**THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT THREE**

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**February 19, 2026**

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom and with in-person attendance at Station 31.
1231 Franz St SE, Lacey, WA 98516

| Present: | Present (Virtual): | Excused: |
|---|---|---|
| Commissioner Kelling | | Commissioner Kirkbride |
| Commissioner Roberts | | |
| Commissioner Hetzler | | |
| Commissioner Gamble | | |

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hetzler called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM, followed with a salute to our Nation's Flag.

## II. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

None.

## III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**MOTION:** To approve the agenda as published.
Motion: Commissioner Kelling
Second: Commissioner Gamble
Carried: Unanimous

## IV. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft minutes of the February 5, 2026, meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners.

B. Warrants (AP 2B 2026):

- General Fund 001 (Acct #6630) EFTs numbered 5736 through 5741; checks numbered 24771 through 24778; draft numbered 1718 for a total amount of $168,647.22.
- Equipment Repair & Replacement Fund 103: EFT numbered 5742 through 5745; checks numbered 24779 through 24780 for a total amount of $196,515.62.
- Capital Projects Fund 301: check numbered 24781 for a total amount of $17,950.39.

C. Payroll 2A-2026 in the amount of $2,236,609.05.

**MOTION:** To approve the consent agenda as published.
Motion: Commissioner Roberts
Second: Commissioner Kelling
Carried: Unanimous

## V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Thurston County Medic One
No report due to the absence of Commissioner Kirkbride.

B. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM)
No report; the next meeting is scheduled for March 4th.

C. City/District Liaison
No report; the next meeting is scheduled for March 19th.

D. Thurston County Fire Commissioners Association
Commissioner Gamble reported from the February 17th meeting:

- There was a presentation about some of the key bills. The one that would be the highest priority for the fire service is Bill 2451, which would revise the tax increment financing. Essentially, it requires negotiation between cities and the fire and junior districts so that they have to agree on reforms to budget. It passed the house and is currently in the senate.
- Another relevant bill is 5928 regarding transparency in home insurance, forcing insurance companies to provide reasons for cancellations to home owners.
- Bill 6079 is a grant program for home insurance adjustments, which creates grant funding not from the general fund for homeowners needing upgrades to retain insurance.
- Bill 2104 removes sunset, making in permanent for fire districts to be reimbursed for aviation use. This has passed the house.
- Bill 2203 penalizes interference with emergency operations. There are questions about the scope of this bill and who would be included. An example was given about whether ICE agents are present and whether they would be considered to be interfering with first responders.
- WFCA updates: Tori Pettis is to become deputy executive director.
- TCOMM discussed their positive evaluations. Recruitment and retention are stable with recent hires. Additionally, there was miscommunication about the building, which is currently being assessed, but there is no plan at this point for it to be put up for sale.
- EMS Council: five of eight new medic units deployed with three awaiting delivery. Olympia staffing remains below target. Tumwater and Lacey are fully staffed. Nominations for EMS Council chair are ongoing.
- The next meeting will be on March 17th at Station 61 and will be a potluck. Chief Schmidt will be there giving a presentation.

E. Thurston Regional Planning Council
Commissioner Kelling reported:

- The Council elected a new chair, Eileen Swarthout, who is a Tumwater City Council member. The vice-chair remains Carolyn Cox, a Lacey City Council member. The new secretary is from the Port of Olympia, Jasmine Vasavada. The calendar for the year was approved.
- The next meeting will take place in person on March 6th.
- As a council, they have no decision-making authority, but they do have influence in a lot of areas such as transportation, growth management, etc. There was discussion about the Transportation Efficiency Act, which is a federal measure. The discussion point brought up by staff was whether the council wants staff to look into options for endorsing state and federal measures. They will look into it further to determine how to proceed.
- The executive director, Elissa Gertler, is in her third month in that role. She has offered to come out to brief the board and the district if there is interest in her doing so.

F. Community Outreach
Chris DeBell reported:

- A family with four kids was outfitted with bike helmets last week.
- There were three station tours at Station 31, two scheduled and one walk-in.
- There was one Senior Safe At Home assessment.
- Taylor is currently working with the city on two upcoming community events: the Lacey Cultural Celebration on March 7th at St. Martins, and the Fun Fair on the 16th and 17th of May.
- Social media views have been elevated over the past month. The introductory post on the Chief Brooks documentary had over 5,000 views. The 12th Man Seahawks post had 10,000 views. The Medic One push-it reel had 15,000 views. Tiffany and Chief Hulst have been working on the next Gone in 60 Seconds, which will be out in a week or so.
- The latest episode of Bill Lange's documentary series was released today. This is the second of a three-part series on the lateral academy.

G. Operations and Logistics
Chief Patti shared:

- Still working on the upfit of the two Aid Units and Engine. Unfortunately, delays are attributed to partner agencies that have had some pretty major breakdowns in apparatus shifting mechanics priority to get those repaired. Still on track for Aid Unit 33 to be in service soon, and Aid Unit 31 will be next, and new Engine 31 will be shortly after.
- The new Medic 6 was placed in service today. There was a delay from when Medic 2 and Medic 3 were placed in service due to some equipment from the factory that was found to be broken. But that was put into service today and the crews are very happy. All of the medic units are now the new configuration. Medic 1 expressed their sincere gratitude to

the Logistics division, as they were instrumental in helping to get those rigs stocked and ready to go.

Chief Cerovski reported:

- Construction and the one-year warranty process was completed in 2021 for Station 34. At the time of the warranty walkthrough in 2021, it was identified the cladding, which is the exterior panel, was cracked in the corner but these were fixed. Unfortunately, these cracks continued, and more were formed in other panels. A substantial amount of cladding on the structure is in pretty bad disrepair.
- Work has been done with the architect, Rice Fergus Miller, and with the contractor to try to rectify this situation, but unfortunately it came to an impasse with their perception that they had done their due diligence with the warranty work and that they were done with their work. Chief Cerovski does not agree and has been working with the legal team to move forward. Unless the Board has any concerns, the process of seeking repairs will move forward. It will be about $20,000 to hire a third-party engineering firm to come in and determine if there is fault on the part of the contractor of record. Next steps will be considered after this assessment has been completed.

H. Standards and Resilience

Chief Cerovski shared:

- SSRA Fire Academy is completing week 6, the EMT portion of the fire academy. So far, the course performance for the recruits is 94.5 for all exams. There is one more exam tomorrow.
- The live fire instructor refresher was completed last week with the East Olympia Fire District training center working to make improvements and get that building ready for use during the fire academy.
- A recruit was injured, as was mentioned in the previous meeting. That recruit is doing well and recovering without missing any other days of the academy.
- Community Risk Reduction: planning the upcoming insurance symposium scheduled for May 7th.
- Safety and Compliance: the fire program visits have already been scheduled. Chief Fogarty and Chief Cerovski spent time with L&I staff over the last week. There was encouragement to get a therapy dog, and research into that is underway. L&I site safety visits have been planned preemptively for Lacey and East Olympia.

## VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. ILA Updates

Chief Schmidt reported:

- Just over a month into the relationship with East Olympia. Chief Patti has been there daily. Our administrative staff have been doing a great job of supporting their staff person, Alesa. She was able to attend the most recent staff meeting. Chief Patti has been focusing on meeting with the lieutenants and finding out the needs of their staff. There was

a second sit-down with union membership, and there are labor management meetings coming up.
- Everything has been going very smoothly overall.
- On the 26th of this month, time is planned for the board chairs from both agencies to sit down and look at the process overall.
- The video announcement is in the process of final edits. This video will be an announcement to the public about the ILA. There was great feedback from the board along with suggestions for some small edits. The video should be coming out next week.

B. Property Development Timelines and Funding Options
Staff gave a presentation with accompanying slides:
- A graph shows the call volume of area districts. LFD3 has a higher call volume than all of the other districts (18,000 calls annually). Call volumes are continued to grow over the coming years.
- Chief Patti discussed current conditions and deficiencies:
    - Existing training facility: Training & Education Center (TEC):
        - Current condition: reliance on a converted fire station lacking the necessary infrastructure of a modern fire service training division
        - Key deficiencies: limited office space for staff; no dedicated burn building, ventilation prop, or vehicle fire props; limited space for parking; insufficient restroom and shower facilities; limited classroom and multi-company training space
        - Impact: training realism and safety are compromised; increased logistical burden for setup and breakdown; reduced ability to conduct frequent or short-notice skills training; limited ability to bring in or host high performance training opportunities.
    - Alternate Training Facility: Mark Noble Regional Fire Training Center
        - Challenges/Limitations: owned and managed by the City of Olympia
        - Contract cost just under $80,000 annually.
        - Shared facility with other agencies
        - Crews removed from District 3 response area during training.
        - Limited restroom facilities; no shower or decontamination capabilities.
        - Limited classroom size.
    - Current Logistics Facility: Logistics Warehouse (leased)
        - Progress made: transitioned from storage closets and converted office space to a 10,000 square foot warehouse.
        - Current limitations: annual lease cost of approximately $100,000; not a long-term, purpose-built solution;

leased facility restricts customization and permanent improvements; insufficient space to store reserve apparatus and other equipment requiring off-site storage.

- Existing Station: Station 32
  - Current condition: station living quarters is a double-wide mobile home originally designed for resident firefighters; now houses three career firefighters staffed for 24 hours a day; apparatus bay is a separate 1970s era cinder block structure.
  - Key deficiencies: not designed for or built to modern standards; bay is undersized for current apparatus; crews must exit the station to access apparatus; lack of a community meeting space.
  - Operational impact: increased response time; reduced operational efficiency; inadequate workspace and no dedicated fitness area; inconsistent with current department expectations for a community-based fire station.
- Response Coverage Gaps in the West Britton Parkway Area:
  - Current condition: continued growth in this area has led to a corresponding increase in incident response; having only one station located north of I-5 creates a concern in the event of a major earthquake due to infrastructure damage limited access or response capabilities; adding response resources in this area would reduce reliance on surrounding stations while better positioning the department to support future growth and strategic partnerships.

- Chief Cerovski discussed risks and consequences of inaction:
  - The needs and issues as reported by Chief Patti will have a domino affect on LFD3's efficiency.
  - The goal is to be proactive versus reactive and to plan for the future, not only for right now.
  - Operational and community benefits: increased operational resources include a second battalion, second truck, additional aid units, and Engine 36. Station 36 gives an improved response reliability of 1.4% based on current conditions. Relocation of Station 32 gives an improved response reliability of 2.5% based on current conditions.
  - A district training facility would bring improved proficiency of new members and incumbents, and improved access facilitates the 10,000 philosophy that repetition is the motor of learning.
  - All of this equates to increases in occupational training exposure, increases in response resources, and increases in response reliability, which correlates to a reduction in lower

incidence of injury, lower risk for the accreditation process, and a lower WSRB PPC rating.

- Director Kirkwood presented the financial analysis:
    - Total project cost breakdown of projects:
        - 2025 non-voted bond payoff: remaining balance as of December 2026 is about $13.6 million. The current payoff timeline is 2044. Paying that off would eliminate the annual debt service of approximately $1.1 million. This would save approximately $7.1 million in interest that would have been paid over the life of the debt.
        - Capital projects: cost categories include raw construction (direct, physical, and tangible expenses); escalation costs (based on inflation and increased costs of labor/materials); and soft costs (architecture and engineering fees, consulting fees, permits, testing, etc.).
        - Training support building: this would be built on the currently owned property off Britton Parkway, to house the training division and to include classrooms, lab rooms, showers, lockers, common space, kitchen, and gym. Total estimated project costs are $16.4 million.
        - Training Campus (phase one): this would include a prop building, pump pit, drive track, and infrastructure. Total estimated project costs are $12.4 million.
        - Logistics Warehouse: this would include logistics offices, workspace, storage, bunker gear, medications, consumables, and equipment. The total estimated project costs are $15.8 million.
        - Apparatus: the goal would be to proceed with ordering a truck and an engine for the new facilities, with a total apparatus cost of $3.7 million.
        - Station 32 property: this would be near the current Station 32, as the current Station 32 location is not optimal. Estimated costs are based on nearby property values. Estimated costs are $600,000.
        - Station 32 will be a fully functional station and bay, equal to the size of the updated Station 33 design. Total estimated project costs are $19.7 million.
        - Station 36: this will be a fully functional station located or near the Britton Parkway property, similar or slightly larger than the size of the Station 34 design. Total estimated project costs are $25.5 million.
        - Training Campus (phase two): to include a confined space prop, trench prop, and collapse prop, with a total estimated project cost of $12.4 million.
        - The total costs of all projects comes to $120 million.
        - Why bonding is the appropriate tool:

- Build now vs. build later
- Intergenerational equity
- Aligns costs with asset life
- Protects operating budget stability
- Preserves strategic reserves
- Predictable tax impact
- Public accountability
- Cost efficiency
- Protects against service delays
- Long-term financial stewardship

        - Important context: with a potential bond of $120 million with an interest rate of 4.12%, the total estimated interest paid over the life of the bond would be about $58 million. Total estimated inflation cost with an eight-year delay would be $57 million. The cost of inflation during delay is nearly equal to the interest cost.

- Steve Brooks discussed the taxpayer impact and public outreach:
    - Estimated cost of $0.20 to $0.25 per $1,000 assessed value. District's current overall levy rate well below comparables.
    - Annual cost to median homeowner: $500k - $8 to $11 a month
    - Comparable fire service agencies:
        - Valley Regional: $96.5 million in 2023
        - Gig Harbor: $80 million in 2022
        - East Pierce: $80 million in 2019
    - Previous Citizen Advisory Committee inputs:
        - Active Nisqually Tribe engagement
        - Effective community outreach and education
        - Leverage strong relationships with partner agencies
    - Ongoing progress reported to the public
        - Coordinated messaging with Nisqually Tribe
    - Active project and contingency management
        - Tiered bond issuance to mitigate taxpayer impacts
    - Public Engagement Plan
        - Updated capital facilities plan
        - Develop FAQs and fact sheets
        - Community meetings and presentations
- Chief Schmidt shared the timeline:
    - Today, February 19, 2026: board presentation
    - March 5, 2026: board review and vote
    - August 4, 2026: bond resolution filing deadline
    - October 16, 2026: ballots are mailed out
    - November 3, 2026: Election Day
    - December 31, 2026: first tranche of bond proceeds received
    - December 31, 2028: second tranche of bond proceeds received
- The floor was opened for questions from the commissioners:

- Commissioner Roberts asked Director Kirkwood about the two bonds that are outstanding and whether they are 20-year bonds. Director Kirkwood affirmed that they are. Commissioner Roberts asked if one of them retires in 2032. Director Kirkwood reported that the 2012 bond expires in 2032. The 2017 and 2019 bonds expires in 2037.
- Commissioner Roberts also asked when is the next levy lid lift. Director Kirkwood reported this will be in 2029.

The meeting took a short recess at 704p.m. The meeting reconvened at 7:10p.m.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

## VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A. District Monthly Financial Report

- General Fund 001 – net excess $17.5 million (18%).
- Donation Fund 101 – net excess $15,967.
- Reserve Fund 102 – net excess of $1.1 million.
- Equipment Repair and Replacement Fund 103: net excess of $963,000.
- General Fund Summary: net excess of $9.6 million.
- Bond Fund 201 – net excess of $942.
- Bond 2017 Fund 202: net excess of $$72,388.
- 2025 Bond Fund 203: net excess of $0.
- Capital Projects Fund 301: net excess of $988,222.
- 2025 Capital Projects Fund 309: net excess of $5.8 million.

B. Chief Schmidt reported:

- The outreach team is working on connecting Chief Schmidt and other executive staff members with HOAs. A lot of meetings are being planned for the year and a number of HOAs might be interested in having district staff come out and give a short report.
- Chief Schmidt has been in contact with tribal legal counsel. Their fee to trust process has three parts behind the scenes. When they first put in for fee to trust, they go to their local office, which is in Everett. 98% of the approval process takes place there. Then it goes to Portland, the regional office. 2% of the process happens there. The final stamp is given in D.C. The fee to trust process has now moved to Portland, so the process is near completion.
- The day after the last meeting, the Jackson family had a gathering at Brett's gravesite. There was a massive turnout with people from Lacey, Yelm, and other agencies.
- The Firefighter Stair Climb is coming up on the 8th of March. The union is doing fundraising for the event.

## IX. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Gamble – the presentation was very thorough and thoughtful, and it is evident that a lot of hard work went into it.

Commissioner Roberts – ditto to Commissioner Gamble. It was a wonderful presentation, with the time that went into it very evident.

Commissioner Kelling – a point of clarification; is the fee to trust for the casino portion? Chief Schmidt clarified that it is for the recreation retail side of it. The gaming side is a completely separate process. Commissioner Kelling inquired if the planned hotel would be on the casino time, and Chief Schmidt confirmed that it would be part of the casino and would be 18 stories. The casino is believed to be several years out still.

Commissioner Kelling also commented that there is an opportunity for all of the commissioners to provide comment on the bills under consideration in the legislature. On the website where the bills can be read, there is also an opportunity to provide pro or con support. All of the commissioners are encouraged to do so. Commissioner Kelling also encouraged staff to participate in the HOA meetings to the extent possible.

Commissioner Hetzler – wonderful information was presented.

## X. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Correspondence
None.

## XI. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

Jonathan Clemens speaking as the medical services officer at South Bay thanks LFD3 Support Services team for helping to deal with some frequent callers who require a lot of expertise and nuanced skills to deal with. As a homeowner and taxpayer, looking at the presentation tonight – is aware the parks district failed last year, and the concern is that by asking for too much, LFD3 might not get any. The value proposition for the new fire station must be much clearer and easier to explain to the public. The commissioners are encouraged to think carefully about asking for enough but not too much.

## XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned as of 7:28 PM.

***Next Regular Meeting: March 5th, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.***
***Available via remote meeting.***

Liberty Hetzler (03/06/2026 12:59:16 PST)

Chair

Vice Chair

Melissa Gamble (03/07/2026 08:10:11 PST)

Commissioner

Sylvia Roberts (03/06/2026 13:39:11 PST)

Commissioner

Richard Kelling (03/15/2026 15:26:53 PDT)

Commissioner

ATTEST: District Secretary

# February 19, 2026 BoFC Meeting Minutes Final

Final Audit Report 2026-03-15

| | |
|---|---|
| Created: | 2026-03-06 (Pacific Standard Time) |
| By: | Chris DeBell (cdebell@laceyfire.com) |
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Signer lhetzler@laceyfire.com entered name at signing as Liberty Hetzler
2026-03-06 - 1:59:14 PM MST

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2026-03-06 - 2:38:28 PM MST

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2026-03-06 - 2:39:09 PM MST

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2026-03-07 - 9:09:28 AM MST

Signer mgamble@laceyfire.com entered name at signing as Melissa Gamble
2026-03-07 - 9:10:09 AM MST

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