THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT THREE

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

COMMISSIONER WORKSHOP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

March 28th, 2026

The meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom and with in-person attendance at Station 31.
1231 Franz St SE, Lacey, WA 98503

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hetzler the meeting to order at 9:00 AM, followed with a salute to our Nation's Flag.

II. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: To approve the agenda as published.

Motion: Commissioner Kirkbride
Second: Commissioner Gamble
Carried: Unanimous

IV. WORKSHOP DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. ILA Updates

Chief Schmidt reported:

- ILA is functioning well. Staff is reporting time spent on EOFD projects. A reporting tool for review at future BoFC meetings for both agencies is in the works.
- It is believed that the money will balance, but the ILA also gives language that if it is found that there is a discrepancy in what they're paying or what LFD3's costs are, staff can go back to the board.

- It continues to be the perception that things are going very well, and there has been good feedback from all parties.
- Commissioner Hetzler commented that they provided a more detailed breakdown of hours worked by whom. They have a good system now of tracking everybody's hours.
- There will be another meeting in a month, and that will be the last of the trial phase meetings. It feels like everything is going as smoothly as possible.
- Commissioner Kirkbride inquired if Chief Schmidt feels comfortable that $400,000 is adequate. Chief Schmidt responded in the affirmative. For the more deeply involved staff, such as Chief Schmidt, Chief Patti, finance, and HR, it appears that the expected numbers or hours has been almost exactly on par. No major adjustments are expected to be needed.
- Chief Schmidt continued with her report. There was an invitation to South Bay's Board of Fire Commissioners Workshop, which took place yesterday. They intended the workshop to address the question of whether or not they should be considering some sort of regionalization or merger talks with other districts. They invited Steve Brooks as a consultant or liaison, as well as inviting the commissioner chair, Chief Schmidt, and Chief Kirkwood, to talk about LFD3's experience with East Olympia so they could understand what is happening regionally. There was a large membership from South Bay present, as well as union leadership. President Green and the rest of E-Board represents South Bay's membership. The Board therefore got a very robust presentation of how things are going in East Bay and Lacey as well as the perceptions and feelings of the membership. Steve Brooks talked about the dynamics of ILAs and mergers. Ultimately, at the end of the meeting they agreed on creating a committee that is more regional, with the ask of bringing on all four districts or departments, including Lacey Fire, East Olympia, South Bay, and Tumwater, to start to sit down together for very early, high-level conversations about what each organization currently has for membership, what their finances look like, plans for the next three to five years, etc., with the goal of talking about what efficiencies can be created and whether partnerships are a good plan. A key point of the conversation was succession planning or attrition.
- It was recommended to Steve Brooks to suggest some dates to the four agencies and create a checklist of items that each agency could bring forward with the goal of a first meeting in late April.
- Commissioner Hetzler added that one of the factors spurring this move is that the administrative person at South Bay does a great deal for their department and is planning on retiring in three years. The chief

will not give any time of timeline but is planning to retire in the next year to three years.

- Commissioner Kirkbride commented that putting together a committee like this to explore the direction of the future is an excellent plan. LFD3 has a good cultural similarity with South Bay and East Olympia for a merger to make sense. Tumwater is a very different organization, and a municipal organization thinks and acts very differently compared to a district. Overall, Commissioner Kirkbride expressed strong support for a merger, but not including Tumwater. In the first organizational meeting, the goals should be spelled out, with Tumwater welcome to monitor the process and be a part of the conversations, but it is too early to consider Tumwater joining.
- Commissioner Kelling expressed support for a deliberate approach. Commissioner's Kirkbride's comments on being careful in how Tumwater's participation is messaged is important.
- Chief Schmidt expressed appreciation for the concern regarding Tumwater. The primary goal right now is to understand the opportunities. As soon as LFD3 started working with East Olympia, Tumwater stepped up and offered to help, including an offer to expand battalion borders and provide support wherever possible.
- Commissioner Hetzler commented that it would be valuable for all of the commissioners to have more education on what an RFA means and what the benefits are.
- Commissioner Kirkbride commented that given that this topic is not officially on the agenda, perhaps it could be discussed more at the next regularly scheduled commissioners' meeting.

B. 2025 Annual Report – Final Review

Chief Schmidt reported:

- Excellent feedback from the commissioners was received after the draft annual report was presented to them. It has been improved following their comments and suggestions. At this point, the question is whether the board feels comfortable with the document being published with these improvements, or if it should be brought forward to the next regular meeting for a detailed review as a group.
- Chris DeBell reported that Commissioners Kirkbride and Kelling sent in comments, and changes were made to the document in accordance with their suggestions. The link to the updated document was just sent out yesterday.
- Chief Schmidt suggested that the board may take until the next meeting to review the document again and look at the changes and decide about publishing it at the next meeting.

C. Bond Discussion

Chief Schmidt introduced the direction of the discussion.

Chief Patti spoke to training and logistics:

- There has been a goal of getting the logistics staff out of Station 31, which is a confined space, while moving forward with the current warehouse project. Having the ability to organize all of the equipment in the warehouse has been very helpful.
- The goal is to integrate training and logistics in the same location. Having classrooms co-located with logistics, as well as a training location, would be very helpful.

Chief Schmidt commented:

- TCOMM had asked a year ago to be notified if LFD3 ever decides to lease out the TEC. If TCOMM took over the TEC and had the radio shop there, when any user of the VRF comes in, not only can they come in for maintenance on their rig, they also have the opportunity for updates on their equipment. If TCOMM used the TEC, they wouldn't necessarily want to use all of the space. Perhaps the meeting room and some of the office space could still be available for district use.
- Commissioner Kelling commented that a site visit to Logistics would be helpful. He also commented that the reasoning behind the goal of improving the Logistics space has been well established, but the how and when will need to be fleshed out.
- Chief Schmidt commented that it's important that the community knows that LFD3 isn't building in excess with the expectation of a merger or RFA. When asking for a sizeable investment from the community, it is important not to under build, in order to have a facility that will still be suitable 20 years from now.
- It was also suggested that when the Citizen Advisory Group is established, that group of individuals should have the opportunity to tour facilities and get a better idea of how they are currently being used and what improvements are needed.
- Commissioner Kirkbride shared that it is necessary to get the message out to the voters that the goal is not to overbuild but rather to build to meet the needs of 20 years from now.
- Chief Schmidt suggested transitioning to Chief Carson to discuss priorities and stations.

Chief Carson shared:

- Regarding Station 32: the double wide was initially purchased to house volunteer residents. The District pivoted in a time of need to make it user-friendly in the interim, but it has a lot of deficiencies, including dedicated workout facilities, and currently relies upon improvised workout space.

- The facility has living quarters and detached apparatus housing. The turnout time, just as a product of the layout of the property, falls short and negatively impacts response time.
- The apparatus bay is a 1970s construction and does not meet today's size requirements.
- Staff is currently looking at an opportunity to move the station further west. In looking at the densely populated areas where calls are originating, it would uniquely position LFD3 to be more effective and decrease response times in that area.
- Currently, LFD3 is looking at property around the Spurgeon Creek area. Building a community-based fire station brings all the efficiencies that the district would like to see: a place for blood pressure checks, an available meeting room, etc. These would all be beneficial. Ownership from the community is important as well.
- Looking at the long term, moving the station further west also provides some efficiencies. When looking at call volume for Station 33, there is a big demand. There could be overlap with Station 33 to take some of the pressure off.
- One of the biggest benefits would be that LFD3 would be strategically placed into the northern area of District 6, potentially saving taxpayer dollars down the road.
- Regarding the property at West Britton Parkway: the area is both an opportunity and a threat to response infrastructure. With the anticipated projects by the Tribe, the projections are for around 2,000 calls per year annually. As things currently stand, the burden of that increased call volume would fall on Station 35.
- Currently, looking into a buildout of Station 36 to house an engine and a truck company. In looking at the building infrastructure north of the freeway, it is high density, multi family, and commercial properties. A truck company is essential for this area.
- Another benefit of doing this would be in the event of catastrophic infrastructure damage (such as due to seismic activity) – if there was overpass damage, it would be hugely beneficial to have an effective response force north of the freeway.
- Similarly to what Station 32 would provide, it would strategically position a new station to be able to service the South Bay area if there was ever a merger, potentially saving a lot of taxpayer dollars.
- Commissioner Kirkbride shared his positive reaction to what was shared thus far.
- Chief Schmidt commented: staff has been working with different HOAs recently. One of the recent groups was the Meridian Campus HOA. One of their priorities was to ask what LFD3 is planning, as

they have seen the development in their community and neighborhood. They want to know what LFD3 is planning to do to accommodate the growth. They expressed in respectful terms that Station 35 does not seem to fit the bill for the long-term needs.

- Commissioner Kelling shared the need to educate the community about the anticipated Quiemuth Village buildout.
- Chief Schmidt mentioned that it is also important to be respectful of Nisqually Tribe's development process. It is not clear how they are going to proceed, and they are waiting on federal approval.
- Chief Schmidt mentioned that staff's vision is that Battalion 34 would be moved to Station 36. This would help cover the majority of the district, and in the case of a major event, there would be incident command oversight on both the north and south sides of I-5.

At this point in the meeting, a brief recess was taken.

When the meeting resumed, Chief Schmidt introduced the next presentation from Chief Cerovski about the priority projects that are appropriate moving forward.

Chief Cerovski presented:

- Right now, the first process to be underway is the development of an RFQ: a request for qualifications for an owner's representative. That process involves interviews, consulting, and evaluating the capability of an owner's representative for their transparency, their collaboration, and accountability to LFD3, as well as holding the future contractor and architectural team accountable in the processes in which they will be involved. This process will be taking place as early as this month with the goal of selecting someone in the next quarter.
    - Commissioner Kelling inquired about the type of person this might be – a lawyer, a former fire chief? Chief Cerovski responded that an owner's representative might be a former firefighter who has extensive experience in the fire service and is familiar with the trends, challenges, etc. The challenge with this type of an individual is a lack of construction experience. Another possibility is an individual with a background in construction management. The goal would be to find someone with specific experience in construction management within the realm of the fire service.
    - Chief Kirkwood mentioned that the requirements of the RFQ is very extensive and has a detailed list of every project that this individual would oversee for the district. When someone submits a proposal, their obligation is to meet all of the different requirements that have been delineated.
- Capital Facility Programming: this involves outlining how all of the different pieces that are needed come together in an efficient way.

Next week, there will be a visit with the architectural team to facilitate this process.

- Alternative Methods: this requires approval from the State of Washington. With the owner's rep, LFD3 will apply for the opportunity to use alternative methods in bidding for construction. This means that instead of the traditional bidding process, there will be a request for a general contractor/construction manager concept, which is a shared, collaborative approach wherein a contractor is identified. This will be a collaborative effort between the owner's rep, the owner, the architectural team, the engineering team, and the contractor of choice. This will help in identifying the right person for the project.
- Remodel project for Station 31 and 33: identifying this project and its goal and then utilizing the owner's rep for these projects. This will also involve dealing with the complexities of remodeling a facility while people are residing in and using it.
- Architectural planning for Station 32, training administration and logistics, and training facility drill grounds. This is anticipated to begin in Quarter 4 of 2026.
- The bond vote will take place in November 2026.
- Phase II will begin in January 2027 with the design and construction of Station 32, involving land acquisition, finalizing the design and developing the construction project, taking 12 to 24 months, depending on the complexities that exist with planning review boards, permitting, etc. The goal is a 10,000 square foot, 3-bay facility.
- Apparatus orders will take place in February 2027 for Engine 36 and Truck 36. There will be a delivery window of about 56 months.
- Britton Parkway construction project beginning in April 2027 with infrastructure development and property development.
- Britton Parkway construction in Quarter 1 of 2028 with training, admin, and logistics.
- Britton Parkway construction in Quarter 4 of 2028 with training facility drill grounds.
- Station 36 construction in 2029, as well as Phase II of the training facility grounds. The construction of Station 36 is dependent on third parties' functioning and needs.
- Chief Schmidt mentioned that the Tribe has been a forward thinking and communicative partner, to the degree that they are available. Over a year ago, they came forward and said they would like to have a partner in this. Their consultants supported what LFD3 believes the impacts would be, even with the early stages. They have expressed that when things begin to move forward, they will partner with LFD3. This is helpful in knowing that staffing at Station 36 will happen

