Florida Emergency Management Assistance Foundation, Inc
Board of Directors Meeting

April 10, 2026, at 11:00 AM
Meeting Minutes

I. Call to Order

Chair Spencer called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM

II. Roll Call

Iyana Meeks called the roll. Chris Spencer (Chairman), Steven Lerner (Vice Chair Lerner), Javier Marques (Secretary), and Taryn Fenske (President) were all in attendance. A quorum was present.

III. Approval of January 09, 2026, meeting minutes.

Chair Spencer called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Vice Chair Lerner called a motion to approve; President Fenske seconded the motion. All board members were in favor of the motion, and the minutes were adopted.

IV. Acceptance of the 2024–2025 Financial Audit.

The Board considered the acceptance of the 2024–2025 financial audit. Board members received the audited financial statements in advance, with a representative from Thomas Howell Ferguson available to answer questions. Chair Chris Spencer reported that he had reviewed the audit and found no material concerns, describing it as a clean and well-executed review of the organization's financial position. No questions were raised by board members. A motion to accept the 2024–2025 financial audit was made by Steven Lerner, seconded by Taryn, and approved without objection.

V. Election of Chair and Vice Chair.

The Board proceeded with the election of officers for the upcoming term. Chair Chris Spencer noted that, having served one term, he was eligible for re-election and opened the floor for nominations. Steven Lerner nominated Chris Spencer to continue serving as Chair, with Javier Marques providing the second. With no additional nominations, Chris Spencer was unanimously re-elected as Chair. The Board then considered the Vice Chair position. It was noted that Steven Lerner had reached the term limit for serving as Vice Chair. Chris Spencer nominated Taren Fenske for Vice Chair, the nomination was seconded by Steven Lerner, and, with no further nominations, Taryn Fenske was unanimously elected Vice Chair.

VI. Approval of the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2026–2027.

The Board reviewed the proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 operating budget. Chair Chris Spencer noted the Foundation's continued improvement in its financial position over the past two fiscal years and commended staff for developing a budget that maximizes operational flexibility. Jeremy Smith presented the proposed budget, highlighting a conservative revenue projection of approximately $4.2 million based on a 10% increase over the anticipated Fiscal Year 2025–2026 ending balance and noting that the Foundation had exceeded its revenue and sponsorship projections during the current fiscal year. During discussion, Chair Spencer recommended adding a $100,000 placeholder line item for mass donations under emergency relief, with the stipulation that any specific expenditures from that allocation would require Board notification and approval. The amendment was seconded, approved without objection, and incorporated into the budget. Following no further discussion, the Board approved the Fiscal Year 2026–2027 operating budget as amended by unanimous vote.

VII. Consideration of Funding Request: FDEM Vital Exercise (April 16, 2026).

The Board considered a funding request for the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) VITAL exercise. Chair Chris Spencer reported that, due to the urgency created by the federal government shutdown affecting Department of Homeland Security and FEMA funding, he had authorized a $57,000 Foundation expenditure to cover training costs that otherwise could not be paid, ensuring the scheduled emergency management training could proceed. He noted that the expenditure aligned with the Foundation's mission to support emergency management training and suggested that, if similar situations become recurring, the Board consider adding a dedicated budget line item at a future meeting. Jeremy Smith provided additional details, explaining that the one-day training would support approximately 15–20 senior-level emergency management personnel as part of the VITAL exercise. Following discussion and clarification regarding the scope of the training, Steven Lerner moved to retroactively approve the $57,000 expenditure, the motion was seconded, and the Board approved the expenditure without objection.

VIII. Updates

a. Financial Update

Jeremy Smith presented the Fiscal Year 2025–2026 financial performance update, reporting that the Foundation continues to exceed expectations. Contributions and sponsorship revenue have surpassed budgeted projections by more than 150%, and the Foundation currently holds approximately $2.7 million in assets. Smith noted that, after accounting for anticipated expenditures of approximately $1.0–$1.5 million related to the upcoming Florida Emergency Management Conference and other planned activities, the Foundation is projected to end the fiscal year with more than $1.3 million in net assets. He also highlighted continued fundraising success through the conference, gala, and golf tournament, as well as the establishment of a money market account that has generated more than $25,000 in interest income. Chair Chris Spencer commended staff for their strong financial stewardship and the Foundation's continued growth. No questions were raised by Board members. Before moving to the next agenda item, Kelly Ann Kennedy confirmed that the earlier officer elections complied with the Foundation's bylaws, verifying that the Board's actions regarding the Chair and Vice Chair terms were legally consistent.

b. Communications

Casey Bruno provided an update on preparations for the upcoming Florida Emergency Management Conference. She reported that the Foundation concluded its sponsorship campaign with 54 sponsors after the sponsorship deadline, reflecting a successful fundraising effort. Staff are actively coordinating conference logistics, including collecting award nominations for the gala, planning sponsor-hosted networking events, and working with the training team to finalize registrations and event preparations.

IX. Discussion on Pending Business Items

a. Mass Donations (e.g. Feeding Florida)

The Board discussed a proposed disaster preparedness donation to support pre-positioned emergency food supplies in advance of hurricane season. Javier Marques sought clarification on whether the requested funding would be transferred immediately or committed for future use, noting the potential benefit of allowing funds to grow if no major disasters occur. Lela Whitfield explained that the partner organization maintains reserve supplies and was seeking assistance to replenish warehouse inventory rather than requiring immediate emergency funding, while noting that the timing of the contribution could be coordinated with the organization. Board members discussed the Foundation's longstanding partnership with the organization and its role in supplementing the Division's existing emergency food resources. After considering the Foundation's strong financial position and the recently approved budget allocation for mass donations, Chair Chris Spencer recommended funding two truckloads of emergency food rather than the full request. Steven Lerner moved to approve the purchase of two truckloads at a cost of $47,305.44 per truck, for a total approved expenditure of $94,610.88. Javier Marques seconded the motion, and the Board approved the expenditure unanimously without objection.

X. Upcoming Activities

The Board received an update on upcoming Foundation activities. Casey Bruno reported that preparations are underway for the leadership program graduation on the 21st, noting the program's success and value to participants. Planning also continues for the Foundation's golf tournament, with strong interest from participants and ongoing sponsorship efforts. Staff are finalizing logistics for the Florida Emergency Management Conference and gala while working with sponsors to ensure they maximize the benefits of their sponsorships through event registrations. Lela Whitfield provided additional updates on sponsorship reconciliation efforts and recognized Iyana Meeks and Skye for assisting with sponsor coordination. She also reported that fundraising initiatives at the conference will include the inaugural golf tournament, an "All-In for Emergency Management" casino-style fundraising event following the gala awards ceremony, and a merchandise store, with proceeds benefiting the Foundation. Iyana Meeks reminded Board members of the upcoming annual meeting on July 10. Chair Chris Spencer encouraged Board members to attend the conference and gala to support the Foundation, and several members confirmed their plans to participate.

XI. Public Comment

No public comment made.

XII. Adjournment

Before adjournment, William Spicola advised that the meeting minutes should reflect that the Board formally resolved to allow Chair Spencer to serve an additional term in accordance with the Foundation's governing requirements. Steven Lerner raised a discussion regarding the need for a process to handle future donation requests, noting that stakeholders had begun inquiring about how Foundation funds may be accessed and what procedures exist for submitting requests. Chair Spencer stated that, as a direct support organization, the Foundation should not receive requests directly, but rather that requests should be reviewed and vetted through Florida Division of Emergency Management leadership before being presented to the Board for consideration. Lela Whitfield agreed and indicated that staff would develop and present a proposed process outlining how donation requests are received, evaluated, and recommended to the Board, ensuring alignment with the Foundation's mission and appropriate due diligence. Chair Spencer adjourned the meeting at 11:44 AM.