

Western Lakes Fire Board
Monthly Board Meeting
November 25, 2024

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, Bill Riemenschneider, Dan DeBahnke, and Scott Carter. Mike Tompkins was excused.

Proof of Notice

- Chief Bowen announced that the notice was posted Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 2:35 p.m. in accordance with open meeting laws.

Pledge of Allegiance

- Tim Clark, Village of Lac LaBelle President 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 November 4, 2024 regular Fire Board Meeting
 - Payment of bills in the amount of \$515,781.34.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Scott Carter to approve the Consent Agenda items including meeting minutes from November 4, 2024 Fire Board meeting and payment of bills in the amount of \$515,781.34. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief's Report

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the fire board the District's calls for service. At this time the District is 8% higher on calls than last year at this time. Chief discussed recent recruitment and hiring success with 16 new part-time employees finishing up orientation and starting on shift soon. The Chief also informed the board that 6 new full-time candidates have received conditional offers of employment with their academy beginning in January. On December 12th the District will host the annual years of service recognition and awards ceremony. Following that on Saturday, December 14th, the District open house at Station 55 in Okauchee will be held with Santa visiting from 1pm until 4pm.

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.

Discussion – Training & Conference Sponsorship Guideline

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the board the final draft of the District's training and conference sponsorship guideline. This guideline is used to determine attendance and compensation at various certification courses, trainings, and conferences. The goal of the District is to provide professional development opportunities and strengthen the knowledge and skills of its members while being cognizant of budget limits. This guideline correlates with the various job descriptions and also will provide members with a pathway for promotional opportunities. The guideline walks members through the various certification and training requirements for the positions at the District.

Discussion/Action – Professional Development Program

- Chief Bowen presented a professional development program that has been put together for the District's current and aspiring officers. The program will begin with individualized Clifton strengths of the current and future officers. As part of the program there will be monthly programs encompassing various aspects of leadership, supervision, and management. These programs will be taught by both internal and external instructors. The program is intended for those interested in the being assigned as acting officers along with current officers of the District. The goal is to provide this education to the team and further develop the staff beyond current training. This program is coming to fruition thanks to the team efforts of Assistant Chief Gscheidmeier, Deputy Chief Konen, Deputy Chief Ingersoll, and Chief Bowen. The program will provide candidates with a diverse mix of education to further them in their careers.
- Fire Board representatives are very happy to see this program and fully support these efforts. Dan DeBehnke shared that the use of Clifton strengths is a great addition and this is a standard in many private sectors programs. Jeff Roemer said there are not many programs like this out there and this is a great program to support WLFD.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve the proposal from Partner2Learn in the amount of \$19,080.00 as part of the District's professional development program and Clifton Strengths. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Full-time Firefighter/Paramedic Job Description

- The updated job description for firefighter/paramedic takes into consideration changes in the candidate pool for these candidates. Due to the decline in eligible candidates, the District and departments across the State are hiring candidates with less and less experience, resulting in them having fewer certifications and training. The proposed changes to the job description balance the availability of candidates with the necessary training and certifications they need to obtain. The adjustments come after much deliberation amongst the management team to ensure the District's firefighter/paramedics have the training but also a realistic amount of time to achieve this training. The changes are not adjusting the entry-level requirements but rather the additional courses currently required to provide additional time to obtain these courses.
- A motion was made by Bill Riemenschneider and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the revised job description for full-time firefighter/paramedic as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Full-time Lieutenant Job Description

- The revised job description for full-time Lieutenant includes updates to training and certification courses in the first two years of promotion. There are no changes to the initial requirements of the positions; however, with the addition of the professional development program for officers and changes in available training from the Technical College System, adjustments have been made. The revised job description includes the Wisconsin Fire Inspector Courses and additional National Incident Management Training. The COLA program is no longer being offered and has been removed.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Scott Carter to approve the job description for full-time Lieutenant as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Employee Benefits Policy

- Chief Bowen reviewed the revised employee benefits policy with the board. The biggest change in the policy is the employees working a 56-hour work week will earn additional sick hours each month, and the maximum number of sick hours also is increased. Currently, employees working 56 hours per week earn 12 hours per month, and after assessing other departments, employees earn between 12 and 25 hours per month. Due to the increased hours these employees work and the risk of injury in the fire service, the recommendation is to increase the sick hour earnings to 18 hours per month. This is in line with other agencies and assists with the District's competitive benefits

packages. In addition to these changes, the vacation and personal time earnings for salaried exempt staff reflect what has already been negotiated based on their years of service. The District's salaried exempt staff do not earn overtime or comp time for additional hours worked.

- Scott Carter confirmed that these changes help the District stay competitive along with recruitment and retention of employees.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve the District's Employee Benefits Policy with changes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Future Agenda Items and Meetings

- Monthly Fire Board Meeting – Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 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."* The Fire Board will not reconvene into open session at the conclusion of the closed session.
- A motion was made at 4:40pm to enter into closed session and invite Laurie Sullivan from the City of Oconomowoc into the closed session by Scott Carter and seconded by Dan DeBehnke. Roll call vote was performed with all in favor.

Adjournment

- At 5:## p.m. the closed session ended and the meeting was adjourned.