Jackson County Fire District 1

Minutes – Board of Directors Regular Session
Meeting of May 20, 2026 at 7:30am

CALL TO ORDER:
The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by President, John Ellis.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGENCE

ROLL CALL:
Craig Berry, Jim Stearns, John Ellis, and John Foster, present. Randy Cort absent.
Also in attendance: Mike Hammond, Jenna Kurzyniec, Jeni Darr and guests Tom Zimmer, Kenny Herinckx, Grace Howell, Brian Mortensen, Mike Gavlik, Jarret Estremado and Lane Augustson.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: Group discussed to start informal pre-board check-ins with the union beginning next month (Tuesday morning); attendees to include board president, a union representative, the chief, and a rotating board member.

MINUTES:
-***Safety Committee Minutes of April 14, 2026*** – Jim Stearns made a motion to accept the minutes, John Foster 2nd. All in favor, motion passed.
-***Regular BOD session of April 8, 2026*** – Discussion of Seasonal staffing: three seasonal firefighter offers accepted; expected start first week of July for a three-month period (timed for heavier Sept/Oct fire activity). John Foster made a motion to accept the minutes, Jim Stearns 2nd. All in favor, motion passed.

FINANCE:
Financial report reviewed. CWRR grant expected to close out this month with final invoice paid; budget tracking well with no major unanticipated expenses. Jim Stearns made a motion to accept the finance report of April 2026, John Foster 2nd. Roll call vote: Craig Berry-yes, Jim Stearns-yes, John Ellis- yes, John Foster-yes. Motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE: Union correspondence (Local 3513): new union president, Lane Augustson, noted; letter intended to address public hard feelings from the prior meeting and to reaffirm the union's commitment to respectful, professional public interactions on scenes and during emergencies

OLD BUSINESS:
-***Solar Grant***- Request for proposal posted. Onsite held with prospective bidders following today's board meeting; bids close June 5; proposals to be reviewed at the next board meeting; public hearing July 8 with final decisions anticipated at the July meeting.

-***Board Meeting Times*** – Board meeting time discussion was deferred to the next meeting to allow absent director Randy Cort to participate; members were invited to submit any input ahead of time.

NEW BUSINESS:
-***Financial Assistance Policy*** – (ambulance bill forgiveness) policy: Chief presented a revised policy (based on a Systems Design sample) to create objective guidelines tied to federal poverty thresholds and required documentation. Jim Stearns made a motion to adopt the financial assistance policy for a 12-month trial; chief to report each approved assistance instance to the board. Roll call vote: Craig Berry-yes, Jim Stearns-yes, John Ellis- yes, John Foster-yes. Motion passed.

-***Rick Brewster CPA Engagement Letter***- Annual audit engagement approved CPA Brewster at $18,900, plus $2,000 to audit the solar contract. Energy Trust grant opportunity mentioned that may help cover small incidentals (including audit-related costs) tied to the prior program. Jim Stearns made a motion to accept engagement letter, Craig Berry 2nd. Roll call vote: Craig Berry-yes, Jim Stearns-yes, John Ellis- yes, John Foster-yes. Motion passed.

-Non-Bargaining Unit Salaries and Benefits for FY2026-27- non-bargaining unit salary/benefit proposals: Admin staff conducted comparables; one role cited average starting around $80k and max around $90k; requested 20% increase to close part of a gap to comparables. Board agreed not to negotiate in public and to use a small-group process. Craig Berry made a motion to have two board members to meet with non-represented staff to work out a compensation/benefit package, John Foster 2nd. All in favor, motion passed. Volunteers selected as Craig Berry and the board president, John Ellis; Jenna to coordinate scheduling.

-Fire Chief Contract- Chief shared intention to retire in July 2026 and then work back under contract July–December 2026 to support recruitment/transition. Draft contract discussed. Board president, John Ellis and Jim Stearns to meet with the chief to refine terms and return with a proposed contract. Group discussed executive recruitment services (SDAO) quoted at $6,000 (district budgeted $10,000). Board discussed hybrid vs full SDAO approach, balancing cost savings, workload, and independence/separation of board members from the process. John Ellis made a motion for Jim Stearns to contact Shanta Carter at SDAO and coordinate a recruitment process with an appropriate level of board involvement, John Foster 2nd. All in favor, motion passed.

CHIEF COMMENTS: Chief Hammond presented his monthly report to the board. Chief received survey results and will work with captains to address themes; likely outcomes include a training policy and a communications improvement plan; union to be consulted on resulting policies. Board requested survey content be included in the chief's report; discussion raised confidentiality concerns due to named comments; chief offered board members the ability to review it in his office rather than broad distribution. District also received Oregon State Fire Marshal wildfire season grant for $35,000. Rescue boat training completed with multiple partners (including FD4 Shady Cove, Grants Pass Fire & Rescue, and Sheriff's Department) with classroom and river session. IRS letter received confirming official district name change; next steps include updating banks and other finance-related entities.

MONTHLY REPORTS:
Monthly captain's reports were reviewed. John Foster made a motion to approve the monthly reports as presented, Jim Stearns 2nd. All in favor, motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: City council liaison Grace Howell introduced herself and shared the city is also working on police pay-scale comparables.

ITEMS THAT CAME UP AFTER AGENDA POSTED: Jim Stearns mentioned Rooster Crow event next month: old fire engine to participate in parade; board members invited to ride. On July 3 is Woodville Museum 40th anniversary event; fire engine to attend; Cascade Fire Supply donated a brand-new (but outdated) set of turnouts for kids to safely dress up for photos.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:
Regular session closed at 8:27 a.m. for Executive Session
Regular session reopened at 8:45 a.m.

SUGGESTED FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Board meeting time discussion, Chief hiring process, Chief performance review (executive session).

ADJORNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 8:47 a.m. by Craig Berry, 2nd by John Foster. Motion passed.

Jenna Kurzyniec
Clerk to the Board

Craig Berry
Secretary/Treasurer - Board of Directors