**THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT THREE**

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**August 20, 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 Hetzler<br>Commissioner Kirkbride<br>Commissioner Roberts<br>Commissioner Gamble | | Commissioner Kelling |

## 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 Kirkbride
Second: Commissioner Gamble
Carried: Unanimous

## IV. PROMOTIONAL AND SWEARING IN CEREMONY

Lieutenants Jeff Beaulieu, Adam Graham, Ty Hodge, Kyle McClellan

## V. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft minutes of August 6, 2026, Board of Fire Commissioners meeting.
B. Warrants (AP 8B 2026):

- General Fund 001 (Acct #6630); EFTs numbered 5842 through 5850; checks numbered 25003 through 25027; drafts numbered 1813 through 1838 for a total amount of $1,809,710.51.
- Equipment Repair and Replacement Fund 103: EFTS numbered 5851 through 5852; checks numbered 25028 through 25029; draft numbered 1839 for a total amount of $37,017.63.

C. Payroll 8A-2026 in the amount of $2,341,220.31.

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

## VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Thurston County Medic One
No report; the next meeting will take place on August 27th.

B. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM)
No report; the next meeting will take place on September 2nd.

C. City/District Liaison
No report; the next meeting will take place on September 17th.

D. LFD3/EOFD ILA Committee
No report; the next meeting will take place on September 9th.

E. Thurston County Fire Commissioners Association
The picnic took place this month, and Commissioner Gamble was not able to attend. The next meeting will take place on September 15th.

F. Thurston Regional Planning Council
No report; the next meeting will take place on September 4th.

G. Community Outreach
Chris DeBell reported:

- Engine 34 visited a summer school program.
- Household Church held a community-focused back-to-school block party where they provided school supplies for kids. Engine 31 stopped by to support the program and provide an engine tour for the attendees.
- The bicycle helmet program continues to be active. Six community members were fitted for helmets last week.
- The sixth video for Prop 1 was posted today. The episode focuses on the needs north of I-5 and Station 36. The previous videos continue to perform well, with views ranging between 6,000 and 22,000.
- The winner on social media this week was the meteor video captured by Ryan Parsons from the logistics warehouse. There were 22,000 views.

H. Operations:
Chief Carson shared:

- Yesterday, 11 to 12 hours of the day were spent doing the BC Assessment Center, which was put on by Public Safety Testing. This assessment program goes through several dimensions. Candidates were assessed on running a meeting for partner agencies in which various questions were

asked about relationships between different agencies with law enforcement, the Lacey Police Department, etc. They were also asked to run a community meeting in which they were told to step in for the fire chief and address several questions about the upcoming bond measure. They also went through interviews and a tactical assessment. All of the candidates did well on these assessments. There were seven candidates who participated.

- Chief Schmidt mentioned that there were assessors for Lacey PD, the Sherriff's Office, Medic One, Tumwater, as well as several fire assessors from different agencies in Pierce County. Many staff members were there as well as HR.

I. Logistics

Chief Patti reported:

- This afternoon, the hose and ladder testing was completed. It went longer than anticipated, but there was very minimal loss of hose this year. There were one or two of the older ladders that did not pass.
- One of the Pierce Velocities in reserve has been placed at Station 32. Now all of the fleets are on the same platform engine at all of the stations.
- The parking lot sealing and striping has been completed.
- The uniform store will be closed at the end of September as an opportunity to reconcile all the orders and close the budget year. Any uniform needs should be put in before then.
- Regarding mobilization: as of last Friday, there was a brush truck sent out with a replacement strike team to the Little Giant fire in the Okanogan Chelan County area. This was a replacement strike team for the first Central Region strike team that has spent their full 14 days there. The replacement strike team is also anticipated to spend 14 days there, at the end of which they will be returning in time for the Jake Johnson memorial service.

