THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT THREE

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

September 3, 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 Commissioner Kirkbride Commissioner Roberts 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. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft minutes of the August 20, 2026, Board of Fire Commissioners meeting.
B. Warrants (AP 9A 2026):
   - General Fund 001 (Acct #6630): EFTs numbered 5853 through 5856; checks numbered 25032 through 25041 for a total amount of $39,471.96.
   - Equipment Repair and Replacement Fund 103: EFTs numbered 5857 through 5858; checks numbered 25042 through 25043 for a total amount of $11,382.21.
   - Capital Projects Fund 301: EFT numbered 5859 for a total amount of $35,165.88.
C. Payroll 8B-2026 in the amount of $733,364.24.

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

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Thurston County Medic One
Commissioner Kirkbride reported from the August 27 meeting:

- The last of the medic unit replacements will be going to Tumwater.
- The surplus medic unit has not been requested by any agency in Thurston County, so it is being made available to any jurisdiction within West Region. That was announced yesterday at the West Region meeting.
- There was a review of the budget to date. It is right where it is supposed to be.
- There is an Operations Committee made up of providers. The longtime chair is Chief VanCamp of South Bay. He announced that he will be retiring in March and that a new chair will need to be selected.
- Medic One is planning on a series of town hall meetings and listening sessions throughout the county. In November the calendar for these meetings will be published. They are really encouraging elected officials to attend the meetings.
- Chief Schmidt asked if there was mention made at the meeting of Medic One running their levy early, possibly as early as 2027 rather than 2028 or 2028. He responded that this was not brought up at the meeting; there was no mention of it. There was, however, mention of extending funding to jurisdictions for EMS, not just Medic One.

B. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM)
Commissioner Roberts reported from the recent meeting:

- There was a budget meeting yesterday; both Commissioner Roberts and Chief Schmidt attended the meeting. At the next meeting, there will be a full report on the budget.
- The next TCOMM meeting is September 30th due to the budget being moved back. Commissioner Roberts will not be able to attend that meeting, but Chief Schmidt will attend and will report on that meeting.

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
No report; the next meeting will take place on September 15th.

F. Thurston Regional Planning Council
No report; the next meeting is combined with the TRPC retreat and will take place on September 10th. Commissioner Kelling will not be able to attend and does not believe representation is necessary.

G. Community Outreach
Chris DeBell reported:

- Yesterday at Station 31, there was a station tour with 20 preschoolers and their teachers from the Kiddie Academy.
- Last week, there was a station tour with two high school boys from the Life Skill program. That tour was facilitated by Support Services. The boys got good face time with the first responders.
- Car seats and helmet fittings continue, with eight visits to the station for these services in the last two weeks.
- There were two different outreach activities today. There were two Senior Safe At Home representatives to the Panorama Wellness Fair. They provided resources on Senior Safe At Home. Support was also given today by two firefighters at the Nisqually Health Fair.
- Communications: the community continues to love seeing the social media posts on members, particularly with the newly promoted lieutenants. There have been over 23,000 views on that post alone.
- Bond videos view numbers are holding steady, and there has been virtually no negative interactions on those.
- Bill Lange's last video for the calendar year launched this week. The video was about Medic One. There continues to be good reach on those videos.
- The bi-monthly Community Dispatch was released on Tuesday. These are distributed to a direct mail list to people (about 500 people). It is also posted on NextDoor, which reaches over 26,000 residents.

H. Operations:
Chief Patti shared:

- On Monday, August 24th, at about 7:45 in the evening, crews were dispatched to a structure fire on Farina Loop. When crews arrived, they found heavy fire in the garage, which started to extend to the second floor. The crews came in and did a good knockdown on the garage; however, it has already extended up into the second floor and into the attic space. This proved challenging for the crews, but they were able to get it extinguished. No occupants or firefighters were injured. The fire is being investigated but the cause is so far undetermined.
- The BC promotional process was completed, and the list was posted on September 1.
- On Tuesday at the Operations Leadership meeting, they will have a joint leadership meeting with Lacey PD and LFD3's BC leadership group. These meetings have been taking place semiannually; now trying to do them quarterly to bring those two groups together to have discussions on any issues that are arising in the community.

I. Logistics

Chief Patti reported:

- Truck 312 is having the motor replaced. The new motor has arrived, and the old motor has been pulled out. There was a part on the new motor that was damaged, so work is underway to quickly warranty that product. Still on track for that vehicle to be back in service in late September or early October depending on how the installation goes.
- With the new Engine 31, it was recently discovered that the black coating on the diamond plate was starting to flake in spots. Outreach was made to Hughes, who reached out to Pierce. It was determined that there was improper prep done at the factory when that material was applied. The warranty repair has been approved through Pierce, and the engine is scheduled to go up to Hughes next week to have the safety stride replaced on all the areas where it has been failed. They will also do some extra areas around it. The truck is anticipated to be gone for two to three weeks.
- There has been work underway with the City of Tumwater on a lease agreement for LFD3's shower trailer. That trailer is currently sitting at the TEC. It is mostly used during Academy. Tumwater is going through remodels on Station T1, which will take all of their station showers out of service. The shower trailer will be delivered to them next Tuesday.
- Mobilization: the Brush 34 crew returned from the Little Giant fire last Thursday just before Jake's memorial. The crew was on a 13-day stint over there and did a great job. There are currently no units mobilized out of the area.

J. Standards and Resilience

Chief Cerovski reported:

- Community Risk Reduction: analysis has wrapped up for the 2026 Insurance Symposium that was held in July. The goal is to have another symposium next Monday. There will be polling of the members who participated from the insurance industry about topics to focus on in 2027.
- With the inspection program, working with vendors on readiness for the fourth quarter billing cycle for safety inspections. All of those processes are being fine-tuned in order to hopefully have a seamless process for the business community.
- There was a fire back in January 2026 that resulted in some charges filed by the District Attorney's office here in the county. Notification was given today that they were successful in obtaining a first-degree arson conviction for the individual in question. It is not common in the fire service to be successful with those kinds of convictions. The success is largely thanks to the investigation team and their efforts on determining origin and cause.
- Safety and Compliance: continuing with LifeScan planning for annual physicals for members.
- Capital Projects: working with the owner representative to develop or find capital project processes and management practices to help better track

budgets in greater detail. This will also help improve monthly reporting. The owner's reps have a lot of talent and are giving a lot of teaching about these kinds of processes which will improve capital work in the future.

- Regarding the cladding on the outside of Station 34: a product has been selected. Chief Schmidt has a sample of it. It is a phenolic product, which is a nonporous fire-resistant high-pressure laminate. These should last longer, perform better, and not fade as badly as what is currently on the building. The contractor is honoring the responsibility to repair the damaged work and will be taking care of the installation and the materials. This is expected to begin in the middle of September and hopefully be done by the very first week in November.
- Working on efforts for Station 31 and the remodel planned, as well as at Station 33. These projects involve a lot of work with the architect and the owners rep to recreate the drawings for these buildings. There are currently no digital architectural drawings because these are older buildings, so scanning systems will be used to create these digital drawings. Those can then be used as the basis for the remodel work.
- Commissioner Hetzler asked if there will be any costs associated with the project. Chief Cerovski responded that it was discovered in the third-party engineering study that the contractor did not necessarily have the expertise to properly inform that installation, and therefore that original product was not the best one to go back to. The new product is comparable in price, and they feel confident that they can install it more effectively. The product is more tolerant of tiny variances in the level of the wall and the way in which it is secured to the structure. LFD3 will pay for about 10% extra product in the same lot color so that if there is something that needs to be replaced in the future, it can be pulled out of the warehouse and replaced and the color will match exactly. At the next meeting the cost of this will be available.
- Commissioner Kelling asked for a reminder of who the owner's rep is. Chief Cerovski responded that it is Turner Townsend Heery out of Seattle and Spokane.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Bond Updates

Chief Schmidt reported:

- There are no major updates. Work is underway to finalize the mailers for printing.
- Chief Schmidt has several speaking engagements lined up. Of note, the City has issued an invitation to speak to the City Council on September 15th. Chief Schmidt will give a State of the District report and share information about the bond.
- As Chris shared, the videos continue to get a lot of views and there has not been any negative feedback.
- There was another meeting with the community advisory committee. Everyone was very engaged. There was a lot of great feedback about the videos. One of the younger committee members did share that

shorter, quicker bursts of information would be received better. As a result, there have been discussions with the social media specialist about taking portions of the longer videos and cropping them to shorter, more succinct videos.

- The advisory committee spoke about finding more ways to get information out, in addition to social media – for example, petitioning for speaking opportunities at HOAs, etc.
- Commissioner Hetzler asked for an opportunity to see the mailers when they are completed.
- Commissioner Roberts asked when the mailers are scheduled to go out. Chief Schmidt responded that the goal is to get it out within a couple of days of when the voter's pamphlet goes out.
- Commissioner Kirkbride asked if there is an independent Pro group. Chief Schmidt responded in the affirmative. The independent group is working on their own mailers. They are also working with the union.

B. Merger Updates

Chief Schmidt reported:

- At the community advisory committee for the bond, the concept of the merger was introduced. For the most part, they were incredibly encouraging and understood the idea and what it would look like.
- The committee agreed to come back together after the election (sometime after the vote and before the holidays) to have further discussions on this topic.
- There was a big meeting on August 21st to bring together electeds, labor groups, and leadership from all three agencies. It was agreed that the time would be best spent if the smaller districts got together in work groups within each of the agencies (comprised of leadership, elected officials, and labor) to talk about feasibility. Since then, the East Olympia group has come together. Chief Schmidt and Chief Patti were a part of that meeting, along with the labor rep from East Olympia and one elected official.
- South Bay has a commissioners' meeting on September 8th and are encouraging community members to attend. Chief Schmidt, representatives from East Olympia, and some of the LFD3 labor reps will also attend the meeting.
- There will be another larger meeting for all of the agencies to come together on September 21st. Commissioner Hetzler gave a reminder that Commissioner Kirkbride will not be able to attend that meeting if any of the other commissioners would like to attend in his place. It was agreed that Commissioner Roberts will attend.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Workshop Agenda Discussion

Chief Schmidt reported:

- There is a workshop scheduled for September 24th. There have been no submissions or suggestions from the commissioners about topics of discussion.
- Staff would like to discuss mergers.
- Given that the chief's evaluation is coming up, Chief Schmidt would like to come to the board with some of the goals and plans for 2027.
- Commissioner Kirkbride requested to discuss capital projects that would begin when the bond passes. A more detailed presentation on these projects would be appreciated.
- Commissioner Hetzler also mentioned discussion of the process for selection of the chair.
- The commissions are invited to send an email in the next day or two with any additional topics of discussion that come to mind.

B. Fire Chief Performance Review Discussion
Commissioner Hetzler reported:
- Review was done of what took place last year: forms were created, which were filled out by the commissioners and submitted to Kristin.
- The commissioners would like to use that form again. The commissioners should have it turned into Kristin by the 17th so that she can compile the information.
- By the 20th, Chief Schmidt will provide a copy of her 360 evaluations so that those can be used as a tool.
- On the 24th, there will be an executive session to review everything.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Chief Schmidt reported:
- The memorial took place for Firefighter Jake Johnson last weekend. There were nearly a thousand people in attendance at the service, which took place at Evergreen Christian.
- Pat Pawlak at Puget Sound Fire was the guiding support for the members throughout the memorial. Chris Gorman has been recruited by that team and has been going to different events and helping out. It has been a great partnership.
- Overall, the entire memorial went very well and was a moving and meaningful event.
- Chief Cerovski put together a document showing the Monthly Operations Data. It shows the incident call volume, response volume, etc. as well as a lookback to August 2025 to see how this year compares to last year. There is also a year-to-date calculation. Overall, LFD3 is up by 40 calls for the year compared to last year. The data is also broken down by incident type, response type, unit activity, and station activity.
- Commissioner Kelling asked if there are plans to share this data with the public. Chief Schmidt responded that the data has never been shared to this level of detail but it could be considered. Commissioner Kirkbride suggested not changing any practices before the election. Chief Schmidt agreed with this suggestion but also said that recommendations from the

commissioners as to how this information can best be used and shared would be welcome. Commissioner Kirkbride suggested including it in the Annual Report.

- The 9/11 Ceremony will take place next week. The ceremony will be held at 6:45 at Station 31.
- The Healthcare Committee was able to meet. The IAFF Health and Wellness (also known as Firefighters Trust) came and gave a presentation to the committee. They shared a great deal of information. It sounds as though their coverage would be very similar. At the next meeting, there will be a full presentation with a PowerPoint to compare the plans. They would honor the LifeScan contract and cover it, just as the current insurance provider does. They also shared that all members would transfer, including all retirees. Although their coverage is similar, they do cover some things that are not covered with the current plan, including IVF, stem cell, and PRP. Comparing the two, the current provider would have an annual premium of $4.4 million. IAFF Health & Wellness Plan 100 would have an annual premium of just over $4 million (a savings of $445,000 if the switch is made).
- Of note, Tumwater has said in the past that if they ever had to look at a merger or consolidation where they lost their insurance provider, that would be a deal breaker for them.
- The plan is to give a more formal presentation on this topic at the next meeting and then possibly ask the commissioners to make a decision.
- Commissioner Kirkbride asked who is the healthcare provider for East Olympia and South Bay. Chief Schmidt shared that she is not aware who the provider is for South Bay and that East Olympia has a different and smaller plan that is not widely used in the fire service.
- HR update: working on the new hire process. The date has closed for applications. Staff have been going through applications and started making phone calls today. On September 16, 17, and 18, nearly 100 applicants will be coming in to begin the process. Commissioner Kelling inquired how many open positions there are. Chief Schmidt reported that the finance team has budgeted for an additional four above what is needed for next year, but there is flexibility in that when looking at the budget and at growth projections. There will be five positions to be backfilled.
- The American Legion is going to recognize the firefighter of the year. The chosen member is Gwen Morton. The dinner is to be next week, and Gwen will be out of town. The American Legion will instead come on October 1st. Chief Schmidt will still attend the dinner next week to see the other reward recipients.

IX. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Kirkbride – based on what was discussed at this meeting, continues to be amazed at the quality of this organization, from the leadership of the chief and the deputy chiefs to all of the staff and the responders. The entire situation with Jake, discussions about mergers, decisions about insurance and

retirement – all of these things are evidence of the strong work of the chief and the entire staff.

Commissioner Gamble – appreciative of the ability to watch the livestream of the memorial. In full agreement with Commissioner Kirkbride. Everything seems to run very smoothly with reports that are very organized and detailed. Everyone is doing a great job.

Commissioner Roberts – the service for Jake was phenomenal. All of the information shared at the meetings make the commissioners' job feel very easy. Is there any update on the lawsuit about fire apparatus? Chief Schmidt reported that staff is still working on gathering the data. Commissioner Roberts would like to be excused from the October 1 meeting.

Commissioner Kelling – thanks to Chris for sharing the video of the last commissioners' meeting. Very appreciative of the extensive process that went into the BC interviews. Will not be present at the October 15 meeting.

Commissioner Hetzler – Jake's memorial was a beautiful tribute. Commissioner Hetzler stopped by before the memorial began and was very moved by all of the displays and how thoughtful everything was.

X. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Correspondence
Chief Schmidt shared that an official letter was received from Christine Larson at the Los Angeles City Fire Department. She was the incident commander for Camp Blaze for 2026. She wanted to make sure that there was recognition given to Firefighters Austen Stutsman, Gwen Morton, Annabelle Kirkwood, and Kelsey Benson, who all served at Camp Blaze. Chief Schmidt will ensure that HR gets copies of this letter to put in the record for each of these individuals.

XI. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

Jonathan Clemens spoke to share that Jake's memorial was a very well-done event and was among the best firefighter funerals. Other comparable funerals have not had the same level of balance between the fire crews and family, nor the sincerity all around. The staff and the Local are commended, as well as everyone who worked together to create this event.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned as of 6:35 PM.

Next Regular Meeting: September 17, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.
Available via remote meeting.

Liberty Hetzler (09/21/2026 12:24:01 PDT)

Chair

Vice Chair

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

Commissioner

Sylvia Roberts (09/21/2026 14:28:19 PDT)

Commissioner

Richard Kelling (09/22/2026 09:32:13 PDT)

Commissioner

ATTEST: District Secretary

09 03 26 BoFC Meeting Minutes Final

Final Audit Report 2026-09-22

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2026-09-21 - 8:48:07 PM PDT

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