because there will be an agreement with the Tribe before the build of 36 officially takes place.

- Chief Cerovski shared that staff have been looking at what other agencies are doing and their gaps and successes. This includes looking at their architects and the types of buildings they've built. Their success was driven by their programming.

Chief Schmidt then turned the floor over to Chief Kirkwood to talk about the finances behind the bond.

Chief Kirkwood shared:

- This is the original presentation that the architect, Rice Fergus Miller, gave in the beginning of February. The focus is cost per square footage, which is currently estimated to be about $950.
- The document includes the square footage of each project (Station 32, Station 36, Logistics, Training Support Building, and a Training Campus), the raw construction budget for each, as well as the construction cost escalation based on inflation and other related cost increases.
- Each cost is broken down into categories, including a 20% contingency.
- The grand total of all construction in play is $102 million. There is also a 2025 bond debt of $13.6 million, $3.7 million for two apparatus, and $1.6 million for a Station 32 property. The total amount needed is $121 million.
- This amount would require an additional levy of $0.32 per 1,000 to the taxpayer. If this is added to the current excess levy for bonds that LFD3 is currently paying on ($0.06 per 1,000), the total excess levy to the voters would be $0.38 per 1,000. If this is added to the current expense levy of $1.50, the total levy overall would be $1.88 per $1,000.
- From the perspective of a homeowner: a home worth $500,000, the new bond would cause an increase of $157 per year or $13.15 monthly. Added with the total excess levy, these numbers would be $188 per year or $15.70 per month. With a home with an assessed value of $1 million, the new bond would cost $315 per year or $26 per month. Added to the total excess levy, these numbers would be $376 per year or $31 per month.
- It has been recognized that these are high numbers, and additional review and assessment has been completed, including comparing measures that have been taken by East Pierce Fire and Rescue, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue, and Valley Regional Fire Authority.
- Rice Fergus Miller has since provided updated numbers. They were able to lower their cost per square foot to $800 (compared to initially

$950). This alone makes a big difference in cost. Combining Logistics and Training Support into one building would create additional savings. They also estimated a lower continency of 10%.

- With the new numbers, the construction grand total is $76 million. When adding in debt, apparatus, and Station 32 property, the total dollars needed for the bonds adjusts for $95 million (compared to the initial $121 million).
- The impact to the voters with the $95 million number would be $0.25 per 1,000. Added with the current excess levy of $0.06, the total excess levy would be $0.31. Added to the current expense levy of $1.50, the total levy to the voter would be $1.81 per $1,000 of assessed value.
- The impact based upon home ownership with assessed value of $500,000 would be $124 annually or $10 per month; the total excess levy would be $154 annually or $12 per month. With a home with an assessed value of $1 million, the annual cost would be $248 annually or $20 per month; the total excess levy would be $309 annually or $25 monthly.
- The levy rates were compared to other agencies in the area, especially those who have issued bonds recently.
- Chief Cerovski commented on the huge amount of work that Chief Kirkwood has done on this project thus far.
- Commissioner Hetzler commented with concerns about the 10% contingency. The new numbers from Rice Fergus Miller have a 10% contingency compared to the previous figure, which had a 20%. The concern would be if things play out with a higher continency than 10% and how this would impact the total cost.
- Chief Schmidt stated that what staff needs to proceed right now is not a final number. What is needed is a maximum of what the board feels comfortable with in order to move forward with all of the critical planning and decision making. A final number to ask for will be needed in June to go forward with ballot language. Ideally, the board could provide a comfortable range of the capped dollar amount to ask for.
- Chief Schmidt also expressed the importance of communicating the message to the community about what is needed. Steve Brooks came forward to speak to this concern.

Steve Brooks shared:

- It is important to realize that these numbers are not just a dollar amount, but a value proposition to the community. The value provided by LFD3 to the community should not be lost in the conversation.

- There was a challenging period in 2008 and 2011 with failed ballot measures for levy restoration.
- There was strong support from the city and the district in 2010 for annexation, so the expectations for the levy passing in 2011 were high, yet it failed. There was a lack of trust and communication with the public.
- Leveraging LFD3's current relationship with the community and modern technology, it is possible to show why the stated goals are beneficial and how they will open up opportunities in the future.
- Virtual open houses and a citizen advisory committee are good ideas to connect the community.
- Commissioner Hetzler asked Steve Brooks if based on previous work in preparing for bonds, if additional consultation is needed for communications. Brooks responded, mentioning several things that are different at this time that give an advantage, such as having Chris DeBell on staff as well as a social media specialist. For education outreach, the right staff is on board. It would be a smart decision to look for someone to manage the project side of it, as Chief Cerovski and Chief Kirkwood are proposing.
- Commissioner Hetzler commented that in the past, levies have succeeded best when the Union is ready to put in some time and effort and energy. Local 2903 President, Lt. Jim Greene responded that this is just starting to come up in the union as a topic of conversation. There is a decent amount of capital for a campaign like this, and there are a lot of young, energetic people who would be willing to get very involved. Union members have built a healthy program for going through this process.
- Commissioner Kirkbride commented that in every campaign LFD3 has had, the Local has been outstanding with their energy, their money, and their influence. He also made a comparison between a design build or a construction manager. With a design build, you control the program but not the money. With a construction manager, the contractor would control both. In Commissioner Kirkbride's opinion, there is not enough money allocated to the training center. The training center budget should be increased to $25 million.
- Chief Schmidt commented that if there is a partnership with the Tribe and a capital investment is made later, that will allow the props at the training center to be built out at a more expanded level. It is still important to go to the voters with a money amount that won't be as shocking; hence the desire to stay under $100 million.
- Commissioner Kirkbride asked if $80 million is the actual cost of what is planned, can the rest be spent on improving the training center?

- Chief Schmidt stated that this is where the ballot language is very critical. It will be necessary to talk about all of the proposed projects and how it can be spent. There is also an opportunity in the second series to take less if it is not felt to be necessary. This is also an important message to the community.
- Chief Kirkwood clarified that language can be added to the ballot to indicate that funds can be spent for additional capital projects as needed. The language can be fairly broad.
- Commissioner Kelling commented that under $100 million feels like a comfortable amount.
- Chief Schmidt requested that the Board approve with moving forward with a bond up to a given amount and give staff time to further educate and make a decision about a defined number.
- Chief Schmidt also reported the City's actions about a funding measure timeline will be based on what the Board decides. They do not want to compete. If LFD3 moves forward with November, they will look at a February timeframe for their own measures.
- Chief Kirkwood reported that with the idea of moving forward with a number of $98.3 million, the total levy overall would be $1.82 per $1,000 of assessed value.
- It was agreed to make a motion for a bond amount at the next regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday.

V. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

Community member Jonathan Clemens made a comment that it is great to be present as an invited part of the community and offered a wholehearted endorsement of combining things into one building. However, one missing component from this discussion is how the additional staffing is going to affect the budget.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:57 AM.

Next Regular Meeting: April 2nd, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.
Available via remote meeting.

Chair

Vice Chair

Melissa Gamble (04/23/2026 08:20:56 PDT)

Commissioner

Sylvia Roberts (04/29/2026 19:13:23 PDT)

Commissioner

Richard Kelling (04/22/2026 17:47:23 PDT)

Commissioner

ATTEST: District Secretary

03 28 26 BoFC Workshop Meeting Minutes Final

Final Audit Report 2026-04-29

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