GOLDER RANCH FIRE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
1600 East Hanley Boulevard, Oro Valley, Arizona 85737

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Chairperson Vicki Cox Golder called the meeting to order on Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 9 a.m.

Members Present: Chairperson Vicki 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 Cesarek, Fire Marshal Akins, Deputy Chief Rutherford, Deputy Chief Jarrold, Deputy Chief Wilson, Technology Director Martinez, Acting Finance Director Sargent, 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**

There were no fire board reports presented.

4. **CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

There were no public issues presented.

5. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. PRESENTATION

- Recognition of the Rock Ridge Apartments team for their service to the community

B. PRESENTATION OF PERSONNEL

- RETIREMENT
  - CORY KAPPEL, ENGINEER

- PROMOTION
    - DARRELL NEWBURN, ENGINEER

- NEW HIRE
    - CONNI WIGHTMAN, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

    Loyalty and behavioral oaths will be administered.

Deputy Chief Jarrold presented the Rock Ridge Apartments team, Amanda Espinoza, John Nunez, and Adilene Saum, a plaque, to thank them for their contribution to the community. Over a month ago, there was a small fire at a nearby school. The team allowed the students to evacuate and use the apartments as an evacuation area.

Deputy Chief Jarrold presented Cory Kappel and recognized him for his retirement. He was presented a plaque on behalf of the Governing Board, US and Arizona flags, certificates, and an axe from North Tucson Firefighters, Local 3832. Engineer Kappel's wife and children were presented with certificates for their support.

Darrell Newburn was called to a wildfire assignment; his presentation will be re-scheduled.

Operations Support Supervisor Bravo presented Conni Wightman, the new Administrative Assistant for Operations.

The Governing Board took a brief recess at 9:17 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 9:19 a.m.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. APPROVE MINUTES- JUNE 16, 2026, REGULAR SESSION

B. APPROVE MINUTES- JUNE 16, 2026, EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEM 8J

MOTION by Board Member Brady to approve the July 21, 2026, Consent Agenda.
MOTION SECONDED by Board Clerk Outlaw.
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.

Chairperson Cox Golder inquired about the metric stating 54% of employees are satisfied with their benefits package.

HR Director Delong responded there was a survey with the options to respond as yes or no. No questions were asked about details; she hopes to distribute another survey in the future by asking for more information.

Board Clerk Outlaw asked if the survey was done before there were sessions explaining the benefits package to the employees.

HR Director Delong confirmed the survey was conducted at the beginning of the year before HR had done education and communication on the benefits package.

Captain Jose Ahumada presented on behalf of the Union President Ben Jones. He stated two members would be sent to the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) convention in August.

Board Services Supervisor Ortiz reported two incumbents were the only candidates who filed for the GRFD Governing Board race so the election would be canceled.

B. COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION'S REPORT – Deputy Chief Wilson presented the Community Risk Reduction's report to the Governing Board on behalf of Assistant Chief Perry. He highlighted the great work Fire Prevention did over the past year in completing 99.66% of all prevention inspections. This is a result of the Board's approval of additional inspector positions over the past several years. The teamwork by Community Risk Reduction in utilizing the Community Resource Technicians (CRTs) for lock boxes and the hard work by the Prevention Division has been great. Deputy Chief Wilson also highlighted the work Community Education has done. They joined the regional Fall Prevention Coalition that focused on lowering fall injury risk regionally. They were working on developing a home safety assessment program, including partnering with agencies for grab bar installations, wheelchairs, walkers, and other types of equipment to assist residents.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked Fire Marshal Akins what happens when a code violation is not addressed.

Fire Marshal Akins thanked Chairperson Cox Golder for the question. She continued to explain code violations have different levels of severity. The levels vary from critical/high hazard to less hazardous that might not need to be addressed until the next prevention inspection the following year. Instead of writing up low level violations, they try to educate the occupant. Critical violations are re-visited after a couple of days. Mid-range violations are given thirty days to be corrected. An additional two weeks are given when needed; such as instances when parts need to be ordered or contractors need to be scheduled. In a case where the occupant shows no effort to resolve the issue, the division can take the next step of the code enforcement process, which would be referring it to the magistrate of the Town of Oro Valley, etc. In her ten years with the Prevention Division, this step has never been used. The reason why the report showed so many violations was because the division inspects all of the schools during the summer, so there were twenty-two schools with hundreds of buildings. As a result, hundreds of violations were found. The number of corrected violations was low because those were the issues resolved from the previous month. The division will re-inspect the schools over winter break.

C. SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION'S REPORT - Assistant Chief Cesarek presented Support Services' report to the Governing Board. He recognized Captain Marquez for obtaining the Fire Officer designation from the Center of Public Safety of Excellence. He added this is something all captains should be looking at organizationally. AC Cesarek then recognized the Facilities team. Under the direction of Division Chief Jeremy North, the Facilities team has been working very hard. He thanked the team for all of their hard work over the summer. Lastly, he highlighted the efforts of Community and Media Relations. Community Relations Supervisor Camarillo and Media Specialist Henson have been showing their expertise and changing the way the District does some of the social media and video work, showing what they can bring to the table and highlighting the organization and what all of the District's men and women are doing. He has received positive feedback from the public regarding social media, so he wanted to publicly thank them both for their efforts.

   Vice-Chairperson Vette asked if the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) digital format had a list for personnel that does not enter the product correctly.

   AC Cesarek confirmed there are QR codes in the stations that can be scanned. Everything was electronic and the data was easily accessible.

   Vice-Chairperson Vette asked what, "Governing Board Promotions" was in the Community Relations section of the board packet.

   Community Relations Supervisor Camarillo clarified Governing Board Promotions were highlights from the board meetings that were mentioned on social media.

D. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES & FIRE RESPONSE DIVISON'S REPORT – Deputy Chief Jarrold presented the EMS and Fire Response report to the Governing Board on behalf of Assistant Chief Grissom. He highlighted the EMS report where personnel were receiving many recognitions from the partners at hospitals. He added there were a couple of significant incidents. There was a ½ acre brush fire along Highway 79 that crews were able to contain on a breezy day. There was also a manufactured home fire in Catalina. The fire was on a very hot day and Deputy Chief Jarrold recognized the difficult conditions the crews faced. He said they worked very hard to control the fire as much as they could. It was a stubborn fire, and they did a great job.

   Chairperson Cox Golder asked about the swift water rescue mentioned in the report.

   Deputy Chief Jarrold stated the team did respond to an incident through automatic aid at Ajo and I-19. Thankfully crews have not had any rescues in the district, however, they have responded to calls due to automatic aid.

Chairperson Cox Golder stated she noticed a higher number of illnesses reported.

Deputy Chief Jarrold explained suppression has moved to the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS), a new reporting system. The system has changed how some calls are coded.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked what well person calls were.

Deputy Chief Jarrold replied that personnel do not respond to welfare calls. Law enforcement is dispatched to those calls. In some cases, when law enforcement deems it necessary, they request assistance from fire personnel. He was not sure what the specific calls were that were mentioned in the report, but he would research and get back to the Chairperson.

Vice-Chairperson Vette asked why the Internation Organization for Standardization (ISO) training was 0%.

Deputy Chief Hilderbrand replied the training was reset for the fiscal year, so they reflected as zeroes. These trainings will take place again over the course of the year.

Vice-Chairperson Vette asked how many snake calls are responded to by the CRTs. He suggested they be broken down by CRTs versus suppression crews.

Deputy Chief Jarrold replied the way the reporting system works was the report was based on the emergency service zone or first due area. The CRTs were handling most of the CRT calls. There were other reports that showed how many calls the CRTs were actually handling (CRTs are part of Community Risk Reduction and their totals are reflected in CRR report). The suppression report was a giant overview of where the calls were located geographically.

Vice-Chairperson Vette said it would be helpful to see how many of the stations were handling these calls and how many the CRTs were handling because that was the reason the program was started; to alleviate the heavy lifting of the stations.

Deputy Chief Jarrold mentioned the calls responded by CRTs were tracked. The goal was 40%, this has been achieved over the past several months. What has been skewing the numbers a little bit was, since the last graduation academy, there has been more trucks in service, such as utility trucks. So, the utility trucks assist with public assist calls as well. It was not the suppression trucks, it was the pickup trucks with two firefighters that responded to these calls, not the engines. There were days where the utility trucks were in service so this might have decreased the percentage of public assist calls the CRTs were running; however, there were some days where two CRT trucks and a utility truck were in service so the utility truck, at times, may have handled a third of the calls.

Vice-Chairperson Vette said it would be helpful to be able to quantify how effective the CRTs are compared to, or what the load they're doing is, compared to the stations. He mentioned he knew there were CRT responses, but it would be nice to break it out to determine how effective the program is.

Chief Brandhuber stated the calls CRTs respond to were listed in the board packet; however, if there is another way the Board would like to see the figures he would be happy to meet with them to accommodate their request and do it a little bit differently.

8. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE APPROVAL OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT PROVIDING IT SERVICES TO AVRA VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT

IT Director Martinez explained both Items 8A and 8B.Avra Valley Fire District requested IT services including the Image Trend platform. The IGA presented was similar to the IGA with Rincon Valley Fire District with two modifications. One was the annual rate that was increased to $18,000 and the inclusion of the Image Trend services in the agreement.

Chairperson Cox Golder asked if the rate increase would be enough.

IT Director Martinez clarified the rate increased from $15,000 to $18,000. The agreement includes 10 support hours monthly; this was an hourly rate of $150/hour. The division felt the rate was adequate.

MOTION by Vice-Chairperson Vette to approve items 8A and 8B as presented.
MOTION SECONDED by Board Member Brady.
MOTION CARRIED 5/0

B. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE APPROVAL OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT PROVIDING IT SERVICES TO THREE POINTS FIRE DISTRICT

See item 8A.

C. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING POLICIES: 203 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT; 215 SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT; 225 EMPLOYMENT AT WILL; 227 REMOTE WORK; 1046 HOLIDAY TIME OFF; AND 1048 CORE HEALTH BENEFITS

Vice-Chairperson Vette thanked HR Generalist/Policy Coordinator Michelle Smith for her work on the policies. He asked if personnel were allowed to take time off in the last two weeks of employment if they gave a two-week notice.

HR Director Delong replied, yes employees can take time off in their last two weeks of employment.

Vice-Chairperson Vette asked how many employees worked remotely.

HR Director Delong stated remote work are approved by a supervisor on a case-by-case basis for special circumstances. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring the employee(s) to make sure they complete their job duties while working remotely.

Chief Brandhuber clarified this was the exception and not the norm. There were no employees scheduled regularly working remotely anymore. It was a one-off and had to be approved by the supervisor.

MOTION by Vice-Chairperson Vette to approve policies: 203 Professional Development; 215 Separation of Employment; 225 Employment at Will; 227 Remote Work; and 1048 Core Health Benefits.
MOTION SECONDED by Board Clerk Outlaw.
MOTION CARRIED 5/0

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

Chief Brandhuber thanked the Finance team for their work, including Acting Finance Director Sargent and Assistant Chief Perry. The work completed by Walker & Armstrong, the accounting firm the Board approved, had been fruitful in assisting the District make corrections in finance and make matters more transparent. The firm worked with the auditor as well. Chief Brandhuber added the reports Acting Finance Director Sargent will use to report to the Board will be different in August. Starting the following fiscal month, the Board would see more detailed reports from the new accounting software. He reported at the end of the fiscal year 25/26 in aggregate, the District had a $400,000 variance in the budget. The two things that caused this were the arbitrage payment that needed to be made on the bond that was never forecasted, which was for $380,000 and the approximately $2 million increase in healthcare costs over the past year. So, while staff never want to meet the budget, there were a couple of legitimate reasons why staff did not meet the mark the past fiscal year.

Acting Finance Director Sargent presented the reconciliation and monthly financial report to the Governing Board. He stated it would be the last report with the legacy reporting structure. The report says statement of activity; all funds presented did not include the general obligation bond expenses and money associated with it. Acting Finance Director Sargent explained $764,000 was reflected in ambulance revenue, however, it was really approximately $600,000. The variance was due to the amount including the subscription revenue. He was working with Supervisor Massie to present that part of the presentation.

Acting Finance Director Sargent explained there were a lot of lines in the red. These were expenses associated with healthcare costs. There were issues paying Cigna, the healthcare provider. These issues have been addressed with the assistance of the accounting consultants. All healthcare expenses had been transferred to HR to enable Finance to track the costs better. He stated the District was $400,000 negative. There was $1.9 million that was reflected in cash that was really not the District's money, but the total revenue was up $1.3 million. The expenses were on budget. What was not included were the principal and interest in debt services, which were not on budget. The debt service column listed $1.9 million the previous month, had been $69,000. This account was set up in Chase Bank. He had assumed it had to do with the general obligation bond, but it was an account for paying the O&M debt service that had been created. He had not been aware that the debt service had been set up on automatic payments and the District was preparing to pay them when they started clearing. The $1.9 million cleared of the principal or the participating certificate of the participation bonds so the money from the county was transferred there. The bank refunded the money twice and that was how $1.9 million ended up in the account that had not cleared by the end of the month. The account was zeroed out because the account was technically not needed. The money should be reflected in the O&M column. The account was in the red because the $1.9 million that belonged to the bank had been transferred back to it. The auto payment in the O&M bond proceeds would be eliminated as well. The $50,000 was a check that needed to clear. The County requested to no longer write checks out of the account. They wanted the District to use warrants so that account would be zeroed. The reason why there was a significant drop in the fund was because $1.6 million was spent on construction of the Administrative North campus, Fleet facility and Training area. The bond service column in Pima County will be considerably lower. The District did not keep the bond rate the same because it was paying arbitrage on the excessive amount of money in the column. This amount was lowered to get as close to zero as possible. It covers the expenses for the general obligation bonds. These were automatic payments controlled by the County. The District received emails stating the money would be withdrawn from the account.

Acting Finance Director Sargent continued to report on EMS billing. Cash collected was $5,348,038 for the 25/26 fiscal year. The Billing Division had to wait for the Department of Health Services (DHS) to approve the new rate increase, this delayed the billing of the annual memberships. The team was able to send the ambulance membership bills in one month. This was reflected in a high cash collection in the month of June. The chart showed 68% of claims accepted with payment received. Two months prior, the Billing team had issues submitting claims due to a computer glitch in their software system. This issue had been resolved.

Acting Director Sargent stated $540,000 had been invoiced for wildland. The structure of the wildland report had been changed. The timing of the wildland report and season would be changed July 1st. The change was due to the fact that the report was based on the start of the wildland season and not the fiscal year.

Vice-Chairperson Vette asked with the change in weather, would the wildland season be all year long.

Acting Finance Director Sargent replied it was technically an Operations question, but from a historical standpoint there was not technically a wildland season. He stated the District required a wildland team because of its geography. The Wildland Division was used as a way to keep the team members trained and to cover the expenses of preparedness. The District had the ability to send people worldwide all year long because of the weather, to do wildland assignments. So, there technically was not a wildland season, there was a lull. The benefit of tracking the expenses better would help the District determine where and how often to send people during that lull timeframe.

MOTION by Vice-Chairperson Vette to approve and accept the Golder Ranch Fire District reconciliation and monthly financial report as presented.
MOTION SECONDED by Board Member Shellenberger.
MOTION CARRIED 5/0

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be August 18, 2026.

10. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public issues presented.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Board Member Brady to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 a.m.
MOTION SECONDED by Board Clerk Outlaw.
MOTION CARRIED 5/0

Sandra Outlaw, Clerk of the Board
Golder Ranch Fire District