

Jackson County Fire District 1

Minutes – Board of Directors Organizational Review Workshop
Meeting of March 26, 2026 at 4:00pm



CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m. by President John Ellis.

ATTENDANCE:

Craig Berry, Jim Stearns, John Ellis, Randy Cort and John Foster. Also in attendance Mike Hammond, Jenna Kurzyniec, Jeni Darr, Cameron Deupree, Tom Reynolds, Jarret Estremado, Lane Augustson and Kaci Carder.

Organizational Review Workshop: The Organizational Review Workshop was convened to review progress on prior SDAO-driven organizational recommendations, assess FY25 organizational projects, and identify key issues and next steps related to staffing, training, safety, and retention.

Key Accomplishments: The District has made substantial progress on core governance, planning, and risk-reduction initiatives:

- Governance & Planning: Board policy review completed; strategic plan updated last year; mission statement reaffirmed with no changes; Standard of Cover updated.
- Financial Sustainability: Five-year financial plan completed, including creation of an ending fund balance policy.
- Policies & Procedures: Transition to Lexipol completed, reducing approximately 175 policies by removing duplicates and outdated material. Ongoing structured review continues through safety committee meetings.
- Safety Program: Two of three components of a formal safety audit completed. Oregon OSHA walkthroughs, expanded quarterly inspections, and required safety committee training have improved compliance and safety culture.

Several items remain in progress, including verification that complaint procedures align with Oregon law and SDAO guidance, completion of the third safety audit component, and a full review of the harassment policy.

Staffing, Roles, and Retention: Retention emerged as the most critical unresolved issue. Union representatives reported the anticipated loss of approximately six personnel by year-end, representing a significant portion of the workforce. The board requested a defined action plan and trend analysis using exit interview data. While exit interviews have been requested, participation to date has been limited.

Discussions highlighted differing perspectives on staffing models, including lieutenant deployment and the single-role paramedic position. The board emphasized maintaining separation between organizational assessment and labor negotiations. There was shared recognition that small-agency “pipeline” challenges and ambulance-heavy workloads affect retention, though anecdotal input suggests broader cultural, communication, and career-development factors may also be influencing departures.

Training, Career Development, and Safety: The District is meeting required annual fire and medical training standards through a designated training shift. However, it was voiced that there is no formal skill evaluation program, individual development planning, or structured career progression framework beyond minimum certification requirements.

Personnel raised concerns about internal barriers to task book access and completion, particularly for FF2, apparatus operations, and NWCG wildland qualifications. Leadership acknowledged regional training bottlenecks and ongoing efforts to expand access and standardization.

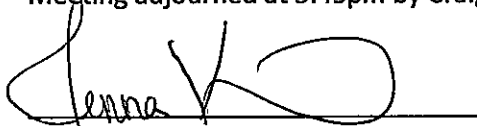
Safety-related feedback was consistently positive, with noted improvements in inspections, training, and regulatory engagement.

Communication and Organizational Culture: A recurring theme across all topic areas was the need for improved communication and transparency—between leadership and staff, and between the union and board. To support this, there was broad agreement to:

- Develop and distribute a new anonymous staff survey to assess progress since the prior climate review.
- Hold a follow-up workshop in mid-to-late May (or May/June) to review survey results and determine next steps.
- Explore a non-negotiation “union report” format to improve board awareness while keeping management informed.

Repeating the full external SDAO review was not supported due to cost and time considerations.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45pm by Craig Berry, 2nd John Foster. Motion passed.


Jenna Kurzyniec
Clerk to the Board


Craig Berry
Secretary/Treasurer - Board of Directors