

MOAPA VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 3, 2025

Location: MVFD Headquarters

Board Members	Judy Metz (Chairman), Josh Jensen (Vice Chairman), Joe Davis, Gene Houston, Chris Stolworthy.
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I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Judy Metz call's the meeting to order
- B. Pledge of Allegiance
- C. Conformance with the Open Meeting Law
- D. Roll Call/Introduction
 - 1) Board Members:
 - a) Judy Metz, Chairman
 - b) Josh Jensen, Vice-Chairman
 - c) Gene Houston, Board Member
 - d) Joe Davis, Board Member
 - e) Chris Stolworthy, Board Member
 - 2) Additional Representatives/Guests:
 - a) MVFD Chief Stephen Neel
 - b) MVFD Assistant Chief Brian Young
 - c) MVFD Assistant Chief Adam Smith
 - d) MVFD Executive Assistant Samantha Empey

E. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Adoption of the agenda as posted.***

Joe Davis motions to adopt the agenda as posted. Josh Jensen seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. (none)

III. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

A. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Approval of January 2025 minutes***

Judy Metz motions to approve the minutes from January 2025 with a correction made regarding the request for purchases made over \$100,000 to not only inform the board of the purchases and the bidding process, but that these purchases be brought to the board for approval. Joe Davis seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

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IV. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Review SOP changes***

Fire Chief Stephen Neel introduced a new process for reviewing and updating the district's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Drawing from his experience on the Mesa View Hospital Board, he proposed that all SOP revisions and new policies be presented to the Advisory Board moving forward. This would ensure board members are aware of updates and can track changes for transparency and consistency. Chief Neel announced the following initial updates:

- The Sexual Hazing and Sexual Harassment Policy has been rescinded and replaced with a more comprehensive Harassment Prevention Policy.
- The Awards and Recognition Policy was updated to reflect a one-year service award and align it with the newly introduced Uniform Stipend and Recognition Policy, which will be reviewed as a separate agenda item later in the meeting.

Chair Judy Metz supported the initiative, emphasizing the importance of board awareness when policies change so members aren't caught off guard by procedural shifts.

Board Member Joe Davis agreed, noting that having clear written SOPs benefits both the board and the Chief by providing documentation and structure, especially in an organization with limited personnel and oversight.

Gene Houston Motions to approve the new SOP changes. Joe Davis seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

B. Discussion & Possible Action: **Appoint MVFD Advisory Board Secretary**

Joe Davis motions to appoint Josh Jensen as the Vice Chair/Secretary with the actual secretarial duties to fall underneath the Executive Assistant position as it was originally approved in the job description. Chris Stolworthy seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

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C. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Wildland Mitigation Program***

Fire Chief Stephen Neel presented a memorandum addressing three main concerns that emerged over the summer regarding the wildland fire program:

- Community understaffing – the perception that local coverage suffers when volunteers deploy.
- Unequal financial benefit – only some volunteers benefit from deployments, while others stay back without compensation.
- Minimal local involvement – volunteers doing only the minimum 24 hours locally but deploying extensively.

Chief Neel's Proposed Solutions:

Backfill Compensation: During deployments, two personnel will be staffed at the station and billed to the wildland fire under backfill, ensuring local response is covered and financially supported.

Part-Time Station Work: Volunteers who can't deploy can apply for part-time, paid positions to staff the station and benefit financially.

Service Requirement for Deployment: From June to September, for every 7 days a volunteer is home from deployment, they must complete 24 hours of local service (e.g., 21 days home = 72 hours of service) before becoming eligible for redeployment.

Deployment Prioritization: Volunteers are prioritized based on training attendance, station hours, and initiative (e.g., practicing outside of scheduled trainings).

Chair Metz clarified that paid station coverage would only occur during wildland season; Chief Neel added this could expand into a year-round model.

Joe Davis suggested adding a requirement that volunteers must serve for at least one year (365 days) before being eligible to deploy, to ensure commitment and discourage "seasonal opportunists."

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Josh Jensen supported prioritizing volunteers based on call volume and dedication. He expressed concern that mothers and others with limited availability may feel left out of the financial benefit structure, despite their high value and contribution.

Chief Neel's Clarifications:

- Deployments depend on qualifications requested by incident command, which can affect the rotation.
- A transparent, shared spreadsheet is used to track the deployment list and qualifications.
- FLSA rules restrict increasing volunteer stipends beyond 20% of the standard rate, limiting flexibility in rewarding non-deployed volunteers. To address this, Chief Neel proposed using paid part-time positions for backfill coverage without violating labor laws.

