

Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – February 17th, 2026

1. Call to Order

Chair Barlow called the Holmen Area Fire District meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on February 17th, 2026, 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

Absent:

Guests: Chief Ostreng, Fire Department Staff

4. Consideration of Agenda Order

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

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion by Hauser to approve the meeting minutes of January 20th, 2026, with suggested fixes for minor typos found by Chief Ostreng. Second, by Barlow. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Resident or Employee Concerns/Comments

Fire department staff voiced safety concerns about Bluffview Court. Staff noted multiple serious accidents had occurred where individuals thought they were still traveling on Highway 53 and did not slow down at the end of the road. Fire department staff suggested updating signage to prevent further accidents. The board thanked the fire department staff for commenting and stated they would address the issue.

7. Financial Review (Treasurer)

- a. The board reviewed the balance sheet. Chief Ostreng noted changes to the reporting under the LGIP-General Capital Saving section and noted the Medical Sick Leave payout was in a good position for future retirements.
- b. The board reviewed the Profit and Lost – budget versus actual. Herlitzke noted the department was slightly over budget. Chief Ostreng addressed discrepancies with the EMS-Capital expenditures line item exceeding its % of Budget.
- c. The board reviewed check detail. The WI Retirement System check was discussed since it had never been reported in check detail.
- d. The board reviewed quotes and invoices in detail.

Department staff provided justification for a custom storage cabinet for the new cardiac monitor in Rescue 1 (R1). The board discussed this in detail, and concerns were raised

about costs. No action was taken, but the board voiced support for getting additional quotes from more local fabricators.

- e. No special topics were discussed.
- f. Chief Ostreng noted a donation from Strup Trucking for \$100 and a donation from Sue Hagg in the form of a quilted flag.

8. Fire Administration Report (Chief Ostreng)

- a. The board reviewed the January 2026 incident/activity report. Chief Ostreng noted there were 130 calls for the month and that it was an all-time high. The board reviewed the new information in the report provided by the new NERIS system. Information was provided by Chief Ostreng on overlapping calls for 2025. Chief Ostreng stated there were 69 instances where two calls overlapped at the same time, and 8 instances where three calls overlapped. Chief Ostreng noted that 5% of the total calls for the year were overlapping calls.
- b. Chief Ostreng notified the board that an employee served a two-day non-paid suspension and was back to work again. He noted the employee was being put on a performance improvement plan. Chief Ostreng notified the board that the training captain's position had been fulfilled after final approval by the fire commission.
- c. There were no updates on the department's fleet.
- d. Chief Ostreng stated black mold was found in the facility. Discussion was deferred to later in the meeting due to having a separate agenda item.
- e. Chief Ostreng stated that an agreement was signed between the department and WTC to allow EMT students to gain clinical experience while doing ride-alongs with the department. The board discussed Fire Inspections, and Chief Ostreng summarized the Brycer software used by the department for the Inspections. Chief Ostreng stated it was his intention to add a package to the Brycer platform for code reviews of the inspection results. Chief Ostreng explained in detail the extent of what the fire department inspects versus what third parties inspect.

9. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

Chief Ostreng gave an update on the last meeting. He noted that the Town of Onalaska decided they would not be participating in the collaboration study and that the City of Onalaska and the HAFD would be splitting the cost of the study equally.

10. Update on Five Bugles Design Station Study

Chief Ostreng reported receiving a response from the USDA regarding the new fire station grant. Hauser updated the board on potential funding options through the offices of Tammy Baldwin and Derek Van Orden and noted the short submission timeline. The board discussed the estimated cost for the new fire station, and some members voiced concerns about the price. Some board members suggested reducing the size of the station or changing the design to reduce costs further. Herlitzke stated he reached out to LCFD to

coordinate tours of their new fire stations for the board. The board requested more information from Five Bugles Design on recently finished projects and what their original estimated cost were. Chief Ostreng stated he would reach out to them.

11. Consideration of new fire pumper specification process

Chief Ostreng stated that a work group was formed to define the exact specifications needed for a new fire pumper and their first meeting would be February 22nd, 2026.

12. Consideration of fire chief evaluation process input.

No discussion occurred. Elam motioned to table the fire chief evaluation process. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Consideration of fire station mold mitigation actions

Chief Ostreng gave a summary of the findings of the mold assessment from Environmental Management Consulting, and noted that mold was found in the Day Room, Administrative Office, and the crew's sleeping area. There was concern that the mold extended beyond these areas based on previous incidents with water found in the ceiling. Chief Ostreng noted that multiple companies were contacted for remediation, and it was his intent to temporarily relocate staff while the mold was addressed.

Fire department staff voiced concerns about the results of the mold assessment due to the use of an air scrubber and ozone machine prior to the assessment.

Chief Ostreng and department staff voiced support for building a temporary living space in the bay while the mold is addressed. The board discussed multiple options for temporary living quarters for the staff. Some board members voiced concerns about building temporary living quarters in the bay in the event the mitigation takes longer than expected.

The board requested quotes on temporary living solutions, demolition, and the repair of leaks when found.

14. Review of Board related draft policies

Chief Ostreng gave a summary of the new draft policies for Temporary Minimum Staffing Level Increase and Exempt Command/Executive-Level Employee Compensation Adjustment. The board reviewed the policies in depth. Some board members questioned if the union had any issues with the policies.

The board voiced general approval of the Temporary Minimum Staffing Level Increase policy.

Some members of the board voiced concerns about the Exempt Command/Executive-Level Employee Compensation Adjustment policy. Issue was taken with the COLA adjustment being attached to the union agreement COLA and not the federal COLA. Chief Ostreng voiced concerns about wage compression between command/executive-level employees and other department staff.

The board discussed the concept of motioning to approve the policies and future policies.

Chief Ostreng noted it was not his intent to have every policy require a vote by the board for approval.

Hauser motioned to approve the Temporary Minimum Staffing Level Increase policy. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

No action was taken on the Exempt Command/Executive-Level Employee Compensation Adjustment policy.

15. Consideration for financial review or audit of HAFD financial records

Chief Ostreng gave a summary of the different audit options from Engelson and Associates, Ltd. The board discussed the scope of a full audit versus a review. The board voiced support for an audit or a review but questioned the need for it as an unbudgeted expense. Herlitzke motioned to refer the Consideration for financial review or audit of HAFD financial records to the April board meeting. Second, by Barlow. Motion carried unanimously.

16. Announcements and Future Agenda Items

The board noted the possibility of a special meeting to address the mold issue once options were available for action.

17. Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for March 17th, 2026.

18. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Elam, Second by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary