

**Western Lakes Fire Board**  
**Monthly Board Meeting**  
**August 13, 2024**

**Call to Order**

- George Morris called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Board members present were George Morris, Kent Lorenz, Bill Riemenschneider, Dan DeBehnke, and Scott Carter. Jeff Roemer and Mike Tompkins were excused.

**Proof of Notice**

- Chief Bowen announced that the notice was posted Friday, August 9, 2024, at 11:14 p.m. in accordance with open meeting laws.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

- George Morris led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Discussion – Impact Fee Study**

- Chief Bowen discussed with the Fire Board an item that has been included in the 2025 Operating Budget. Several years ago some of the municipalities asked about the District completing an Impact Fee Study to consider the impacts of the growth and development on the District's Stations and assist in funding the construction of future Fire Station(s). Now that the Community Risk Assessment is completed and the Standards of Cover will be completed by year end the time to consider an Impact Fee Study has come. With regard to Fire/EMS Services the only eligible item that impact fees can fund are stations. As the communities grow over the next 7 years there may be a need for an additional fire station. The fees are collected by the municipalities when building permits are issued if an impact fee is in place. Until a study is completed, this is an unknown of what is needed and how much could be collected to help offset the costs of new construction to current tax payers. No action is needed at this time, however if approved in the budget an RFP will be issued this fall to begin the process of completing the study. Once completed the municipalities will decide if they will implement impact fees.
- The Fire Board appreciated the discussion and information on this process. This is a proactive approach to consider the impacts of new development on the current system and would assist the current tax payers with these costs as the new development is the cause of additional needs and would be paying these fees if approved.

**Discussion – 2025 Operating Budget**

- Chief Bowen distributed the draft 2025 operating budget. Since the initial presentation staff has worked diligently to obtain final numbers for the budget. The proposed budget includes a 4% inflationary increase on the municipal contribution in addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the staffing plan. Of the proposed budget increase labor costs account for nearly the full amount. With the exception of \$30,000 for the impact fee study and \$12,438 of other operational increases the remainder is all labor costs. Chief Bowen walked the Fire Board through the various revenues the District receives to cover the District's expenses. Many of the revenue sources are fixed much like the municipal levy contributions leaving very little room for changes to the budget. EMS reimbursements from health insurance continue to decrease due to the aging population within the District and high medicare coverage. Due to mandatory writedowns of medicare the District only receives about 30% of the cost of providing the service. Expenditures have been heavily evaluated with the Chief going through a line item review of each category. The proposed budget includes the addition of 6 new full-time firefighter/paramedics and 3 new Lieutenants which are the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final phase of the staffing and funding plan presented in 2022 with implementation starting in 2023. These new positions will bring the five fire stations to full staffing of a five person crew allowing an initial

effective response force of a med unit and suppression unit from each of the stations. The budget includes a 3% COLA for the full-time employees in 2025, and takes into account the 9.9% health insurance increase through the State of Wisconsin Program. On a positive note through a culture of safety the District is projecting a decrease in the workman's compensation modification factor which will cause a decrease in premium costs. The budget includes increases for utilities based on notification received from the various vendors providing electric, gas, water, and sewer services to the stations.

- Members of the Fire Board deliberated the draft budget. Chief Bowen shared that Board Member Tompkins would prefer a 2.5% COLA to be considered rather than the 3% which is included in the budget. Dan DeBehnke shared his company is providing a 2.5% COLA next year due to decreased revenue. Scott Carter brought up the competitive market currently and that if we can maintain the 3% this year he would prefer to do so based on other agencies approving similar increases. For 2024 the District gave a 2.5% increase which was lower than some other agencies. The board recognizes that without cutting staff or wages there is very few options to consider. City of Oconomowoc Administrative staff asked if the District could consider a 3% inflationary adjustment for next year without impacting staffing. Chief Bowen calculated a 1% reduction would be \$140,000 and that they could provide options to the municipalities if necessary, but more than likely would be made to labor and staffing costs and have operational impacts and service level impacts.
- A motion was made by Scott Carter and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approved the proposed 2025 Operating Budget as presented. Further discussion by the board was that this is a service based budget which has direct impacts on the District's ability to provide services. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Discussion – 5-Year Capital Improvement Budget**

- Chief Bowen distributed the amended 5 year capital improvement budget. The amended CIP includes some apparatus, equipment, and facilities costs being postponed after further evaluation of the current condition of these assets. Some projects are able to be delayed due to preventative maintenance and overall use. Some projects have been brought forward in the CIP as they require more immediate attention. The overall fiscal impact of the CIP has stayed the same with these changes for many of the years. The 2027 CIP has a reduction in overall cost, and the 2028 CIP had a reduction until adding a line items for Emergency Operations Center Costs at the City of Oconomowoc Police Department. The EOC is able to be used by any municipality and these improvements including information, technology, and equipment. The total project cost is \$55,000. With this project included in the 2028 CIP, the overall fiscal impact will be evaluated along with pursuing grant opportunities.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kent Lorenz to approved the amended 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Future Agenda Items and Meetings**

- Monthly Fire Board Meeting – Monday, August 24, 4:00 pm at Station 1.

#### **Adjournment**

- At 6:05 p.m. a motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Bill Riemenschneider to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.