8.a – Prevention as well as agenda Item H by taking the extra word "out" *Director Benetti made a motion to approve the draft minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, and Director Ownbey – excused, Director Weidling - yes, and Director Jones - yes. Motion carried 4-0.*
4. **Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget Hearing and Adoption**
   The district called the public hearing to open at 5:35 p.m.

   Jay Meredith, Mid Rogue Fire District Budget Officer, briefed the board on the budget process. Mr. Meredith, reviewed the budget committee's approved budget.

   The board opened the floor for public comment. No public comment was heard.

   The board deliberated on the proposed budget. Discussion was held regarding a modification to the district office, and the line item that it would come from the materials and services budget. The board discussed keeping the budget tight for the upcoming year. The board discussed PERS for the administrative assistant. It was determined that if changes are needed in the future, an appropriation from the contingency fund could be approved later in the fiscal year.

   Director Benetti moved to approve the budget as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Ownbey. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes, and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0.

   Director Ownbey made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-008; In the matter of Adoption of the Budget for the Fiscal Year 2026-27 and Making Appropriations. Director McGowan seconded the motion. Discussion was held on the resolution verbiage, where Jay Meredith, discussed the amendments of the language on the resolution. The board approved the language changes in the resolution. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes, and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0.

   The public hearing was closed at 5:56 p.m.

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5. **Secretary/Treasurer Report**

Director Weidling gave a report for what bills were paid. The balance in the budget is $255,725.87. Director Weidling has ran a report, and projects that with the current spending, the district may be able to be running for an estimated 4-5 years. The County has transferred the money to the district's LGIP account and with a 4% interest. Director Weidling determined that is an estimated $54,000.00 a year in interest.

6. **Executive Director Report**

a. **Strategic Plan**

Executive Director Turnbull the discussed in depth the stakeholder meetings that he has held. More stakeholder meetings are scheduled throughout June. Mr. Turnbull reviewed the strategic plan in depth with the board, and discussed his goals for the district before putting a taxing measure on the ballot. Mr. Turnbull requested that the version of the strategic plan that was be presented be a six-month plan, in lieu of a year or two year plan. *Director Benetti moved to approve the strategic plan for a six-month timeframe as presented. The motion was seconded by Director McGowan. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes, and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0. A resolution adopting the strategic plan will be approved next meeting.*

7. **Public Comment**

Jay Meredith, Grants Pass, recommended that the district look into a credit card program called RAMP, to use for the purchasing cards. He has had success with the RAMP program while running a non-profit organization.

8. **Old Business**

A. Payroll and Account Update

Director Weidling explained the need of a director to provide a social security number has not been resolved. Director Jones and Director Weidling will meet with the bank to discuss a resolution. Discussion was held on potentially changing the company that is providing the payroll services. This matter was moved to the next scheduled meeting for an update.

B. District Office Remodel

Mr. Turnbull discussed with the board the possibility of remodeling the office. There has been an estimate of $8,000.00 to complete the project. The request for remodel has been approved by the landlord of the building. Moving forward with the office remodel will allow a bigger meeting space for staff and stakeholder meetings as needed. The board approved the remodel without objections.

C. Public Relations Firm

Mr. Turnbull held a conversation with a stakeholder, where it was recommended that the district potentially engage with a public relations firm. The board discussed the benefits of moving forward with a representative agency. Director Weidling recommended interviewing firms so that the district hires a firm that understands the district's needs and that would meet the district's needs. The board directed Mr. Turnbull to move forward with doing research on firms and bring back more information.

D. Funding Navigator

Mr. Turnbull explained that he knows of this company that provides a grant writing and research service through his outside projects. The company has a flat rate of $4,500.00, they will review the district's funding needs, and they will provide a grant writer for the district. Director Jones discussed that the Ford Foundation provides a grant, to cover the cost of a grant writer for the district, which could be used for the $4,500.00 fee. The board discussed two grants that the district could be eligible for, and the benefits of having an outside company help the district apply for the potential grants. Discussion was held regarding the benefits of obtaining a 501c3 non-profit to assist the district. *Director Ownbey made a motion to proceed with the creation of the Friends of Mid Rogue Fire District Non-Profit. The motion was seconded by Director McGowan. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes, and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0.*

E. Oregon State Fire Marshal's Fire Department Identification (FDID) Update

Mr. Turnbull explained that he has reached out to the Oregon State Fire Marshals Office. The board discussed the status and the conflicts that the district is having obtaining the FDID. Mr. Turnbull expressed his interest in maintaining a good relationship with OSFM, and how he would like to proceed and do more research on how the district may move forward. The board gave Mr. Turnbull direction to move forward with determining what is needed from the district to obtain an FDID.

F. District Policy Updates

Mr. Turnbull explained that he has made the updates to the policy updates as requested. The only changes made to the district policies was adding the language of, "Fire Chief/District Executive Director". Director Benetti made a motion to approve the policy amendments to policy 2025-001, policy 2025-002, and policy 2025-004. Director McGowan seconded the motion. Upon roll call, Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0. Director Jones will create a resolution for next meeting.

G. Mid Rogue Purchasing Cards Update

Director Weidling briefed the board of the ongoing issues of the district of obtaining debit cards, or purchasing cards for the district. After research, and meeting with Evergreen bank in addition to a conversation at US bank, Director Weidling discussed an option from US bank, that gives the district visa credit cards. The board discussed the benefits of moving all the district funds to another bank. This matter will come back at the next meeting when Director Weidling has more information.

8. New Business

A. Committee Reports:

Staffing: Director McGowan briefed the board on the need for a resolution for the district to become a PERS employer. Discussion was held on the district needing to move forward with an individual that has a background in Human Resources, or can bring the district to the next step forward. The board has stated that the current payroll company will be authorized to contact PERS on the district's behalf. Director McGowan and Director Weidling expressed their frustrations on the currently contracted payroll company. The board discussed the options of employer paid 6% or the employee pay the 6% PERS contribution. *Director Ownbey made a motion that the PERS is paid by employer pre-tax. The motion was seconded by Director McGowan. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes, and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0.*

Director Jones read resolution 2025-009 verbatim.

Director Ownbey made a motion to adopt and approve Resolution No. 2026-009; In the Matter of Participating in the PERS Employee Program. Director McGowan seconded the motion. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – yes, and Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 5-0.

Communication: Director Jones explained that the district has been approved for the .gov, and the email address have been changed. The website has also been updated with a .gov website address as well. Director Jones will export the old server email, to preserve the emails for retention purposes.

Policy and Procedure: Director Ownbey provided a draft policy for the board to review for employee vehicle uses. The board moved this item forward to the next scheduled meeting without objection.

Prevention: The fire levels have been placed on the website for the community to view.

Training: Nothing to report.

Vehicle Acquisition: Nothing to report.

9. Correspondence

None heard.

10. Additional Matters

Director Ownbey explained that he has concern as to opening another bank account for the district. He recommended reaching out to Grants Pass Chief Sanchez to see how he recommends moving forward with a purchasing card.

11. Adjournment

The board adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m. without objection.

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Kassie Austin, Recorder

MID ROGUE FIRE DISTRICT

2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

PREPARED FOR THE MRFD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

By Philip Turnbull
Executive Director

Adopted May 27, 2026

Executive Summary

The Mid Rogue Fire District (MRFD) is a newly established organization committed to stabilizing and improving fire protection and emergency services in Central Josephine County, Oregon. This Strategic Plan establishes a practical foundation for achieving that goal. As a newly formed district, MRFD is focused on clarifying its role, building public trust, and preparing long-term solutions grounded in service standards, financial planning, and community education.

This document is not the final public-facing plan. Rather, it serves as the initial step in a two-step process intended to guide the development of a broader long-term plan. It identifies the actions MRFD must complete in preparation for community presentation of the long-term plan and the pursuit of voter approval. Due it the inward facing nature of this plan, it adopts a concise format grounded in several assumptions regarding shared knowledge and prevailing Board consensus.

Vision and Mission

MRFD's vision is to be recognized as a trusted leader in fire and emergency services, providing exceptional service within central Josephine County with a focus on fiscal and civic responsibility.

MRFD's mission is to safeguard lives and property through quality service delivery, proactive education, innovative strategies, and collaborative partnerships.

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Public Introduction and Role Definition

Introduce MRFD, establishing an understanding of its mission and the specific public safety issues it was formed to address.

Goal 2: Long-Term Strategy Development

Formulate a clear, efficient, effective operational, administrative, and budgetary plan to address identified public safety concerns. This is in preparation for voter approval.

Goal 3: Community Engagement

Develop and implement a public education initiative designed to enhance community understanding of local fire protection issues and the proposed solutions offered through the long-range plan.

Strategic Priorities

Priorities (objectives) support and enable the Strategic Goals. All are critical and often overlap in purpose.

Priority 1: Short-Term Expenditure Allocations (2026–2027 Budget)

Guided by the development of a project management outline (Gantt chart), early financial commitment enables smooth, effective implementation of core operational and administrative processes. This will be critical for launching public education initiatives. These initiatives inform residents about local fire protection concerns and practical approaches to address them.

Priority 2: Public & Stakeholder Introduction & Education

A phased outreach initiative will educate residents and community leaders regarding MRFD's mission, scope, and the specific public safety concerns potential solutions.

- **Phase 1: Fire & Top-Level Governmental Leadership.** Site visits to establish initial partnerships with key stakeholders.
- **Phase 2: Government Departments, Businesses, and Civic Organizations.** Presentations and site visits will introduce MRFD and key elements of the long-

range strategic plan. These activities are designed to educate stakeholders and invite constructive feedback to enhance content and messaging.

- **Phase 3: Public Education.** A broad media and civic campaign designed to inform and empower the public, build trust, demonstrate transparency, and present proposed solutions — including costs and timelines.

Priority 3: Standards of Cover

A Standards of Cover (SOC) evaluation is a structured process that ensures a fire service can meet the community's risk profile through effective resource deployment. It is typically developed alongside a Community Risk Assessment (CRA). It further accomplishes this by establishing a framework for assessing and improving emergency response capabilities, in line with the types and scope of services (fire suppression, EMS, technical rescue, hazardous materials).

Steps include:

1. Conduct a Community Risk Assessment (CRA).

- Community profile: Population size, density, geographic distribution and mapping of infrastructure, transportation and natural features.
- Hazard identification: Classify risks (residential, commercial, industrial, wildland-urban interface) and critical infrastructure.
- Historical incident data: Analyze types, frequencies, outcomes, and trends to identify high-risk areas and time frames.

2. Establish response time objectives using current performance as a baseline.

- Set specific, measurable response time goals for different incident types.
- Break down components: call processing, turnout, travel, and on-scene time by resource.

3. Continuous Monitoring and Review.

- Regularly update SOC documents with new data and changing community needs.

4. Stakeholder Engagement.

- Involve community leaders, emergency management partners, and agency staff in the process.
- Ensure transparency and community buy-in for the SOC's credibility.

Priority 4: Rural Metro Fire Long-Term Contract

MRFD signed an agreement with Rural Metro Fire in 2025, establishing it as the district's sole provider of emergency response and fire protection. This agreement was necessary due to MRFD's lack of service delivery capabilities, and also due to Rural Metro Fire's long history of community service and compliance with all measurable standards.

Section 1.c of that agreement outlines both parties intent to negotiate a "Replacement Agreement". Further, establishing a clearly defined long-term relationship with Rural Metro Fire is necessary for development of the long-term strategic plan, because it will provide a mechanism for MRFD to:

- Incorporate updated service standards (see Standards of Cover).
- Provide solutions to existing and emerging equity and public safety concerns.
- Establish clear accountability for costs and timelines.

Priority 5: Pro-Forma Budget

A pro-forma budget estimates future revenues and expenses. It must run concurrently with the Rural Metro Fire Replacement Agreement and the Standards of Cover exercise, all feeding into in the long-range strategic plan.

Priority 6: MRFD Position Platform

A Position Platform supplements the Strategic Plan by addressing key issues that would benefit from formal public examinations.

Topics include:

- Fairness and implications of privately funded fire protection, with particular attention to the issue that 30% of property owners do not pay for Rural Metro Fire services or otherwise contribute to community fire protection efforts.
- An analysis of community risk, with consideration given to the urban-wildland interface characteristics of Southern Oregon.
- Addressing public confusion regarding the relationships between MRFD, Rural Metro Fire, local fire departments, and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

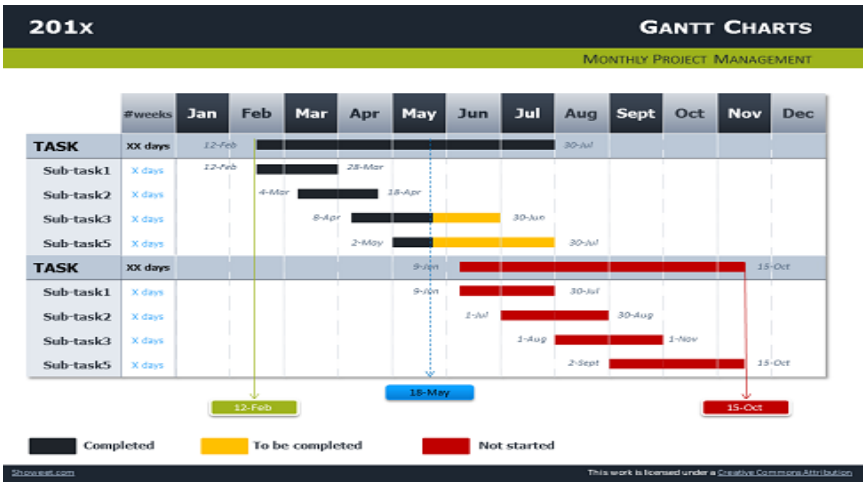
Priority 7: Formal Strategic Long-term Plan (Public-Facing)

The Long-Term Strategic Plan will guide MRFD's growth, resource allocation, and decision-making over multiple years. It will outline goals, priorities, benchmarks, and accountability measures to ensure consistent, high-quality service as community needs evolve. It is intended that it will serve as the foundation for a ballot tax measure.

Implementation Timeline

A GANTT Chart will be employed to transform the goals and objectives designated priorities into actionable items, facilitate assignment tracking, and establish scheduling priorities. This visual project management tool delineates tasks, timelines, and dependencies using a clear, horizontal bar layout. By specifying start and end dates for each task, a GANTT Chart allows stakeholders to observe workflow and detect potential bottlenecks or overlaps.

Sample Chart



Summary

This document presents the MRFD Strategic Plan and Position Platform, establishing a framework for developing long-term objectives, setting priorities, and defining accountability standards. It also outlines the structure for task organization, progress monitoring, and workflow management.

MID ROGUE FIRE DISTRICT **2026 STRATEGIC PLAN - JUNE**

Planed Duration | Actual Start | Complete

	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	June wk 1	June wk 2	June wk 3	June wk 4	July wk 1	July wk 2
	ADMIN							
1	District Funding Options Research	Engaging Counsel						
2	OSFM FDID	In conversation						
3	Office Remodel	$9,100						
4	Form Friends of MRFD	Formed but not yet functional		Recruitment and Organizational meeting to be scheduled				
5	Public Relations Firm Research	United Strategies & Consulting				Reffered by Colin Martin		
6	Grants Funding	Funding Navigator		Recommend preping for 2027 - 3 Registrations				
	POSITION PAPER							
6	Part 1: MRFD Vs RMF Roll Definitions	Funding options (see #1 above)						
7	Part 2: 30% Non-Contributers Issue							
	STANDARDS OF COVER							
8	Community Risk Assessment	Jo Co Emergency Mgmnt						
9	Response Standards	RMF Records						
10	Training & Qualification Standrds							
11	App & Equipment Standards							
	STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS							
12	Kelcie Easter	County Emergency Manager						
13	Sheriff Daniels							
14	Mike Mclaughlin							
15	Ron Smith							
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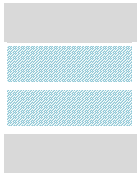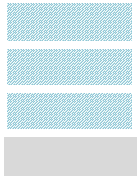
July wk 3