

Western Lakes Fire Board

Joint Owners Meeting

September 13, 2023

Call to Order

- George Morris called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Board members present were George Morris, Jeff Roemer, Kent Lorenz, Mike Tompkins, Bill Riemenschneider, and Scott Carter. Dan DeBehnke was excused.
- Each of the municipalities called their meetings to order.
- Also present was the City of Oconomowoc Common Council, Village of Summit Board, Village of Dousman Board, Town of Ottawa Board, Town of Oconomowoc Board, Town of Merton Board, and Village of Lac LaBelle Board.

Proof of Notice

- Chief Bowen announced that the district notice was posted at 12:14 p.m. on September 8, 2023.

Pledge of Allegiance

- The Chief Elected Officials from the Municipalities led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

- George Morris opened the meeting to comments from the public of which there were none.

Consent Agenda

- The District Fire Board will convene into closed session pursuant to section 19.85(1)(e), Wisconsin State Statutes, 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: Contract Service Agreements with other Municipalities and Intermunicipal Ownership Agreement.”
 - Also, in attendance (and noticed separately) will be elected officials from the City of Oconomowoc, Village of Summit, Village of Dousman, and Town of Ottawa.
 - The Fire Board will not return into open session at the conclusion of the closed session.
- At 6:07 p.m. a motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan Debehnke to move to closed session by roll call vote. Affirmative roll call vote by all board members.
- At 7:08 p.m. the closed session ended.

Presentation – District Updates

- Chief Bowen provided an update of the District’s operations year to date following the first phase of additional positions being added to the District. This included a comparison of deployment times from each of the stations by quarter of 2023 compared to the prior year. All stations have seen a reduction in deployment (out-the-door times) with the changes made thus far. Further detail of scene arrival times of a staffed fire apparatus (engine or ladder) to fire related incidents was provided. With the staggered staffing and funding drastic global changes and improvement won’t be realized until the full plan is implemented in 2025. In 2023 half the original plan is being implanted over the course of the year. Overall, positive improvements in deployment and scene times have been made compared to the year prior. The Chief provided a breakdown of the various recruitment processes completed to date, highlighting the number of applicants and positions hired with each process.

Presentation – 2024 Operating Budget

- Chief Bowen presented the proposed 2024 operating budget which has been worked on by District Staff and the Fire Board since July. During the budget process, the Fire Board held three budget workshops prior to approving the budget being presented this evening.
- The budget includes phase 2 of the sustainable staffing and funding plan in 2024. This includes fully funding the positions which were added in 2023, but staggered throughout the year. In addition, phase 2 includes three new full-time lieutenants and three new full-time firefighter/paramedics, who will be hired in June. The wages and benefits of these positions are funded beginning in June, with the full costs being realized in 2025 as part of the 3rd and final phase of the sustainable staffing and funding plan.
- In addition to the phase 2 additions, which is 20% of the original referendum amount, the general operating increase for the District is under a 2% increase. The general operating budget includes a State Health Insurance plan increase of 16% for eligible employees, a General Insurance increase of 6%, a wage adjustment for employees of 2.5%, and the addition of new software programs for the District, including Financial and Payroll Software, Lexipol Policy Development, and Records Management Software. To maintain operations despite the increased cost, several considerations were made, including cuts to requests for funding.

Presentation – 5 Year Capital Improvement Budget

- Chief Bowen presented the proposed 5-year capital improvement plan, which has been updated following an analysis of the District's apparatus, equipment, and facilities. Capital projects have seen significant lead times due to supply chain delays. In some instances apparatus and equipment have lead times upwards of three to four years. Over the last two years, due to inflation, several items have seen increases of 15% to 30%. As a result, the district administration and the fire board took an aggressive look and considered capital projects. The CIP was reworked to have an annual inflationary increase of 2.5% to 3.8% annually. This was possible due to the elimination of some apparatus and equipment through identified efficiencies and operational changes, without reducing the services provided by the District. Due to the supply chain challenges the District is requesting approval of the CIP through 2027 at this time. In order to lock in prices of apparatus and equipment and see the items arrive in the respective year these projects need to be approved at this time.

Discussion/Action – 2024 Operating Budget

- The municipalities each discussed amongst themselves in open session the presented budgets.
- Mayor Magnus brought forward questions on the operating budget if these was a way to utilize District Fund Balance to offset the operational increase for 2024. Currently the District's fund balance is below 8% of its operating budget which is not advisable for cash flow purposes. In addition, due to these being ongoing operational items with reoccurring annuals costs the use of fund balance is recommended for one time capital projects if possible and the fund balance allows. For cash flow purposes general accounting practices is to maintain a fund balance of 15% to 20%, and until the District reaches those levels of fund balance it is not recommended.
- President Riley asked about the increase in overtime costs. Chief Bowen and the Board reviewed with the municipalities how overtime is determined. Full-time staff work an average 56 hour work week which results in overtime due to the schedule. With the increase in the number of full-time personnel there is an increase in the general overtime. Overall, the District strives to manage these expenses, and is constantly monitoring these.
- The municipalities thanked District Administration and the Fire Board for their efforts on this budget. Despite significant increases in operational items outside of local control such as insurance the general operating budget increase of 2% is well-done.
- A motion was made by Village of Summit and seconded by the City of Oconomowoc to approved the 2024 Operating Budget and Funding by Municipalities as presented. Motion carried.

Discussion/Action – 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan

- The municipalities each discussed amongst themselves in open session the presented capital budget.
- Following these discussions, the municipalities had questions as they relate to the in-station alerting, replacement aerial, and overall apparatus use and service lives.
 - The Chief reviewed with the municipalities documents included in the packet as they pertain to the use of apparatus and the general anticipated service life of each type of apparatus. Based on usage include mileage, engine hours, and general wear and tear and how these affect the apparatus over their 10 to 20 year life cycle. In addition with the ambulances as they are replacement with a model that can be refurbished after to years, the replacement costs of these units is reduced by 25% to 30% compared to purchasing entirely new units.
 - The in-station alerting will help with alerting crews of incidents. Currently open air (radio) paging has its limitations and at times crews are not notified. In addition, several studies have been done showing the negative health effects on personnel being alerted at night through traditional methods. With the in-station alerting improvements to the health of personnel as well as improved alerting times will be realized.
 - Mayor Magnus specifically has questions about the replacement aerial at Station 2. He would like further analysis and review of the use of this apparatus and needs assessment of maintaining two aerials in the District. President Queen from the Village of Dousman is very concerned about the negative impacts on the southern communities if this is not maintained due to prolonged response times and only having one aerial in the District. Chief Bowen stated that the administrative team will complete additional analysis and present at the spring meeting. The longer this decision takes, the more potential for price increases to occur.
- A motion was made by the City of Oconomowoc and seconded by the Village of Summit to approve the District’s Capital Improvement Plan as presented for years 2024, 2025, and 2026 and for District staff and the Fire Board to complete further analysis on aerial devices to be presented in spring of 2024. Motion carried.
- Due to this change, the Fire Board discussed the 5-year CIP which was originally adopted.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Kent Lorenz to approve the District’s Capital Improvement Plan as presented for years 2024, 2025, and 2026 and for District staff and the Fire Board to complete further analysis on aerial devices to be presented in spring of 2024. Motion carried.

Discussion/Action – Intermunicipal Agreement Amendment

- The municipalities discussed adjustments to the District’s current intermunicipal agreement specifically to incorporate the Town of Oconomowoc and Town of Merton into the IMA as owners. The Municipalities feel that this is a positive step and support the Chief working with the municipalities on proposed changes to the IMA and bring forward in June of 2024 for further discussion.

Discussion/Action – Fire Board Positions

- While the process of updating the Intermunicipal Agreement is completed the municipalities discussed supporting the Town of Oconomowoc and Town of Merton appointing a liaison of their municipalities with the Fire Board and District.

Future Meetings

- Spring Joint Meeting – Wednesday, June 12, 2024 at 6pm at the City of Oconomowoc Police Department.

Adjournment

- At 8:29 p.m., a motion was made by Town of Ottawa and seconded by City of Oconomowoc to adjourn the Joint Owners Meeting. Motion Carried.
- At 8:29 p.m., a motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Kent Lorenz to adjourn the Meeting. Motion carried