J. Standards and Resilience

Chief Cerovski reported:

- Community Risk Reduction: a little over a month away from beginning their billing cycle for the inspection program, which begins in the fourth quarter of this year. There has been a lot of administrative work preparing for this. There has also been administrative work underway to develop policy about fee structures, which will be brought to the board in September.
- Capital Projects: an alternative product has been identified to replace the cladding, which has not been performing to expectations at Station 34. A product has been identified to hopefully replace the existing product. The contractor of record is confident in their ability to install the new product correctly.
- Commissioner Hetzler asked if there was an inspector to help solve this problem. Chief Cerovski responded that there was a third-party inspector who validated the assessment that the cladding was not functioning

properly. Their determination was that it was because it was improperly installed. In conversations with the contractor of record, the architect of record, and the engineer of record who were involved in the cladding, they all understand that it is their responsibility to replace that product with something that functions properly. The color is matched by lot design, so there may be a need to purchase additional product to keep on hand for replacements as needed. All the replacement material and the installation work should be covered by the contractor of record.

## VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Bond Updates

Chief Schmidt reported:

- All of the required documents and `connections with the county have been attained. The bond measure is on the November 3rd ballot.
- Chris DeBell already mentioned the social media videos about the measure.
- There will be additional scheduled opportunities to speak to the public.
- As of now, there is no knowledge of the existence of an Against committee.
- The Union is supportive of moving forward.
- The membership has been properly trained to make sure their responses to questions are appropriate and factual.

B. Merger Updates

Chief Schmidt reported:

- There was a meeting on Monday the 17th. There was an initial meeting in April where both South Bay and East Olympia had requested that the group get together for feasibility to determine if it was financially appropriate for there to be a merger and to create some work groups.
- After April, there were several smaller work groups, including labor units working together, administrative meetings, financial work, etc.
- At the meeting on the 17th, Finance reported back to the smaller districts that there were an appropriate direction and feasibility of mergers if the boards wanted to look at that. However, there were some nuances with contracts, wages, ranks, etc. In order for it to make sense financially, efficiencies need to be considered.
- The individual labor groups were given a good chunk of time to talk about what their members' interests might be.
- It was recommended that each agency – South Bay, East Olympia, and Lacey – would get together within their own groups (included elected officials, leadership, and labor reps) to discuss what was talked about Monday. Each individual group will decide whether they want to continue with conversations.
- Still a way out from any individual agency petitioning LFD3 for an official merge, but good conversations are underway. The next meeting will take place on September 21st.

- Commissioner Hetzler added that South Bay invited Steve Brooks to come to their next commissioner meeting to help answer questions and explain this idea to their board on September 8th.
- Commissioner Hetzler also printed off the sticking points to share with the commissioners. These are some of the issues that were discussed at the meeting.
- Chief Schmidt mentioned that it's important to balance having feasibility and deciding if it is a good decision to move forward, but the labor groups also need to balance how they get together and what that looks like as far as policies that the IFF has.

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

## IX. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A. District Monthly Financial Report
Director Kirkwood reported:

- General Fund 001: net excess of $9,493,090.
- Donation Fund 101: net excess of $17, 144.
- Reserve Fund 102: net excess of $1,119,296.
- Equipment Repair & Replacement Fund 103: net excess of $350,063.
- General Fund Summary: net excess of $10,979,592 (26% of the expenditure budget for the year).
- Bond Fund 201: net excess of $79,668.
- Bond 2017 Fund 202: net excess of $532,276.
- 2025 Bond Fund 203: net excess of $813,891.
- Capital Projects Fund 301: net excess of $933,227.
- 2025 Capital Projects Fund 309: net excess of $5.9 million.
- A number of charts and graphs were shown.

B. Chief Schmidt reported:

- The memorial for Firefighter Jake Johnson will take place on August 29th at Evergreen Christian at 1:00 p.m.
- An invitation was received to attend the Redwind Casino groundbreaking for their remodel and expansion. Chief Roberts and Chief Schmidt attended last week. They are anticipating the project to take about a year. They are adding 70,000 square feet.
- The healthcare rates were received from the Washington Fire Commissioners Association plan. The rate increase is expected to be 18.5%. This is more than 15% that was budgeted for 2027. A good proactive move in the background was the creation of the healthcare committee. That committee has already been working on looking at comparable plans. One option is Firefighters Trust. Olympia and Tumwater have been with them for some time. A meeting has been planned with them for August 26th. They are predicting that they will have only an 8% increase for their customers. There will likely be a proposal available to look at for engaging with them in 2027.

- Commissioner Roberts asked if there are different rates for when families are included in a policy. Chief Schmidt confirmed that there are different rate levels for additional dependents.
- Commissioner Kirkbride thanked the committee for their work and for keeping the goal of saving money while still providing the kind of care that everyone should have.
- Commissioner Roberts asked if there is an out-of-pocket cost for members and families. Chief Schmidt responded that there is a healthcare savings plan with an amount of money placed into it twice a year. The debit card associated with that plan is used to help with deductibles. Right now, there are reasonable deductibles which have a cap for the year. There is relatively little out of pocket cost to the members and their families.
- Commissioner Gamble asked if the current provider gave a reason for the 18% increase. Chief Schmidt responded that they have continued to see many major life events that have caused costs to go up.
- Chief Schmidt commented that after meeting with the First Choice Program, they sent a PowerPoint explaining some of the financial aspects. There were many years when they had no cost increase or very minimal increases. Now there have been two years in a row with very large increases.

## X. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Roberts – the promotional ceremonies are always wonderful. The BC assessment process was fascinating to hear about.

Commissioner Gamble – the promotional ceremonies are always the best part of meetings. It is wonderful to see the large support system for the firefighters.

Commissioner Kirkbride – very proud to be part of this organization. Will be away for much of September and will miss the merger meeting and the second meeting of the month but will be back in time for the EMS Council meeting. As for the role of representative on the merger committee, the role could gladly be yielded to a fellow commissioner who can attend more of the meetings.

Commissioner Hetzler – if another commissioner wants to attend those meetings, that would be helpful. However, there is one district that only has one representative, so it is not absolutely necessary to have two representatives in attendance. The people who are working on the merger information have been putting an enormous amount of work and time into gathering all of the necessary information. Advance notice given that Commissioner Hetzler will be gone December 17th. An update would be appreciated on the public records request situation that came up some time ago, if this could happen at a future meeting. At Station 35, there is a very large black object to the left of the apparatus bay that appears to be covered in cloth; what is this? Chief Cerovski responded that there are forcible entry props at three of the five stations, which have a canvas cover. These are to give the firefighters opportunities to refresh their forcible access experience and practice.

Commissioner Hetzler gave a reminder that it was agreed last year that the Chief's Eval would be completed in September.

## XI. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Correspondence
Chief Schmidt shared that there was a donation for the LFD3 Donation Fund. A woman came in, whose husband passed away in June. LFD3 crews responded on the call at that time. She came in August and donated $500 to the fund. Her kind comments and donation speak volumes about the crew that responded that day and their support and helpfulness to her during such a challenging time.

## XII. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

None.

## XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned as of 6:52 PM.

***Next Regular Meeting: September 3, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.***
***Available via remote meeting.***

Liberty Hetzler (09/21/2026 12:23:27 PDT)
Chair

Vice Chair

Melissa Gamble (09/21/2026 20:48:57 PDT)
Commissioner

Sylvia Roberts (09/21/2026 14:30:56 PDT)
Commissioner

Richard Kelling (09/22/2026 09:31:41 PDT)
Commissioner

ATTEST: District Secretary

# 08 20 2026 BoFC Meeting Minutes Final

Final Audit Report 2026-09-24

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| Created: | 2026-09-21 (Pacific Daylight Time) |
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