

**Western Lakes Fire Board**  
**Monthly Board Meeting**  
**December 17, 2025**

**Call to Order**

- George Morris called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. Board members present were George Morris, Jeff Roemer, Dan DeBehnke, Scott Carter, and Kevin Laabs. Excused were Kent Lorenz and Mike Tompkins.

**Proof of Notice**

- Chief Bowen announced that the notice was posted Friday, December 12, 2025, at 3:50 p.m. in accordance with open meeting laws.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

- George Morris, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Comment**

- George Morris opened the meeting up to public comment, of which there was none.

**Fire Chief's Report**

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the board year-end projects that are in the process of being completed, including the station alerting and security camera project, fireground physical agility test, and apparatus maintenance and refurbishment. Chief Bowen advised the board of ongoing meetings with WLFD and LCFR management regarding possible consolidation, and that a joint command staff meeting was held earlier in the month, which showed significant support from both teams. In the coming months, additional meetings will be held to further analyze the possibilities together and develop a comprehensive vision, including operations, staffing, financials, and municipal governance, for municipal leaders to further weigh in on. Draft ordinances are being developed for the municipalities to consider regarding the implementation of impact fees upon completion of the facilities needs assessment and impact fee study, as well as an ordinance related to lift assists at staffed medical facilities that are not providing the service.

**Discussion/Action – District Fee Schedule**

- Chief Bowen presented to the board an overview of the fee schedules associated with Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Special Event Standby services, Fire and Highway services, and Fire Prevention services. These fees pertain to specialized services rendered to specific individuals or businesses. The assessment of these fees occurs annually and reflects the costs incurred in the provision of services. In determining these fees, we consider not only the operational expenses of the District but also the rates established by comparable agencies for similar services, thereby ensuring equitable and competitive pricing. A proposed adjustment of four point twenty-five percent (4.25%) is anticipated for the District's fee schedule in the year 2026. This recommendation aligns with the guidance provided by the municipal boards during the review and approval process of the District's budget. The increase is directly associated with the levy increase imposed on municipalities for fire and emergency medical services. As the costs incurred by the District for delivering these services are projected to rise by 4.25% in 2026, the fee schedule will reflect this corresponding adjustment. These fees have been integrated into the budget for 2026, which received approval from the municipalities on September 10, 2025.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve the 2026 District Fee Schedule as presented, effective January 1, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

## **Future Agenda Items and Meetings**

- Monthly Fire Board Meeting – Monday, January 26, 2026, at 4:00 pm at Station #1.

## **Closed Session**

- George Morris announced the Fire Board will convene into closed session pursuant to section 19.85(1)(c), Wisconsin State Statutes, “To consider employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation of the District’s part time and full-time employees, over which the Fire Board exercises responsibility;” *Specific compensation, benefits, and performance evaluations related to specific employees.*” The Fire Board will reconvene into open session at the conclusion of the closed session.
- A motion was made at 4:34 pm to enter into closed session by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke. Roll call vote was performed with all in favor.
- A motion was made at 5:49 pm to move to open session by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kevin Laabs. Motion carried unanimously.

## **Discussion/Action – 2026 Compensation Schedule**

- Chief Bowen reviewed the annual evaluation conducted by the Chief and the Human Resources Manager, which analyzes wage structures using internal and external data from local law enforcement agencies and comparable fire departments. The evaluation considers wage compression within WLFD and includes insights from legal counsel on regional wage negotiations. Projected wage adjustments for 2026 vary between 2.0% and 5.0% for both internal and external increases. Local comparisons show Oconomowoc Police budgeted a 3.78% increase, while Lac La Belle Police and Summit Police have increases of 4.0% and 5.0%, respectively. Factors influencing these adjustments depend on each municipality's financial capacity. The 2026 budget proposes a 4.0% wage increase across full-time, apprentice, and part-time positions. Management suggests a base wage adjustment of 3.0%, plus a 1.0% annual increase for employees who pass a job performance physical function test or receive a legal exception. The annual compensation plan also includes compression adjustments between different classifications to prevent internal compression issues. This increase emphasizes the District’s commitment to employee health. If established in 2026, the 1.0% increase will be retroactive to January 4, 2026. The proposed wage adjustments are included in the approved 2026 budget for all positions, effective January 4, 2026, with the retroactive adjustment applying once the test process is finalized.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Kevin Laabs to approve the 2026 wages as presented for the District’s Full-time, Part-time, and Apprentice positions effective January 4, 2026. Upon completion of the bona fide process for the annual job performance physical function test, a 1.0% adjustment for those who pass or receive authorized exemption will be retroactively applied to January 4, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

## **Adjournment**

- At 5:54 p.m., a motion was made to adjourn by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke. Motion carried unanimously.