THURSTON COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT THREE

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

October 16th, 2025

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 Kirkbride	Commissioner Roberts	
Commissioner Kelling		
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. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: To approve the agenda as published.

Motion: Commissioner Gamble
Second: Commissioner Kirkbride
Carried: Unanimous

III. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC /MEMBERS PRESENT

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Draft minutes of the October 2, 2025, meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners.

B. Warrants (AP 10B 2025):

- General Fund 001 (Acct #6630) EFTs numbered 5657 through 5663; checks numbered 24592 through 24617; drafts numbered 1644 through 1656 for a total amount of $1,403,814.08.

- Equipment Repair and Replacement Fund 103: EFTs numbered 5664 through 5666; check number 24618 for a total amount of $6,252.83.
- Capital Projects Fund 301: EFTs numbered 5667 through 5668 for a total amount of $28,110.84.
- 2017B Capital Improvement Project (2019A): Check number 24619 for a total amount of $40,963.41.

C. Payroll 10A-2025 in the amount of $2,057,518.28.

MOTION: <u>To approve the consent agenda as published.</u>

Motion: Commissioner Kirkbride
Second: Commissioner Kelling
Carried: Unanimous

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Thurston County Medic One
No report; the next meeting will take place next Thursday.

B. Thurston 9-1-1 Communications (TCOMM)
No report; the next meeting will take place on November 5th and will be attended by Commissioner Gamble.

C. City/District Liaison
No report; the next meeting will take place in November.

D. Thurston County Fire Commissioners Association
No report; the next meeting is on October 21st.

E. Thurston Regional Planning Council
No report.

F. Community Outreach
Chief Schmidt shared:

- October is Fire Prevention Month. Starting on October 9th, crews have been working towards getting out to 18 schools, with a focus on kindergarten through 2nd grade.
- Crews continue to attend high school football games.
- On October 4th, there was a Children's Day event at Huntamer Park.
- Bicycle helmet fittings continue.
- Bill Lange released his next video. There has been a lot of traffic on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and NextDoor, with thousands of views on each of these platforms. Great comments have been received thus far.
  - Commissioner Kelling inquired about who controls the rights to the videos once they are all completed. Chief Schmidt mentioned that

he is the creator and it is his YouTube channel. His business or LLC retains the rights to the videos.

G. Capital Facilities and Equipment Activities
Chief Cerovski shared:
- Photos are now available of Engine 31. Next week, Chief Cerovski will be traveling to Wisconsin with the apparatus spec committee for the final acceptance at the blue floor. "The blue floor" is emblematic of Pierce Manufacturing. The location where they inspect the apparatus for final delivery and acceptance is in an apparatus bay with a blue floor.
- The apparatus is expected to arrive sometime in November. It should be ready in January for a ceremony to put it in service. The current Engine 31 will go into reserve status at that time.
- Commissioner Hetzler inquired who is going to the blue floor.
    - Chief Cerovski responded: Adam Cummings, the chief mechanic; Deputy Chief Chris Patti; Assistant Chief Chris Frost; Lt. David Perz.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Board Handbook — Board Review and Potential Action
Chief Cerovski reported:
- There was a question received from the commissioners about where existing or old policies could be found in order to verify that nothing has significantly changed from those documents to what is on page 9 of the new document, which describes the responsibilities of the board chair and vice chair, as well as the board secretary.
    - Chief Cerovski commented that there was great difficulty finding any evidence of a document that provided guidance as to those positions. However, there were several old versions of the generic WFCA Commissioner Handbook.
    - Commissioner Roberts interjected to clarify the question that was asked. At the end of every year, the commissioners prepare to change roles, and in the past, there has been a significant amount of discussion about the sequence of events for how the chair becomes the chairs. There has been a specific sequence to follow when it comes to determining who the new chair is, and who will take on the role of chair if the next in line does not accept it, et cetera. The new draft document seems to be broader than the usual process, and the intent of the question being asked was to make sure that there was not a conflict. Perhaps the comparison is simply to past practice, without anything existing in writing.
    - Chief Cerovski responded that he is familiar with what Chief Roberts is referring to and will find it and vet it. Is it the preference of the board to ensure that whatever is codified in that older document is incorporated into the new document?

    - Commissioner Hetzler stated that this new version is preferred, but it would be important to make sure that there is not a conflicting document already in existence.
    - Chief Cerovski suggested that when the board handbook is adopted, that the resolution to adopt it includes language indicating that it supersedes any previous policy procedure or best practice.
    - Commissioner Kirkbride commented that according to the new document, the term of the office will be one year from the first regularly scheduled meeting of the year until the first regularly scheduled meeting of the subsequent year. However, the chair and vice chair are not selected until the second meeting.
        - Chief Cerovski responded that the language will be fixed to match correctly with that practice.
- Chief Cerovski reported that it would be good to move forward with presenting this document to the attorney for them to review and to make sure it is not in conflict with any other documents. Is this acceptable to the group?
    - Commissioner Hetzler commented that if the changes are made to this section, based on what was just discussed, then it would be ready to go to the attorney at that point.
- Chief Cerovski also mentioned a question that was brought forward about the budget process on page 31. The changes that were made are highlighted in the document. The intent behind this section is that the board can refer to the reports that they are given from the fire chief, the strategic plan, or any other guiding documents to ask questions about whether initiatives from the past are complete or whether there needs to be a change in strategy or performance. This helps drive the decisions of Director Kirkwood and the budget team to make sure that budgetary resources are available to achieve the strategic objectives or initiatives that are identified by the fire chief, et cetera. It provides the commissioners with the flexibility to make these inquiries virtually at any time in accordance with the budget process.
    - All of the commissioners agreed with the changes to this section.
- Chief Cerovski reported that the next step will be to make the changes as agreed upon this evening and then present the attorney with the document and review it with him. The goal is to give him enough time to present his findings and review and recommendations, if any, at the next workshop on October 30th. If his recommendations are accepted, then the changes will be made and a resolution can be made to adopt it with a date set for it to take effect.
- Commissioner Kelling had an inquiry about Voting on page 16. The language in the document mentions "a statement indicating the reason for the vote or the reason for abstaining." Unless there is a statutory requirement to indicate the reason for the vote or the reason for abstaining, this language should be struck.
    - Commissioner Hetzler mentioned that research was done into this, and that reasons should in fact be given for abstaining but not for

voting. Commissioner Kelling reported that he checked Robert's Rules of Order, which are procedural but not binding for the board, although the document is followed in principle for procedures. Commissioner Kelling expressed his disagreement with requiring that commissioner have to indicate a reason for abstaining for a vote, unless it is required by a statute or WAC.
    - Commissioner Kirkbride expressed his support of following Robert's Rules of Order, and that not following them makes the commissioners susceptible to challenges from outside entities and agencies.
    - Chief Cerovski offered to discuss this with the attorney. Because Robert's Rules of Order are referenced in the document, there will be a request to the attorney to clarify if that means that the Rules are binding on the conduct of the commissioners when it comes to voting.
- Chief Cerovski commented that the document codifies that once the commissioners have voted on something, the only signatures required will be the board chair and the board secretary, attesting to the vote that took place. Therefore, if someone was to vote no or abstain, they are not then bound to sign any document.

B. Britton Parkway Project (Appendix A) — Board Review and Action

Chief Cerovski reported:

- Resolution No. 900-10-25 was presented to the commissioners. It has been reviewed and vetted by the attorney. Everything is in order for the closing date of November 5th.

MOTION: <u>To approve Resolution 900-10-25, a resolution of the Board of Fire Commissioners of Fire Protection District No. 3, Thurston County, Washington (Lacey Fire District 3), authorizing the closing of the purchase of the property located at 7250 Britton Parkway NE, Lacey, WA, and providing for related matters.</u>

Motion: Commissioner Kelling
Second: Commissioner Gamble
Carried: Unanimous

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2026 Preliminary Budget Presentation — Staff Report

Director Kirkwood reported:

- Preliminary assessed value is $22.8 billion (up about 4.19% from 2025).
- Projected property tax levy: $34.3 million (up $1.38 million from 2025). This includes new construction of approximately $258 million.
- There will be a 3.5% COLA for all staff.
- 5 new hires are included in the budget to backfill retiring members only – no new operations FTEs.
- Major 2026 budgeted expenditures:

- Owners Representative Contract – major capital projects - $400k
  - Warehouse lease - $115k
  - Logistical equipment - $96k
  - IT hardware replacements - $58k
  - Training programs - $54k
  - Promotional testing - $26k
- Medical insurance rates up by 15%.
- Continued interfund transfers to meet apparatus replacement schedule and reserve needs.
- A chart of revenue projections was presented. Total revenue in the 2026 proposed budget is $52.2 million.
- Expenditures (executive/legislative): $503,440.
- Expenditures (administrative support): $8.1 million.
- Expenditures (fire protection (BLS), life saving (ALS), and training: $31.95 million.
- Fund transfers were reviewed. Subtotal of transfers for the 2026 proposed budget are $3.3 million.
- General fund balance and cash reserve were reviewed. The percentage of appropriations are at 20.4% for next year.
- Director Kirkwood invited questions.
  - Commissioner Kelling inquired about the manning at Station 32 right now. Chief Schmidt responded that it is up to three right now, as of the midyear.
  - Commissioner Kelling inquired about the next aid unit staffing to come online. Chief Schmidt responded that there is no plan right now to add an aid unit. This is something that will continue to be monitored and considered. Commissioner Kirkbride commented that one of the Medic One surplus units is scheduled to come to LFD3 next year.
  - Commissioner Kirkbride inquired about the call volume at Station 32. Chief Schmidt reported that the hope is that the call volume will be doubled (prior to Station 32 going into service in January, it was at less than a thousand calls a year).
  - Chief Schmidt mentioned that it was originally planned to have four new positions in January. Part of the reason there has been a step back from this is because of the healthcare cost increases.
- Director Kirkwood commented that the budget is more conservative due to the preliminary assessed value, which is less than it has been in the past.
  - Commissioner Kelling inquired when the fees are anticipated from Community Risk Reduction. Chief Schmidt responded that there was a meeting on this today, with a presentation from Chief Roberts. There have been discussions on whether to start incurring fees at the beginning of the year versus spending time next year educating on the value for decreased insurance rates and having community WSRB ratings that are improved. The staff for that division is part of the budget already.

- Commissioner Kelling asked for clarification of whether this budget accounts for any additional revenue from inspections. Chief Schmidt responded that that it does not in fact include revenue from inspections. Even if the decision is made to start charging in 2026, there is no prediction of what the income might be and it is not likely to be significant.
- Chief Cerovski went back to the question about Station 32, and based on the third quarter report, the station ran about 700 calls in the first three quarters of the year. They are on track to probably bring in 1000 calls for the year. It is currently the lowest call volume station. The next lowest is Engine 35, another single engine company station, which right now is at about 1400 calls for the year.
- Commissioner Kelling inquired if the budget accounts for rounding out the Community Risk Reduction department. Chief Schmidt responded that the plan is to wait. Right now it includes the one inspector and their equipment.
- Commissioner Hetzler inquired about next steps. Director Kirkwood reported that the next board meeting will include a public hearing on the final budget. At the last board meeting in November, the final vote will take place for the board.
- Commissioner Keling inquired, relative to the medical insurance percentage increase, what approach did this budget take? Director Kirkwood responded that it was determined that the intention is to cover the costs for the members. This is approximately $300,000. To adjust for that, there were some cuts made (including not hiring the anticipated new hires).

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

A. District Monthly Financial Report

- Summarized Statement of Activities – General Fund 001: net excess of $6,038,988.15 (15%).
- Donation Fund 101: net excess of $16,434.
- Reserve Fund 102: net excess of just over $1 million.
- Equipment Repair & Replacement Fund 103: net excess of $662,153.
- General Fund Summary: net excess of $7.7 million (18% of appropriations).
- Bond Fund 201: net excess of $62,945.
- Bond 2017 Fund 202: net excess of $529,966.
- 2025 Bond Fund 203: no activity in this fund. Money will be transferred into this fund next month.
- Capital Projects Fund 301: net excess of $502,507.
- Capital Projects CFEP Funds 307: net excess of $182,843.
- 2025 Capital Projects Fund 309: net excess of $14 million.
- Graphs and charts were shown further explaining the finances.

B. Chief Schmidt's Report

- Regarding hiring: staff went into the entry level process hiring four because of retirements and to backfill positions. This week, Lt. Eric Bamer notified the district that he is retiring in June of next year. This was enough notice to increase the number of new hires. There will be five starting in January.
- LifeScan started this week. They are set up at the TEC. Administrative and operations members are rotating in and getting their annual physicals.
- Olympia Fire Department gave notice at the end of last week that they are going to be pulling out of the SSRA. This leaves the SSRA with about 18 to 20 recruits through the rest of the county, which is still a very good-sized class. As follow up, Chief Schmidt will be meeting with Chief Hurley and Chief Morris on October 23rd.
- As seen in the budget, there is a contract for the use of Mark Noble. Olympia Fire Department has made notification to cancel the contract in 2027, not 2026. They are looking at going to a per diem model and are planning to have conversations with Tumwater Fire Department about doing the same thing.
- Southeast Thurston has lost a member in the last couple of weeks due to long-term illness. Jeremy McLellan passed away. His service will take place at Tumwater Middle School on Saturday at 11:00 a.m.
- Staff was able to purchase the 988 LifelineVeterans stickers for all of the apparatus, both staff cars and response units. These are the purple stickers that help fundraise for suicide awareness. The cost for this was just under $1000. The Department of Licensing was very accommodating in getting the quantity that was needed. The total vehicle count was 38.
- The Assistant Chief Safety and Compliance Officer process was recently done. Once scores are tabulated, the internal candidates get notification by email of what their scores were. There was a notification from one of the candidates on Monday that they had not received the scores. It had been almost two weeks since the scores were tallied and results had been verbally given by phone. The score sheet marks the start of contesting the process, so with the notification not received, that process technically does not start. There was an immediate check determining that the emails had not been set. Work with the E-Board is underway to create the window of time for contesting the process. This involves rescinding the offer for the purpose of having the necessary time period. That time period will end on the 24th.
- As a reminder, there is a preliminary agenda for the workshop on the 30th. Discussion points include the capital facilities plan, the board handbook, a presentation on the organizational audit, and a discussion about the healthcare MOU going forward about healthcare costs. If the commissioners have other topics to add, those can be sent along to Chris DeBell to be added to the agenda.

- Commissioner Hetzler mentioned adding a discussion about the chief's evaluation.

IX. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Roberts – thank you for the opportunity to Zoom in. Thank you for all of the hard work on everything. There was an opportunity to use the Rebound service yesterday, and it is amazing. Great appreciation for it being extended to the commissioners as well.

Commissioner Kelling – October 29th is the County Elected Official Social. Steve Hobbs, the secretary of state, is the guest speaker. The event will take place at 5:30 at the Atrium.

Commissioner Gamble – no comments.

Commissioner Kirkbride – thanks to Director Kirkwood for putting the budget together and for the excellent monthly financial reports. This month is an important one for the fire service. The school children always really look forward to seeing the fire truck come and the fire presentations that are done in the month of October. Thank you for all the hard work during Fire Prevention Month.

Commissioner Hetzler – there was an opportunity to do a 15-minute interview to kick off the annual Risk Assessment with the auditor's office this week. Is this a new process? Chief Schmidt will also be participating and responded that this is the first time to do this as part of the process.

X. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Correspondence

- Chief Schmidt indicated that the members transported someone to the hospital. The letter received states that, "Your kindness and caring hearts were much appreciated during such a stressful time, although ultimately several days later, he passed. Your care gave us extra time. Thank you from the bottom of our heart."

XI. HEARING OF THE PUBLIC / MEMBERS PRESENT

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned as of 6:58 PM.

Workshop: October 30, 2025, 5:30 p.m.
Next Regular Meeting: November 6, 2025– 5:30 p.m.
Available via remote meeting.

Chair	Vice Chair
Melissa Gamble (11/17/2025 19:46:29 PST)	Sylvia Roberts (11/14/2025 13:33:31 PST)
Commissioner	Commissioner
Rick Kelling (11/15/2025 14:30:03 PST)	Michael Cerovski (11/14/2025 11:51:36 PST)
Commissioner	ATTEST: District Secretary

10 16 25 BoFC Meeting Minutes Final

Final Audit Report 2025-11-17

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