

Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – April 21st, 2026

1. Call to Order

President 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 accept the agenda order. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chief Ostreng suggested a few changes, including a typo and some wording regarding the potential shared administrative assistant position. Motion by Hauser to approve the March meeting minutes with the suggested changes from Chief Ostreng. Second, by Herlitzke. 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 questions or concerns raised by the board.
- b. The board reviewed the Profit and Lost – budget versus actual report. Treasurer Herlitzke noted the board had expended 33% of the budget year to date and that the department was on track. Board members questioned the Replacement-EMS line item. Chief Ostreng explained what this item was and noted it would not be an issue for the end-of-year budget.
- c. The board reviewed check detail. Hauser questioned the check to Bound Tree Medical. Chief Ostreng explained it was for EMS supplies.
- d. There were no quotes or invoices for the board to review.
- e. No special topics were discussed.
- f. Chief Ostreng explained that the department recently received two small monetary donations from constituents.

8. Fire Administration Report (Chief Ostreng)

- a. The board reviewed the March 2026 incident/activity report. Chief Ostreng noted there were 135 calls for the month and that the call volume exceeded last year's call volume. Chief Ostreng briefed the board on notable calls for the month and explained that the majority were medical.
- b. Chief Ostreng explained that there was one minor staff injury report for the month. He noted that he would start briefing the board on all staff injuries and that it was his intention to have staff document injuries that did not require medical attention.
- c. Chief Ostreng stated that the Rescue 1 cabinet was being worked on, the new engine order was delegated to the staff committee for further evaluation, and that Tender 1 had a pump issue that was taken care of by staff.
- d. Chief Ostreng deferred discussion on mold mitigation to agenda item 11 and noted that the station was having serious issues with the blacktop around the station. He explained that the blacktop was starting to fail in various locations since it was not built to withstand the weight of the trucks like a concrete slab would have.
- e. Chief Ostreng updated the board on a variety of general topics.
 - a. He explained that the department would be phasing out its current patch and shared an example of the new logo/patch with the board.
 - b. He also stated he planned on tracking data regarding calls to 911 versus calls direct to the station for emergencies. Board members questioned whether the answering machine for the station instructs people to call 911 if nobody answers. Chief Ostreng explained it does but noted that the phone system was extremely old, and he was looking into improving the call flow.
 - c. Barlow asked for a training report or general updates on training now that a training captain is in place.

G. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

The board reviewed the memo on the Fire Department Collaboration Workgroup (Item 9). Chief Ostreng explained the workgroup had been initialized, a project team was created, and both municipalities had met with Robert Whitaker to establish it. Board members questioned if a board representative needed to be part of the workgroup yet. Chief Ostreng stated that was not necessary and that the administrators and representatives would be more involved later in the process. Chief Ostreng noted that a union representative would also be added to the workgroup for proper representation.

10. Update on fire station project

Chief Ostreng updated the board on the response he received from Congressman Derrick Van Orden's office (Item 10) and stated that he had not yet heard back from Senator Tammy Baldwin's office but expected to receive a similar response. Chief Ostreng explained he thought the reason for denial was the lack of shovel-ready plans. The board discussed ways they could improve the department's chances of approval for next year. The board discussed what it would take to get to a shovel-ready plan. Both municipalities

agreed the next step was to go back to their full boards and come up with a hard number that each municipality would be willing to spend on a new fire station.

11. Consideration of fire station mold mitigation activities

Chief Ostreng updated the board on the current situation. He noted that it was his intent to hire someone to manage the entire project, but that did not seem feasible because the project was too small.

Chief Ostreng explained his proposed solutions as well as estimated costs for each contractor and the work they would be providing. He stated that he disagreed with Servpro's estimate due to their lack of acknowledgement of mold issues in the ceiling and did not consider it a viable solution. Chief Ostreng recommended Lappins LLC for the mold remediation portion of the project.

Chief Ostreng updated the board on the current roof issues and explained the differences in the proposed solutions from Interstate Roofing and American Roofing. He stressed how important it was to get the mold addressed and interior stripped before deciding on a solution for the roof.

Board members discussed the different options and carefully considered the budget. Town of Holland board members questioned the more expensive proposals. Chief Ostreng explained that department staff were worried about the problem not being resolved if the less extensive proposals were chosen. He referenced past boards promising things, such as a station remodel, that never came to fruition and noted that department staff lacked confidence in the board's ability to move the new fire station forward. Chief Ostreng also reiterated that the board had approved a three-month contract for temporary housing while the mold issue is remediated.

The board questioned how the project would be paid for. Chief Ostreng explained the funds would come from capital savings. Motion by Hauser to approve the mold mitigation project not to exceed \$70,000, with the understanding that the project would be funded by capital savings. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

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

Barlow briefed the board on the original proposal and any status updates since the previous meeting. Chief Ostreng noted that the City of Onalaska had provided an official proposal. He also provided three staffing options along with cost estimates. Option 1 consisted of a full-time shared position with the City of Onalaska. Option 2 consisted of a part-time position employed only by the Fire District. Option 3 included no assistant.

Board members voiced support for Option 2 based on the lower cost and increased hours but questioned whether the department could find a suitable candidate. Other board members questioned where the employee would work with the ongoing mold issue. The board also discussed concerns about a tight budget going into 2027. Chief Ostreng stated that if Option 2 was chosen, it was his intent to implement it no sooner than 2027.

The board consensus was to instruct Chief Ostreng to respectfully decline Onalaska's

proposal due to budgetary concerns and to consider the possibility of a part-time administrative assistant starting in 2027. No motion occurred.

13. Election of Board Officers

Motion by Hauser to approve the current board officers for another year with Barlow serving as president, Herlitzke serving as Treasurer, and Elam as secretary. Second, by Herlitzke. Motion carried unanimously.

14. Closed Session

Motion by Herlitzke to convene in closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.85(1)(c) for the purpose of considering employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation data of a public employee over which the Board has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility, specifically regarding the 2026 Fire Chief evaluation process. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

15. Reconvene in Open Session

Motion by Hauser to go back into open session. Second, by Herlitzke. Motion carried unanimously.

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

No action was taken based on the closed session. The consensus was that board members would complete their evaluation forms and bring them to the next board meeting for consideration.

17. Announcement and Future Agenda Items

Herlitzke requested that each municipality approach its respective board to discuss funding shovel-ready plans for the new fire station, and to come up with a maximum amount each municipality would be willing to finance for the station.

Hauser requested that Chief Ostreng add a future discussion on the administrative assistant position when the board starts considering the 2027 budget.

18. Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for May 21st, 2026.

18. Adjourn

Motion by Herlitzke, to adjourn. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary