

Mid Rogue Fire District Board Meeting: September 14, 2026

5:30 p.m. – Merlin Park Community Center

Live Streamed at www.youtube.com/@MidRogueFD

Rural Fire Protection District Attendance:

Directors Present: Randy Benetti Sr., Ralph Weidling, Mark Jones; Vincent Ownbey

Members Absent: Tom McGowan (Excused)

Staff Present: Executive Director Phil Turnbull; Administrative Assistant Kassie Austin

Recorder: Kassie Austin

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum was established.

The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of Agenda

Director Weidling made a motion to approve the September 14, 2026 agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Benetti. Upon roll call: Director McGowan – excused; Director Benetti – Yes; Director Weidling – Yes; Director Ownbey – excused/not yet present; Director Jones – Yes. Motion carried 3-0.

3. Approval of Minutes

Director Benetti made a motion to approve the August 10 meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call: Director McGowan – excused; Director Benetti – Yes; Director Weidling – Yes; Director Ownbey – excused/not yet present; Director Jones – Yes. Motion carried 3-0.

4. Secretary/Treasurers Report

The Secretary/Treasurer reported \$192,284.11 in checking, \$255.03 in savings, \$72,609 in the PERS account, and \$29,601.49 in the P-card account. The Local Government Investment Pool balance was \$1,493,720.14, excluding the most recent accrued interest. With estimated accrued interest, the LGIP balance was expected to be approximately \$1.499 million.

The board discussed moving the Treasurer's Report to the first meeting of each month to cover the prior month's activity. Staff will continue assisting the Treasurer with financial reporting and receipt reconciliation. The board also discussed timely completion of required year-end reporting.

Director Ownbey arrived during this agenda item.

5. United Strategies Report

Isis Thornton-Saunders presented the proposed public education and communications strategy. Phase One, anticipated to begin in October and continue through December, will focus on who Mid Rogue Fire District is, what services it provides, its history, and why the district matters. The board emphasized that messaging should describe the district as an all-risk, all-hazard fire district and include structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, rescue, hazardous materials response, wildland fire, and other emergency services.

Phase Two, beginning in January, will focus on long-term funding, longevity, and sustainability. Any future ballot-measure campaigning would be handled separately from the district through a political action committee. Proposed outreach methods include radio, direct mail, social media, print publications, community events, town halls, and earned media. Every Door Direct Mail was discussed as a potential option. Ms. Thornton-Saunders will revise the messaging and bring a Phase One budget to the next meeting. The anticipated launch date is October 1.

The board also discussed the need for clear messaging regarding subscribers and non-subscribers and the importance of preparing an answer regarding district operations if a future funding measure is unsuccessful.

6. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Phil Turnbull reviewed current district projects, including the Standards of Coverage, preparation for future Rural Metro negotiations, development of a pro forma budget, and the future composition of a Rural Metro negotiating team. Formation and composition of the negotiating team will be placed on the next agenda.

A written request has been submitted to Rural Metro for additional data and timelines. Staff has also contacted SDAO for guidance regarding the negotiation process. Standards of Coverage work continues on comparable districts, baseline service, certifications and qualifications, minimum service standards, and response data. The United Strategies contract has been executed. Staff continues developing a community-group contact database and expanding social media and public outreach.

The Murphy Boundary Project remains in progress. Eighty-two properties were identified for review, and County Legal is adjusting the map for resubmittal.

The board received an update regarding Friends of Mid Rogue Fire District. Charlie Phoenix has volunteered to manage the organization and is expected to present at the next meeting. Without objection, the board supported use of the district's Maltese-style logo provided the organization is clearly identified as Friends of Mid Rogue Fire District. Staff will follow up regarding physical-address requirements.

Potential future fire-response reimbursement was discussed. The Fielder Mountain Fire did not meet the minimum reimbursement threshold. The district is proceeding with Fire Chiefs Association membership and participation in the two-county mutual aid agreement. Staff will continue assisting with financial reporting and monitoring countywide first-responder radio infrastructure discussions.

7. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

8. New Business

a. Committee Reports

Prevention: The committee supported continued staff work regarding homeowner insurance and fire-prevention education. Staff and committee members will coordinate information for the district website, social media, and future community presentations.

Standards of Coverage: Work continues as discussed under the Executive Director Report.

b. Rural Metro Rate Increase Proposal

Rural Metro Operations Chief Austin presented the proposed rate increase on behalf of Chief Nelson. Rural Metro cited increased operating costs, employee recruitment and retention, staffing, fleet maintenance, and aging apparatus as factors supporting the proposed rate schedule. The rate schedule is proposed to be enforced over the next three years ending with \$2.29 per thousand assessed. *Director Benetti made a motion to approve the Rural Metro rate schedule as presented. The motion was seconded by Director Ownbey. Upon roll call: Director McGowan – excused; Director Benetti – Yes; Director Weidling – Yes; Director Ownbey – Yes; Director Jones – Yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

c. Pro Forma Budget Committee Subcommittee

The board discussed forming a pro forma budget subcommittee using existing Budget Committee members, with a goal of approximately three to five members. *Director Ownbey made a motion to approve formation of the Pro Forma Budget Subcommittee. The motion was seconded by Director Weidling. Upon roll call: Director McGowan – excused; Director Benetti – Yes; Director Weidling – Yes; Director Ownbey – Yes; Director Jones – Yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

d. Administrative Assistant Hours

The board discussed the increased administrative workload and a request to increase the Administrative Assistant position to 32 hours per week. The board requested additional information regarding benefits and budget implications before making a permanent change. *Director Weidling to increase the Administrative Assistant's authorized hours to 116 hours per month pending additional research regarding the requirements and costs associated with increasing the position to 32 hours per week. The motion was seconded by Director Ownbey. Upon roll call: Director McGowan – excused; Director Benetti – Yes; Director Weidling – Yes; Director Ownbey – Yes; Director Jones – Yes. Motion carried 4-0.*

Staff will obtain additional information regarding benefit and employment requirements.

e. Administrative Assistant Time Card Approval

Without objection, the board authorized the Executive Director to approve the Administrative Assistant's timecards for submission to payroll.

f. Purchase Receipts/Reimbursements

The board reviewed outstanding receipts and reimbursements and discussed procedures for forwarding receipts and maintaining supporting documentation for district expenditures. Additional reimbursement documentation will be provided at the next meeting.

g. Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association Dues

Without objection, the board authorized payment of the applicable Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association membership dues.

h. Dropbox Additional License

The board discussed providing United Strategies with controlled access to district files. Dropbox was preferred because permissions can be limited to appropriate folders and documents. Without objection, the board authorized an additional Dropbox license for United Strategies at approximately \$12 per month for the period access is required.

i. Employee Health Insurance Reimbursement

The board revisited the Executive Director's employment agreement and the previously authorized \$3,000 annual benefit intended to assist with health-related out-of-pocket costs. Staff advised that the benefit could not be administered in the manner originally contemplated. The board expressed its intent to preserve the value of the \$3,000 annual commitment while ensuring it is administered appropriately. Staff will consult with the district's financial/payroll advisor and return with available options.

9. Correspondence

The board reviewed current bills and account statements, including legal expenses and P-card activity. The board discussed maintaining sufficient funds in the payroll account and using checks rather than the P-card for larger or unusual vehicle repair expenses when practical.

10. Additional Matters of the Board

The board discussed the upcoming fire district association training conference in Hood River, November 5-7, 2026. Additional information regarding registration costs, availability, and travel will be brought to the next meeting.

11. Adjournment

The board adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m. without objection.

Kassie Austin, Recorder

Item 5



Mid Rogue Fire District Volunteer Support Unit Proposal

**By Phil Turnbull
Executive Director**

08.25.26

Proposal: The creation of a Volunteer unit to provide Support & Liaison services, overseen by the Friends of Mid Rogue Fire District, with District oversight.

1. Purpose

Establish a District-sponsored, volunteer-staffed program to enhance incident response needs, structural and wildland, provide responder welfare, and inter-agency coordination during emergency and non-emergency operations within Josephine County. Provide the District participation in community events. As approved by District Fire Chief.

2. Program Overview

The concept includes complementary components:

A. District Operations Center

A small, mobile unit functioning as an early stage EOC with a narrow focus. The DOC will support District Responders and Cooperators. This will be accomplished by improving interagency communication and resource coordination until the Incident Commander directs otherwise. The DOC is not intended to be a point of public contact. It would be staffed primarily by volunteers with previous emergency response experience. The staffing will be determined by the DOC manager in communication with the District Chief.

DOC Functions include:

- Central clearing point for incoming agencies and resource offers with an emphasis on agencies not routinely incorporated into unified command. This could include utilities, public works, tow companies, NGOs, Sheriff, S&R and other support agencies.
- As needed, the DOC will be staffed with a coordinator, Operations Chief, Planning Chief, PIO, Liaison Officer, Logistics Chief and support personnel. May utilize Staging Area Managers.
- Serve as a consistent centralized intel point for items like communications plans, official evacuation status, and current make-up of the command structure.
- Providing responder agencies with key contact links and offer message relay services in the interest of reducing redundancy and communication overload for incident management.

B. Field Support

Provides on scene logistical and responder welfare support during escalating initial and extended attack incidents. This is a standard fire department support activity.

Functions could include:

- Obtaining tables, chairs, shade awnings, and comfort shelter for field command/staging areas, offering coffee, water, electrolyte beverages, and energy snacks.
- Provide initial attack logistical support, including cold zone shuttle services, general errands, maps and coordination of meals prepared by local vendors as appropriate.
- Can also be available as support for training events and planned community activities.
- Works with Prevention Tech to support various functions such as: Children Care Fair, Merlin Parade, Jo Co Airport Day, GP Christmas Parade, Toys for Tots, home safety assessments and other such events..

C. Equipment & Support Function

To ensure safety, consistency, and liability protection. This unit enhances first responder safety under the direction the Incident Commander or delegate.

- District may provide a dedicated support vehicle, owned, maintained, and insured by the District, or operate vehicles for another organization under an MOU as an additional named insured. This model is used nationwide and avoids the complications of nonprofit owned emergency vehicles.
- Friends of Mid Rogue Fire District may raise supplemental funds for comfort items, enhancements, and volunteer supplies

- District support is limited to mission specific expenses and assets directly tied to District operations
- Training, qualifications and PPE standards will be developed under the direction of the Fire Chief or designee. A volunteer agreement will be used. A background check will be made.

D. Governance & Coordination

- Programs sponsored by Mid Rogue Fire District
- Operational guidelines approved by the Fire Chief and or Executive Director
- Day to day volunteer coordination handled by Friends leadership
- DOC will operate through county, state and regional MOUs and guidelines.

BOARD PROGRESS REPORT - 09/14/2026

		Planned Duration	Actual Start / In Play	Planned Duration	Complete								
DESCRIPTION		NOTES	Sept wk 2	Sept wk 3	Sept wk 4	Oct wk 1	Oct wk 2	Oct wk 3	Oct wk 4	Nov wk 1	Nov wk 2	Nov wk 3	Nov wk 4
1	Standards of Cover												
	Deliverables Packet	for Negotiating Team											
	RMF Baseline Survey	Awaiting Zone Response Time Data											
	Minimum Standards - General	RVFCA Standards Review in Progress											
	Apparatus/Equip/Facilities/Mech Quals												
	Comps	Validating											
	FF Certs & Quals												
1	Service Contract Negotiations												
	Negotiation Team Packet												
	Pro-Forma Budget Committee	Recruiting											
	SDAO Advisory Services												
	RMF Negotiations	Dates TBD											
1	United Strategies												
	RMF Membership Database	Request made											
	Community Group Database												
	Endorsement / OpEd Group Database												
1	Public Education (Phase 1)												
	Media (<i>all forms</i>)	See United Strategies Presentation											
	Public Presentations	Scheduling											
	Kawanis	20-Oct											
	My Community Connection Party	24-Oct											
	Stakeholder Visits	<i>starting with RMF</i>											
	Fireside Chats	TBD											
2	Friends of MRFD												
	Volunteer Manager												
	Worker's Comp	Included in Existing Policy											
MISC													
	Mutual Aid Agreement	17-Nov											
	Homeowner Insurance Project	Cheryl Johnson											
	Updated Strategic Plan	Covers Through June 30, 2027											
1	OSFM FDID												
	Statutory Agreement Made / FDID Request	Holding											
TASKS ON HOLD													
7251 RADIO ID / VIN: 19-23820			100185										