

**GOLDER RANCH FIRE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, September 16, 2025, 9:00 a.m.
1600 East Hanley Boulevard, Oro Valley, Arizona 85737**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chairperson Cox Golder, Vice-Chairperson Wally Vette, Board Clerk Sandra Outlaw, Board Member Steve Brady, and Board Member Tom Shellenberger

Staff Present: Fire Chief Tom Brandhuber, Assistant Chief Grissom, Assistant Chief Perry, Assistant Chief Cesarek, Deputy Chief Hilderbrand, Deputy Chief Jarrold, Fire Marshal Akins, Deputy Chief Wilson, Finance Director Christian, IT Director Rascon, HR Director Delong, and Board Services Supervisor Ortiz

2. SALUTE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Those in attendance said the pledge of allegiance.

3. FIRE BOARD REPORTS

Vice Chairperson Vette reported they (he, Board Clerk Outlaw, and Board Member Brady) attended the September 11th ceremony at the Veteran's memorial in Naranja park (a public notice was posted as required). He said the speeches were well done and it was a beautiful ceremony.

Board Clerk Outlaw said she attended the Oro Valley Spark Business Summit. She was impressed with the event and mentioned how it was good to listen to new ideas from agencies such as Oro Valley Police Department (OVPD). She expressed how important it is to work with the community and said she was pleased with the Golder Ranch Fire District (GRFD) personnel who also presented.

4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public issues presented at this time.

5. PRESENTATIONS

A. EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE (ESGR) AWARDS PRESENTATION



Chief Brandhuber introduced Sandy Wilson, the Master of Ceremonies (MC) for the ESGR awards presentations. Mrs. Wilson introduced herself as an ESGR volunteer and the other ESGR volunteers present: Darren Veters, State Chair Immeritus; Michael Dunbard, Outreach Volunteer; Rusty Orvick, Outreach Volunteer; and Rick Palmatier, State Chair. She named GRFD employees who have/are actively serving: Christopher Graeber, Air National Guard, Air Force, Fire Protection; John Colby Jr., USAF Reserves, USMC & USAF, Operation Superintendent; James Glover, Reserves, US Marine Corps, Gunnery Sergeant/Platoon Commander; Karl Rhein, Army National Guard, Army Sergeant; Alejandro Matty, Reserve, Army, Sergeant (not present); Westin Clausen, Air National Guard, Air Force, Staff Sergeant (not present); Mason Russell, Air National Guard, Air Force, Staff Sergeant; Thomas Brandhuber, Reserve, Air Force, Retired Command Chief Master Sergeant; and Anthony Marquez, Air National Guard, Air Force, Chief Master Sergeant.

Mrs. Wilson introduced Arizona State Chair, Rick Palmatier.

Chairperson Palmatier thanked those in the guard and reserve for their service and he also thanked GRFD for its support of ESGR. Chairperson Palmatier explained ESGR's primary mission is to work with businesses. It is an office started by the Department of Defense in the early 70s. It could not do what it does without the support of ESGR volunteers and businesses. Mr. Palmatier began the presentation of the Patriot award, and noted it is the highest award that can be bestowed to someone in a civilian agency.

Mrs. Wilson introduced military representative for the day's event, Colonel Brandt Putman, Commander of the 162nd Fighter Wing.

Colonel Brandt Putman said he used ESGR early on in his career. Things were different back then and employers were not quite as familiar with the law. ESGR was able to assist him in using military leave. He said he is extremely grateful for ESGR, he said because there are 1.3 million people in the US military, about 38% of those people are in the Guard and Reserve. The active components could not do it without the support of the guard and reserve. From his own experience, the guard relies heavily on the support of ESGR.

Mrs. Wilson invited Chairperson Cox Golder, Chief Brandhuber, and Chairman Palmatier to the front for the presentation of the Pro-Patria Award.

Mrs. Wilson explained the eight distinctive categories of the award and how GRFD met each category. The categories were as follows:

- Service member support
- Family support
- Compensation policies
- Compensation benefit policies
- Service member recognition
- Hiring practices



- USERRA Awareness (Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act of 1994)
- ESGR awards

Chairperson Cox Golder said GRFD supports ESGR for love of country. She said it was an honor to support ESGR.

Chief Brandhuber thanked ESGR, the Governing Board, and the members in uniform for their service.

GRFD Captain and Air National Guard, Air Force, Chief Master Sergeant Marquez and Air National Guard, Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Mason Russell presented Chief Brandhuber with Patriot awards.

ESGR Chairperson Rick Palmatier, Colonel Brant Putnam, Chief Brandhuber, and GRFD Governing Board Chairperson Cox Golder signed a new statement of support for ESGR.

B. UTSTEIN SURVIVABILITY PRESENTATION- GRFD MEDICAL DIRECTOR, DR. RICE

GRFD Medical Director, Dr. Rice gave a presentation on the Utstein Formula for Survival. She explained it is a standardized system for reporting when someone has a cardiac arrest outside of the hospital. She said GRFD has done exceptionally well and has one of the highest survivability rates in the nation. However, because the criteria is so limited and because there are so few occasions when the criteria is met, that a small number can affect GRFD's score. Regardless of the limitations, GRFD has done well overall.

C. PRESENTATION OF PERSONNEL

- YEARS OF SERVICE
 - SHANNON ORTIZ, BOARD SERVICES SUPERVISOR- 10 YEARS
 - MICHAEL THOMAS, CAPTAIN- 30 YEARS
- PROMOTIONS
 - JESSE BURKS, ENGINEER
 - DANIEL DE LA PUENTE, PARAMEDIC
 - BRANDON MCPHERSON, ENGINEER
 - BRENDAN PEELER, PARAMEDIC
 - TJ STEELE, ENGINEER
 - STEVE WHITE, BATTALION CHIEF
 - AUTUMN ZOECHBAUER, PERMIT TECHNICIAN

HR Director Delong presented Board Supervisor Ortiz for her ten years of service with GRFD.



Deputy Chief Wilson presented Captain Thomas for his thirty years of service with GRFD.

Captain Paddock presented Jesse Burks for his promotion to Engineer.

Captain Kassulke presented Daniel de la Puente for his promotion to Paramedic.

Captain Drury presented Brandon McPherson for his promotion to Engineer.

Captain Dean Sanchez presented Brendan Peeler for his promotion to Paramedic.

Captain Peru presented TJ Steele for his promotion to Engineer.

Division Chief Charnoki presented Steve White for his promotion to Battalion Chief.

Fire Marshal Akins presented Autumn Zoechbauer for her promotion to Permit Technician.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. APPROVE MINUTES- AUGUST 19, 2025, REGULAR SESSION

MOTION by Vice Chairperson Vette to approve the September 16, 2025, Consent Agenda

MOTION SECONDED by Board Member Shellenberger

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

7. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

- A. FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT – Chief Brandhuber presented the Fire Chief's report to the Governing Board. He thanked the Governing Board for their support of ESGR and he thanked the employee members of the Guard and Reserves for their service. Chief Brandhuber thanked Fire Marshal Akins for attending and presenting at the Town of Oro Valley council meeting. He commented that she was so thorough and knowledgeable that the council did not have any questions after her presentation. He said he attended the September 11th ceremony at the Veteran's Memorial Park and it was a great event. He thanked the Honor Guard and Pipes and Drums for what they do and for representing GRFD.

Chairperson Cox Golder reviewed the statistics for suppression calls. She noticed a high number of calls for animals, snakes, etc. (non-emergent calls). She asked if these were responded to by the Community Resource Technicians immediately or if there is a delayed response.

Assistant Chief Perry responded, the Community Resource Technicians (CRTs) respond to these calls for snakes, smoke detector battery changes, etc. for the most



part immediately, there are a few calls that are delayed but the delay is a matter of minutes.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked if six new trucks were purchased.

Assistant Chief Perry clarified six new Community Resource Technicians were recently hired, they use trucks the District already has.

Board Member Shellenberger asked if the District could research placing the non-emergency number, 3-1-1, decals on the CRT trucks.

Assistant Chief Perry replied they could look into it.

Chief Brandhuber explained there have been issues with getting 3-1-1 working in Pinal County. He wants to make sure this is a service the District can also provide in Pinal County before it is placed on trucks.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked if the smoke detector maintenance calls were battery changes.

Assistant Chief Perry verified they were. These calls were battery changes in smoke detectors.

Chairperson Cox Golder said she noticed a high number of canceled calls while crews were in route. She asked if this is watched and if anything could be done about it.

