

LEBANON FIRE DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
November 15, 2023

- Robert Taylor, Board President
- Dale White, Vice President
- Wyatt King, Secretary/Treasurer
- Allen Forster, Member
- Vacant, Member

- Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief
- John Tacy, DC of Operations
- Ken Foster, Fire Marshal
- Mark Fitzwater, DC of Training
- Desiree Barker, Chief Administrative Officer
- Michael Perkins, Recruitment Lt.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order and the flag salute was led by President Taylor at 5:30pm.

MINUTES: APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 10, 2023 MINUTES

- Minutes were reviewed.
- **Member White made a motion to approve the minutes. Member Forster 2ND, all in favor, motion approved.**

FINANCIALS: APPROVAL OF FINANCIALS

- Financials were reviewed. Chief Rodondi pointed out the Financials were changed to make the report better for sharing with the public. Chief Rodondi went on to say that this brings us in line with other Districts' methods since we are not in line with the industry standard. Chief Rodondi reference the negative percent on our financials as an example of confusion. The goal is to digest the information without confusion and give better understanding to explain to others. We want to remove any doubts as we move toward the potential levy. This isn't removing any transparency but will allow a change to highlighting information instead. Desiree Barker, Chief Administrative Officer, commented that she was surprised to see the Financials at the Board Meetings, as it is not a common practice.

Member White believes them to be cumbersome and recommends allowing the Finance Director (Chief Administrative Officer) to do their job of watching the money. Member King prefers the percentages be returned to the report. It helped him understand the flow since he was not steeped in the Fire culture. Member White strongly disagrees. He stated the public wants a number and a budget document is a plan. The Board can adjust the numbers if needed. He went on to say that the Board's responsibility is the high view. It is not the responsibility of the Board to be in the weeds. It is the Fire Chief's responsibility to explain it to the public. If questions are posed to the Board, they should be referred to the Fire Chief or Chief Administrative Officer. Member Forster and Member Taylor agreed with Member White. Chief believes the new document provides more transparency because the public should be able to pick up the document and understand it. Member King noted that the Budget Committee is the details. He likes more detail but will be patient to see the upcoming changes. Chief believes the new document provides more transparency due to better understanding and while he appreciates the discussion, it is ultimately his responsibility to decide.

- **Member White made a motion to approve the Financials with changes. Member Forster 2ND, all in favor, motion approved.**

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- There were no citizen comments.

AGENDA ITEM #1 – VACANT BOARD POSITION #3, CANDIDATE(S) REVIEW

- Chief Rodondi introduced the vacant Board Member position, that was vacated by Michael Schrader's resignation. The October board meeting included discussion on inviting two individuals to the November Board Meeting for interviews by the Board. Tim Mueller and Robbe Boren were contacted. Though interested in future membership, Robbe Boren excused himself, believing Mueller to have the assets to better serve the Board at this time, and he will remain on the Budget Committee.

Chief Rodondi performed introductions to the Board for Tim Mueller, retired Sheriff of Linn County. Mr. Mueller, not expecting to become Sheriff during his career, guided his department through budget short-falls, recession, and tough times. He stated transparency is important. He is open to any questions. His is an open book.

Chief Rodondi stated he was in favor of moving forward with Mr. Mueller. Member Forster stated he'd never heard negative comments.

- **Member White made a motion to appoint Tim Mueller to the vacant Board position. Member Forster 2nd, all in favor, motion approved.**

AGENDA ITEM #2 – NELSON RESEARCH UPDATE

- Chief Rodondi introduced Reagan Knopp, from Nelson Research. Mr. Knopp stated he'd be with us through the long-haul. Mr. Knopp provided a brief history on his experience. His political consulting experience has helped him understand public behavior. His goal is to help us achieve success. Mr. Knopp acknowledges that Lebanon Fire District's revenue challenges are big and agrees that a levy is needed to not only survive, and that future budgets are a concern. He believes Nelson Research delivers a superior product.

Mr. Knopp then introduced JL Wilson, the Principle of Nelson Research. Mr. Wilson attended the meeting over Zoom. Following the Nelson Research memo, he explained how the research is compiled. Ultimately 357 valid responses were compiled. Typically repeating voters have the best results and give a good indication of success on a positive vote on an election. Mr. Wilson stated we have high results compared to other agencies. Mr. Knopp interjected his surprise given the recent tax notices being mailed. The initial results indicated ~62% support of a \$0.75 levy and that was without providing details covered later in the survey. 55% is considered a good starting point, and we are higher at 62%. When advancing into the "If you know" series section of the survey, Mr. Wilson further explained the "benefit to me" angle increased support. The four messages contained in the packet tells the story and provide the "benefit to me" to help the public understand. The no answers may have nothing to do with us, but instead the public may not feel they can afford the increase economically. There was no critical resistance. When introducing the \$0.45 alternative, it fell flat since it is not perceived as solving the problem. Support was decreased. Mr. Wilson believes a strong messaging campaign will increase support. Additionally, Mr. Knopp and Mr. Wilson recommend moving forward with the levy at \$0.75/\$1000 as opposed to \$0.45/\$1000. Mr. Knopp further added the May election is less likely to lose our message when comparing it to the November election and the campaigning that accompanies it.

Member King asked for a definition of the 4 of 4 referenced in Question 1 of the survey. Mr. Wilson explained that of 4 elections, the individual voted 4 times.

Chief Rodondi provided 3 Actions. Action 1, pursue the levy at \$0.75, but not commit until ballot language is complete, then Action 2 to follow-up on language for the ballot. Action 3 move forward on the levy at \$0.75/\$1000.

- **Member White made a motion to approve Action 3, moving forward on the levy at \$0.75/\$1000. Member Forster 2nd, all in favor, motion approved.**

Member Mueller mentioned the rules of campaigning. Employees cannot campaign during work time. They can when on their personal time. The Board may campaign. There can be zero dollars toward the campaign. The campaign is only funded by supporters. Mr. Knopp will schedule a meeting to present a plan and the budget amount needed. This is the LFD's first levy.

Chief Rodondi thanked both Mr. Knopp and Mr. Wilson for attending the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM #3 – REVIEW THE STATE OF EMS IN OREGON

- Chief Rodondi introduce Division Chief Tacy to provide an overview of the document to be distributed. Division Chief Tacy and members from AMR and Mercy Flights took on tackled the issue of the difficulty in the work force. Division Chief Tacy, belongs to the Ambulance Association. The agencies are varied, but they surveyed many. A response from Montana, with factual information on the issues, and other research were sent to the Western University Emergency Association. With the assistance of 7-9 of their researchers a document was prepared from the compiled data Division Chief Tacy provided. They captured the overview of the crisis in Oregon, especially the rural areas in Oregon detailing the issues, hurdles, challenges. The document was sent to OHA, WLEA, the Governor's office, and legislators across the state. Chief Rodondi informed the Board the document would be in a press release in a couple weeks and was something to be proud of.

AGENDA ITEM #4 – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE(S)

- Chief Rodondi touched on the 2023 Legislation in Review as it relates to the pilot apprenticeship program. It wasn't intended for Districts like ours. It was intended for Diversity Equity & Inclusion with separate academies, mentorships. We don't have the numbers or capacity needed for the separation. It did not pass.

AGENDA ITEM #5 – NON-REPRESENTED STAFF ADDRESS THE BOARD

- There were no Non-Represented Staff to address the board.

AGENDA ITEM #6 – UNION ADDRESS THE BOARD

- Union Trustee Carroll shared their focus on building relationships in the community by holding Bar-B-Ques and cook-outs. The most recent were a cook-out at the high-school and Bar-B-Que for the Station 31 construction crew.

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There are 3 open nominations in the Union. President, Treasurer, Trustee. Voting takes place in December.

Primary focus moving forward is to work hand-in hand with the LFD to get the levy passed.

AGENDA ITEM #7 – VOLUNTEERS ADDRESS THE BOARD

- Lieutenant Perkins updated the Board on the volunteer progress. The volunteer academy is finishing up. The final burn is November 18th, then graduation the following week. We will have 15 new volunteers.
- Upcoming events is contact in the school. Upcoming highlights are East Linn Career Fair, December 2nd - Holiday in the Park Parade, December 8th - Lacombe Country Christmas with Santa on the truck, and the Road Maggot's toy drive for Toys for Tots.

AGENDA ITEM #8 – FIRE CHIEF REPORT

- Chief Rodondi moved forward by thanking the staff for wearing the pink shirts in the community to address firefighter cancers.

Station 31 is wonderful, and we hope to move into the offices toward the end of January. This is one of Emerick's favorite project and is a wonderful facility. Without everyone's support, this would not have been possible.

Salem did not pass their payroll tax. The plan was to hire 26 firefighters if they passed the tax, or 12 if they didn't pass the tax. However, they moved ahead with hiring up to 12, 3 Lebanon Firefighters have accepted positions with Salem. We are preparing for vacancies in January. We have a robust firefighter list to work with. One single-role position is vacant, and we are down to number 3 on the list. We may need to reopen single-role.

We are appealing all but one OSHA citation. We've compiled all the corrections and our appeal in January is likely. Next meeting during a closed session, discussion of today's OSHA will be on the agenda for a closed session and not yet for public consumption. The unprofessionalism during the call to Chief Rodondi and DC Tacy was unbelievable. An immediate call was placed to State Fire Chiefs and SDAO. A complaint is forthcoming. We are fighting this appeal for all the districts in the state. We have SDAO's financial support.

We have 2 new ambulances deploying into the fleet. One tomorrow and one next week. We are now whole after one-year and a day since it was on its side. The Grant Type 6 may be here no later than June. We may receive at the end of January and have requested to be one of the first to receive one.

The old ambulances are for sale. The first sale will be for \$10,000 and requires no approval from the Board. The second sale is expected to exceed \$10,000 and will require approval since it exceeds the surplus amount in the Board policy.

Chief Rodondi reported he'd be out of town visiting family the remainder of the week. Division Chief Tacy will be acting through Friday.


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The Fee Schedule and Annexation is on a side-burner for now until after the levy is completed.

Chief thanked everyone for their attendance.

ADJOURN REGULAR SESSION

- Adjourn Regular Session at 6:44 pm.



Robert Taylor, Board President



Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief