

Western Lakes Fire Board
Monthly Board Meeting
May 11, 2026

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 Thursday, May 7, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., in accordance with open meeting laws.

Pledge of Allegiance

- Dr. Chuck Cady, led the Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

- George Morris opened the meeting up to public comment. There were no public comments presented at this time.

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 March 23, 2026 regular Fire Board Meeting
 - Payment of bills in the amount of \$2,072,341.51.
- Jeff Roemer asked about the invoices for credit cards and Waukesha County Technical College as the dollar amount compared to the description seemed off. Chief Bowen explained that the accounting software has a character limit when it prints the reports. The full detail is within the software and the invoices, but when there are multiple items on a single invoice, the printed report only prints the last items listed. Treasurer Kent Lorenz confirmed this and also reviewed with the board how credit card purchases are reviewed in accordance with policy, including the Chief's credit card report being reviewed by the Treasurer and President. Roemer appreciated the explanation.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve the Consent Agenda items, including meeting minutes from March 23, 2026, and payment of bills in the amount of \$2,072,341.51. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief's Report

- Chief Bowen provided a brief summary of the written report provided in the board packet. He recognized Captain Sudol's efforts in the radio grant that will be discussed later in the meeting, reviewed the storm events in April and the coordination of emergency management operations between the District and municipalities, and the upcoming Taste of Western Lakes Open House. He also provided an update on the full-time, part-time, and apprentice hiring processes and report developed regarding the daily staffing of the District.

Chief Officer Reports

- George Morris asked if any of the Chiefs had additions to their reports, and if the board had any questions.
- Jeff Roemer complimented the team on their submissions for the board reports. The reports highlighted all of the work being done with the team through committees, bureaus, management, and the organization as a whole. The transparency of the packet, information shared, and work is commendable.

Presentation – Operational Staffing and Apparatus Deployment Model, Assistant Chief Hoffman

- Assistant Chief Hoffman presented to the board the staffing and apparatus deployment model of the Western Lake Fire Department (WLFD) in response to community questions about noticing fire apparatus responding to emergency medical service (EMS) calls and crew stops at grocery stores. The presentation aimed to ensure transparency, educate the community on deployment strategies, clarify legal authorities, demonstrate fiscal efficiency, and encourage public engagement. According to Wisconsin Statutes, operational decisions are the responsibility of the Fire Chief and command staff. WLFD operates 24/7, with 90% of firefighters cross-trained in fire suppression and EMS, allowing for advanced life support while staffing fire apparatus. The district uses a Priority Dispatch system managed by Waukesha County Communications to assess call urgency, with low-acuity calls receiving an ambulance-only response and high-acuity calls requiring additional responders. Dispatching engines or ladders to critical medical calls helps avoid lifting injuries and ensures crews remain prepared for fire emergencies without delay. WLFD's transition to a tiered deployment model in 2022 improved its ISO rating from 5/6/10 to 2/4/10, potentially saving property owners \$1 million to \$1.2 million annually in insurance premiums. For context, the annual debt service for a \$2.5 million ladder truck is approximately \$229,000, while funding one 24/7 firefighter position costs about \$464,000 to \$497,000 annually. Full-time personnel work 48-hour shifts and often stop for supplies during community events to avoid response time delays. WLFD assesses its operational model against national and state standards and tracks key metrics monthly to ensure fiscal responsibility and operational soundness.
- Members of the board expressed how informational and educational this presentation was, as it walked them through the various considerations that must be made by the District's management team regarding staffing and apparatus utilization. They recommend an abbreviated presentation be made at the upcoming Joint Municipal Meeting to provide further education to the elected officials and share the complexity of the staffing and response model and significant thought and evaluation being done by the District when it comes to unit utilization and staffing utilization.

Presentation – Pre-Hospital Blood Program, Deputy Chief Warren

- Deputy Chief Warren and Dr. Cady provided a comprehensive overview of the District's Pre-Hospital Blood Program. Deputy Chief Warren outlined the significant work and progress achieved over the past year in partnership with Dr. Schultz. The District has formally established an agreement with Versiti, while a proposed agreement with ProHealth Care for the acquisition of essential blood products is currently on the agenda for this meeting. Initial paramedic training for the program was successfully completed in April, with plans for ongoing training to ensure that all team members attain full competency. The finalized blood protocol, along with operational guidelines and procedures, has been distributed to the Fire Board for review. Deputy Chief Warren also presented the specific equipment designated for utilization in the field. The District will conduct testing of the procedures and equipment over the forthcoming weeks to verify that all systems are functioning effectively prior to live deployment. The objective is to fully implement and launch the Pre-Hospital Blood Program by June.
- Members of the board asked questions about the blood type being carried as well as the process to ensure blood does not go to waste. Dr. Cady provided an overview of the various blood types and how the partnership between the District, ProHealth, and Versiti is designed to ensure blood does not go to waste.

Discussion/Action – Blood Services Agreement with ProHealth Care

- President Morris asked the board if this agenda item #13 could be moved up to allow for discussion and action while Dr. Cady was present. There were no objections from the board.
- The Blood Services Agreement with ProHealth Care was presented to the Fire Board as the final procedural step required to actively deploy blood products at the Western Lakes Fire District (WLFD). The initiative directly aligns with the District's strategic goal to enhance Emergency Medical Services (EMS), improve patient survivability, and proactively address community risk

reduction through progressive, evidence-based medical interventions. The pre-hospital blood program was developed in close collaboration with the District's Medical Directors, Dr. Cady and Dr. Schultz. It was noted that the Fire Board had previously approved the foundational agreement with Versiti, which serves as the primary blood supplier for ProHealth Care. Upon approval and implementation of this agreement, WLFD will become the first agency in Waukesha County to launch a life-saving pre-hospital blood program. Dr. Cady highlighted that clinical evidence in peer-reviewed EMS and physician journals demonstrates that early pre-hospital administration of O-positive packed red blood cells significantly reduces mortality in patients experiencing hemorrhagic shock. Unlike traditional crystalloid fluid resuscitation, direct blood transfusions restore oxygen-carrying capacity and assist with clotting, bridging the critical gap between injury and definitive surgical intervention. All participating District personnel successfully completed comprehensive training on blood products and administration protocols in April 2026, meaning the department is fully prepared for immediate implementation. Under the proposed agreement, WLFD will pay ProHealth Care \$106.35 per contract year. This base cost covers the provision of up to fifteen units of O-positive blood. If actual usage exceeds the anticipated fifteen units, both parties will negotiate a reasonable cost increase in good faith. ProHealth Waukesha Memorial Hospital (PHWMH) reserves the right to increase the base cost by a maximum of 5% per contract year. The required payment is due thirty days from April 1, 2026. District leadership highly recommended the approval of the Blood Support Services Agreement with ProHealth Care to facilitate the final implementation of the program.

- Dr. DeBehnke expressed his support in this program and the steps taken by the District to ensure training, competency, and appropriate care of the blood products.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Scott Carter to approve the Blood Support Services Agreement between the Western Lakes Fire District and ProHealth Care, Inc. as presented and authorize the Fire Chief to execute the necessary documents. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion – Update on Facility Needs Assessment and Impact Fee Study

- Chief Bowen provided an update on the status of the Facilities Needs Assessment and Impact Fee Study. Materials have been drafted and distributed to the municipalities including a draft impact fee ordinance and memorandum of understanding. The municipalities will be making public notices regarding public hearings that will be held by each municipality in June.

Discussion – Strategic Plan Updates and Budget Priorities

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the Fire Board updates to the District Strategic Plan and Budget Priorities. The acquisition or construction of a Centralized Administrative Headquarters and Public Safety Training Facility as the cornerstone priority for the 2027 budget. The District currently faces a 12,250 square foot deficiency in administrative space. Consolidating the leadership team, currently spread across five stations, will eliminate professional isolation and unproductive travel time. This consolidation is projected to add over 20 hours of capacity weekly and improve human resources compliance. The District has already eliminated one full-time Deputy Chief and three part-time Battalion Chief positions through attrition. The facility will feature a multi-jurisdictional EOC designed to serve as a "nerve center" for complex emergencies and natural disasters. The site will provide training grounds for Fire, EMS, and Law Enforcement personnel. Chief Bowen noted a potential partnership with Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) to offer additional training opportunities. Centralizing specialized vehicle maintenance will reduce downtime, extend asset lifespans, and lower external repair costs. Chief Bowen presented three funding options for the centralized headquarters. Impact fees could fund 5,000 square feet of the administrative space, and the District is pursuing state and federal grants.
- The second priority involves implementing recommendations from the McMahon Facilities Needs Assessment and Impact Fee Study to address municipal growth. Eighty-five percent of the new facility will be funded by impact fees generated from new development. The proposed station will feature 10,000 square feet of operational space designed for rapid turnout times and crew health, alongside 5,000 square feet of administrative space. Potential locations include land already

allocated at the intersection of Lake Drive and the Highway 67 bypass in the City of Oconomowoc, or a strategic land opportunity near the Highway 67 bypass in the Village of Lac La Belle.

- To ensure rapid emergency response during critical situations, the District aims to work with municipalities to improve property addressing consistency by utilizing standardized, highly visible "Fire Numbers". Standardized reflective signs eliminate delays caused by searching for hidden addresses in rain, snow, or darkness. The District is focusing these standardization efforts on the City of Oconomowoc, the Village of Dousman, and the Town of Ottawa as the other municipalities have already implemented these standard address signs.
 - Kevin Laabs shared his personal experience working with the Town of Merton to implement these signs and how valuable they are to first responders when locating properties.
- Chief Bowen concluded the presentation by outlining three ongoing operational priorities. The District must continue funding its equipment and apparatus replacement schedules in accordance with industry and national standards to meet growing service demands. Outdated municipal fire codes must be comprehensively reviewed and aligned with current building codes to ensure safety during remodeling and new construction. These updates are also essential for maintaining or improving the District's Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings. Adequate daily staffing levels must be maintained to ensure an effective response force. Additionally, continuous professional development and training programs are required to promote employee retention and effective succession planning.
- Members of the board shared their support of these budget priorities and how they align with Standards of Cover and Community Risk Assessment for the District. These are not surprises as they have been part of the Strategic Plan and allow for ongoing evaluation and discussion through the budget process. The board looks forward to discussing these items in greater detail as the budget process continues.

Discussion –Fire Code Ordinance Revision, Plan Review, and Compliance Vision

- Chief Bowen presented a vision and plan to enhance municipal fire codes, streamline commercial plan reviews, and improve compliance tracking within the District. The goal is to establish consistent ordinances across the region. Preliminary discussions involving Deputy Chief May, Assistant Chiefs Hoffman and Meyer, Chief Bowen, and other leaders aim to build municipal partnerships. The Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Bureau is facilitating meetings with local building inspectors to explain how these updates will benefit both municipalities and the District. A strong fire code is crucial for public safety, ensuring buildings have proper escape routes, detection alarms, and suppression systems. Effective enforcement improves access for fire crews and enhances local Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings, ultimately lowering insurance premiums for residents and businesses. The District currently utilizes the NFPA, but is evaluating the utilization of the International Fire Code (IFC) for compatibility with building codes, while the NFPA offers detailed technical specifications. To improve the plan review timeline and detail for commercial development, the District is evaluating allowing for designated commercial plan review, which would give developers another option for plan reviews, facilitating adherence to IFC and NFPA standards while reducing turnaround times. Additionally, the District could implement LIV Solutions, an automated platform for monitoring compliance with life-safety systems, helping to manage ongoing testing and flagging noncompliance automatically. By modernizing codes and tracking compliance, the District aims to enhance safety and efficiency in construction.

Discussion/Action – Personal Protective Equipment (2026 CIP)

- Chief Bowen commended Assistant Chief Meyer, Battalion Chief Carriveau, and the PPE Committee members for their work reviewing replacement turnout gear under the PPE capital funding. The District employs a large number of personnel, necessitating a constant supply of turnout gear to meet specific sizing requirements and general wear and tear. The initial budget included the purchase of 40 complete sets of gear. Favorable costs from a competitive bidding process will allow the District to purchase a total of 44 sets with the allocated funds. The PPE

project replaces aging structural firefighting turnout gear for frontline personnel and replenishes the reserve inventory for new hires and to replace damaged gear. The District is required to maintain certified structural PPE for approximately 170 to 175 personnel over a 10-year lifespan. The 2026 capital budget request for turnout gear totals \$185,000. The cost to fully outfit one firefighter with boots, a helmet, and structural turnout gear is \$4,153. The selected PPE package includes Haix Fire Hunter Pro boots, a Cairns 1836 helmet, and Morning Pride structural coats and pants. A total of \$182,732 will be allocated to purchase 44 complete sets of Morning Pride turnout gear, helmets, and boots. The remaining \$2,268 will be utilized to purchase additional Cairns 1836 helmets as needed.

- Kevin Laabs asked what color the gear will be, as he knows this is always a question. Chief Bowen explained that the current color for the District is a dark khaki; however, due to changes in availability, the District will be converting to black gear moving forward.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Kevin Laabs to approve the 2026 capital budget expenditure not to exceed \$185,000 for structural firefighting personal protective equipment as presented, with final specifications and sizing to be approved by the Fire Chief. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – WI Interoperability Radio Grant

- Chief Bowen presented the strategic plan for the District's participation in the FY26 Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs (DMA) Interoperable Communications Grant, known as the Radio Grant. The City of Oconomowoc will act as the municipal agent for the Western Lakes Fire District. This initiative aims to improve interoperable communications while ensuring fiscal responsibility.
- The grant will fund the purchase of six mobile 7/800 MHz P25 Phase II trunking radios and one dual-band VHF/7/800 MHz P25 Phase II portable radio. The current radio fleet, acquired between 2014 and 2017, has reached its service life and will be inoperable after the County's planned system upgrade in 2028/2029. Although radio replacements are in the 2028 Strategic Capital Improvement Plan, this grant allows for proactive equipment acquisition to meet life safety standards.
- The total grant request is \$47,122.11, with a 20% local match of \$9,424.42, which the City of Oconomowoc has agreed to cover. The Western Lakes Fire District will reimburse this amount using carryover funds from a completed VHF radio project, thereby reducing future replacement costs in the 2028 Capital Budget. Chief Bowen recommended that the board approve the financial commitment for the local match for the grant application.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the Western Lakes Fire District's financial commitment to fully reimburse the City of Oconomowoc in the amount of \$9,424.41 to cover the 20% local match required for the Wisconsin FY26 DMA Interoperable Radio Grant. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – EMS Week Proclamation

- Chief Bowen shared with the Fire Board that National EMS Week is May 17th through the 23rd, and the Proclamation signifies the District's great appreciation for the EMS providers that serve our District.
- President George Morris read the EMS Week Proclamation and expressed his sincere gratitude for the EMS Providers serving the District.
- A motion to approve the EMS Week Proclamation was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Mike Tompkins. Motion carried unanimously.

Future Agenda Items and Meetings

- Joint Municipal Meeting – Wednesday, June 10, 6:00 pm at City of Oconomowoc Police Department
- Monthly Fire Board Meeting – Monday, June 22, 2026, at 4:00 pm at Station #1.
- Kevin Laabs asked if it is worthwhile to go on a tour of the District and see each of the Stations as a board. Chief Bowen, welcomed this and shared that we used to move around for meetings, but due

to limited meeting space at the other stations we have been hosting meetings at station 1. Any board member may request a tour at any time, and many have done so.

Adjournment

- At 6:04 p.m., a motion was made to adjourn by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke. Motion carried unanimously.