

Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – November 24th, 2025

1. Call to Order

Chair Barlow called the Holmen Area Fire District meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on November 24th, 2025, at the Town of Holland Town Hall.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Present: Rick Hauser, Jeff Herlitzke. Patrick Barlow, Travis Elam, Doug Jorstad (Alternate)

Absent: None

Guests: Chief Ostreng, Fire Department Staff

Virtual: Chief Robert Whitaker

4. Consideration of Agenda Order

Motion by Herlitzke to move Closed Session after **Resident or Employee Concerns** due to Chief Whitaker's schedule conflicts. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chief Ostreng requested changes to the **Financial Review item e.** and noted that the previous motion for the treadmill purchase was incorrect. The notes indicated the motion was not to exceed \$5,500, but the correct amount was \$6,500. Motion to approve the minutes with changes by Herlitzke. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Resident or Employee Concerns/Comments

Doug Jorstad voiced concerns about waiting for collaboration or any financial assistance from neighboring municipalities regarding a joint fire department or new fire station. Jorstad noted that he didn't believe anybody was ready to help the department in the next few years. Jorstad also voiced concerns about the lack of progress on the fire station and noted that the Village of Holmen was aware of two potential properties that would be coming up for sale soon that would fit the needs of the department for a new fire station. Jorstad stated that the Village of Holmen was ready to move forward with the new fire station but was concerned about the Town of Holland's willingness and readiness to commit to it.

Captain Lavery and Captain Cook thanked the board for how the union negotiations were handled. Captain Cook also voiced concerns about the lack of progress on the new fire

station and expressed support for a new training captain position.

14. Closed Session

Motion to convene in closed session pursuant to Wis. Stats. §19.85(1)(e) by Herlitzke. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session Discussion Topics:

Consideration of the 2026 – 2028 Agreement Between the Holmen Area Fire Department and International Association of Firefighters Local # 127, AFL-CIO-CLC.

15. Reconvene in Open Session

Motion by Herlitzke, second by Elam, to reconvene in open session. Motion carried unanimously.

16. Reservation of right for action and/or recommendation on Closed Session item(s)

Motion by Herlitzke to Approve the 2026 – 2028 Agreement Between the Holmen Area Fire Department and International Association of Firefighters Local # 127, AFL-CIO-CLC. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Financial Review (Treasurer)

- a) The board reviewed the 2025 balance sheet.
- b) The board reviewed Profit and Lost – budget versus actual.
- c) Chief Ostreng gave an overview of the remaining 2% dues and explained where the funds had been spent.
- d) The board reviewed check detail. No specific checks were questioned.
- e) The board reviewed the invoices and quotes in detail.
 - a. Motion by Herlitzke to approve payment of Invoice 2530G050 from EMC Insurance in the amount of \$3,061. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.
 - b. Motion by Herlitzke to approve payment of Invoice 2531803G from EMC Insurance in the amount of \$2,672.36 as well as approval of any other monthly Invoices from EMC that may exceed \$2,500. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.
 - c. Motion by Herlitzke to approve payment of Invoice 401109 from McMahon in the amount of \$3,465. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

- d. Chief Ostreng explained why the department needed a new AC unit in addition to explaining what a Mini Split heat pump was and why it was needed for the fire fighter's living quarters. Fire department staff gave detailed accounts of the issues they deal with on the coldest days in the winter as well as the hottest days in the summer. Motion by Herlitzke to approve the installation of Amana central air conditioner unit in the amount of \$5,698. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously. Motion by Herlitzke to approve the installation of Fujitsu Mini Split, not to exceed \$5,000. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.
- e. Chief Ostreng notified the board that Support Vehicle 762 has been sold.
- f. Chief Ostreng brought up a specific donation that requested a 501c3. The board discussed this and debated establishing their own versus using the Holmen Area Foundation to accept donations. The board agreed it didn't make sense to create a separate entity to accept donations due to the requirements for establishing one.
- g. Chief Ostreng stated the department had received a handful of donations including a \$500 donation from the Knights of Columbus, \$1,000 from Sandra Higgs Green Bay Packer quilt raffle, and \$150 from Ann Hoyer. Chief Ostreng also noted that HAFD received a thank you from MDA for the donation of \$1,800 MDA received from the fill the boot drive that HAFD hosted.