Assistant Chief Grissom responded that crews try to respond to calls immediately. He and his staff are continuously reviewing the calls and making adjustments accordingly.

President Jones said Union members recently attended a Diamondbacks baseball game as a team building event. He said everyone enjoyed themselves. President Jones spoke of federal house resolution (HR) 2766 the Special District Fairness and Accessibility Act. He noted it is a repeat bill that seems to be getting traction. The bill helps fire agencies get funding.

- B. COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION'S REPORT - Assistant Chief Perry presented Community Risk Reduction's division report to the Governing Board. He reported the CRTs ran 270 calls; these are calls that are taken off suppression's call load and enable them to be available for emergency calls.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked what Talk and Truck Time was.

Deputy Chief Hilderbrand explained Talk and Truck Time is a program done by GRFD Community Educators. It is for kids in pre-school and kindergarten. The educators talk about what firefighters do, show the kids the firetrucks, and have the kids see



firefighters in their gear, so they are not scared of them if they come across them in a real emergency.

- C. SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION'S REPORT – Assistant Chief Cesarek presented the Support Services' division report to the Governing Board. He said Lead Fleet Technician, Phil Cantua is the President of the Arizona Mechanics Association. At a recent conference, Phil presented the Arizona Fire Mechanic of the Year Award. Assistant Chief Cesarek said Phil did a great job. Assistant Chief Cesarek recognized IT and the Logistics teams for all their hard work to meet the deadline for crews of station 378 to move into the new location on Wednesday, September 17th.
- D. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES & FIRE RESPONSE DIVISON'S REPORT – Assistant Chief Grissom presented the EMS & Fire Response's division report to the Governing Board. Assistant Chief Grissom echoed what Chief Brandhuber said about the Honor Guard and Pipes and Drums. They do a great job representing the District at events. Assistant Chief Grissom recognized the training staff for all their hard work in the engineer process. The Professional Development and EMS divisions have been very busy lately with all the training and promotional processes.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked what EBS was.

Assistant Chief Grissom responded EBS stood for Emergency Business Shoring. He explained it is a process done by the Special Operations Technical Rescue Team when there is a building collapse. It is a process the team trains for diligently.

8. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE BACKUP AMBULANCE COVERAGE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN TUCSON FIRE DEPARTMENT AND GOLDER RANCH FIRE DISTRICT

Chief Brandhuber explained this is an ongoing agreement the District adopts which allows Golder Ranch Fire District to respond in the Tucson Fire Department area.

MOTION by Vice Chairperson Vette to approve and adopt the Backup Ambulance Coverage Intergovernmental Agreement between Tucson Fire Department and Golder Ranch Fire District

MOTION SECONDED by Board Member Brady

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

- B. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE NONCRIMINAL JUSTICE AGENCY (NCJA) POLICY

Chief Brandhuber asked HR Director Delong to present this item to the Governing Board.



HR Director Delong explained that the NonCriminal Justice Agency (NCJA) is the agency used to run fingerprints and do background checks. Human Resources went through a regular audit with the agency, and this is a policy they require agencies they work with, to adopt.

Board Member Brady asked if this is for all people the District does fingerprinting for.

HR Director Delong clarified this only applies to GRFD employees.

MOTION by Board Member Shellenberger to approve and adopt the NonCriminal Justice Agency (NCJA) policy

MOTION SECONDED by Vice Chairperson Vette

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

C. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING POLICY 1026- DRUG- AND ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE

Chief Brandhuber explained this policy goes back to a year ago when the Board adopted a medical marijuana procedure for future implementation, which would allow employees to possess a medical marijuana card through the State. This card is only issued when a physician deems a medical reason for it. Leadership did a lot of work behind the scenes to ensure if the medical marijuana policy was adopted, that the District was protected, the public was protected, and the employees were protected. Friday, he met with the district's occupational health provider, and they said they would not support the medical marijuana policy the District presented. Chief Brandhuber thought it was still important to present this to the Board to get their input. He said he would not give up on this. There are other occupational health providers available, which staff will research. He conveyed his belief that medical marijuana has a legitimate purpose. Chief Brandhuber stated he supports the medical marijuana policy. It allows employees with medical clearance cards to use it for medically necessary reasons. He stated there are safeguards included to protect the District, protect the public, and protect the employees. But employees can't use medical marijuana if the District's occupational provider will not recognize the employee as fit for duty.

President Jones stated he agreed with Chief Brandhuber, and he too supported the medical marijuana policy. As of last week, he thought we had done everything we needed to do. The Union supports this policy. He believes it is a benefit and a commitment to the health and safety of the employees. The Union would like to see the policy move forward with the provision that the District finds an occupational provider that supports the policy.

Board Member Brady asked if the occupational provider was a state agency.



Chief Brandhuber answered the occupational provider was a local business the District used.

Vice Chairperson Vette asked if the item should be tabled.

Chief Brandhuber replied the Governing Board could do this. If there were questions the Board had, he would be happy to answer them. He thought it was important to have a discussion with the Board, if they had any concerns, he would be willing to address them.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked if other fire districts/departments have a medical marijuana policy. She recommended inquiring as to who they use as an occupational health provider.

Chief Brandhuber responded, in speaking with attorneys, he believed GRFD was leading the way. The District has been progressive. He explained what other departments/districts have chosen to do is take THC off the drug test panel. The problem with this is if an employee is in an accident, law enforcement takes over and their test will include testing for THC. Chief Brandhuber wants to have testing in place for impairment so if something does occur, the employee has already been tested for impairment. He said other districts/departments have chosen to just ignore it completely. He wanted to have something in place.

Board Clerk Outlaw asked if the policy could be adopted contingent upon finding an occupational provider that would work with the District on the medical marijuana policy. That would move the policy along and express the Board's support for it. Legally it would not be in place until the District has permission from the occupational health provider.

Attorney Aversa stated yes, the policy could be adopted if the Board wanted to show support for the policy, contingent on finding an occupational provider that supports the policy. The Board would have to revisit it again, once a provider was in place that would show support to work with the policy. Attorney Aversa deferred to HR Director Delong.

HR Director Delong agreed with Attorney Aversa. She said the current policy would remain in place with employees. The new policy will be held while she, Chief Brandhuber, and President Jones sought a new provider. She clarified the Union would need to support the idea that the current policy remain in place for employees, with the new one allowing medical marijuana contingent upon finding a new provider.

President Jones said the Union would support this.

Attorney Aversa wanted to clarify for anyone listening to the discussion. No one is allowed to show up to work impaired. This discussion is about someone who is



legally issued a prescription medical marijuana card and is also fit for duty. This person would have gone through a comprehensive screening to look at the underlying reasons why the medical marijuana card was issued in the first place. The screening would include the manner of use, the timing of use, and so forth. It is never permissible to show up to work impaired. This is the District's way of managing a program where an employee is allowed to utilize a legal method to address a medical condition.

HR Director Delong clarified this wording is incorporated in the policy. She stated the basis for the drug- and alcohol-free workplace policy is that employees are never allowed to come to work impaired.

MOTION by Vice Chairperson Vette to approve and adopt Policy 1026- Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace contingent upon finding an occupational health provider that supports the medical marijuana policy

MOTION SECONDED by Board Member Shellenberger

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

Chief Brandhuber thanked the Board for their support of this policy. He thanked Board Clerk Outlaw for her idea to adopt it with a contingency. It reinforces the District's support of personnel.

D. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE GOLDER RANCH FIRE DISTRICT RECONCILIATION AND MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

Finance Director Christian presented the GRFD reconciliation and monthly financial report. He commented at the time the District was spending more than it was earning. However, the District would see an increase in property tax in October. Year-to-date the District has \$75,000 in the General Fund at the Pinal County Treasurer's Office and \$10 million at the Pima County Treasurer's Office. All cash in all accounts there was \$20 million. For ambulance billing, there were 582 transports in the month of August. In reference to wildfires, so far personnel have responded to thirty-eight fires, this was split between Federal and State fires. A lot of these are response for single resources and not everything had been billed yet.

MOTION by Board Member Shellenberger to approve and accept the Golder Ranch Fire District reconciliation and monthly financial report as presented.

MOTION SECONDED by Vice Chairperson Vette

MOTION CARRIED 5/0

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be October 21, 2025.

10. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public issues presented at this time.



11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Board Member Brady to adjourn the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Board Clerk Outlaw

MOTION CARRIED 5/0



Sandra Outlaw, Clerk of the Board
Golder Ranch Fire District

