

Western Lakes Fire Board
Monthly Board Meeting
September 22, 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, September 19, 2025, at 3:04 p.m. in accordance with open meeting laws.

Pledge of Allegiance

- Josh Paral, Fire Chief for Village of Merton Fire Department, 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 August 13, 2025 special Budget Workshop Meeting
 - Minutes of August 25, 2025 regular Fire Board Meeting
 - Payment of bills in the amount of \$1,054,767.55.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Mike Tompkins to approve the Consent Agenda items including meeting minutes from August 13, 2025, special Budget Workshop, August 25, 2025 Fire Board meeting and payment of bills in the amount of \$1,054,767.55. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Chief's Report

- Chief Bowen provided updates for the fire board's monthly report on District and Administrative Operations.

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.

Discussion/Action – Village of Merton FD Operating & Capital Budget Contributions

- Chief Bowen presented the draft budget for the Village of Merton Fire Department, a critical element of the contract established among the District, the Village of Merton, and the Town of Merton for the provision of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to the eastern regions of the Town of Merton. The District contributes over 55% of the Village of Merton's Fire Budget, with contributions determined by the call volume from the Town of Merton in relation to that from the Village. The contractual terms permit a budget increase of up to 4%. However, the proposed budget currently indicates an increase of nearly 12%. Chief Bowen has expressed his concerns regarding this proposal and has suggested that alternative revenue sources, such as additional EMS income and revenue adjustments, be explored to alleviate the burden of levy or contract costs. He has reviewed his comments, which are consistent with discussions previously conducted with Chief Paral and Village Administrator Henschel. Furthermore, Chief Bowen conveyed insights from the Town of Merton pertaining to the Fire Inspection Fee schedule of Merton Fire, requesting further clarification regarding the methodology used to determine these fees. Additional concerns were

raised by the Town of Merton regarding the 2024 audit, which revealed significant excess revenues from EMS, along with the current 2025 year-to-date revenue surpassing budget projections.

- Chief Paral presented the draft budget to the board, noting that the most significant increase is attributed to the addition of an extra 12 hours of daily paid staffing at the station. This adjustment will enhance in-house staffing to three personnel available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Jeff Roemer posed a series of inquiries concerning staffing levels, paid-on-call response, attendance expectations, and minimum requirements of the Merton Fire Department. He referenced the contract stipulating a limit of a 4% increase. Kent Lorenz concurred with Chief Bowen's analysis of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) revenues, noting that Merton has already surpassed its anticipated revenues significantly for the year 2025, and that this should be duly reflected in the 2026 budget. Kevin Laabs, a representative from the Town of Merton, also provided his assessment of the budget, expressing concern that the EMS revenues were insufficient, which could ultimately lower the levy request. He further noted that the 2024 audit for Merton showed EMS revenues nearly double the budgeted amounts, which remained within the Village of Merton. Chief Paral stated that he could not provide an explanation for the increased revenues but indicated his intent to gather additional information.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve a 4.0% contribution increase to the Merton Fire Department budget for 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Discipline Policy

- Chief Bowen presented to the board a comprehensive summary of the amendments made to the District's Disciplinary, Extra Time, and Employee Benefits Policies. These amendments are part of an annual review and enhancement process involving the management team, staff contributions, and legal scrutiny. The proposed changes are aligned with both State and Federal Law and adhere to the District's Core Values and overarching mission. Chief Bowen recommends approval of these policies, contingent upon final legal review.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kent Lorenz to approve all three policies, including the District Discipline Policy, Extra Time Policy, and Employee Benefits Policy, under one motion. A motion to approve District Policies, including Discipline, Extra Time, and Employee Benefits, contingent on final legal review and necessary changes. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Extra Time Policy

- Approved in prior motion under Discipline Policy.

Discussion/Action – Employee Benefits Policy

- Approved in prior motion under Discipline Policy.

Discussion/Action – Dodge County Joint Powers Agreement

- Chief Bowen reviewed with the Fire Board the 2026 Dodge County Joint Powers Agreement renewal in accordance with Wisconsin Statute 256.35(9) regarding 911 system in Dodge County. No changes to the current agreement have been made and this is an annual renewal with Dodge County for the service area in the Town of Ashippun.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the Dodge County Joint Powers Agreement. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Engine 56 Motor Replacement

- Chief Bowen updated on Engine 56 repairs following a significant incident on August 9th, where while on an emergency scene the engine began having an overheating issue. After Deputy Chief Igl inspected the engine, a major oil leak was found, necessitating its tow to Fire Service Inc. for diagnosis. Technicians discovered catastrophic motor failure, prompting discussions among Emergency Vehicle Technicians. The recommendation was to replace the failed motor with a refurbished unit, which includes a warranty, rather than attempting a rebuild that could incur further

costs and downtime. The decision was made to proceed with the replacement, as similar issues have been reported by other departments in Wisconsin, although no lawsuits have been filed against Cummins or the manufacturer. Deputy Chief Igl is collaborating with local professionals to prevent future failures. The District faces unexpected expenses in repairs, categorized as overages in the Fire Apparatus Maintenance budget. However, anticipated excess revenue from interest and ambulance services offers some financial relief. The budget will be monitored closely, and if there are shortfalls, funds may come from the District's balance, though it's hoped that the budget will end positively. A budget amendment will be presented to the Fire Board once repairs are finalized. Chief Bowen approved the repairs, emphasizing the need for operational frontline fire suppression. Manager.

- Assistant Chief Hoffman recounted his experience with a similar failure at a previous organization. He emphasized the significance and impact of such incidents, noting their devastating effects on operations. As an industry, we are collectively assessing preventative measures to mitigate future occurrences. The constant changes resulting from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, variations in fluid specifications, and modifications to motor designs have placed us in a position of ongoing education, often with limited insights from prior cases.
- Members of the Fire Board expressed their appreciation for the commitment to transparency, the thorough investigation into the underlying causes, and the ongoing efforts to proactively address potential concerns. They urged management to persist in evaluating preventative measures and programs that may be explored through collaborative networking with other departments.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Mike Tompkins to approve the emergency decision of repairs to Engine 56 as previously authorized by Chief Bowen in accordance with policy. Budget amendment will be made upon receipt of the final invoice for the project. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Gear Extractors (2025 CIP)

- Assistant Chief Meyer presented the 2025 capital project to replace outdated turnout gear extractors, essential for firefighter safety and operational readiness. The 2025 budget allocates \$42,500 for this replacement, as current units are over 20 years old and fail to meet operational needs for cleaning carcinogens and hazardous materials. The proposed 35 LB capacity extractor can wash 4-6 pieces of gear per load, ensuring compliance with NFPA standards. Four vendor quotes were received, with the MacQueen Circul-Air 35LB model being the most cost-effective option at \$33,125 for five units (\$6,625 each), well within budget and offering significant savings. The Jefferson Fire and Safety quote exceeded the budget, and while both Air One options were competitively priced, they were still higher than MacQueen's offer. Assistant Chief Meyer recommends purchasing five MacQueen Circul-Air 35LB extractors at \$6,625 each, totaling \$33,125. This investment will enhance firefighter safety through better decontamination of gear and prolong its lifespan.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve the purchase of five Circul-Air 35LB turnout gear extractors at \$6,625 each from MacQueen, for a total cost of \$33,125, and authorize staff to proceed with the procurement process. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – Breathing Air Compressor (2025 CIP)

- Assistant Chief Meyer presented the 2025 capital project to replace the aging breathing air compressor. The goal is to ensure firefighter safety and operational readiness with modern equipment. The budget allocates \$50,000 for this replacement, with a quote from Air One Fire Equipment for \$59,835, exceeding the budget slightly. However, this cost ensures brand continuity with Mako compressors, which support training and maintenance. Three quotes were solicited: Air One Fire Equipment – Mako: \$59,835, Jefferson Fire and Safety – Bauer: \$61,000, MacQueen – Arctic: \$54,125 + installation costs. Despite MacQueen's lower base price, the additional fees made Mako the better option for operational continuity. The total overage is \$460, but additional interest

from allocated funds covers this. Assistant Chief Meyer recommends approving the purchase of the Mako SCBA compressor to maintain equipment consistency and ensure firefighter safety.

- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Kent Lorenz to approve the purchase of a Mako SCBA compressor from Air One Fire Equipment in the amount of \$59,835 and authorize staff to make this purchase. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – EMS Stair Chair (FAP)

- Chief Bowen discussed replacing EMS Stair Chairs in 2025 and LUCAS Mechanical CPR Devices as part of the 2026 Capital Improvement Plan, commending Deputy Chief Warren for her efforts. Deputy Chief Warren provided an overview of the Stair Chair replacement initiative aimed at maintaining functional emergency medical equipment within budgetary and safety constraints.
- The current stair chairs, averaging 15.9 years old, exceed their useful lifespan and are essential for patient transport in multi-story buildings. The District proposes replacing 10 manual stair chairs with Stryker Stair-PRO Model 6252 chairs and acquiring one powered Stryker Xpedition stair chair for safer movement of heavier patients.
- This acquisition includes a 10-year ProCare warranty covering maintenance and repairs, ensuring long-term functionality. The EMS Committee recommended sticking with Stryker due to their reliability and conducted evaluations of demonstration units. While most patients can be transported with manual chairs, the powered chair provides significant safety benefits, especially for heavier patients. The plan includes 10 manual chairs and 1 powered chair, standardizing equipment across the District and optimizing operational readiness. This upgrade will also reduce injuries and lower Workers' Compensation costs. The EMS Bureau worked with Sourcewell for competitive pricing and received enhanced funding from the Wisconsin EMS Funding Assistance Program, covering all costs for the replacements. Two bids were received, including a Sourcewell Bid, which goes through the Wisconsin Public Bidding process. The Sourcewell bid was \$95,154.89 compared to the direct Stryker Bid for \$84,138.42. This purchase comes with full maintenance coverage for 10 years, reducing future repair costs and ensuring budget predictability.
- DC Warren recommends Approval of the direct bid purchase of: 10 Stryker Stair-PRO Model 6252 stair chairs (Quote #11132558) and 1 Stryker Xpedition powered stair chair (Quote #11181844). Totaling \$84,138.42, including 10-year ProCare coverage.
- A motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Kevin Laabs to approve Quote #11132558 from Stryker Sales, LLC for the purchase of 10 Stair-PRO Model 6252 stair chairs in the amount of \$64,256.90 and Quote #11181844 for the purchase of 1 Xpedition powered stair chair in the amount of \$19,881.52, for a total of \$84,138.42, including 10-year ProCare warranty coverage. Funding for this project through Wisconsin EMS Funding Assistance Program. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – LUCAS Mechanical CPR Device (2026 CIP)

- Deputy Chief Warren presented the LUCAS replacement initiative to ensure functional emergency medical equipment within budgetary and safety limits. The current LUCAS automated CPR devices are over ten years old and no longer have available replacement parts, increasing the risk of failure during patient care. These devices were initially donated by Aurora Health Care to enhance cardiac arrest survival rates but didn't include ongoing replacements. LUCAS devices are critical because they: Improve cardiac arrest survival by providing continuous, high-quality chest compressions, allow one EMS provider to focus on other lifesaving interventions, reduce provider fatigue and injury risk. Replacing these units is crucial for maintaining high patient care standards during emergencies. The EMS Committee chose to stay with LUCAS for interoperability with hospitals and other EMS providers. A price evaluation was conducted, revealing that a direct bid from Stryker Sales, LLC, at \$171,439.68, is \$34,970.70 lower than the Sourcewell bid of \$206,410.38,

despite the latter including higher costs for ProCare and accessories. The Stryker bid offers a full 10-year ProCare warranty, covering maintenance and repairs, thus lowering long-term costs. While the project exceeds the 2026 CIP budget by \$21,439.68, the price is projected to increase by 4% on October 1, 2025. DC Warren recommends approving the Stryker bid for six LUCAS 3 devices with a full accessory package, ensuring effective emergency response capabilities by leveraging \$27,000 from the EMS general fund.

- A motion was made by Mike Tompkins and seconded by Dan DeBehnke to approve Quote #11132545 from Stryker Sales, LLC for the purchase of six (6) LUCAS 3, v3.1 automated CPR devices with full ProCare warranty coverage, in the amount of \$171,439.68, inclusive of trade-in credits for current LUCAS 2 units. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action – UTV EMS Vehicle (2026CIP)

- Chief Bowen introduced the 2026 Capital Improvement Project for the purchase of a UTV EMS Vehicle through MedStat, which received unanimous approval during the 2026 budget process. This initiative aims to enhance the District's medical response capabilities by providing a compact, maneuverable unit for events like parades and triathlons, improving response times in congested or off-road areas. The UTV will also serve as a critical interim resource during the ambulance replacement program, ensuring continued operational readiness for special events and non-emergency calls. Following an analysis of other agencies' UTV implementations and Assistant Chief Hoffman's personal experiences, the District recommends acquiring the ASAP Off-Road Specialty Vehicles MedStat 500. Delivery is expected in approximately 20 months. The total project cost of \$91,724, which includes equipment, graphics, and shipping, is under the allocated \$100,000 in the Capital Improvement Plan. Chief Bowen recommends approval of the UTV purchase for \$87,224, with shipping costs expected to be between \$1,000 and \$2,000 upon delivery.
- A motion was made by Dan DeBehnke and seconded by Jeff Roemer to approve the purchase of ASAP MedStat Series 500 EMS UTV with options as presented in the amount of \$87,224.00 and a total project cost including shipping to not exceed \$92,000. Motion carried unanimously.

Future Agenda Items and Meetings

- Monthly Fire Board Meeting – Monday, October 27, 2025, at 4:00 pm at Station #1.

Adjournment

- At 5:20 p.m. a motion was made by Jeff Roemer and seconded by Scott Carter to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.