

# Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Barlow called the Holmen Area Fire District meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Town of Holland Town Hall.

**Members Present:** Jeff Herlitzke (Holland), Rick Hauser (Holland), Patrick Barlow (Holmen), Travis Elam (Holmen)

**Alternates Present:** Doug Jorstad (Holmen)

**Members Excused:** None

**Also Present:** Chief Ryan Ostreng

**Guests:** Fire Department Staff

**Virtual:** Chief Robert Whitaker (Consultant, closed session only)

## **Pledge of Allegiance Recited**

### **Approval of Agenda:**

Motion by Herlitzke. Second by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

Motion by Hauser. Second by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Resident or Employee Concerns/Comments:**

None.

### **Financial Review:**

The board reviewed the **Balance Sheet** (Item 7a) in detail. There were no comments or concerns. The board reviewed **Profit s Loss Budget vs. Actual** (Item 7b2). There were no comments or concerns.

Chief Ostreng noted that he added a new item to the packet, Item 7b3, to better explain where 2% dues funds were being allocated specifically to address concerns about the line item **2% Fire Protection Equipment Ex** under Capital Expenditures. Ostreng noted that page 18 in the packet contained the total 2% dues expenditures for 2025. Elam questioned what happened to left over 2% dues at the end of the year. Ostreng explained that 2% dues had strict spending requirements and had to be tracked separately from the general fund if not allocated. Chief Ostreng stated he intended to spend the remaining 2024 2% dues as well as all the 2025 2% dues this year.

The board reviewed check detail thoroughly. Barlow questioned a past item that had a short window of opportunity to pay via check and questioned how to handle this in the future. Chief Ostreng noted it was the check for Workers' Comp insurance. The board

discussed having this paid electronically and be approved by one of the board members ahead of time without having a check written. Hauser questioned a check to MCS networks. Chief Ostreng explained that it was for a SonicWall 3-year renewal as well as a Proofpoint license.

The board reviewed other quotes and invoices. Chief Ostreng explained it was his intention to purchase 5 new Motorola APX 8000XE portable radios for a total of 13 radios. Chief Ostreng stated he wanted to get everyone their own assigned radio so staff wouldn't have to sync radios with their SCBAs for shifts. Barlow asked if the radios were dual band so the department could communicate with all departments in the area. Chief Ostreng stated they were dual band. Chief Ostreng requested the approval of \$46,289.45 towards the purchase of 5 new Motorola Radios. Ostreng noted the radios had gone up in price and would continue to go up in price over the years. Department staff voiced support for having their own individually assigned radios. Elam questioned if it would be beneficial to save the 2% dues, gain interest by leaving them in the bank, and then use them in future purchases for the new fire station. Chief Ostreng re-explained what 2% dues could be used for and stated that 2% dues for the future fire station would be very limited. Barlow questioned if the department should reserve some of the 2025 2% dues for the start of 2026 just in case. Barlow asked if the Chief expected any large 2% dues purchases in the first half of 2026. Barlow also raised concerns about spending down the 2% dues and noted that he would like to see a certain percent of the 2% dues sit in the account for future big-ticket items. Chief Ostreng noted that this year the department received roughly \$90,000 in 2% dues from both municipalities and that the purchases of the new command vehicle had already come out of the LGIP 2% dues. Elam questioned how old the current radios in use were and how long the new radios were expected to last. Department staff noted that 4 of the 8 radios were purchased in 2023 and Ostreng noted the radios had a 20-year life span. Motion by Herlitzke to purchase the 5 new Motorola APX 8000XE in an amount not to exceed \$46,500. Second by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

Chief Ostreng updated the department on recent donations.

#### **Fire Administration Report:**

The board reviewed the calls by month. Chief Ostreng noted that July had the most fire calls on record since 2017 with a total of 136 calls. Chief Ostreng noted that the calls for August were on pace for July and he expected roughly 130 calls. The board discussed notable calls for the month. The department noted a call that used the new cardiac monitor that was recently purchased and funded through donations. Department staff noted that it played a critical role in saving the person's life.

Chief Ostreng noted there were no staff or personnel updates.

Chief Ostreng provided a fleet update and stated that Engine 1 continued to have issues and that Engine 2 was in service. Chief Ostreng stated that New Car 1 should be finished by August 25<sup>th</sup> without the inclusion of the equipment slide out tray.

Chief Ostreng stated that the facility continues to leak and that he had reached out to a company to perform an air test of the facility to check for mold. Herlitzke questioned if any progress was made on a quote to replace the roof and stated he would like the Chief to prioritize it before winter. Chief Ostreng stated his priority was an air quality analysis to figure out what needs to be removed from the building.

Chief Ostreng mentioned reviewing the automatic aid agreement with the City of Onalaska due to repeated cases where both fire departments had heavy call volume and were unable to respond to each other's call. Chief Ostreng stated that he was looking to get a formal automatic aid agreement setup with Trempealeau Fire Department to cover the 5 properties in Town of Holland that are the closest to Trempealeau.

**Review Fleet Replacement Plan:**

Chief Ostreng stated he didn't have the plan finished yet and was looking to collect more data. Chief Ostreng stated he planned to have the plan ready before the next board meeting.

Chief Ostreng referenced **Item G** and noted it was his intention to replace the current water tender with a new first-line pumper and move Engine 1 into the tender role. Chief Ostreng stated that he had support from department staff to move forward with this plan.

Barlow questioned if Engine 1 would retain enough equipment on it to function as a pumper if staff had to respond to two different structure fires at the same time. Chief Ostreng referenced ISO standards and stated that the pumper/tender could function as both a pumper/tender as well as a backup engine, and that eventually the Engine 1 could be moved back into a primary engine role in the next 10 years. Ostreng noted that Engine 1 has a lot of equipment on it that is typically seen on a special purpose truck.

Hauser stated that he wanted to see a finished fleet replacement plan before he could support purchasing a new truck. Chief Ostreng stated that waiting on purchasing a new truck would result in increased costs.

Herlitzke questioned if it would take about 4 years to receive a new truck and Chief Ostreng confirmed this.

Elam questioned if it was a good idea to move forward with purchasing a new engine when Engine 1 was only 2 years old and the department was looking to build a new station within the next 2 to 3 years. Chief Ostreng noted that he had safety concerns with how Engine 1 was currently being run and noted equal comments from La Crosse Fire Department about how the engine was being run. Chief Ostreng stated Engine 1 was perfect for how La Crosse had planned on running the department but currently was not a right fit for how the department is currently running. Elam asked if there was any way to recoup the cost of Engine 1 by selling it if the vehicle wasn't the right fit for the department. Elam stated he'd rather see the department have an engine it uses instead of holding onto one that isn't

used. Chief Ostreng stated he didn't think that was the right call, and that moving it to a tender is the best use for Engine 1.

Herlitzke stated that he was previously an opponent of a new smaller primary engine due to Town of Holland's water concerns, and that after spending time with the Chief and department staff he had changed his mind. Herlitzke voiced his support for a second smaller primary engine along with the transition of Engine 1 to a pumper/tender.

Barlow reiterated budget concerns. Chief Ostreng stated that he could get a basic quote to bring before the board for consideration. Herlitzke asked if it would be possible to get a spec truck that was cheaper with a faster lead time. Chief Ostreng stated this was possible but most modern engines are coming with only 750 gallons of water on board, which wouldn't fit the needs of the fire district.

Elam questioned the operating procedure for the trucks and raised concerns about department learning new procedures for the new truck, and staff only using Engine 2 and the new truck because those would be the engines they are familiar with. Elam stated he was worried Engine 1 would rarely get used or trained on. Chief Ostreng stated that any new engine would match Engine 1 or Engine 2 and that it wouldn't be an issue. Hauser questioned what the primary engine was currently. Chief Ostreng stated that Engine 2 was the current primary engine due to issues with Engine 1.

Barlow asked if the board could look at the specs of trucks that were recently purchased by City of Onalaska or La Crosse. Chief Ostreng said he would find out more details about specs, but the baseline cost of a new truck would be 1 to 1.5 million dollars. Motion to continue discussion on purchasing a new truck once the Chief provides a completed replacement plan in addition to quotes by Herlitzke. Second by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **Town of Holland Innovation Planning Grant Feasibility Study:**

Town of Holland members stated the study revealed the same things the fire station study revealed and stated they had nothing additional to comment. Herlitzke noted the study also involved speaking with the Town of Onalaska and that the new officials seem to be more susceptible to working with the Fire Department. Hauser also noted that the Mayor of Onalaska attended the study presentation.

#### **Fire Station Study:**

The board discussed the results of the fire station study presentation. Chief Ostreng noted that he was surprised the two-station option was even brought up. Chief Ostreng stated the multiple station options were only ever explored for future planning and noted the district only has the capacity to develop one new station. Barlow noted that although the initial quotes were high, he is confident that Wendel Five Bugles can work with the department to bring costs down to match the communities' borrowing limitations.

**Closed Session:**

Motion to go into closed session pursuant to Wis. Stats. §19.85(1)(e) by Herlitzke. Second by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

**Actions on Closed Session Items:**

No actions were taken on closed session items.

**Announcement and future agenda items:**

None

**Next Regular Meeting:** September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**Adjourn:**

Motion to adjourn 9:45 p.m. by Herlitzke. Second by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary