

Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – March 24th, 2026

1. Call to Order

Chair Barlow called the Holmen Area Fire District meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. 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: None

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 Herlitzke to approve the meeting minutes of February 17th, 2026, and the meeting minutes of March 3rd, 2026. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Resident or Employee Concerns/Comments

There were no resident or employee concerns.

7. Financial Review (Treasurer)

- a. The board reviewed the balance sheet. There were no concerns raised.
- b. The board reviewed the Profit and Lost – budget versus actual. Herlitzke noted that the department had used 26% of the budget year to date. Chief Ostreng noted Building Capital Expenditures and EMS Capital Expenditures were higher than it should be. He stated that he would provide a spreadsheet at the next meeting to give more clarity on these.
- c. The board reviewed check detail. Board members questioned checks to DeBauche.
- d. The board reviewed quotes and invoices in detail.
 - a. The board reviewed the quote from Monroe for custom cabinet fabrication and installation. Chief Ostreng noted a request was made to a third fabricator but that he did not hear back from them. He stated that it wasn't required by internal policy to get competitive pricing for purchases under \$5000. Chief Ostreng stated the department still favored the quote from Thin Line Outfitters and recommended its approval. The board questioned what part of the budget the purchase would come out of. Chief Ostreng stated it would come out of Fire Capital. Motion to approve a storage cabinet from Thin Line Outfitters not to exceed \$5,000 by Herlitzke. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

- e. No special topics were discussed.
- f. No donations were discussed.

8. Fire Administration Report (Chief Ostreng)

- a. The board reviewed the February 2026 incident/activity report. Chief Ostreng noted there were 122 calls for the month and that the majority of them were medical. Chief Ostreng also noted that the department was still seeing an issue with overlapping calls.
- b. There were no staffing/personnel updates.
- c. Chief Ostreng stated the department had just received its boat back from the shop.
- d. Facility updates were not discussed due to the facility being a topic later on in the agenda.
- e. Chief Ostreng stated that two firefighters were being sent to the Minnesota Fire School on March 28th for training and the department was doing joint training with the City of Onalaska.

G. Fire commission report

There was no discussion on the Fire commission report.

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

Motion by Hauser to postpone the Consideration for financial review or audit of HAFD financial records to July. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

11. Consideration of fire chief evaluation process input

Motion by Hauser to remove the item off the table. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously. The board noted that they didn't want to wait too long to do the evaluation process. Specifically, they noted it should be done before the budget. The board consensus was to have a closed session at the April meeting to come to a consensus and finish the fire chief evaluation process before giving final input in the May meeting.

12. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

Chief Ostreng stated that the scope for the study had been adjusted, and the cost-share split had been finalized. He noted that the administrators for the Village of Holmen and City of Onalaska had requested specifics on invoicing. Chief Ostreng stated the contract for the study was ready to be returned by the end of the week.

13. Consideration of HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program Interlocal Contract for new fire engine

Chief Ostreng explained what the program entailed and noted there would be no financial impact on the department. Chief Ostreng noted the program would allow the department to save some money on a new fire truck purchase and that he believed the City of Rochester had purchased fire engines through the same program. Chief Ostreng also noted there are a handful of other Wisconsin municipalities already using the program. Motion to authorize President Barlow to work with Chief Ostreng on establishing the

contract. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

14. Update on fire station project

Chief Ostreng stated that he sent in the applications for Congressional Directed Spending to both Senator Baldwin's office and Congressman Van Orden's office for consideration. Barlow notified everyone that the Village of Holmen had purchased property recently, and that four acres from the sale were designated for the new fire station.

Board members stated that they greatly appreciated the fire station tours they went on with Chief Schott from the La Cross Fire Department. The board noted that they better understood the needs and wants for the fire station as well as what things weren't necessary based on feedback from Chief Schott and La Crosse firefighters.

15. Consideration of fire station mold mitigation activities

Barlow reminded everyone that the department was moving forward with relocating the firefighters to apartments near the station.

Chief Ostreng stated he has received multiple quotes from different organizations from \$4,000 to \$20,000 depending on the scope of work. He also stated he got a quote for repairing the roof that was \$7,000.

Chief Ostreng stated department staff were in disagreement on how much of the existing building should be torn down and inspected for mold. Chief Ostreng stated that there were areas of moisture and mold in the ceiling near the roof.

He also stated that most of the business he spoke with about the matter stated they were very busy. No action was taken.

16. Consideration of shared administrative assistant position with Onalaska Fire Dept.

Chief Ostreng briefed the board on the possibility of sharing an administrative assistant position with the City of Onalaska fire department beginning June 1st, 2026. Chief Ostreng stated it was Onalaska's intent to hire for a full-time position and to split the hours 30/10 with 10 hours being dedicated to the Holmen Area Fire Department.

Elam voiced support for the position and noted that it was a small step towards more collaboration with Onalaska. Other board members voiced concerns about the cost for the position and how it would fit into the budget.

There was discussion on where the employee would be located as well as what benefits they would receive. Chief Ostreng stated that the primary location for the position would be in Onalaska and the employee's benefits would be based on the City of Onalaska benefits.

Chief Ostreng explained to the Board how he believed the position could be incorporated into the 2027 budget, noting that he anticipated an overall budget increase of approximately 4.6%. He stated that he intended to use 2% dues to help fund firefighter retirement, which would free up other budgeted funds to help cover the cost of the position.

Board members asked how the position would impact the 2026 budget. Chief Ostreng stated that he intended to use 2% dues to cover the cost, though he anticipated having remaining funds at the end of the year, which may make that unnecessary.

Board members also questioned how a 10-hour-per-week position would benefit the department. Chief Ostreng identified several administrative tasks the assistant could help with, including support for the Fire Board and Fire Commission.

The Board discussed potential space limitations within the current fire department facility, as well as possible capital costs associated with the position, including a desk, computer, and related equipment.

The Board also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of adjusting the administrative time allocation to either 8 or 16 hours per week instead of 10 hours.

The consensus of the Board was to continue discussions with the City of Onalaska and gather additional details regarding the specifics of the agreement. No motion was made.

17. Announcement and Future Agenda Items

There were no announcements or future agenda items.

18. Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for April 21st, 2026.

18. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Herlitzke. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary