

Western Lakes Fire Board
Monthly Board Meeting
June 23, 2025

Call to Order

- George Morris called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Board members present were George Morris, Jeff Roemer, Kent Lorenz, Mike Tompkins, Dan DeBehnke, Scott Carter and Kevin Laabs.

Proof of Notice

- Chief Bowen announced that the notice was posted Friday, June 20, 2025, at 2:43 p.m. in accordance with open meeting laws.

Pledge of Allegiance

- Kevin Laabs, new Fire Board representative for the Town of Merton, led the Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

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

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 May 12, 2025 regular Fire Board Meeting
 - Payment of bills in the amount of \$978,599.10.
- Jeff Roemer asked about the purchase of 50 sets of structural firefighting gloves for \$4,300 as this seems like a significant purchase. Deputy Chief Meyer explained the purchasing policy of the District and the gloves being a line item of personal protective equipment of the District and the purchase being within budget. This was a bulk purchase to replace worn/damaged gloves for the year. Roemer appreciated the detail and explanation.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve the Consent Agenda items including meeting minutes from May 12, 2025 Fire Board meeting and payment of bills in the amount of \$978,599.10. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief's Report

- Chief Bowen started with a welcome and introduction of Kevin Laabs to the Fire Board as the new representative for the Town of Merton with the recent approval of the revised WLFD IMA. He thanked Bill Riemenscheider for his 38 years of dedicated service to the Fire Board and a happy retirement.
- Chief Bowen provided an update to the board regarding the 2026 operating budget and the initiation of the five-year capital budget process. The deadline for Bureaus and Committees to submit requests for new programs and modifications is June 15. The evaluation of these requests will commence shortly, which includes examining partnership budgets with the Village of Merton and the Village of Hartland. Ongoing collaboration with the Fleet, Operations, EMS, and Training Bureaus is focused on assessing fleet movements and equipment requirements, with specific items in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) being prioritized.
- Two conditional offers have been extended for the positions of Assistant Chiefs, with final offers anticipated in the near future. It is expected that the new Assistant Chiefs will commence their roles between July 1 and August 1. Initiatives are being implemented to enhance employee recognition, as well as to consider merging annual award ceremonies with local law enforcement agencies.
- The District has engaged in discussions at a Waukesha County Traffic Commission Meeting concerning improvements to the most hazardous section of I-94, lending support to a request for

expansion to three lanes. Work on the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs), under the leadership of Captain Laue, is ongoing, with updates slated for submission to the board for approval.

- Continued participation in the Wisconsin Fire & EMS Legislative Coalition is aimed at addressing legislative priorities. The revised WLFD Intermunicipal Agreement has been completed, along with adjustments to the service agreement with the Village of Lac LaBelle and the Town of Oconomowoc, which will be discussed this month. Presentations have been delivered to the Joint Citizens Academy and the WLFD Professional Development Program on topics concerning operations and municipal finance. Collaborations are underway regarding grant opportunities with law enforcement to support the Peer Support Team. Additionally, meetings with Bureaus are being conducted to address operational matters and foster a cohesive organizational vision while also providing mentorship to company officers and staff.
- Scott Carter asked about the levy limit exemption for Joint Fire Departments as it relates to the 2% Plus CPI levy Limit for the Municipalities.

Chief Officer Reports

- George Morris asked if any of the Chief's had anything to add to their reports, and if the board had any questions.
- Deputy Chief Meyer, highlighted the upcoming Retirement Ceremony in July.

Presentation – Personnel Bureau, Deputy Chief Brad Ingersoll

- DC Ingersoll delivered a comprehensive overview of the various responsibilities undertaken by the Personnel Bureau. The primary duties of the Bureau encompass ensuring that the District is staffed with capable and professional personnel, promoting a culture characterized by safety, integrity, and leadership, and supporting the overall operational readiness of the District.
- DC Ingersoll guided the board through the District's initiatives aimed at effectively recruiting and retaining personnel, providing an in-depth examination of the recruitment, hiring, and orientation processes. He emphasized the modifications implemented in these practices over recent years, which were informed by a SWOT analysis, to enhance performance and outcomes. Additionally, he elaborated on the various employment classifications within the District, including full-time, part-time, apprentice, and paid-on-call positions.
- Concluding his presentation, he reviewed the functions of the Health and Safety Committee, highlighting its essential role in mitigating risk and fostering a culture of safety within the Woodland Lakes Fire Department (WLFD).

Discussion/Action – 2024 Financial Audit

- Chief Bowen addressed the board regarding the financial audit for the year 2024, which was conducted by Clifton Larson Allen. On June 11, 2025, Shannon Small attended the Joint Owners and Fire Board meeting to present the financial audit to both the board and elected officials. Chief Bowen inquired whether the board had any questions or concerns following this presentation. The board expressed their satisfaction with the findings of the financial audit. The board has requested that, prior to the 2025 audit staff complete a request for proposal for the next audit to ensure financial competitiveness.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Mike Tompkins to approve the 2024 District Financial Audit as presented by Clifton Larson Allen. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Engine Refurbishment (2025 CIP)

- Chief Bowen began with a review of the CIP and an overview of the District, which presently operates five fire engines, consisting of three primary units and two reserve units. The reserve engine, referred to as Engine 53, has accumulated 34,642 miles and has been in service for twenty years, aligning with its expected useful life. Given the engine's relatively low mileage and overall satisfactory condition, refurbishment has been chosen instead of acquiring a new replacement.

Funding for the refurbishment of one of the reserve engines has been specifically allocated in the budget.

- A thorough evaluation of the reserve engine was performed to determine its viability for refurbishment. Due to its classification as a reserve engine rather than a frontline unit, refurbishment has been assessed as a practical choice. This process is anticipated to be completed more quickly than building a new engine. The costs associated with refurbishment will depend on the needed work and the engine's condition; in this case, the refurbishment cost is projected to be around 6% of the cost of a new unit. The planned refurbishment process will update this twenty-year-old engine to meet the district's current standards and operational needs, potentially adding five to ten more years of service.
- Deputy Chief Igl has requested bids for this undertaking from three different vendors. The financial provision in the 2025 budget for this project stands at \$90,000. As this is a refurbishment initiative, the bid price may vary once the disassembly of the unit and the following work begin. In contrast to purchasing new apparatus, where prices remain constant, a contingency is recommended for this refurbishment project. One bid has been submitted, totaling \$14,747.60 from Rennert's Fire Equipment Service, which is under the budgeted amount. A contingency of 10%, amounting to \$7,500, is suggested. Considering both the submitted bid and the contingency, the total estimated cost for this project, if the entire contingency is used, is \$82,752.40, which is \$7,247.60 under budget.
- The staff recommends approving the refurbishment of reserve engine 53, as quoted by Rennert's Fire Service Inc., for \$75,252.40, along with the allocation of \$7,500.00 for contingency funds to cover any unexpected issues or requirements that might emerge during the refurbishment process.
- A motion was made by Kent Lorenz and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the quote #4927 from Rennert's Fire Service Inc. to refurbish reserve engine 53 in the amount of \$75,252.40 and provide \$7,500 contingency for unforeseen needs during this process for a total project cost of \$82,752.40. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Station Alerting System (2025 CIP)

- Chief Bowen presented to the board the proposals for the installation of In-Station Alerting systems at the District's six stations, as well as the installation of exterior security cameras. This initiative has been included in the District's budget for the past five years but has been postponed annually due to more pressing capital demands. Chief Bowen reviewed the components and design of the proposed station alerting system for each station. Over the past six months, Deputy Chief Meyer, Deputy Chief Igl, Assistant Chief Gscheidmeier, and Chief Bowen have collaboratively assessed the specifications of this project, including its costs. Unfortunately, the original budget estimates were substantially lower than the current actual costs of these systems. The staff has engaged with the vendor to explore cost-saving opportunities that would not adversely affect the overall function and benefits of the system. The initial quote received was double the budgetary figure, necessitating a comprehensive review. Although the revised quote remains above budget, it is offset by savings from the VHF radio replacement project, which was completed under budget. Chief Bowen walked through a financial analysis completed with the District's Finance Manager of the complete capital improvement budget with a detail of each project highlighting the budgeted amount against the actual approved quotes.
- Recommendation by staff is to approved the current quote #1535 from Digicom in the amount of \$447,232.53 with a 10% contingency of \$45,000.00 and \$10,000 for prewiring of the exterior security cameras for a total cost of \$502,232.53. The allocated funding for this project in the CIP is \$300,000.00 with the remaining funds available from excess funds of the radio replacement and tender refurbishment projects.
- Scott Carter sought to obtain Jeff Roemer's insights regarding the necessity and cost implications of the project. Roemer articulated that this project is essential and that the costs are projected to increase over time. He highlighted the advantages of this system in relation to the operations of WLFD, emphasizing the positive impact on ISO ratings, which would enhance employee working

conditions and response times. Additionally, he noted that improvements in ISO ratings would influence insurance premiums for the taxpayers.

- The board appreciates staffs approach to this project including detailed analysis of the project and capital budget as whole to get the project completed.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve proposal #1535 from Digicom in the amount of \$447,232.53 with a 10% contingency of \$45,000, and \$10,000 for the prewiring of exterior security cameras for a total project cost of \$502,232.53. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion – Fire and EMS Protection Agreement between WLFD, Village of Lac LaBelle, and Town of Oconomowoc.

- Chief Bowen indicated that this was supposed to be a discussion and action item, however, was not agenized for action so no action could be taken. The draft agreement has been reviewed by the administration and management of the parties to the agreement and are in support of approval.

Discussion – Strategic Budget Goals

- Chief Bowen, the Fire Board, and Staff discussed the District’s strategic goals for 2026 and future years.

Future Agenda Items and Meetings

- Monthly Fire Board Meeting – Monday, July 28, 2025, at 4:00 pm at Station 1.

Closed Session

- George Morris Announced that the Fire Board will convene into closed session pursuant to section 19.85(1)(c)(e), 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;” and “deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public property, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session” for the following purposes: “*Contract Service Agreements with Municipalities; Specific compensation, benefits, and performance evaluations related to specific employees – Assistant Chief.*” The Fire Board will not reconvene into open session at the conclusion of the closed session.
- A motion was made at 6:26 pm to enter into closed session by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke. Roll call vote was performed with all in favor.

Adjournment

- At 6:59 p.m. the meeting ended.