

SSD/SROA Joint Board Meeting Minutes

9:00 A.M. on Friday, April 18, 2025

Sunriver Public Safety Building, 57475 Abbot Drive, Sunriver, Oregon 97707

Call to Order: Chair Fister convened the joint meeting at 9:01 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

SSD Board Present: Bill Hepburn, Jim Fister, Randy Schneider, Denney Kelley, and John Ralston. John Shoemaker was not present.

SROA Board/Staff Present: Keith Kessar, James Lewis, Clark Pederson, Randy Schneider, Bill Burke, Gerhard Beenen, and Keith Mobley.

SSD Staff Present: Fire Chief Boos, Police AIC Chief Van Meter, Administrator Holliday, Executive Assistant Fobi, and CSO Steinbrecher.

Public Input: None

1. Welcome & Overview:

SROA Board President Beenen and SSD Board Chair Fister provided welcome statements. They commented on how nice it is to finally be in the new building and host this meeting. Chair Fister stated they are working on a policy to ensure the community can reserve Seator Hall, particularly during working hours. There was discussion about various people to thank, how these individuals coordinated with SROA and the County to make this project a reality, and an update on the finances. Finally, a big thank you to the SROA staff for managing the move-out process and handling the growing pains of the transition.

2. Bike Patrol & Pathway Safety

The Pathway Safety Program is working in close collaboration with the SROA Public Safety Task Force, including James Lewis and Clark Pederson, to improve education and enforcement around e-bike usage, ensuring pathways remain safe for both homeowners and guests. The focus includes reinforcing passing, courtesy rules, and addressing concerns related to dogs being on or off leash. The Task Force is also refining regulations, with a draft report of updated rules and recommendations expected for board review in May or June. These efforts include improvements in signage, communication, and education enforcement, along with ideas like distributing small cards outlining bike rules and promoting community-wide cleanliness. The Task Force is also coordinating with nearby communities like Bend, Black Butte, and Caldera to align rules and avoid duplicating work.

To support effective operations, combined training sessions will be held for Bike Patrol and Citizen Patrol members, with input from the District Attorney's office to clarify what each group can and cannot legally do. CSO Steinbrecher stated there are six bike patrol officers who will begin their roles on Memorial Day weekend. She stated all patrol members will be equipped with radios for clear communication. SROA shared enthusiasm about working with CSO Steinbrecher, especially given the high volume of pathway-related calls, making strong coordination essential.

3. Police Report, Summary of LPR & Drone Activity

AIC Chief Van Meter provided the police report, beginning with the introductions of Michelle Mertins as the new Police Department Executive Assistant and Brittany Fobi as the SSD Executive Assistant to Administrator Holliday. AIC Chief Van Meter reviewed 2024 statistics, provided staffing updates, and shared examples of continued partnerships with state and regional agencies further establishing its reputation as a center of law enforcement excellence. The new building and Seator Hall have been instrumental in hosting various trainings and meetings.

Community engagement continues to be a priority with events like Shop with a Cop, the 4th of July celebration, Halloween, Oktoberfest, and the Polar Plunge. In drone operations, the program is temporarily grounded following the departure of the lead pilot, however, Officer Lyman is currently in training to take over with plans to onboard a second pilot. Once operational, internal CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) training will be implemented to integrate drone capabilities into emergency planning. Drones have proven effective in public safety, including an incident where one was used to track a bear in Sunriver.

The Flock Safety Program remains an invaluable investigative and public safety tool. Since launching last summer, the system has scanned 363,000 license plates. It enables officers to run investigations using license plate data, capture alerts for “hot” plates via mobile devices, and conduct nationwide searches. It has already contributed to solving a homicide by identifying a vehicle from Kansas City. Flock provides visibility of vehicles entering and exiting Sunriver and integrates with Deschutes County emergency services for real-time response.

Finally, Police Chief Rasic is in the final stages of hiring and will officially begin his role on April 28, 2025.

4. Rules Enforcement Discussion – Contract Update

SROA has maintained a longstanding contract with the District to enforce SROA rules and regulations. A key development was the introduction of the nuisance property rule, which holds property owners accountable for the behavior and condition of their properties. Citations are now issued directly to both owners and the property managers, leading to a significant reduction in complaints. SSD continues to enforce SROA rules under the current agreement, which is now due for renewal. As part of this renewal, there is interest in integrating bike patrol into the existing framework, potentially blending the two agreements into a cohesive plan. Maintaining consistent language across contracts is crucial, especially when addressing responsibilities, enforcement capabilities, and cost-sharing structures. SROA emphasized ensuring operational efficiency and fiscal responsibility is key to the success of the partnership. Additionally, strong relationships between personnel from both organizations continue to play a critical role in preventing issues and fostering collaboration.

5. Emergency Communications Discussion

There have been positive and strategic discussions with the Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office, which oversees Emergency Management for the region. A top priority moving forward is to develop a consistent, countywide emergency communication system. The goal is to ensure that if evacuations occur, whether in Sunriver, Black Butte, or Bend, the processes and procedures remain unified and streamlined to avoid confusion.

Sunriver has unique assets to support this effort, including a 5G tower. There is interest in exploring whether Sunriver could serve as a pilot site for expanded 5G access to enhance emergency communications. SROA has been approached by various cellular providers and remains open to discussions if there is a demonstrated need. With infrastructure like power access already in place, these assets could play a vital role in supporting emergency management initiatives. Additionally, pathway signage related to emergency alerts is being reviewed, as many are outdated and reference the old siren system. The transition will focus on modernized communication methods that are practical and responsive to today’s needs.

Given Sunriver’s layout, which is divided into multiple districts, evacuation efforts will likely need to be phased and customized by area. There is an ongoing discussion about introducing color-coded signage at traffic circles and along Highway 97. While change will take time, SROA is committed to working collaboratively and leveraging its multiple communication channels to reach both residents and guests.

Continued conversation, planning, and partnership with emergency management leaders will be key to successfully implementing these improvements.

6. Fire and EMS Report

Fire Chief Boos provided the fire and EMS report and stated total calls for service have continued to decline, following a long-term downward trend since 1993, with an average of around 600 calls per year considered normal. Despite the overall decrease, the department provided a substantial amount of mutual aid to the La Pine area over the past year, due in part to combined operational efforts between the two communities.

One notable event was the Bachelor Complex Fire, during which Sunriver escalated from a Level 1 to a Level 2 evacuation. The community responded exceptionally well, with coordinated support from county officials and Search and Rescue (SAR) teams, particularly in assisting vulnerable populations. Effective emergency response during such events requires close coordination with both the county and ODOT, which was successfully demonstrated with the establishment of a satellite command center and mobilization of necessary resources. Looking ahead, SSD is partnering with SROA to form an emergency management team to meet quarterly to enhance preparedness. An annual wildfire preparedness fair has been introduced, with the next event scheduled for April 29 at the SHARC. This event will offer education, resources, and practical guidance to help the community prepare, with the understanding prevention and preparation are key.

Chief Boos highlighted his greatest concern: a structure fire occurring during a high wind event, which could lead to a rapidly moving and dangerous situation. He also emphasized the fire risk posed by the rail line on Sunriver's east side, where trains frequently carry hazardous materials pose a potential threat.

He thanked SROA for its patience and collaboration during ongoing construction and planning efforts and acknowledged the strong support from the community and the valuable contributions of the Citizen Patrol. Looking to the future, Boos noted a desire to improve event promotion and awareness to encourage even greater community participation in safety and preparedness initiatives.

7. SROA & SSD Strategic Planning Impacts

The District is finalizing its strategic plan, which is expected to be approved next month. This follows the approval of SROA's strategic plan in September 2024, which incorporated shared guiding principles across both organizations, including excellence in governance, environmental stewardship, enhanced quality of life, a strong Sunriver experience, and community engagement. Both entities identified specific goals, policies, and action items, with some flagged as high priority. In October 2024, SROA conducted a goal-setting session in collaboration with SSD to clarify roles and responsibilities, reduce overlap, and establish clear expectations. These efforts were integrated into the 2025 budget planning process.

The strategic plan is set to span five years, which is considered the maximum effective timeframe for long-term planning. Alongside this, there are efforts to build comprehensive community partnerships with the Sunriver Resort, Village, and the District. The SSD Strategic Plan is primarily operational, focused on maintaining a healthy organization, fostering strong internal relationships, and ensuring long-term capacity to deliver reliable public safety services. However, budgeting remains a challenge.

Looking ahead, the District is exploring long-term funding strategies, such as issuing bonds, reassessing rates, or expanding the service boundary. Expansion would require careful consideration, as it comes with increased responsibilities and potential costs. Discussions are ongoing with nearby communities like Caldera Springs, Crosswater, and Vandervert Ranch about potential police coverage. However, fire

service expansion appears less feasible in many of these areas, as La Pine Fire District already provides effective coverage. SSD leadership remains committed to evaluating these options strategically and ensuring any changes are both sustainable and beneficial to the broader Sunriver community.

8. SSD Boundary Expansion Update

SSD Chair Jim Fister provided an update on potential boundary expansion, with early conversations underway with neighboring communities such as Caldera Springs, Crosswater, and Vandervert Ranch. These discussions are in the very preliminary stages. SSD leadership emphasized any expansion will only move forward if it clearly aligns with the district's capabilities and serves the best interests of the Sunriver community.

9. Building/Campus Updates & Parking Lot Discussion

SROA stated the remodel of the existing police department is progressing well, with Phase 1 completed and a new operational entrance in use until June 9. Phase 2 of the project is now underway in the existing SROA area, with the main lobby expected to open by mid-June. The construction remains on budget. However, the project has temporarily reduced available parking due to the presence of a dump trailer, tools, and active construction zones. This has highlighted the importance of ongoing communication between SROA and SSD to coordinate parking logistics and minimize disruption. Patience and flexibility are needed from both sides during this time.

Parking challenges are particularly evident during events at Seator Hall. While a few SROA staff or guests using the lot isn't an issue, simultaneous events at Seator Hall and SROA can cause significant congestion. Improved coordination around event scheduling will help ease these pressures. While adding more parking is an option, it would come at a high cost.

It was noted the SROA parking lot is scheduled to be paved from May 19 to 23, 2025 with work being staggered to allow one side to remain open at a time to minimize disruption.

10. Coordination on External Activities (ODOT Messaging, TRT, Traffic Circles)

Significant transportation and infrastructure discussions are underway involving ODOT, regional leaders, and the Sunriver community. A key concern is the future of Highway 97, with reports indicating there may be no funding available for regular maintenance beyond 2027. This raises serious concerns, especially in the context of a potential Cascadia Subduction Zone event, where Highway 97 would serve as the primary north-south corridor for freight and emergency movement through Oregon. The urgency of the issue has prompted coordinated efforts among area representatives to develop a consistent message for state legislators. Letters have already been sent during past winter maintenance issues, and collaborative meetings including one at OSU Cascades with over 30 stakeholders have taken place. Increased commuter traffic from La Pine to Bend further strains Highway 97.

SROA is also focused on specific intersection improvements near Sunriver, including South Century, Spring River, and Venture Lane. A public comment process allowed SROA to submit a response for the Spring River/South Century intersection, which could impact Sunriver properties. SROA recommended moving the intersection further south into an open area with fewer residential impacts. There is also consideration of a pedestrian and bike tunnel on Venture Lane, due to high traffic volumes in that area. SROA and Caldera have not yet engaged the designers on this topic, but SROA emphasized the need for a comprehensive and safety-focused approach. Concerns around design practicality remain, particularly regarding emergency vehicle access. SSD stressed any long-term traffic changes must account for the ability to navigate large apparatus, like ladder trucks. Emergency access during construction phases also needs to be guaranteed.

SROA continues to advocate for solutions that reflect long-term community interests rather than short-term fixes and is working to ensure these plans positively impact homeowners.

The meeting concluded with Bill Hepburn recognizing SROA's vital contributions in supporting the new public safety building and expressing thanks to Doug Seator, a former SSD board member, Civil Service Commission member, and Citizen Patrol volunteer, now honored through the naming of Seator Hall.

Motion to Adjourn

Dir. Ralston moved to adjourn; seconded by Dir. Hepburn. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11.09 a.m.

Submitted by Executive Assistant Fobi.

APPROVED