

Western Lakes Fire Board

Monthly Board Meeting

December 18, 2023

Call to Order

- George Morris called the meeting to order at 4:0 p.m. Board members present were George Morris, Jeff Roemer, Kent Lorenz, Mike Tompkins, Bill Riemenschneider, Dan DeBehnke, and Scott Carter.

Proof of Notice

- Chief Bowen announced that the notice was posted December 15, 2023, at 3:44 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.
- Village of Dousman resident Amy Beckman spoke and thanked the District and, specifically, employees who responded to her husband's motorcycle accident in July. Without the immediate response and units arriving on the scene in less than 3 minutes, her family and holiday season would be completely different. She thanked everyone for their service and brought cookies and a donation from the family.

Consent Agenda

- Items listed under the Consent Agenda are considered in one motion unless a Fire Board Member requests that an item be removed from the Consent Agenda
 - Minutes of November 27, 2023 regular Fire Board Meeting
 - Payment of bills August in the amount of \$543,960.37.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Scott Carter to accept the Consent Agenda items including meeting minutes from November 27, 2023 Fire Board meeting and payment of bills in the amount of \$543,960.37. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief's Report

- Chief Bowen updated the board on the recent open house at Station 5 in Okauchee with Santa visiting. Also, a review of the recent employee awards and recognition ceremony held on December 1st, where 320 years of service by the District's team were recognized. Also several life saving awards, merit, and unit citations. The leadership team is actively working through a records management system conversion which will occur on Christmas Eve. The current system ESO has not held up to the promises made by them with regard to customer support, reporting, data analysis, etc. Many of the items they promised have not been implemented. The new system has been used by both Pewaukee Fire Department and City of Brookfield and they are extremely happy with the software. Once the conversion is completed the District will be able to begin the process of completing a Community Risk Assessment with the data and function of the software. The transition to Aladtec for scheduling will improve the functionality of the daily schedule and assist staff with the new format. Lastly, once implemented the new systems are actually slightly less expensive than the current system in use.

Discussion/Action – AFG Grant Project (Plymovent System)

- Chief Bowen provided the board with an overview of the awarded grant through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. The grant is specifically for vehicle exhaust systems to be installed in the District's stations. The grant will place the first-ever system at Station 6 in Stone Bank and replace systems at Station 2 in Dousman, Station 3 in Oconomowoc, and Station 4 in Sullivan. Some updates will be completed at Station 1 in Pabst Farms. The system at Station 5 in Okauchee is less than 5 years old and doesn't require updates. The AFG grant is for \$202,909.00 with the District's share of the project being up to \$25,000. At this time administration is recommending approval of the bid from Hastings Air-Energy Control Inc. in the amount of \$243,000.00.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the bid from Hastings Air-Energy Control Inc. in the amount of \$243,000.00 for the installation of vehicle exhaust systems at the District's station and to proceed with AFG submission for project completion. The District share is not to exceed \$25,000 which will be used from the contingency fund. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – 2024 Fee Schedules

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the board the proposed fee schedules for 2024, including EMS, Fire & Highway, Standby & Special Event, and Fire Prevention. A review of the current fees compared to costs of providing these services was completed along with a comparison of regional agencies charging similar fees for services. Minor inflationary adjustments have been made to the EMS and standby fees. The Fire Prevention and Inspection Fees do not have any increases, but a new category for agricultural inspections, including large buildings such as riding arenas, barns, and storage, has been added. Due to the large square footage, these buildings under the current system would result in higher fees. These inspections have a large square footage, however a riding arena, for example, is able to be completed in a timely manner. This new category for agricultural inspections will reflect the time spent completing inspections and decrease the cost for these specific locations.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kent Lorenz to approve the 2024 Fee Schedules as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – 2024 Full-time and Part-time Wages

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the board the proposed 2024 wages for full-time and part-time employees. Included in the 2024 budget was a 2.5% wage adjustment for the District's full-time employees. In 2023 the District completed a wage adjustment for the part-time wages bringing them to competitive market rates within both the public and private sector. The adjustments to wages in 2023 have made a significant impact on the recruitment and retention rates of positions. The number of vacant positions has dropped to on average single digits for the part-time and apprentice classification. The 2024 budget includes increases to the part-time chief officer and professional wages along with the apprentice wages.
- The Chief brought forward a question from salaried exempt staff when picking up additional shifts in the battalion chief car. Some departments do provide a stipend for doing this. The District's legal council does not recommend this practice as salaried staff are provided a salary that should remain consistent between checks. The board agrees with legal councils and the chiefs recommendation to not provide stipends, but for the chief to monitor and manage when some flexibility is needed due to working additional shifts.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Mike Tompkins to approve the 2024 part-time and full-time wages as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Employee Benefits Policy

- The current Employee Benefits Policy went through a significant review and update in October and November. This review and update was necessary due to changes in the District’s staffing and positions within the District. After going through the pre-selection process for vacation time some updates were necessary and anticipated. The revised policy with updates is recommended following actually going through the process that was originally outlined. There are no financial impacts to updating this policy with changes.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Bill Riemenschneider to approve the revised employee benefits policy as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Future Agenda Items and Meetings

- The next regular meeting of the board will be Monday, January 22, 2024 at 4p. The meeting will be held at Station 1 (Pabst Farms).

Closed Session

1. 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;” for the following purposes: “*Specific compensation and benefits related to specific employees.*” The Fire Board will reconvene into open session at the conclusion of the closed session.
- At 4:35 p.m. a motion was made by George Morris and seconded by Kent Lorenz to move to closed session by roll call vote. Affirmative roll call vote by all board members.
 - At 5:15 p.m. a motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kent Lorenz to return to open session by roll call vote. Affirmative roll call vote by all board members.

Discussion/Action – Following Closed Session Discussion

- A motion was made by Kent Lorenz and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the title change of Division Chief of Training to Deputy Chief of Training as approved in the revised District Organizational Chart. This title change does not have a financial impact, but matches the revised organizational chart and eliminates the Division title from the District. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Sworn Full-time Employee Compensation Steps

- No action taken.

Discussion/Action – Finance Manager Position

- A motion was made by Mike Tompkins and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to authorize the Chief and Human Resources to proceed with hiring the Finance Manager from recommended candidates. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

- At 5:19 p.m. a motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Mike Tompkins to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.