Joe Davis motions to approve the Wildland Mitigation Program with the new stipulation that members wishing to deploy have already served, at minimum, 365 days with the Fire District. Chris Stolworthy seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

D. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Uniform Stipend Program***

Chief Neel presented a new Uniform Stipend Program aimed at professionalizing and incentivizing volunteer members. The program includes:

- Initial Uniform Issue: Members will receive a sweatshirt without name/rank initially to avoid waste if they leave early. After one year, names and ranks will be added.
- Boot Stipend: After six months, members can receive a \$200 boot stipend with receipt reimbursement, ensuring proper PPE per OSHA standards.

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- One-Year Recognition: At one year, a formal badge pinning ceremony will be held for volunteers who have completed Firefighter I or EMT certification. Members will receive a \$100 stipend for Class B uniforms and receive their badge.
- EMS-Only Path: Volunteers who only want to serve in EMS (not fire) can still be recognized and participate in the ceremony if they maintain good standing and EMT certification.
- Return of Gear: Members must return issued gear upon leaving to maintain professionalism and avoid misuse.
- EMS Pants Program: A grant will provide blue EMS pants for all volunteers to wear at the station, improving professional appearance.
- Wildland Boot Reimbursement: Instead of providing standard-issue boots, volunteers can buy their own NWCG-compliant wildland boots and be reimbursed, allowing for better comfort and fit.

Josh Jensen motions to approve the uniform stipend program. Gene Houston seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

E. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Full-time Executive Assistant***

Chief Neel presented a proposal to convert the current part-time Executive Assistant position held by Samantha Empey into a full-time role. He noted that the board had previously discussed this potential change, and Samantha had already provided a detailed list of her duties. A formal job description, pay scale, and classification were obtained from Clark County's Finance Department. The proposed pay aligns with Clark County's Executive Assistant classification. Finance has confirmed that funding is available to support this full-time position. Legal and HR advised that the position must be publicly posted and cannot be offered directly to the current Executive Assistant. Samantha will need to apply and interview for the position alongside other applicants. The position will fall under regular PERS (Public Employees' Retirement System), not the firefighter-specific plan. All associated costs—including PERS, insurance,

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workers' comp, Medicare, and federal income tax—have already been budgeted.

Board Member Comments:

Joe Davis asked about the removal of the EMT Basic certification from the updated job description, which was previously listed as preferred. He inquired whether retaining it could be beneficial in emergency scenarios if the Executive Assistant were the only one present in the building.

Chief Neel responded that the EMT requirement was removed due to lack of demonstrated need over the past two years. CPR/AED certification remains a requirement and is considered sufficient for handling immediate life-threatening situations.

Chief Neel also noted the importance of including duties related to SAP (the County's financial system) in the job description, especially as the Executive Assistant is now actively managing purchase orders and financial tasks.

Chief Neel confirmed that he and Samantha had received SAP training and that invoice processing is now being handled daily through the shared finance email.

Chair Judy Metz raised a concern about whether the job title might trigger union involvement.

Chief Neel clarified that there is no concern regarding union affiliation (specifically the firefighter union, IFF) based on the job title or reclassification, even if it includes "manager" in the title.

Gene Houston motions to approve a Full-Time Executive Assistant Position. Josh Jensen seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

F. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Hire Part-Time EMS Personnel***

Chief Neel presented the need for part-time EMS personnel to the board, referencing a 2017 meeting with Clark County officials highlighting

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significant EMS response delays in Moapa Valley. This led to a shift toward local control and an effort to improve response times, especially as call volume has risen from 900 in 2016 to over 1,200 in 2024. The district is struggling to meet the NFPA's 14-minute rural response standard, and long transport times (3-4 hours) place a strain on volunteers. To address this, Neel emphasized the need for part-time EMS personnel to maintain response times and service quality while supporting volunteer retention.

Joe Davis raised concerns about the data, asking whether call volume was compared to actual transports. Chief Neel clarified that in 2023, there were about 550 transports out of over 1,200 calls. He also provided six-month average response times by station, showing a gap between current response times and NFPA standards.

Chief Neel outlined the proposed staffing model, including one full-time paramedic, one part-time responder, and volunteers. This would ensure readiness without overburdening volunteers, with transports handled by full and part-time staff and volunteers when available. Exceeding the 1,039-hour limit for part-time employees would require enrolling them in PERS and adding 58% toward retirement contributions. The district plans to track hours with scheduling software and intervene if someone approaches the limit.

Joe Davis expressed reservations about part-time employees, warning it could alienate volunteers and reduce their participation. He noted that an earlier trial of increasing stipends had little effect on volunteer turnout, suggesting that financial incentives might not address recruitment or retention issues.

Josh Jensen echoed concerns about potential friction between paid part-timers and volunteers, noting it might cause some EMTs to quit.

Chief Neel countered by emphasizing that part-time staff would supplement, not replace, volunteers, especially for critical medical calls where rapid response is crucial.

Joe Davis reiterated concerns about volunteer burnout from long transports, suggesting the district could have benefited from a past transport service offer that was declined.

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Chief Neel suggested a trial period to evaluate the part-time staffing model, offering a 12-month trial. After further discussion, Chair Metz proposed a 6-month trial instead, which would allow the board to reassess the program in September. This would help determine if the program works and if it should continue.

Chair Metz motioned to authorize the six-month trial for part-time EMS personnel in all positions (AMT, EMT, and Paramedic). Gene Houston seconds the motion. All board members, except Joe Davis, voted in favor. The motion was passed.

G. Discussion & Possible Action: ***Hire Full-Time Community Paramedic***

Chief Neel introduced the proposal, explaining the community paramedic would help address non-emergency needs for seniors (e.g., medication assistance, fall prevention, transportation to appointments/pharmacies). Be credentialed through the health district and serve as a liaison to social services. Also respond to emergency calls during part of their scheduled week, filling coverage gaps and allowing Chief Neel to focus more on administrative duties.

Chair Metz questioned the need for this position, especially if the EMS staffing model is working as intended.

Chief Neel clarified that the current model includes only one full-time and one part-time responder, plus a volunteer, and emphasized the need for consistent leadership and mentorship at the station during the week.

Brian Young addressed liability concerns, explaining that community paramedic encounters typically involve physician oversight, which limits liability compared to standard 911 responses.

Joe Davis disagreed, suggesting liability increases with more frequent home visits, but Brian countered with his experience and maintained that liability is lower under the community paramedic model.

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Chief Neel added that the position would be funded for two years through a \$25,000/year grant, eligible for Medicaid reimbursement, and reiterated that it would support both call response and preventative care.

Chris Stolworthy expressed skepticism, stating he liked the concept but questioned its necessity. He saw it more as a community service rather than a core fire district role. He was concerned the role could be misused by seniors seeking companionship, not care.

Gene Houston asked if Medicare already provides similar services.

Chief Neel replied that the role is intended to help fill the gap for those without home health coverage.

Chris Stolworthy remained unconvinced, emphasizing that while the theory is positive, he was unsure if it was the right move for the district at this time.

Chair Metz made a motion to deny hiring a full-time community paramedic and requested that Chief Neel bring back a revised proposal. Josh Jensen seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed

H. Discussion: ***Wildland Program Training***

Chief Neel stated that the wildland training materials had been sent to the board for review. He explained that, to comply with open meeting laws, any discussion or questions about the training needed to take place in this public meeting.

Chair Metz responded that the training was well done and addressed all of the boards questions. No other board members offered additional comments or questions.

The discussion concluded without further remarks.

I. Discussion: ***Paid Personnel Deploying on Wildland Fires***

Chief Neel discussed the need for advanced wildland training, especially for roles such as Task Force/Strike Team Leader and Engine Boss. He and other staff, including Brian, have attended required classes and now hold

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open task books that must be signed off during actual wildland incidents—many of which cannot be completed in-district. Neel emphasized that training is essential for risk mitigation and to prepare the department to manage increasingly complex wildfires, including cost-share fires that start on private land but spread to BLM or other jurisdictions.

Chair Metz asked if, once qualified, Neel could be in charge at wildfires both locally and externally. Neel explained the dispatch process, clarifying that he would only be pulled for incidents if he marks himself as available. His goal is not to seek deployment but to gain the qualifications necessary to train and certify others locally.

Josh Jensen asked how long it takes to complete the training. Neel responded that it varies by incident and task completion. He gave an example of a colleague who was unable to get sign-offs while staged at a fire, demonstrating how not all deployments result in progress on training.

Joe Davis voiced concerns about deploying the district's only two paid personnel to wildfires, which may compromise coverage in Moapa Valley. He supported incident command training but emphasized it should be structured to focus on leadership and coordination, not fire suppression. Davis noted much of the training could be done online, but some requires in-person experience, and he questioned how to ensure personnel are gaining meaningful experience, not just filling roles on fires.

Chair Metz requested to review Neel's task book to understand what specific qualifications are required and expressed concern about high-risk or large-scale fire requirements. Neel agreed to share the task book and reiterated the importance of local capability and cost-share obligations for fires starting in the district.

The board generally agreed on the importance of incident command training but emphasized the need to balance training goals with maintaining local coverage and ensuring cost-effectiveness.

V. FINANCES

A. Discussion & Review: ***Review of FY26 Budget***

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Chief Neel began by noting that the C-tax distribution initially appeared low due to the new finance system, but upon reviewing data across the board, it was found that all entities received about 50% less. He has been in contact with the county manager, and improvements have already been seen, as evidenced by an increase in cash in the bank. He emphasized the importance of not accumulating too much surplus, which could prompt the state to reduce funding, implying they may think the funds are not needed.

Joe Davis added that, as a nonprofit connected to the state, the district is subject to unique rules, and sudden fund "sweeps" can happen if excess cash is perceived as unused.

Chair Metz raised a separate concern about budget transparency. She requested that a detailed report of income and expenses be provided quarterly, including specific vendors, check amounts, and descriptions. She said it's difficult to approve or feel confident in the budget without seeing exactly how large sums are spent.

Chief Neel responded that he already provides check registries and credit card reports to one board member for review and ratification, as a way to maintain board oversight over approved expenditures.

Chair Metz clarified that for categories like payroll, summary transfers are acceptable, but vendor purchases should include descriptions, so the board knows what services or items were paid for.

Chief Neel agreed to print and provide these detailed reports, like he does with the budget, and also send them to the board members for review.

VI. COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Rene Eastin expressed concerns about the new part-time positions, acknowledging that while volunteers can apply, those currently running the most calls (like herself) would be limited to fewer hours if they accepted the positions—ultimately reducing district coverage. She emphasized that the issue is not resentment over pay, but about who

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benefits from the program without impacting service. She suggested requiring more consistent hours throughout the year for those who wish to participate in wildland fire deployments.

Chair Metz responded that this kind of input is exactly what the trial period is for—to identify potential issues and find balance.

Chief Neel explained he had run numbers on frequent responders like Andrew and found that even if they took part-time roles, they would still have enough hours left to maintain their current level of call participation.

Rene pushed back, clarifying that the analysis assumed a minimum of 24 hours and didn't fully consider those wanting to work the maximum allowable hours (e.g., 86 per month), which could still limit overall response.

Chair Metz ended the discussion citing Roberts Rules of Order, noting public comment is not a back-and-forth debate and follow-ups must be added to future agendas.

Andrea Smith raised concerns that response times wouldn't improve simply by having more people at the station, due to long travel distances to many incident locations. She also questioned whether those not currently active would step up if given part-time roles and expressed safety concerns regarding the new rapid response vehicle, asking whether safe driving practices would be enforced.

Jason Eastin voiced support for Chief Neel focusing on administrative duties rather than responding to calls, emphasizing the need for clear roles and adequate staffing. He praised the addition of a full-time assistant and noted the importance of continued volunteer recruitment and youth involvement. Jason also highlighted the lack of a simple solution and suggested more education and engagement to solve staffing gaps long-term.

VII. REPORTS

A. MVFD Chief Stephen Neel:

Chief Neel confirmed that he will continue sending weekly updates to the board. The board members expressed that they appreciate these

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updates, as they provide insight into what is going well and what needs improvement, and help them respond to public questions more effectively. Chief Neel also mentioned that he and Sam completed training for the SAP system, which will be transitioned to Sam and eventually to a new hire. He noted there was nothing further to report since all relevant updates have already been included in his weekly summaries.

B. MVFD Assistant Chief Brian Young:
Nothing new to report

C. MVFD Assistant Chief Adam Smith:

Assistant Chief Smith provided a comprehensive update on the department's training program. For the first time, training compliance is being tracked systematically using Target Solutions, with approximately 80% firefighter participation in the first month.

Training activities and assignments are built monthly and sent to all personnel, including exterior support, Firefighter I and II, and first responders working toward firefighter certification. A second system, Resource One, is used to double-track first responder hours and skills with checklists and certificates transferred to Target Solutions.

Due to the department's relative youth—90% of staff have under five years of experience—the training program was revamped. Two monthly trainings are now required: one operational-based classroom training per station (presented via pre-recorded videos and PowerPoints), and one hands-on skills training session held at Station 73. These trainings aim to address past deficiencies in operational proficiency, especially for fire calls.

All training materials are accessible through YouTube and Target Solutions, ensuring flexibility and accessibility for volunteers. Smith also noted the establishment of clear expectations for captains and crews, distributed as formal documents. SOP adherence and disciplinary actions are being reinforced more consistently, with monthly SOP reviews also available on Target Solutions.

Chair Metz thanked Smith and expressed appreciation for the detailed update. She then shifted the discussion to two concerns. First, she suggested updating the board's bylaws, noting that the current ones are outdated and should be reviewed, ideally beginning by the June meeting.

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Second, she raised concerns about recent apparatus breakdowns and questioned whether regular preventative maintenance is still being performed now that Clark County is no longer handling it.

Chief Neel responded that preventative maintenance continues to follow the same schedule as it did under Clark County. He stated that maintenance is actually more consistent now, thanks to the department hiring a dedicated mechanic. Neel cited specific recent issues, such as an overheating squad and gasket leaks, explaining that some breakdowns were unavoidable due to equipment age and backlog at repair facilities. He reassured the board that safety-critical and operational issues are prioritized and fixed promptly by a qualified mechanic. Small cosmetic or non-critical issues are batched for efficiency, but operational readiness remains a top priority.

- A. Board Member Report and General Comments:
(None)

VIII. SETTING OF NEXT MEETING

- A. Next meeting is set for:
Monday, June 2, 2025 @6:00 p.m. MVFD Headquarters.
3570 Lyman St, Logandale, NV 89021.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Judy Metz motions to adjourn. Chris Stolworthy seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.

Executive Session

- Immediately following Regular Board Meeting -

- I. CALL TO ORDER
 - A. Judy Metz call's the meeting to order
- II. AWARD NOMINATIONS
 - A. Life Saving Award

Chief Neel presented a nomination for the district's first-ever Life Saving Award to First Responder Sicaly Reynolds. He read a detailed account of her actions during a medical call on January 20, 2025, at

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approximately 9:11 AM. Reynolds responded to a report of chest pain that was upgraded en route to a cardiac arrest. Upon arrival, she immediately initiated high-quality CPR, maintaining circulation and oxygenation until advanced life support could be administered and the patient was transported by Mercy Air. Her actions were credited with directly contributing to the victim's survival, which was confirmed by follow-up with the hospital. Chief Neel emphasized the importance of formally recognizing volunteers who demonstrate exceptional skill, quick thinking, and dedication to service.

The board supported the nomination unanimously, with Chair Metz sharing her personal appreciation and experience regarding the significance of being part of a life-saving effort. The award will be formally presented to Reynolds at the June board meeting.

B. Member of the Year Award

Adam Smith presented nominations for Member of the Year from each of the district's three stations, as required by district SOPs. He gathered nominations from the station captains and shared the reasoning behind each.

Station 72 (Moapa): Captain Shakespeare nominated Andrea Smith, noting her high call volume, consistent attendance at trainings, and dedication to ensuring Rescue 72 is response-ready. She also serves in an EMS supervisory role and contributes beyond her duties.

Station 73 (Overton): Captain Livingston nominated Rene Eastin, recognizing her active involvement in calls, wildland fire, and REMS. She helps train new members, participated in the district's first driver-operator course, and frequently asks thoughtful questions to support her growth and the department.

Station 74 (Logandale): Captain Arager nominated Kayla Cormier, acknowledging her renewed commitment after returning from a break. She regularly checks equipment, maintains certifications, and expressed interest in mentoring youth through the Explorers program.

After discussion, the board members unanimously supported nominating Rene as Member of the Year. Board members praised her consistent presence at meetings, constructive feedback, and active participation across multiple areas of the department, including wildland, EMS, and training. Chief Neel and board members emphasized her commitment to improving the community and her contributions to both operations and public engagement.

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Chair Metz motions to adjourn. Josh Jensen seconds the motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion was passed.