8. Fire Administration Report (Chief Ostreng)

- a) The board reviewed the calls for October. Chief Ostreng noted that October broke the department record for the most calls in a month. Chief Ostreng also brought to the boards attention that the Fire Department has been getting dispatched very late to accident calls on high speed roadways. Chief Ostreng stated that the police had been getting dispatched first, and it could take minutes before the county dispatched the fire department. Fire Department staff gave accounts of being dispatched up to 10 minutes late to calls, and in some cases never dispatched to calls that resulted in a victim being transported by ambulance. Chief Ostreng noted that the City of Onalaska Fire Department was also experiencing these issues. The board was extremely concerned about this issue. Elam stated that he would speak to the County Administrator about this issue directly.
- b) Chief Ostreng gave an update on staffing and personnel updates.
- c) Chief Ostreng gave an update on the fleet. Chief Ostreng stated that all vehicles should be operating fine except for Rescue 1 that continues to have issues with its tires.

- d) Chief Ostreng gave an update on the facility. Chief Ostreng stated that he reached out to a company to do an air quality assessment based on the water damage that has occurred from leaks. He estimated the cost to be \$3,000 to \$6,000.
- e) Chief Ostreng updated the board that the new La Crosse County CAD system would be going live December 9th, 2025, after many years in transition.

G. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

Barlow gave a brief update on the group and what was talked about at the previous meeting. Barlow mentioned the communities weren't ready to qualify for a grant that was proposed and that a future collaboration effort could be worked out with the help of McMahon. Chief Ostreng estimated the study to investigate collaboration between the communities would cost about \$40,000 to \$50,000.

10. Discussion about planning for future Holmen Area Fire Department fire station

Chief Ostreng stated he reached out to Five Bugles Design (FBD) to discuss what was considered a shovel ready plan so the department could apply for a grant that required it. Chief Ostreng stated this would cost roughly \$688,500 and would be about 8 months of work. Village of Holmen members voiced support for moving forward with the process of building a new fire station. Barlow noted that Holmen did account for more of the call volume and reminded the board that in 2016 the fire agreement was updated to go to equalized cost share based on equalized value, which resulted in Holmen paying for almost 70% of the operating costs each year. Town of Holland members acknowledge the need for a new fire department but voiced concerns over the cost to their residents due to the 50/50 capital cost share.

11. Review of current apparatus and draft fleet replacement plan

The board was happy with the draft replacement plan but noted they couldn't commit to spending money based off the plan in its current state. Chief Ostreng requested the board look at the plan in detail and consider it moving forward so the department could start to use it as a plan for replacing vehicles in the future.

12. Consideration of firefighter promotion to captain

Chief Ostreng gave a brief reminder of the reason for a training captain position and what the position would entail. The board was concerned about how it would impact the budget. Chief Ostreng stated that it was already in the budget for 2026 and noted it would cost about \$20,000 for the promotion to training captain. Chief Ostreng stated it was his intention to bring the promotion to the Fire Commission for final approval. Motion to approve request to create Fire Training Captain through promotion by Hauser. Second by

Herlitzke. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Consideration of fire chief evaluation process input

The board discussed the pros and cons of Example 1 and Example 2 and opted to move forward with a revised version of Example 1 for consideration at the next board meeting.

17. Announcements and Future Agenda Items

The board discussed meeting again with Laura Eysnogle from FBD to discuss what a shovel ready plan would look like.

18. Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for December 16, 2025.

18. Adjourn

Motion by Hauser, second by Elam, to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary