UNIFIED FIRE AUTHORITY BOARD MINUTES

October 20, 2026 7:30 AM
Electronically via Zoom Webinar/UFA Headquarters-3380 South 900 West, SLC, UT 84119

- Call to Order
  Quorum present
  Chair Fotheringham called the meeting to order at 7:31 a.m.

- Public Comment
  No members of the public requested to speak either in person or electronically. Public comment was available live and through the posted public comment email address.

- Minutes Approval
  a. September 15, 2026, UFA Board Meeting Minutes
  Mayor Gettel made a motion to approve the September 15, 2026, UFA Board Meeting minutes as submitted. Mayor Sudbury seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

- Committee Updates
  Chair Fotheringham reported that no committee meetings had been held since the previous Board meeting. There will be a UFA Finance Committee Meeting on December 1, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

- Consent Agenda
  a. Review of September Disbursements
  Chief Financial Officer Tony Hill presented the September 2026 disbursements, located under Tab 2 beginning on page 9 of the Board packet. He stated that he had no specific items to highlight and was available to answer questions. No questions or discussion followed.

  Councilmember Stewart made a motion to approve the consent agenda as submitted. Mayor Overson seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

- Consider the Date of November 17, 2026, for a Public Hearing to Receive and Consider Comments on Proposed Amendments to the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year Budget
  Chair Fotheringham stated that UFA would like to hold a public hearing date to receive and consider comments on proposed amendments to the FY 2026–2027 budget on November 17, 2026.

Mayor Gettel made a motion to set the date of November 17, 2026, for a public hearing to receive and consider comments on proposed amendments to the 2026-2027 fiscal year budget. Mayor Sudbury seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

- Approval of the FY27/28 Budget Calendar

  CFO Hill reviewed the proposed FY 2027–2028 budget calendar, beginning on page 17 of the Board packet. He explained that budget planning occurs throughout the year, with the formal process scheduled to begin in December. The proposed calendar followed UFA's customary process, including three Benefits and Compensation Committee meetings, two Finance Committee meetings, and multiple opportunities for full Board review.

  The first two Benefits and Compensation Committee meetings are scheduled for January 28 and February 11, 2027. The Board proposed moving the March 18 meeting from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. to accommodate scheduling conflicts.

  CFO Hill also reviewed the remaining major budget milestones:
  April 12, 2027: Finance Committee meeting for Chief Burchett's proposed budget presentation.
  April 29, 2027: Extended Finance Committee meeting for division budget presentations and committee recommendations.
  May 18, 2027: Scheduled approval of the tentative budget.
  June 15, 2027: Scheduled approval of the final budget.

  Councilmember Stewart made a motion to approve the proposed FY 2027–2028 budget calendar, changing the March 18, 2027, Benefits and Compensation Committee meeting to 2:00 p.m. Mayor Jackson seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

- Operations Report

  Assistant Chief Dustin Dern presented the Operations Report under Tab 4 of the Board packet. His report included monthly operational performance, the quarterly automatic and mutual aid report, a significant rescue in Big Cottonwood Canyon, and a Wildland Division season update.

  Call Volume Report

  Year-to-Date Activity and September Performance
  Chief Dern reported that year-to-date incidents were approaching 33,000, approximately 1,700 more than at the same point in the previous year. Overall year-to-date performance remained consistent with expected levels.

  Chair Fotheringham asked a question about whether the increase was concentrated in particular areas,

Chief Dern explained that call growth was generally distributed throughout UFA's jurisdiction. Growing communities, including Millcreek and Eagle Mountain, experienced more growth than smaller communities such as Copperton, but no single station or community accounted for the overall increase.

Chief Dern reviewed September incident totals, unit responses, and response-time measures, including dispatch processing, turnout, travel, and total response time. He highlighted a 44-second increase in the 90th-percentile total response time.

Assistant Chief Dern's initial review of the call data identified approximately 34 incidents with unusually long processing times. Chief Dern explained that these appeared to include incidents initially received as police calls and subsequently transferred for fire or medical response. He believed the reporting system was retaining the original police incident start time, thereby extending the time attributed to UFA's response. Some reported times approached 39 to 40 minutes.

Chief Dern emphasized that the explanation was still being researched. When the identified incidents were removed from the analysis, performance remained consistent with normal levels. Staff were working with Darkhorse to review and correct the reporting issue, and Chief Dern would provide follow-up information if further review identified a concern.

In response to a question about whether other statistics raised concerns, Chief Dern stated that he had not identified additional unusual performance issues.

Unit Hour Utilization and Incident Types

Chief Dern reported no significant changes in September unit hour utilization. Several ambulances continued to operate at utilization levels ranging from approximately 15 to 23 percent. Heavy apparatus utilization remained generally consistent with prior reporting, and crews continued to be busy.

He also reviewed the incident breakdown by call type. Fire incidents declined from 108 in August to 75 in September. Chief Dern attributed the decrease in part to changing weather and seasonal conditions.

Quarterly Automatic and Mutual Aid Report

Chief Dern presented the automatic and mutual aid report through the third quarter. He reminded the board members that Chief Burchett introduced the report in July and that staff would return with updates quarterly.

Through the third quarter, UFA had received 101 more unit responses than it had provided to partner agencies. By comparison, the July presentation showed that UFA had provided 32 more unit responses than it had received.

Chief Dern reported no significant unexpected changes in the agency-by-agency relationships. Mutual aid activity continued to grow with incident volume, and the distribution among partner agencies remained generally consistent with expectations.

He clarified that the report counts individual unit responses that actually arrive at an incident. Units dispatched but not arriving are excluded from both aid-given and aid-received totals.

Willow Heights Trail Cardiac Arrest Rescue

Operations Chief Nate Kay reviewed a September 26 rescue on the Willow Heights Trail in Big Cottonwood Canyon.

Shortly before 10:00 a.m., crews from Stations 108 and 110, along with Battalion 14, were dispatched to a reported cardiac arrest approximately one mile from the trailhead near Solitude Ski Resort. A man hiking with his wife had collapsed, and bystanders began CPR before emergency personnel arrived.

Battalion 14 and Station 108 arrived at the trailhead at approximately the same time. Battalion 14 established command, while Station 108 personnel and a Brighton UPD officer formed a team, gathered equipment, and hiked to the patient.

Upon reaching the patient, personnel confirmed that he was unresponsive, not breathing, and without a pulse. Bystanders had performed CPR for approximately 30 minutes. Station 108 paramedics assumed care and identified a shockable cardiac rhythm. They delivered a defibrillation shock, established intravenous access, administered cardiac medications, and placed an advanced airway. Shortly afterward, the patient regained a pulse and began making efforts to breathe independently.

Crews continued advanced medical care while coordinating an evacuation plan. Dense forest and surrounding terrain prevented a helicopter hoist rescue, requiring personnel to carry the patient approximately one mile to the trailhead.

Medic Ambulance 110 personnel brought additional medical equipment and a Stokes rescue litter up the trail. Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue personnel and Solitude Resort Bike Patrol assisted with the evacuation. A University of Utah AirMed helicopter was dispatched to a landing zone at Solitude Resort.

The patient continued to improve during the evacuation and was attempting to speak and follow commands by the time crews reached the trailhead. He was placed in the staged ambulance, and care was transferred to the AirMed crew for transport to the University of Utah Hospital.

Chief Kay reported that the patient was awake and talking upon arrival at the hospital. He received advanced cardiac treatment in the cardiac catheterization laboratory and was admitted to the medical intensive care unit. After approximately one week, he was discharged without significant neurological deficits and returned home to Argentina with his wife.

The patient and his wife had arrived in Utah the day before the incident. Chief Kay reported that the medical team identified strenuous activity at high altitude as a contributing factor in the cardiac event.

Chief Kay emphasized the importance of early, sustained bystander CPR, advanced medical care, and coordination among responding agencies. He recognized UFA personnel, UPD, Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office, Solitude Resort Patrol, University of Utah AirMed, dispatchers, and civilians who assisted.

Board members commended the response and successful outcome. Chief Dern noted that the incident would be recognized through UFA's life-saving coin presentation program.

2026 Wildland Fire Season

Division Chief Anthony Widdison presented an overview of the 2026 wildland fire season. He described another active year within Utah and throughout the western United States, with significant local incidents and large, complex regional fires.

Chief Widdison reported that Utah experienced its most significant wildfire season by acreage since approximately 2007. He identified the Widemouth, Babylon, and Cottonwood fires among the state's largest recent incidents and stated that UFA personnel supported suppression efforts on all three.

UFA resources also supported incidents in Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, California, Oklahoma, and Texas. Chief Widdison emphasized that these assignments strengthen state and federal partnerships while providing operational experience and professional development.

Salt Lake One Hand Crew

Chief Widdison reported that the Salt Lake One hand crew continued progressing toward interagency hotshot crew status.

During the summer, UFA conducted an internal embedded review with an experienced hotshot crew superintendent. The review provided a positive assessment of the crew's qualifications, operational performance, leadership, and readiness to advance in the certification process.

Following the review, UFA submitted its implementation package to the Great Basin Operations Committee and was awaiting an official response.

After its final wildfire assignment, the crew transitioned to fuels reduction projects, prescribed fire preparation, and seasonal rehabilitation work. Chief Widdison recognized the crew's professionalism, resilience, and commitment throughout the certification effort.

Wildland Engine and Single Resource Programs

UFA's wildland engines completed numerous assignments, including deployments to Texas earlier in the year and other major incidents during the summer. Deployments continued into October, particularly in California, where fire activity and resource needs remained elevated.

Chief Widdison explained that the engine program provides additional suppression capacity and opportunities for Operations personnel to participate in assignments and advance their qualifications.

The Wildland Division also managed another busy year of single resource deployments. UFA personnel served in command and general staff positions on national incident management teams and in supervisory and specialized operational assignments. These deployments supported major incidents while strengthening relationships with interagency partners.

Rapid Extraction Module Support

The Rapid Extraction Module Support, or REMS, program provided specialized rescue and medical resources for wildfire incidents in remote and difficult terrain. Teams completed out-of-state assignments, including deployments to Nebraska and Idaho.

Chief Widdison explained that REMS personnel operate where conventional rescue and medical resources may have limited access, providing capabilities that are increasingly important during complex wildfire incidents.

Camp Williams

UFA maintained dedicated wildfire suppression resources at Camp Williams to support the Utah National Guard. Crews provided seven-day operational staffing during the fire season, along with prescribed fire and fuels management activities to reduce risk and support training operations. Staffing was scheduled to continue through October, with prescribed fire and mitigation work continuing as conditions allowed.

Fuels Mitigation and Local Response

The fuels crew completed mitigation projects throughout UFA's jurisdiction and continued the Chipper Days program to help residents improve defensible space around their properties.

During periods of elevated fire activity, the crew balanced mitigation work with wildfire response. Assignments included significant incidents in the Millcreek area and smaller incidents, including lightning-caused fires in remote areas.

Chief Widdison emphasized that the crew's ability to support initial and extended attack adds operational capacity and allows Operations resources to return to their response area. As fire activity slowed in September, the crew resumed mitigation projects delayed by incident response.

Chief Widdison concluded by recognizing Wildland Division employees for demanding work, extended time away from their families, professionalism, and commitment to safety. Chair Fotheringham thanked him and asked that the Board's appreciation be conveyed to the division.

Eagle Mountain Hazardous Materials Incident
Mayor Gettel asked about a hazardous materials response at the Meta data center in Eagle Mountain. Assistant Chief Dern did not have sufficient incident details available at the meeting. Staff agreed to obtain additional information and provide it to the Board by email or at a subsequent meeting.

- Administration and Planning Report
  Assistant Chief Wade Russell presented updates on the behavioral health program and Fire Prevention Week.

Captain Lane Hilton's Retirement and Service Recognition
Chief Russell recognized Captain Lane Hilton, whose retirement was effective November 1, 2026. Captain Hilton began his career with UFA in 1995 and served as a firefighter, paramedic, company officer, and EMS medical training officer before helping develop and lead UFA's behavioral health program.

Chief Russell explained that Captain Hilton combined operational experience with his professional training as a licensed counselor to support employees, retirees, and their families.

Since 2016, Captain Hilton had helped expand counseling access, strengthen peer support and crisis intervention, and change how employees discuss mental health and seek assistance. Chief Russell emphasized his role in reducing stigma and helping individuals through significant personal crises. His work extended beyond UFA to the broader fire service, and the Professional Firefighters of Utah recognized him with its Frontline Leadership Award in 2021.

Chief Burchett thanked Captain Hilton for his impact on UFA and the fire service. He shared that Captain Hilton had personally helped him following the death of his brother and emphasized the difference one

person can make in the lives of others. Chief Burchett committed to continuing the program Captain Hilton helped build and presented him with a Fire Chief coin and letter of appreciation.

Captain Hilton thanked the Board and UFA leadership for supporting behavioral health services over the preceding decade. He acknowledged significant progress while emphasizing the need for continued work, particularly following the recent loss of another firefighter in the Valley to suicide. He encouraged continued support for UFA's program and similar efforts at UPD. He also thanked the chiefs under whom he had served for their leadership and friendship.

Captain Hilton stated that he planned to begin working with one of UFA's contracted providers on November 2, allowing eligible UFA personnel to continue accessing his services through that provider.

Behavioral Health Program Transition
Chief Russell explained that following Captain Hilton's retirement, UFA would transition from an in-house clinician model to a full-time behavioral health case manager.

The case manager would serve as a point of contact for individuals seeking assistance, connect employees with external clinicians, support and manage the peer support team, and coordinate behavioral health benefits and resources with Administration.

Chief Russell stated that the goal was to preserve a clear pathway to care and make it easier for employees to access appropriate services.

Fire Prevention Week
Fire Marshal Wade Watkins reported on Fire Prevention Week, held October 4–10. UFA's outreach aligned with the National Fire Protection Association's lithium-ion battery safety focus and "Charge into Safety" messaging.

Chief Watkins explained that UFA had already been addressing lithium-ion battery hazards and used Fire Prevention Week to reinforce safe charging practices and awareness of rapid fire growth associated with battery failures.

The social media campaign generated approximately 40,000 views and more than 60 shares. A video showing the rapid development of a lithium-ion battery fire attracted particular attention and helped communicate the importance of safe charging.

Chief Watkins thanked Information Outreach for developing and distributing the messaging. He stated that UFA intended to continue aligning annual Fire Prevention Week outreach with NFPA's initiatives.

- Support Services Report

  Assistant Chief Zach Robinson presented an overview of the Salt Lake County Continuity Cup exercise and updates on construction and design projects.

  Salt Lake County Continuity Cup

  Emergency Management Deputy Director Ellis reported on the second annual Continuity Cup, a three-day series of exercises testing continuity of government and operations. The exercise examined how Salt Lake County divisions could support one another and how County government could assist other agencies and jurisdictions during a catastrophic event.

  This year's scenario involved a wind-driven wildfire originating near Herriman and spreading into Herriman, Riverton, Bluffdale, and Draper. The scenario contemplated approximately 50,000 evacuations and associated response needs.

  The exercise included five primary components:

  - Sheltering: Activation of sheltering teams and trailers, with an emergency shelter setup at the Viridian Event Center.
  - County division continuity planning: Division-specific scenarios addressing staffing impacts, available vehicles and equipment, and the potential reassignment of personnel to support response.
  - Policy group decision-making: Participation by the County mayor, deputy mayors, district attorney, clerk, UFA Fire Chief, and Sheriff's Office to address emergency declarations, communications, and other leadership decisions.
  - Emergency Coordination Center operations: A simulated Level 1 full activation involving emergency support function personnel.
  - Crisis communications: An exercise involving the County's crisis communications team.

  Deputy Director Ellis reported that the exercise was successful and identified lessons to incorporate into training throughout the year. The Continuity Cup would continue annually with a different scenario.

  Station 103

  Chief Robinson reviewed construction progress on the new fire station 103 in Herriman. He clarified that the station was funded by Herriman City. UFA was not directly managing construction, although Logistics and Facilities personnel had assisted City staff throughout the project.

  The initial punch-list walkthrough had occurred the previous week. A considerable number of items remained, and the contractor was working toward completion.

UFA planned to begin moving larger furnishings and equipment into the station in late October, including desks, fitness equipment, and gear racks. The target date for moving the crew from the existing station was November 17, contingent on completion of necessary punch-list items and issuance of a certificate of occupancy. The grand opening was being planned for early January.

Joint UFA–BLM Wildland Fire Station

Chief Robinson reported that schematic design for the joint UFA–Bureau of Land Management wildland fire station was complete. The project had entered design development, focusing on building layout, mechanical systems, and construction details.

The design development submittal was scheduled for December 4, with review continuing through January 8. Acceptance of that submittal would bring the project to approximately 65 percent design completion. Chief Robinson also reported that UFA was working with BLM to address the difference between the current project estimate and the funding limit established in the agreement. Staff would keep the Board informed as those discussions progressed.

Fire Training Facility

Chief Robinson reported that UFA signed its project management contract with Construction Control on October 5. The project was moving into architect selection. The request for qualifications was scheduled for release on the meeting date and would close November 17. Staff anticipated completing selection and issuing a notice to proceed in early January. The preliminary schedule allowed approximately eight months for design, two months for bidding and permitting, and 18 months for construction.

- Fire Chief Report

Paramedic Hiring/Staffing Model Update

Fire Chief Dominic Burchett presented updates on paramedic staffing, a community donation, and organizational changes.

Paramedic Staffing and Temporary Response Model Review

Chief Burchett reported that UFA continued to experience a paramedic shortage and increased mandatory shifts at that rank. Although mandatory staffing typically increases during summer vacation periods, the pressure had continued into the fall, when some relief would normally be expected.

During station visits, Chief Burchett had observed the effects on employees. He explained that UFA was evaluating a temporary response model adjustment to reduce the number of paramedics required on duty each day while recruitment and training efforts continued.

The Medical Response Advisory Group (MRAG) of approximately 10 to 12 employees representing multiple organizational levels had met once and was scheduled to meet again in November. The group was reviewing available options and would provide recommendations, an implementation timeline, and potential trigger points for activating, discontinuing, or reversing a temporary model.

Chief Burchett acknowledged the complexity of changing the response model and stated that this complexity was one reason UFA had proceeded carefully.

Recruitment Efforts
Chief Burchett reviewed three hiring pathways intended to increase the number of paramedics entering the organization.

The lateral process sought licensed paramedics with firefighting experience who could complete an abbreviated orientation rather than a full recruit camp. These employees could generally begin operational assignments approximately one month after hire.

Despite a national recruitment effort, four lateral candidates remained in background checks. Chief Burchett stated that bringing those candidates into the organization would still make the effort worthwhile. The paramedic-only process sought applicants with paramedic credentials but without firefighting experience or certifications. Those candidates would need to complete approximately 16 weeks of recruit training before operational assignment.

That process closed October 13 with 28 eligible applicants. UFA was interviewing 24 candidates during the meeting week. Chief Burchett explained that approximately half of an applicant pool may successfully complete all hiring stages and said that obtaining 10 to 15 paramedics through the process would be a positive result.

UFA had also reopened its special-hire process for current Wildland and part-time EMS employees meeting established requirements. Four individuals were being considered through that pathway.

Chief Burchett estimated that the combined efforts could result in approximately 10 to 15 hires, while cautioning that multiple hiring stages remained. Many successful candidates would not be available for operational assignments until June.

He emphasized that Command Staff had shifted its focus toward addressing the staffing challenges and was considering additional solutions and incentives. Prior efforts had each provided some benefit, but no single action had resolved the issue. Paramedic education requires approximately nine months in addition to prerequisites, limiting how quickly the workforce can expand.

Chief Burchett anticipated providing additional information at the November Board meeting regarding a potential response model adjustment and its impacts.

Holiday Inn Express Donation

Chief Burchett reported that the Holiday Inn Express in Herriman donated $2,500 to UFA and $2,500 to Herriman Police Department in connection with its grand opening.

The donation to UFA was unrestricted, and Administration would identify a meaningful use for the funds. Chief Burchett attended the grand opening and publicly thanked the hotel for recognizing and supporting public safety agencies.

He explained that UFA policy allowed the Fire Chief to accept donations below $5,000 and required Board approval for donations above $5,000. An initially anticipated $5,000 donation prompted discussion with legal counsel because the policy did not expressly address a donation of exactly that amount. Chief Burchett obtained the Chair's approval before acceptance; the actual UFA check was subsequently received for $2,500.

Organizational Changes and Succession Planning

Chief Burchett reviewed organizational changes previously communicated to Board members and employees. An updated organizational chart was included at the back of the Board binder and had been distributed by email.

Assistant Chief Robinson had advised Chief Burchett of his intention to retire at the end of 2027 after approximately 30 years of service.

Chief Burchett explained that the anticipated retirement created an opportunity to reassign the Assistant Chief portfolios before major projects advanced further. A principal consideration was continuity of leadership for the fire training facility, with construction anticipated to begin near the end of 2027. The reassignment would allow one Assistant Chief to oversee the project through completion.

The changes would also give Chiefs Dern and Russell experience in additional portfolios, supporting leadership development and preparation for potential future Fire Chief opportunities.

Chief Burchett acknowledged that the reassignment would require the Assistant Chiefs to learn new responsibilities but anticipated limited disruption to the broader organization.

Board Appreciation and Life-Saving Coin Presentations

Mayor Overson thanked UFA for the invitation to a life-saving coin presentation at Station 118 and for its participation in the Taylorsville pancake breakfast.

Chief Burchett explained that life-saving coins are presented through the medical division. The Division meets with the responding crew, reviews the incident, and recognizes the actions contributing to a successful outcome. He had begun inviting mayors and councilmembers to appropriate presentations in their communities so they could see the impact of UFA personnel firsthand. Presentations are often scheduled in groups of four or five during a quarter, and Board members would receive invitations when applicable.

- Possible Closed Session

  Chair Fotheringham announced the need for a brief closed session and requested a motion. Mayor Overson moved to temporarily recess the meeting and convene in closed session to discuss matters as provided by Utah Code Annotated Section 52-4-205, and to adjourn the October 2026 meeting at the conclusion of the closed session. Mayor Jackson seconded the motion, and a roll call vote was taken.

Bailey	YES	Jackson	YES
Birrell	YES	John	Absent
Bourke	Absent	Kanter	YES
Buroker	Absent	Overson	YES
Butterfield	Absent	Stewart	Absent
Fotheringham	YES	Sudbury	YES
Gettel	YES	Van Horn	YES
Gray	YES		
Harris	Absent		
Henderson	YES		

A closed session was held.

- Adjournment

  Mayor Jackson moved to adjourn the October 20, 2026, UFA Board Meeting. Councilmember Birrell seconded the motion. All voted in favor; none opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mayor Cheri Jackson	Mayor Dustin Gettel
Mayor Paul Fotheringham	Mayor Jared Gray
Councilmember Ellen Birrell	Councilmember Jared Henderson
Councilmember Kathleen Bailey	Deputy Mayor Catherine Kanter
Mayor Kristie Overson	Councilmember Sheldon Stewart

Mayor Mick Sudbury	Councilmember Howard Van Horn

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Mayor Gay Lynn Bennion	Councilmember Catherine Harris
Councilmember Chrystal Butterfield	Mayor Roger Bourke
Mayor Scotty John	Mayor Tish Buroker

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

CFO Tony Hill
CLO Brian Roberts
Clerk Micayla Dinkel

ATTENDEES

AC Dern	HRD Day	AC Robinson	DC Widdison
AC Russell	FM Watkins	DOC Easton	Captain Doyle
Specialist Rivera	DC Greensides	Specialist Cochran	Captain Costin
Rachel Anderson	Captain Hilton	Digital Media Specialist Samuel	DC Ayres
Captain Park	OC Kay	BC Bogenschutz	Deputy Director Ellis