

Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – January 20th, 2026

1. Call to Order

Chair Barlow called the Holmen Area Fire District meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on January 20th, 2026, at the Town of Holland Town Hall.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call

Present: Rick Hauser, Bob Stupi (Alternate). Patrick Barlow, Travis Elam

Absent: Jeff Herlitzke (Excused)

Guests: Chief Ostreng, Fire Department Staff

4. Consideration of Agenda Order

Motion by Elam to approve the agenda order. Second, by Stupi. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion by Hauser to approve the meeting minutes of December 12th 2025. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Resident or Employee Concerns/Comments

There were no resident or employee comments or concerns.

7. Financial Review (Treasurer)

With Treasurer Herlitzke excused from the meeting, Chief Ostreng took over Financial Review and answered all questions.

- a) The board reviewed the final balance sheet for 2025. No specific items were discussed.
- b) The board reviewed the 2025 Profit and Lost – budget versus actual. Chief Ostreng noted that 98% of the budget was spent for 2025.
- c) The board reviewed the 2026 balance sheet. No specific items were discussed.
- d) The board reviewed the 2026 Profit and Lost – budget versus actual. Chief Ostreng noted that 8% of the budget had been spent for 2026.
- e) The board reviewed check detail. Elam questioned the check to DeBauche Truck C Diesel. Chief Ostreng stated the check was to pay for coolant leak repairs.
- f) The board reviewed the invoices and quotes in detail.

- i) Chief Ostreng requested the purchase of four new recliners. He stated that the current recliners are ten years old, have holes in them, and are incapable of being cleaned. He stated the cheaper quote was for the exact same brand of chairs and requested an approval of up to \$3,600 for the purchase. Motion by Stupi to approve the purchase of four new recliners from American Firehouse Furniture not to exceed \$3,600. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.
- ii) Chief Ostreng notified the board that he had purchased a new residential washing machine for the department since the old one had developed a mold issue and was reaching the end of its life. Chief Ostreng noted that the total cost of the purchase was roughly \$1,000 for the machine, delivery, and installation. He noted the total cost was below the required amount for board approval but wanted to notify the board as a courtesy. Fire department staff stated that the current washing machine was 15 years old.
- g) Chief Ostreng explained that he was waiting on a quote from a company called Lexipol, which is a policy/procedure management platform for staff. He stated that the department previously used Lexipol when it was under management by LCFD, and it was his intent to bring it back. Chief Ostreng stated he anticipated the cost to be \$6,000 annually. Chief Ostreng also mentioned the company offers a grant writing service that costs \$7,500 that might be useful.
- h) Chief Ostreng stated the department received a \$500 donation from Toni LaFond, a \$5,000 donation toward the new fire station from the Robert Lunke Foundation, and a \$5,000 donation from the JVR Golf Outing toward medical equipment upgrades.

8. Fire Administration Report (Chief Ostreng)

- a) The board reviewed the calls for December. Chief Ostreng noted the department hit a record number of calls for 2025 with a total amount of 1,370. Chief Ostreng updated the board on notable calls for December.
- b) Chief Ostreng gave an update on staffing and personnel. He noted that one employee was placed on administrative leave, and an investigation was pending allegations. No further information was provided. Chief Ostreng also stated that only one applicant applied for the Fire Captain Training Position.
- c) Chief Ostreng gave an update on the fleet. He noted the boat was currently being serviced at Holmen Marine, and that Tender 1 had a minor issue but was being serviced in house.
- d) Chief Ostreng gave an update on the facility and stated that they had found black mold. Discussion was delayed until later in the agenda.
- e) Chief Ostreng stated the NERIS transition has finished, but more time needed to be dedicated to it. He stated that the transition worked out well.

G. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

Barlow stated that three of the four communities had approved funding to move forward with the study for future combined services. Barlow noted that the Town of Onalaska was the last to approve funding for the study and that they needed a special meeting to discuss the topic. Chief Ostreng stated that he felt like the City of Onalaska and the Town of Onalaska thought the department was moving too fast with the collaboration effort and that the new fire station should not be lumped in with the collaboration effort.

10. Update on Five Bugles Design Station Study

Barlow stated the board had received the final copy of the Five Bugles fire station study and noted he and Stupi were waiting for a meeting with a USDA representative to discuss grant funding. Chief Ostreng stated that he had made the study publicly available on the department's website. Stupi requested a digital version of the study to be placed on the Town of Holland's website.

11. Consideration of new fire pumper specification process

Chief Ostreng stated that within the next two weeks a work group would be created to narrow down the specifications. He stated that he was waiting for further input from the Town of Holland on cost before contacting Pierce for a formal quote. Hauser stated that cost could be reviewed, but the mold issue in the stations was his primary concern.

12. Consideration of fire chief evaluation process input

Barlow refreshed the board on the current state of the evaluation process and noted the board had accepted a form with some minor tweaks, but there was no current action being taken to implement the form. No additional discussion was had.

13. Consideration of fire station mold mitigation actions

Chief Ostreng informed the board that the department had discovered mold in the walls of the station after a defect in the wall surfaced where paint was bubbling. Chief Ostreng stated he reached out to multiple mitigation companies and eventually consulted with Lappins Company. He stated that after Lappins reviewed the issue, they were also concerned about black mold. Chief Ostreng stated that Lappins loaned the department an air scrubber and an ozone machine for use while fire department staff weren't in the rooms affected by the mold.

Chief Ostreng stated he also contacted Environmental Management Consulting, Inc. (EMC) to do a full analysis of the building. He stated they tested the air, the walls, the ceiling, and a variety of other things which were quoted as Waterloss Investigation and Moisture Mapping for a total amount of \$1,980. Chief Ostreng noted that he was awaiting the results of the test and would coordinate with Lappins for a mitigation strategy once the results were in.

Chief Ostreng requested up to \$10,000 for mold mitigation efforts for the fire department.

Hauser questioned if this was the first instance of mold found in the building. Chief Ostreng and department staff noted that it wasn't the first time mold was found in the building and that it was an ongoing issue in certain areas of the department. Elam questioned if all the sheetrock damage was near the windows. Chief Ostreng confirmed this was the case in addition to moisture that was found in the insulation in the ceiling.

Chief Ostreng stated that he had concerns about long-term impact to the department and the time to mitigate the issue entirely if walls needed to be fully replaced. He stated he investigated a rentable exterior dwelling solution and stated that the cost to rent such a thing for 6 months could cost up to \$250,000.

Motion to approve up to \$10,000 for mold mitigation by Elam. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

14. Review of Board related draft policies

Chief Ostreng stated he would like the board to consider adopting a few new policies. Chief Ostreng explained each policy briefly. The first policy for consideration was a temporary increase in minimum staffing. Chief Ostreng stated this new policy would give him the authority to increase staffing during major storms or other emergency scenarios.

The second policy for consideration was pay adjustments for executive level nonunion employees. Chief Ostreng explained the new policy covered COLA adjustments as well as any additional raises above COLA and what justified that.

Chief Ostreng stated that it wasn't his intent for the board to read the full policy document during the meeting and that it could be discussed at the next regular meeting along with any changes.

15. Announcements and Future Agenda Items

Stupi questioned if the department had an audit since Chief Ostreng had taken over as Chief. Chief Ostreng stated this had not been done and questioned if a third-party audit was required since the department's finances were handled by a third-party. Stupi explained that the Town of Holland just finished their audit and that it was normal to have a third-party audit even if finances were maintained by a third-party.

Hauser stated that he had reached out to Tammy Baldwin's office in addition to Van Orden's office for help with grant funding for the new fire station and would report back on their response later.

16. Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for February 17th, 2026.

17. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Elam, Second by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary