

Mid Rogue Fire District Board Meeting: July 27, 2026

5:30 p.m.

Live Streamed at www.youtube.com/@MidRogueFD

Rural Fire Protection District Attendance:

Directors Present: Tom McGowan, Randy Benetti Sr., Ralph Weidling, Mark Jones

Members Absent: Vinny Ownbey - excused

Recorder: Kassie Austin

1. Call to Order

- a. The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m.
- b. The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Agenda

The board reviewed today's agenda items. *Director McGowan made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. 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 Minutes – June 8, 2026 and July 13, 2026

Director Benetti made a motion to approve the minutes as written on June 8, 2026. 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. Director Benetti made a motion to approve the minutes as written on July 13, 2026. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call, Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti - yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones - yes. Motion carried 4-0.

4. Secretary/Treasurers Report

Director Weidling reported that the total District funds of \$1,497,722.79, including funds held in the district's checking, P-card, payroll, savings, and LGIP accounts. A correction was noted regarding the P-card and payroll account balances, which had been transposed on the report. The P-card account should reflect approximately \$30,000.00 and the payroll account approximately \$1,000.00.

5. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Phil Turnbull provided updates on several ongoing District projects and administrative matters. The letter regarding the Rogue River properties was completed and sent, limited to the ten identified properties. Work continues on implementation of the District's financial policies and procedures. Mr. Turnbull intends to coordinate with the district accountant and Treasurer to establish appropriate responsibilities and reduce the Treasurer's day-to-day administrative workload while maintaining appropriate oversight. The board discussed the district's Verizon account and the Executive Director's district-issued phone. Because district business conducted on a personal device may be subject to public records requirements, continued separation of personal and District devices was discussed. Additional options will be explored. Regarding district funding options, Mr. Turnbull reported that research into expanded out-of-district billing has reached a stopping point under current statutory limitations. The item will be removed from the active project list unless circumstances or applicable law change. Research regarding intergovernmental agreements, mergers, and consolidations will remain ongoing, although no immediate action is contemplated.

Mr. Turnbull provided an update regarding the district's FDID and coordination with the State Fire Marshal's Office. Work is continuing on the necessary agreement and required training to allow the Executive Director to fulfill applicable statutory fire chief responsibilities and move forward with fire investigation and code enforcement arrangements.

The board discussed public affairs firm research. The presentation heard during the meeting was the second of three anticipated presentations. Sue Densmore was identified as the anticipated third presenter. The board expressed interest in making a selection as soon as practical following the third presentation, provided pricing information from each firm is available for comparison.

Mr. Turnbull provided an update regarding development of the district's Standards of Cover. Primary components will include a community risk assessment, response standards, training and qualification standards, and apparatus and equipment standards. The board also discussed incorporating community growth, future station locations, response-time performance, and future property needs into the planning process. A workshop will be scheduled to further develop the framework.

Stakeholder outreach remains ongoing, including communication with area fire chiefs, emergency management, dispatch, and other public safety partners. The district is also working to transition website and social media responsibilities to administrative staff.

Mr. Turnbull reported that the district's first public presentation is scheduled for August 5, 2026. The presentation is intended to introduce the district and provide general information regarding its current structure and long-term funding needs. Funding Navigator, position papers, and development of a Friends of Mid Rogue group remain on hold pending further progress on the district's funding and communications strategy.

6. Liz Loomis Public Affairs Presentation

Liz Loomis of Liz Loomis Public Affairs provided a presentation regarding strategic communications, public relations, and ballot measure services. Ms. Loomis reviewed her firm's experience working with local governments and fire/EMS agencies and discussed the firm's approach to developing communication strategies. She explained that the firm's work generally occurs in three phases: information gathering and assessment, development of messaging and a communications plan, and implementation of the approved plan. The presentation included discussion of paid, earned, shared, and owned media; public outreach; social media; website communications; internal communications; spokesperson and media training; and crisis communications. Ms. Loomis discussed the importance of preparing for potential communication challenges associated with transitioning from the district's current funding and service-delivery structure to a permanent tax base or other future public funding model.

7. Public Comment

Fred Cohen, Merlin, discussed confusion regarding the Rural Metro billing system, and asked what authority the Mid Rogue Fire District has over the way that Rural Metro bills their subscribers.

8. Old Business

a. P-card Update

The board discussed monthly spending limits for District purchasing cards, which are expected to arrive today. Director McGowan made a motion setting the Executive Director's monthly spending limit at \$10,000.00. The motion died due to a lack of a second. Discussion was held for the purpose of the p-cards. It was determined that the Executive Director would use his for things such as fuel, and vehicle maintenance, along with other miscellaneous expenditures. The office staff would use the p-card for supplies, and other small purchases.

Director Benetti made a motion to establish a \$2,500.00 monthly spending limit for the Executive Director's P-card. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0.

Director Weidling made a motion to establish a \$1,000.00 monthly spending limit for the Administrative Assistant's P-card. The motion was seconded by Director Benetti. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0

b. Payroll and Accounting Update

Director Jones received an update regarding implementation of payroll through QuickBooks. Direct deposit remains pending while banking verification issues are resolved. The District accountant recommended changing the District's payroll schedule to a biweekly schedule to better accommodate PERS, Social Security, and payroll processing requirements.

Director McGowan made a motion to change the District payroll to a biweekly payroll schedule totaling 26 pay periods a year. Director Benetti seconded the motion. *Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

The board also discussed the Administrative Assistant's vacation accrual provisions. The employment agreement provides for 20 hours of annual vacation/PTO accrual but did not specify a maximum accrual. *Director Weidling made a motion to establish a maximum vacation accrual equal to 18 months of accrual for the Administrative Assistant. The motion was seconded by Director Benetti. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

The board was also advised that the HSA provision contained in the Executive Director's employment agreement cannot currently be utilized because the Executive Director is not enrolled in a qualifying District-provided health plan. The provision will need to be addressed accordingly.

c. Administrative Staff Bank Account Viewing Access

The board discussed the need for administrative staff to have view only access to the district's bank accounts so that staff can provide banking information to the board at future meetings. *Director Benetti made a motion to authorize district administrative staff view only access to the district bank accounts. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

d. Policy FIN-002; Financial Reporting Policy

The board reviewed the amended Financial Reporting Policy under the District's new policy-numbering structure. *Director Benetti made a motion to approve policy FIN-002, under the new policy naming structure. 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.*

e. Resolution 2026-012

Director Jones read the resolution verbatim. *Director McGowan made a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-012. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

9. New Business

a. Committee Reports

Staffing: Nothing to report.

Training: Nothing to report

Communications: The district continues transitioning website, agenda, minutes, and social media responsibilities to administrative staff. The board discussed using the District's Facebook page to share incident and fire information when appropriate.

Policy: The board needs to develop formal PTO and sick leave policies. The policies will address accrual requirements and whether unused sick leave is paid out or forfeited upon separation from employment. The Policy Committee will develop draft policies for future board consideration. Additional financial policies will also need to be developed.

Prevention: An initial meeting was held with Illinois Valley Fire District representatives. Additional follow-up information is pending.

Vehicle Acquisition: Nothing to report.

Standards of Coverage: Nothing to report.

b. Renaming Existing Board Policies

The board discussed implementing the previously approved policy-numbering structure, using category identifiers such as financial and administrative designations. *Director Benetti made a motion to authorize administrative staff to renumber existing board-adopted policies into the new policy structure without returning each policy individually to the board, provided no policy language is changed. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call; Director McGowan – yes, Director Benetti – yes, Director Weidling – yes, Director Ownbey – excused, Director Jones – yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

c. 2nd Quarter Rural Metro Statistics

Rural Metro's Chief Nelson presented the quarterly incident report and discussed call activity during the reporting period. The board requested that future reports clearly identify the reporting quarter and, where possible, provide additional information regarding mutual aid given and received, comparative call volume, and calls involving neighboring jurisdictions. The report reflected approximately 706 incidents during the second quarter of 2026, approximately 32 fewer incidents than the same quarter of the prior year. The board also discussed medical responses during periods when ambulance resources are unavailable and the importance of tracking mutual aid and cross-jurisdictional responses as the District develops future service standards.

10. Correspondence

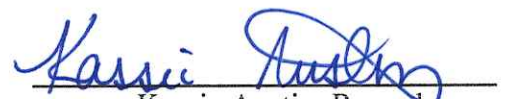
The board reviewed routine District statements and legal expenses. The District also received a public records request seeking a fire report. The requester was advised that Mid Rogue Fire District was not the custodian of the requested record and was directed to the appropriate agency.

11. Additional Matters from the Board

The board discussed whether an outside human resources consultant should review District personnel policies for compliance with current Oregon employment requirements. It was noted that the District may already have access to HR consulting resources through SDAO/HR Answers. Staff will investigate available services before pursuing an outside consultant.

12. Adjournment

The board adjourned the meeting at 7:23 p.m. without objection.


Kassie Austin, Recorder