

MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

July 7, 2026

At 7:00PM 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, Rick Weber, Linda Weber, L. Wiebeg, Martin and Karen Garber, Barbara Roberts, Magan Whiting, Calista and Zach Branstetter, Kristy Hale, Ernest Hale, Bonnie Kosanke, Nathaniel Hale, Justin Whiting, Chris Rowland, Dale, Ty Chaffin, Julie Whiting, Lucas Wade, Candice Cary, Brian Woods, Taryn McIlvenn, Glenn Burket, Colene Rowland, Jennifer Woos, Stephen M. O, T. Stinex, and M. Sandy. Chief Balke and Administrative Assistant Stacy Cox along with many of the volunteer of Mesa County Fire Authority also attended.

Everyone present stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Wayne DeGesualdo said an opening prayer.

MOU With Mesa County

The MOU with Mesa County in reference to the Wildland resiliency code was sent to all board members by email for review. Wayne DeGesualdo asked if everyone had a chance to review the MOU. Everyone agreed they did. A MOTION was made by Eric Talley to adopt the MOU with Mesa County for the Wildland Resiliency Code. David Upchurch seconded motion. All in favor, none opposed. Motion Carried.

Chief Balke explained what the Wildland Resiliency Code is and why MCFA has to adopt one. He explained that Mesa County Building Code would be over building code issues and MCFA will oversee fire code. The reason for this is to make property and such more reliance.

Resolution

Wayne DeGesualdo read the resolution aloud.

Mesa County Fire Authority A RESOLUTION OF THE MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY ADOPTING THE 2025 COLORADO WILDFIRE RESILIENCY CODE

WHEREAS, the Mesa County Fire Authority ("Authority") is a quasi-municipal corporation and political subdivision of the State of Colorado operating pursuant to intergovernmental agreement authorized by Section 29-1-203 and 203.5, C.R.S., between the Lands End Fire Protection District and Central Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District ("IGA") for the purpose of providing fire protection and rescue services; and

WHEREAS, Section 32-1-1002(1)(d), C.R.S., authorizes fire protection districts to adopt and enforce fire codes, although no such fire code shall apply within any municipality or unincorporated portion of a county unless the municipal or county governing body adopts a resolution stating that such code shall be applicable within the fire protection district's boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the IGA provides the Authority will all statutory powers available for fire protection districts; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors finds and determines that it is in the best interest of the residents, taxpayers, and visitors of the Authority to maintain adequate and updated regulations by means of adopting by reference the 2025 Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code for application within the Authority's boundaries.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Board of Directors of the Mesa County Fire Authority as follows:

Adoption of Wildfire Resiliency Code. The Board of Directors of the Authority hereby adopt by reference the 2025 Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code and Appendices, as published by the Colorado Department of Public Safety, attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein ("Wildfire Resiliency Code"), for establishing minimum regulations for the safeguarding of life and for property protection. Regulations in the Wildfire Resiliency Code are intended to mitigate the risk to life and structures from intrusion of fire from wildland fire exposures and fire exposures from adjacent structures and to mitigate structure fires from spreading to wildland fuels. Adoption of the Wildfire Resiliency Code provides for the designated code official to issue permits for construction regulated by the Code, issue permits for operations regulated by this Code, and inspect and enforce compliance upon premises for which such permits have been issued pursuant to this Code. **Designation of Code Official.** Section 103 of the Wildfire Resiliency Code provides for designation of a code official with authority for implementation of the Code. The Board of Directors of the Authority hereby designate its Fire Chief (by prior intergovernmental agreement the Fire Chief for the Town of Palisade currently serves as the Authority's Fire Chief) as the designated code official for implementation of the Wildfire Resiliency Code.

Revisions or Amendments to the Wildfire Resiliency Code. This Resolution of Adoption shall apply to any amendments of revisions subsequently promulgated by the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

Severability. If any part, section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this Resolution or the Wildfire Resiliency Code adopted hereby is for any reason held to be invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions. The Board of Directors hereby declares that it would have passed and adopted this Resolution and all other parts of the Wildfire Resiliency Code should any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase be declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Copies on File. A copy of this Resolution and the Wildfire Resiliency Code adopted herein shall be kept on file in the business office of the Authority, and shall be available for public inspection.

Repealer. All resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict with this Resolution, are hereby repealed, provided that this section shall not repeal the repealer clauses of any prior resolutions or hereby revive any ordinances or resolutions previously repealed.

Publication. This Resolution shall be published upon adoption in The Daily Sentinel.

Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect and be enforced immediately upon its approval by the Authority's Board of Directors, and shall be in full force and effect within the unincorporated portions of Mesa County located within the Authority.

Authorization. The officers of the Authority are authorized and directed to take actions necessary and appropriate to affect the provisions of this Resolution.

INTRODUCED, READ, AND APPROVED by the Board of Directors of the Mesa County Fire Authority, upon a motion duly made, seconded and passed at its special meeting held on the 7th day of July 2026, by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 against, and 0 abstentions.

MOU and resolution were signed.

Work Shop

Wayne DeGesualdo gave a brief summary of what brought everyone here today. He explained that MCFA is responsible for fire protection and emergency response with the exception of law enforcement to our two districts. Since COVID it is harder to get volunteers but the folks standing in the back of the room are just that and they are paid a stipend for volunteering. In 20 days they graduate from Fire Training Academy with certifications for Fire 1 and hazmat. Now to be an EMTS you must be on protocol in Mesa County and work under a medical doctor who reviews their work. EMTs must do ride along rides with other agencies right now to complete the protocol process. It is required that so many calls/reports are completed and then submitted for review, depending on the review other work may be required to finish getting on protocol. This process can take months to years depending on their full-time job, family obligations etc. Volunteers are held to the same standards as those who are getting paid. In achieving the hours necessary for protocol, they must ride along on calls with paid personnel and perform EMT duties under supervision. Volunteers have to find time between other obligations that works with the other agencies schedules making it a little more difficult for our volunteers.

Over time we have lost all of our protocolled EMTS- and now we have one who also has a full-time job. Mesa County stepped in and said we can not let you be in this position with only one EMT to service both districts.

We had hired Darrell Charlesworth as our chief and his primary goal was to get more people on protocol although he had several when he started. We must have a minimum of two in order to run our ambulance.

A member of the public asked as the board what is the reality of hiring the folks you need to run on our residents and provide the level of care we deserve.

Wayne DeGesualdo advised at this time we still only have one EMT on protocol and while in the process of trying to hire, the County sent us a letter about 3 months ago and gave us 60 days to fix this issue or they will take our ASA away. Their suggestion was to merge or do something now.

A member of the public asked what happens if we lose our ASA? We will no longer be allowed to provide ambulance service in this area.

Wayne DeGesualdo advised the money is just not there to hire a full-time staff and chief at MCFA as a stand-alone entity. We could for a year maybe two but it is not sustainable. Studies have shown that one combined organization overall would service Mesa County better than several small departments. COM and LEFPD did that- they joined together to create MCFA but between leadership and decreased volunteers it has not helped these two districts. So, the time has come to figure out what is next to best service this area.

Eric Talley advised that GJFD has been running calls in the LEFPD for reimbursement for labor and equipment (gas and maintenance).

Chad (Whitewater citizen)- said he lives at XXX Red Tail Court and needed an ambulance twice- for my wife who laid there on the floor dying and the first time it took 42 minutes for an ambulance to arrive and the second time it was 35 minutes. Do you know how hard it is to hold the hand of your wife as her life is slipping away while you wait on an ambulance that my tax dollar should be paying for? The doctor said 6 more minutes and there would not have been anything they could have done to save her. We deserve to have service in our area not someone coming from GJFD or CFD where you have to watch your family member slipping away and in pain, its just not right. Out here it is just not going to help us, we are to far from Clifton and Grand Junction. We are LEFPD and I fill like I have been failed by MCFA. I paid \$272.00 this year on property tax for emergency services but did not get this service and had to then pay Clifton for the service. The board apologized that he had to go through this kind of ordeal and that is why we are having this meeting to make sure no one is left without service.

A public member asked how goes merging or getting in an agreement with Clifton get us better service and protection.

Chad Wallace said I have been on this board for a year. About 4 months ago I started researching as I did not like what I saw happening. We started losing EMTs and in April of 2024 we voluntarily gave up our ambulance licenses and entered into an agreement with GFPD. 66% of EMS calls have been handled by GJFD since then and they have been paid for coming out here while 35 % of EMS calls are handled by CFPD and they are not getting paid. The county gave us 6 months to get our act together and should have, could have done that before now but we haven't and now it is July 2026. Within the last year we have had four EMTs on probation trying to get on Protocol and am I being told they could only do their ride along rides with Palisade.

Spoke with CFPD and GJFD and both said they were taking 3rd riders but no one from MCFA has been sent to them to complete their rides. Why? Not sure other than Palisade wants 5 special districts together to create a kingdom and raise the Mil Levy to 15 in order to support the kingdom. We looked at GJFD for a solution or idea and they did not respond with a suggestion or idea. Clifton has offered to help run our services in their verbal presentation- a pass-through plan to evaluate over the next 2 to 3 years so we can get the department back where it needs to be. A small piece of history is that LEFPD was a non-profit organization that moved to a government agency with standards and regulations. Standards for protocol has not really changed what has changed is leadership. Balke promised that Josh would over see our EMT program- and he has lost Josh from Palisade and MCFA. Balke has not made in progress in the last year, none of his goals he set has been met. Our ambulances are licensed for Palisade but not here- and they are being used. Palisade is short funded and they need the money but never explained how they would help us during our meeting with them. Brian Cherveney and Brain Woods gave us a verbal proposal on how they can help us. If we do not take action then we can lose both districts completely. We need to reorganize and join with Clifton.

Kris Hubbs as how many rids to you need to get on protocol? The answer was 2 months or 15 reports which ever comes last but it is much deeper than just the rides. It the quality of care, quality of reports, the knowledge the care provider has and is able to show.

Rick Weber ask how many have read CORA- go the county and get the reports so you are informed.

Candice Cary said she is a nurse LPN and a nursing student, and the way the board member speaks about the members and leadership is very demoralizing and inappropriate. Your conservations sound like you have nothing positive to say about your chief, your department or any of your members who work out here. You make them sound like you think they are worthless. From one professional to another, how are you helping your members achieve their goals rather than tearing them down? How are looking for EMTs to help out here?

Chad Wallace interrupted Candice and made a motion to Stop the Public from talking and continue the meeting without interference. David Upchurch seconded the motion. Two approved motion, three opposed. Motion Failed

Candice Cary was able to continue that she is happy to help and advocate for EMTs to come work here but because of comments being made by the board it would be difficult as this time. People are disappointed and angry, saying the board makes this not a good place and this is from outside agencies from your department I deal with as a nurse. You need to get your heads together and take how you treat your people seriously.

Public member asked if MCFA merges with Clifton is that all service, EMT, EMS, Fire, etc. Chad Wallace advised that is the wrong terminology, it not a merge but more of a partnership. Advised he wanted to applaud Val for keeping her EMT protocol stats with a target on her back. The real question is how can we keep EMS out here, what is it going to take. This is what we are trying to do with partnering with Clifton. There are issues, and restructure that will have to happen so that we can provide the needed service out here.

A public member asked if they could dumb it down how many EMTs, ambulances, staffed fire trucks out here. Chief Cherveney advised trying to collaborate and find a solution, and needs to understand it would not be full time staffed at this location at this time.

A public member asked if our equipment is useable. Yes, just need bodies to staff them.

Chief Cherveney said that he appreciates all the volunteers and all those that are almost on protocol.

Brian L. asked for Cherveney to advise what protocol is. Said that it is when you meet the standards that the licensed doctor has set in order to function as an EMT in Mesa County under his medical license.

A member of the public asked how long Chief Balke has been in charge. Chad Wallace advised since March of 2025.

Chief Cherveney said our goal is to be a central foundation for us to create a partnership.

A member of the public said that his insurance has gone up over 8K for his property on Purdy Mesa (COM/LEFPD) is that because of the stats of the fire department.

Wayne said he is trying to paint a picture of where we are and where we need to be. We held a workshop to talk about options, Grand Junction is happy to help with mutual aid, help build us up but no formal proposal on how to do that. Palisade wants to create a new large district. Clifton provided a verbal proposal with written outline on how to help us. We were not able to make a discussion in the workshop. The way we see it is we have three choices. One, take no action and let the county decide for our districts, Two, join with Palisade and create a new large district. Three form a partnership with Clifton. That's what on the table.

Rick Weber said I am a retired professional fire fighter from 1978 due to lung damage. Volunteered in 2008-2009 on the board and before that showed up as a citizen. I want to say first board members get no salary. Went to a class in Pueblo in 2007 about retention and recruitment for volunteer fire departments. Wayne attended a breakout session at a conference a year or two ago that said in five years volunteer fire departments will not exist anymore. Rick advised he would be happy to provide his option on the matters at hand if anyone wants to give him their email address. Our volunteers we have try hard but the paradigm has switched.

Asked by a member of MCFA if they are just spinning their wheels as volunteers. Was advised no but it not the boards place to make volunteers are happy but rather to make sure the community is provided for.

Rich Phillips said when he was young, he helped form a volunteer fire department then went to paid position for 5 years. Said he has come to pretty much every meeting representing each citizen in the district even if they didn't know it. I believe this board is trying their best to provide for this community the services needed. We have 2 new ambulances and one 4000-gallon tanker. I want to see this station used.

Robert said it does not feel it is fair that we moved away from the hiring process when we had multiple people applying for the part time positions. What about us who are trying to build up the department. There would be a place with Clifton if you can meet the standards required.

Wayne DeGesualdo advised that was what we're working towards but the County Attorney said no if you can't be up and running immediately. We were looking at having to try to get many of the applicants on protocol which is the same dilemma we are facing now.

Kris Hubbs asked how much are we pay Grand Junction Fire and could we use that to pay for MCFA folks. Stacy Cox said she can provide a breakdown of that after the meeting but it is pennies compared to what it will take to run a fully staffed department.

Chad Wallace said we were given six months in 2024 to turn this around and we have not. We now have an ultimatum.

Kris Hubbs asked if it the board intention to make MCFA a professional department after the 2-3 years with Clifton

Wayne DeGesualdo said hats off to our volunteers, you are in our consideration and we are not really sure what the future looks like yet. It is our intention to provide the best service to our community in what ever form that looks like.

A member of the public asked if this agreement would allow our volunteers to continue. Answer was we have ideas but nothing has been worked out yet.

Chief Cherveney said there is a process to come on at Clifton and we do have single roles as well as dole roles.

There is no formal resolution at this point and that will be board to board discussion.

Courtney Griffith said she has been serving this community for 12 years, through 3 medical directors and 4 chiefs. I see the struggles with response times. I am giving vague information about the problems we faced with people that were here before. Trying to be respectful of people's reputation and not slander them while trying to still be transparent. I believe we have a good group of volunteers and the ones causing the problems are gone.

How many people were on the structure fire this week. Five MCFA member worked the fire. Why was Clifton not called to this fire. Courtney said she request a specific wild land team and Grand Junction as they were the closest.

Asked if volunteers would be allowed to train with Clifton to give them a chance to grow and then fill open positions. They would be able to apply for positions.

Chad Wallace read into the minutes Resolution #2026-01 and David Upchurch seconded it. A vote was called, all in favor and none opposed. Resolution/motion passed. (This resolution is attached in its entity following the minutes.)

From here we need to create a committee of two board members to meet with Clifton to get a plan together. David Upchurch nominates Eric Talley (COM) and Chad Wallace (LEFPD). All in agreement.

Public Comment:

Rick Weber thanked the board, and said I know this is hard.

Rich Phillips said, as the agitator of the community, I will be watching the time line.

Kris Hubb said I know hard I know grief and this is a terrible mistake.
Chad Wallace said then give us a solution.

Frank Rupp spoke about the mutual aid efforts on the fire that MCFA just had and how Courtney was able to save the house. It was asked why Palisade was requested but Clifton was not asked for when they are the closer unit. Courtney said it was because she knew that Palisade had a wildland team in house and was available and that Clifton had been busy with other calls.

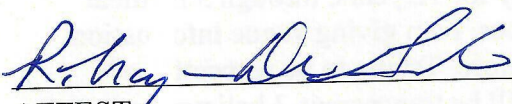
Adjournment of meeting

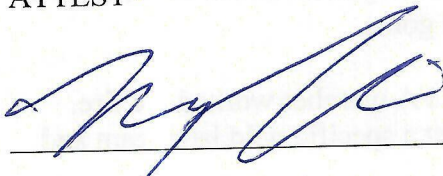
Eric Talley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Murray Thiessen seconded the motion. All in favor, no opposed, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:06

Next Board Meeting is July 28, 2026 at 7:15PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Stacy Cox
Administrative Assistant
Mesa County Fire Authority


ATTEST


ATTEST

MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

Resolution No. 2026-01

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY
ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR THE EVALUATION OF A PROPOSED REGIONAL EMERGENCY
SERVICES PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CLIFTON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

WHEREAS,

The Mesa County Fire Authority ("MCFA") is committed to providing reliable, sustainable, and legally compliant fire protection and emergency medical services to the communities it serves; and

WHEREAS,

The Board has received information regarding a proposed regional emergency services partnership from the Clifton Fire Protection District ("CFPD") for the potential provision of fire protection, emergency medical services, ambulance transport, fire administration, and related emergency services; and

WHEREAS,

The Board recognizes that any future agreement requires careful evaluation of operational, financial, legal, and governance considerations before any decision is made; and

WHEREAS,

The Board further recognizes the importance of conducting this evaluation in a transparent, collaborative, and timely manner in light of Mesa County EMS compliance requirements and the long-term planning currently underway by both organizations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY:

Section 1

Authorization

The Board authorizes the continued evaluation and development of a proposed Intergovernmental Agreement with the Clifton Fire Protection District.

The proposed agreement may include fire protection, emergency medical services, ambulance transport, fire administration, operational support services, financial participation, capital planning, asset participation, and other related emergency service functions.

Adoption of this Resolution authorizes evaluation and discussion only and shall not constitute approval of any agreement or commitment by the Authority.

Section 2

Guiding Principles

In evaluating the proposed agreement, the Board intends to be guided by the following principles:

- Protection of public safety and reliable emergency service delivery.
 - Compliance with applicable County and State emergency service requirements.
 - Long-term operational and financial sustainability.
 - Fair financial participation, including recognition of existing MCFA assets and investments.
 - Clearly defined operational authority and accountability.
 - Protection of taxpayer interests.
 - Preservation of MCFA's independent governance unless otherwise determined by the Board.
 - A transparent, collaborative, and timely evaluation process conducted in good faith.
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Section 3

Board Liaisons

The Board shall appoint **two members of the Board of Directors** to serve as Board Liaisons during the evaluation process.

The Board Liaisons are authorized to:

- Coordinate communications and meetings with CFPD representatives.
- Exchange information requested by either organization.

- Gather information for Board consideration; and
- Report progress to the full Board.

The Board Liaisons shall not:

- Bind the Authority.
- Approve agreement terms.
- Commit the Authority to any proposal; or
- Represent that the Board has approved any proposal without formal Board action.

