

Western Lakes Fire Board

Monthly Board Meeting

January 22, 2024

Call to Order

- George Morris called the meeting to order at 4:01 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 Friday, January 19, 2024, at 3:44 p.m. in accordance with open meeting laws.

Pledge of Allegiance

- Dr. DeBehnke led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

- George Morris opened the meeting up to public comment.

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 December 18, 2023 regular Fire Board Meeting
 - Payment of bills in the amount of \$1,634,854.00. Included in the payments was a prepayment to Reliant Fire Apparatus for the 2024 replacement engine approved by the board in November in the amount of \$989,977.00. This allowed the District to lock in the cost of the apparatus and take advantage of the prepayment discount.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Kent Lorenz to accept the Consent Agenda items including meeting minutes from December 18, 2023 Fire Board meeting and payment of bills in the amount of \$1,634,854. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief's Report

- Chief Bowen started off by recognizing the work of the WLFD team so far in the month of January. The year kicked off with an early morning structure fire on Morgan Rd in the City of Oconomowoc. The initial response force of an engine, truck, tender, med unit, and battalion chief arrived in under 10 minutes. The first fire suppression units arrived in less than 6 minutes. A few days later, the team responded to a significant vehicle accident involving multiple patients; extrication was required, and an unresponsive patient was ejected from the vehicle and succumbed to their injuries. The following week the region was hit with a significant snow event that caused the County to enact the high call volume protocol. Throughout these incidents, the team worked together to provide the best possible care and service to our residents.
- Work continues with the administrative team on the Community Risk Assessment, revision of policies, and writing of guidelines. In addition, work continues on the District's Intermunicipal Agreement with the municipalities it serves.
- Chief Bowen also reviewed with the board a number of legislative initiatives that are being worked on including bills for PTSD coverage, retiree return to work, healthy aging, peer counseling, firefighter training, and fall prevention.

Chief Officer Reports

- George Morris asked the board if they had any questions for the Chief Officers on their reports or if any of the Chiefs had anything to add.
- Jeff Roemer stated that the team has been busy and working extremely hard on a number of projects as highlighted in these reports. He is very proud of the efforts and teamwork occurring.
- The board was impressed with the services provided to the communities during the storm event and cold weather. Mike Tompkins asked about the response to trees down across roadways. The Chief explained that the District responds to these calls to get the roadways opened up. With the rural communities if a tree is blocking a roadway and an emergency occurs the detour could be 10 minutes or more. Deploying the crews out to open these roadways allows responding units to respond quickly during critical emergencies. For these incidents the fire department is deployed quicker during off hours for public works, and also many of these are handled within a short amount of time. The District works closely with the municipal public works and parks departments to balance these efforts. Chief Bowen thanked the partner police departments and public works departments for the teamwork and spirit of cooperation during the snow events, everyone worked tirelessly together to mitigate the calls for service.
- The board was impressed with the results of the recent job fair. DC Ingersoll said it was a great event despite the snow event and cold weather.

Presentation – 2024 District Training Plan (DC Konen)

- Deputy Chief Konen reviewed with the board the District's 2024 training plan. He thanked the committee members that assisted with developing this plan and putting together the trainings planned for the coming year. The team utilized various training standards and requirements in place by the State of Wisconsin, Insurance Services Office, National Fire Protection Association, and Federal Government agencies to design the training requirements. DC Konen also thanked all of the instructors and employees of the District for their assistance in making 2023 a great year.
- Jeff Roemer thanked DC Konen and the training committee for the work putting together the next year's training plan. This is well laid out and follows state and national requirements.

Discussion – 2024 Grants

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the board past grants that the District has applied for and received. Grants are highly competitive and vary depending on the grant. The District will continue to research grant and funding assistance opportunities at the local, state, and federal levels. In addition the ongoing assistance and support of the Western Lakes Fire and EMS Association with fundraising efforts, and donations from residents has been greatly appreciated. In 2023 several donations were received from businesses, organizations, and individuals to help support training efforts and additional training equipment/props.
- The board supports the teams desire to pursue grant and funding assistance opportunities to help decrease the financial burden for tax payers.

Discussion – Firefighter/Paramedic and Driver Operator Job Descriptions

- Chief Bowen discussed with the board changing dynamics within the industry as they relate to qualifications at time of hire. There is a growing trend locally and throughout the country of candidates not having all of the preferred educational requirements at time of hire. This is also impacting the ability for employees to obtain the training as there are only so many courses offered at a given time and they fill up quickly. As a result administrative staff will be working on reviewing the associated job descriptions and providing recommendations for change to the board.

- The board supports this review and making changes as necessary. This is a trend being seen in other professions as well.

Discussion – District SOG Manual (AC Gscheidmeier)

- Assistant Chief Gscheidmeier reviewed with the board the District’s new consolidated Standard Operating Guideline Book and associated guidelines. The new system consolidates the operating guidelines into a single document that has hyperlinks to each specific guideline. These guidelines are developed through committees and operations before being reviewed and approved by administration. The goal is to add additional guidelines as they are needed and review them on an annual basis as operations change within the District.
- Jeff Roemer commended the staff for their efforts with this project.

Future Agenda Items and Meetings

- The next regular meeting of the board will be Monday, February 26, 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 4:45 p.m. a motion was made by George Morris and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to move to closed session by roll call vote. Affirmative roll call vote by all board members.
- At 5:01 p.m. a motion was made by George Morris and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to return to open session by roll call vote. Affirmative roll call vote by all board members.

Discussion/Action – Full-time Employee Compensation Steps

- A motion was made by Kent Lorenz and seconded by Mike Tompkins to approve Chief Bowen for a full compensation step retroactive to January 1, 2024 as part of his annual performance evaluation. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

- At 5:06 p.m. a motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kent Lorenz to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.