

# MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 28, 2026

At 7:10PM Wayne DeGesualdo called the meeting to order. Wayne DeGesualdo, Eric Talley, Murray Thiessen, Dave Upchurch and Chad Wallace were present for the board.

Also present were public member Rich Phillips, Brian Lurvey, Frank Rupp, Brian Cherveney, Glenn Burket, Chris Rowland, Colene Rowland, Amanda Burket, Michael Knop, Chief Balke and Administrative Assistant Stacy Cox, along with volunteer member Courtney Griffith of Mesa County Fire Authority.

Wayne DeGesualdo said an opening prayer.

## *Approval of Minutes*

Wayne DeGesualdo asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes of the March 24<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting, all agreed they did. David Upchurch made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Murray Thiessen seconded the motion. All were in favor, no opposed. Motion carried.

Wayne DeGesualdo asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes April 15<sup>th</sup> Special Board Meeting, all agreed they did. Murray Thiessen made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Eric Talley seconded the motion. All were in favor, no opposed. Motion carried.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

*Letters from Mesa County Attorney Office to Lands End Fire Protection District and Central Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District* Chief Balke present two different drafts of the letter to send into Mesa County Attorney in response to the letter they sent that was discussed at the Special Board Meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Chad Wallace said that he wanted to speak on the matter before any action was taken. There was over an hour of discussion around this on-going issue of being able to provide ambulance service to the two special districts that make up Mesa County Fire Authority. Chad Wallace inquired about the nature of the of the contract with Grand Junction Fire Department. It was explained that it is a temporary contract until MCFA can establish ambulance service in the two special districts. Chad presented information that he had gathered from different resources that shows a decline in the number of volunteer members since 2016 and continuing to the present, but especially since 2022. Chad thought that in a previous meeting that MCFA would run calls under Palisade Fire Department. Chief Balke explained no, that PFD would have the ambulance licensed under PFD with the state to keep them up to date and ready to use. Chad went on to discuss the historical context of starting a volunteer service and then moving to a fire department which lead to a tax district and government entity. Chad continued by expressing concern about the decline in volunteer participation and the shift to paid staff. Chad questioned the feasibility of the current plan that was approved at the special meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup> and was voted on by 4 out of 5 members including himself- which passed with a 4 to 0 vote. Chad now believes this plan in unrealistic given the lack of personnel and the financial

burden of hiring staff and maintaining equipment. Chad also expressed concerns over going in debit half a million dollars for two fire trucks when it does not appear that there are members to run the equipment. Chad suggests that MCFA (LEFPD and COMFPD) do workshops with GJFD and CFD about creating a permanent contract with them to do EMS and fire services for the two special districts and scrape everything that was voted on and approved in the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. Chad emphasized the importance of getting a service agreement in place for the specific areas and focus on what is best for the taxpayers in his opinion as he does not see MCFA being able to meet the financial strain of maintaining current services with paid staff without a significant tax increase or new revenue streams such as wild land teams going on deployment and does not believe that should be the focus. Chad believes that due to the limited number of transports in the LEFPD area and the potential financial benefits of turning tax revenue over to GJFD is a good thing for both parties. Members of the public also spoke up with concerns about the ability to provide services to their family, friends and neighbors who all live in the two special districts and expressed they would never support a tax increase with the state of things at this time.

Murray Thiessen thinks he would vote for getting together with other fire departments and seeing what they might want to do and how they might handle the current situation MCFA is facing.

Eric Talley made a motion to write a letter to Mesa County Attorney asking for an extension for 60 to 90 to exploring other options including options with partnerships with neighboring fire departments, specifically CFD and GJFD through work study groups. Murray Thiessen seconded the motion. All were in favor, no opposed. Motion carried.

Work study groups with GJFD and CFD need to be set up and open lines of communication to see what is best for all departments and citizens. Work studies can happen with all board members present, but no decisions can be made.

Murray Thiessen made a motion to table the hiring pending the outcome of the work study group and attorneys' response from Mesa County. Eric Talley seconded the motion. All were in favor, no opposed. Motion carried.

### ***Update on the purchase of engines***

Chief Balke said that we are about two weeks out of finalizing the payment from the escrow account. Chief Balke advised the board that Engine 51 is out of service due to electrical issue, value and pump failures.

Eric Talley made a motion to cancel the purchase of the 2010 Pierce International 4400 Pumper and only continue with the purchase of the 2010 Crimson International Pumper Tanker even if it means incurring a penalty for backing out of the purchase. David Upchurch seconded the motion. All were in favor, no opposed. Motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### ***Treasurers Report***

Murray Thiessen presented the treasurer's report. We are at 33.3% through the year and income from tax revenue is at 30.56% from Lands Ends and 0% from Central Orchard Mesa but COM Income shows 103.23% due to the repayment of the lone of \$161,661.50 for the tender. Income is 61.33% for the year between the sale of vehicles, loan repayment and bank interest. Total expenses for the year are sitting at 17.29% for the year. It was questioned why the 202 Ambulance training and Certifications are so high when we are not running an ambulance in our district. Chief Balke explained we have been helping pay for classes to get certificated EMTs on staff. It was questioned why station 52 had water charges under 308. Stacy Cox advised due to input error; those charges belong to station 53- and that will be corrected. No other questions. Eric Talley made a motion to approve the treasurer's report with the correction to 308. Dave Upchurch seconded the motion. All in favor, no opposed, motion carried.

### **Chiefs Report**

Chief Balke explained no formal chief's report sent out a head of time as he has been busy with truck purchases, financing and letters to the county attorney. The Fire Academy is going well. Thursday nights from 6pm – 10pm and Sundays from 9am – 5pm. This is a blended program combining online learning with in-person skills training. Currently have 10 people going through it. Seeing great attendance and scoring. Have already had several people apply for the EMT position for MCFA, will see if they want to be hired on at PFD instead including two paramedics.

### **Mesa County Fire Authority – Fire Chief's Report April 28, 2026**

**ADMINISTRATION** • I have posted for the Part-time Firefighter/EMT positions. We have received a couple of applications and several phone inquiries. • We have had a couple of new volunteer applications. Continuing to interview candidates. • I have been working on the response letter to the County Attorney on the action plan to reestablish the ambulance service. • Working with the finance company and sellers on the purchase of the two new fire engines. The finance package is almost complete, and we will need to issue a check for the financing fee of \$5,000.00. This is separate from the annual payments.

**OPERATIONS** • For the month of March 2026 there were 26 Calls for service. For the period starting January 1, 2026, through the end of April 2026 there have been 89 calls. • Continue to work with Mesa County Building Department and other fire agencies on the Wildfire Resiliency Code

**TRAINING** • The Fire Academy is going strong with a total of 10 participants. At the end of each Sunday training, we have been spending time working on various station projects. • On April 12th, we took the academy to the two sites in the Lands' End area that have cistern systems

and performed drafting training. We alternated water tenders to demonstrate the difference in operation and to ensure both sites were functional.

**FACILITY & EQUIPMENT** • We have 800 feet of new 1 ¾" fire hose on order. • Working with the vendor to get on their schedule for SCBA Flow and Fit testing. • A new refrigerator has been ordered and delivered. • We had some electrical work done on station 51 for apparatus bay lights and electrical work performed at station 53 for the extractor placement. The new extractor has been installed and is fully functional.

Calls: no official report but in the last four weeks there have been 23 calls and only one call where there was no MCFA member to respond.

**Community Events/Meetings:**

Safety Fair June 14<sup>th</sup> 11AM to 3PM

**Public Comment:**

Frank Rupp thanked the Chief for all he does for MCFA.

Courtney Griffith addressed the board and public and said she wished that Chad was here to hear it. While numbers on paper is one thing its about the members who show up. So yes, there has been a reduction of number of volunteers but that really a reduction in the number of volunteers who show up and do the work. When MCFA was formed, volunteers who weren't showing up for trainings and calls was removed from the roster and right now we have a group of hard-working dedicated folks who give their hearts and souls to MCFA without the support of their community and their county. It seems like no matter how hard we try the members of MCFA are not supported by Mesa County but rather torn down and built up for the good works we do. While you think it might be best for GJFD to take over, they are already short staffed and facing burn out. I have been on a call in LEFPD that took their ambulance 45 minutes to get there after the page came out they were so busy because of which station the ambulance was sent from. GJFD is going to put their citizens first over ours and service out here will be slow.

Rich Phillips advised that he was stepping down from the cemetery board and Michael Knopp is taking his place.

Wayne also brought it to the attention of the board and Chief that during the bike race in our district on lookers and such parked in front the filling station tank on his property and blocked access and wondered if we need signs at both locations announcing the tanks and not to block, fire line.

***Adjournment of meeting***

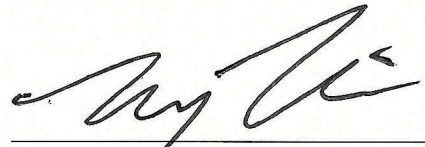
Murray Thiessen made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eric Talley seconded the motion. All in favor, no opposed, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:56.

Next Board Meeting is May 26, 2026 at 7:00.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacy Cox  
Administrative Assistant  
Mesa County Fire Authority

  
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ATTEST

  
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