Jackson County Fire District 1

Minutes – Board of Directors Regular Session
Meeting of October 14, 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:
John Foster, Randy Cort, John Ellis, Jim Stearns, Craig Berry, present.
Also in attendance: Mike Hammond, Jenna Kurzyniec, Jeni Darr and guests Niki Murphy, Tom Zimmer, Kenny Herinckx, Grace Howell, Brian Mortensen, Mike Gavlik, Lane Augustson, Austin Champion, Casey Wilson and Kelsey Scott.

WARDS CREEK RESTORATION:
Nikki Murphy requested the districts support for Wards Creek Restoration Initiative (WCRI) to apply for the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) Round 4 on behalf of Jackson County Fire District No. 1. The proposed $1.3 million project would fund fuels reduction, community wildfire preparedness, education, and potential communications equipment improvements.
Key points included:
-WCRI's previous CWDG application scored 87%, and the organization plans to strengthen its Round 4 proposal using reviewer feedback.
-The district would not be required to provide matching funds or financial assistance.
-More than $600,000 of the grant would support fuels reduction work, with approximately $61,000 allocated for district administrative activities. Some concern was expressed about the staff time required.
-The project would continue existing vegetation management and creek restoration efforts through 2028, including work required by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.
-WCRI plans to expand wildfire preparedness education, focusing on evacuation readiness, water conservation, defensible space, and emergency response expectations.
-Outreach efforts have already included 2,000 flyers, more than 100 event participants, and multiple home fire-assessment requests.
-The grant may also fund communications equipment to improve coordination among emergency responders.
-The project area is expected to affect approximately 65–68 property owners.
Following discussion, the Board approved WCRI's request to submit the grant application, and the Fire Chief offered to provide a letter of support if needed.

SAVAGE CREEK ROAD ANNEXATION:
-Chief Hammond described continuing work to annex roughly 15–20 addresses on Savage Creek Road, in the part extending from Jackson County into Josephine County. Mid-Rogue Fire District supports the district in taking the area because its response times are quicker; the addresses were not included when Mid-Rogue was established.
-Next step is a survey, preliminarily estimated at $5,000–$7,000, requiring quotes from three survey companies. The chief expects the process could take about a year and said legal work on a resolution may depend on the survey. Surveying would be charged to contract services and legal work to legal and labor; both lines may exceed budget, although materials and services overall were tracking well. The work was not identified during the budget process.
-The board discussed whether the eventual revenue would justify the cost. The chief did not have a firm estimate, but said existing fire-protection contracts for structured properties are generally $700–$1,000 each and that the total could be more than an initial rough estimate of $6,000–$7,000 annually. Most of the listed properties have structures; perhaps four or five do not. Josephine County is expected to collect the tax and transfer it to the district.
-Property owners can initially choose whether to annex. The chief said a later building permit or sale would require annexation. The notice had already been mailed; the chief recalled one inquiry and no negative feedback. Board members agreed to continue the process, while raising a concern that the district should not spend more than it can reasonably recoup.

GOOD OF THE ORDER: John Foster thanked Jim Stearns for the SDAO hiring process.

MINUTES:

-Safety Committee Minutes of September 8, 2026 – Randy Cort made a motion to accept the safety committee minutes, John Foster 2nd, all in favor, motion passed.

-Regular BOD session of September 9, 2026 – John Foster made a motion to accept the minutes, Randy Cort 2nd. All in favor, except Craig Berry voting no, motion passed.

-Special BOD Meeting of September 23, 2026 – Randy Cort made a motion to accept the minutes, Craig Berry 2nd, all in favor, motion passed.

-Special BOD Meeting of September 24, 2026 – Randy Cort made a motion to accept the minutes, John Foster 2nd. All in favor, except Craig Berry voting no, motion passed.

FINANCE:

Chief Hammond stated overtime was about 5% behind its usual pace, despite increased staffing and responses to fires both in the district and elsewhere. No unanticipated expenses were reported, and the overall budget was described as tracking well. The district has installed five Starlink units—on two ambulances and three fire engines—to address unreliable cell service during incidents. The chief said some other services may be discontinued and units can be paused outside fire season; the board estimated the off-season monthly cost at roughly $450–$500, without settling on a final figure. SDAO provided about $2,500 toward installation through work Jenna put together. The chief reported approximately $203,000 in GEMT funding for 2025 and $54,000 in fees, leaving roughly $150,000. GEMT has been funded again for 2026, but the chief described the program as embattled and said continued funding after that would not be surprising to lose. Craig Berry made a motion to accept the finance report of September 2026, Randy Cort 2nd. Roll call vote: Craig Berry-yes, Jim Stearns-yes, John Ellis- yes, John Foster-yes, Randy Cort-yes. Motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

OLD BUSINESS:

-Chief Recruitment Process- Jim Stearns said the chief recruitment process went well and praised SDAO's work. Background and medical checks were identified as remaining steps, though Jim was unsure whether they had been completed.

-Solar Grant - Solar project update: a 30% grant distribution request was received. Craig Berry stated Installation is expected to be completed by March. The panels and racking are American-made; inverters and batteries involve a global supply chain.

CHIEF COMMENTS: Chief Hammond presented his monthly report. Captain testing is scheduled for November 5, with four internal applicants and six outside evaluators assessing interviews and scenarios. The chief said the list was kept internal because the district had four candidates; the practice is to go outside only if there are fewer than three. The chief anticipated one captain opening next year but could not forecast beyond that. Firefighter testing is set for December 3 and had recently been advertised. With civil service approval, the current hiring list will be terminated so the incoming chief starts with a new hiring list and promotion list. The chief also thanked Jackson County Fire District 3 for leading grant-funded, expanded firefighter physicals that included cancer screenings and stress testing.

Chief also informed the board of directors up the upcoming OFDDA conference was announced for November 5–7 The chief said the district would cover the conference and hotel costs for any board members who choose to attend.

MONTHLY REPORTS: Monthly Captain's reports were reviewed. John Foster made a motion to approve the monthly reports, Randy Cort 2nd. All in favor, motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Tom Zimmer also thanked Jim Stearns and the chief for the SDAO-supported recruitment work and for arranging a fire-chiefs gathering ahead of the meet-and-greet

ITEMS THAT CAME UP AFTER AGENDA POSTED: None

SUGGESTED FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Following up with the City of Rogue River on whether public works, police, and fire can communicate across their radio systems.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 8:19 a.m. by Craig Berry, 2nd by Randy Cort. Motion passed.

Jenna K

Jenna Kurzyniec
Clerk to the Board

Craig Berry
Secretary/Treasurer - Board of Directors

Randy Cort / Vice president