The Board may modify these appointments at any time by majority vote.

Section 4

Independent Legal Counsel

The Board directs the Board Liaisons to identify one or more qualified attorneys experienced in Colorado Special District law and Intergovernmental Agreements for Board consideration.

The Board prefers legal counsel that:

- Represents solely the interests of the Mesa County Fire Authority.
- Is independent of either negotiating party.
- Is free from any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and
- Has demonstrated experience representing Colorado public entities in intergovernmental agreements.

Selection of legal counsel shall be made only by formal action of the Board.

Section 5

Continuity of Administrative Services

The Board recognizes the importance of maintaining uninterrupted administrative leadership and governmental operations throughout the evaluation process.

If the Authority's existing administrative services arrangement expires, is terminated, is modified, or if the Board determines that an alternative administrative services arrangement is

in the best interests of the Authority before completion of a comprehensive agreement, the Board may evaluate and consider a temporary administrative services agreement with the Clifton Fire Protection District or another qualified provider.

Any temporary administrative services agreement shall:

- Be limited to maintaining continuity of governmental and administrative operations.
- Be temporary in nature pending completion of the Board's evaluation of a long-term service agreement; and
- Require formal approval by the Board at a properly noticed public meeting.

Section 6

Board Authority

Only the Board of Directors, acting during a properly noticed public meeting, may approve, modify, or reject any proposed agreement or any material provision thereof.

The Board intends that all Directors receive substantially the same information throughout the evaluation process and that all significant policy decisions be made collectively during public meetings.

Section 7

Planning Schedule

The Board recognizes the importance of timely evaluation of the proposed agreement in light of:

- Mesa County EMS compliance requirements.
- The need to provide certainty regarding future emergency service delivery; and
- The planning, budgeting, and capital improvement activities currently underway by both organizations.

Accordingly, the Board establishes the following planning objectives:

- **Within approximately 30 days:** Complete an initial review of the proposed services, financial framework, governance concepts, and identify issues requiring Board direction.

- **Within approximately 60 days:** Receive a preliminary agreement framework together with legal and financial review and identify any remaining issues requiring resolution.
- **Within approximately 90 days:** Consider a substantially complete proposed agreement or receive a written status report identifying outstanding issues and recommending a revised schedule.

These timeframes are intended as planning objectives to promote timely, thoughtful, and transparent evaluation while allowing adequate opportunity for public discussion, legal review, and informed decision-making.

Section 8

No Obligation

Nothing contained in this Resolution obligates the Mesa County Fire Authority to enter into an agreement with the Clifton Fire Protection District.

Any agreement shall become effective only after formal approval by the governing boards of both organizations.

Section 9

Intent of the Board

The purpose of this Resolution is to establish an organized, transparent, and timely process for evaluating a proposed regional emergency services partnership.

The Board intends to conduct this evaluation in good faith, with appropriate legal and financial review, while protecting the interests of the residents, taxpayers, volunteers, employees, and communities served by the Mesa County Fire Authority.

The Board further recognizes that a timely and transparent evaluation process is in the best interests of the Authority, its residents, neighboring emergency service agencies, and Mesa County, and intends to work cooperatively toward an informed decision within the planning objectives established by this Resolution.

Adoption of this Resolution shall not be interpreted as approval or rejection of any proposed agreement, but rather as the Board's commitment to a deliberate, informed, and publicly accountable evaluation process.

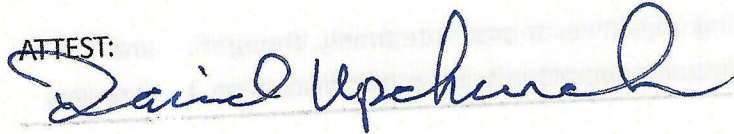
PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 7 day of July, 2026.

MESA COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY



President, Board of Directors

ATTEST:



Secretary, Board of Directors