

Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Meeting Minutes – May 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, Patrick Barlow, Travis Elam

Absent: Jeff Herlitzke (Excused)

Guests: Chief Ostreng, Fire Department staff

4. Consideration of Agenda Order

Hauser requested that the closed session be moved to the next meeting due to all members not being present. Motion by Barlow to amend the agenda and postpone agenda item 13 to the June meeting. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously. Motion by Elam to approve the amended agenda. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion by Hauser to approve the minutes. Second, by Elam. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Resident or Employee Concerns/Comments

Captain Lavery commented that numerous local communities were building new fire departments that staff had not yet looked at for ideas. He noted that the other municipalities were likely in the same position as HAFD. Captain Lavery also questioned whether there were any possibilities to upgrade the existing station if the budget was going to be tight, and a new station was not going to be possible. Captain Lavery wondered what other options were available to explore and expressed concerns about staffing at the current station.

7. Financial Review (Treasurer)

President Barlow presented the Financial Review in Herlitzke's absence.

- a. The board reviewed the balance sheet. There were no questions or concerns raised by the board.
- b. The Board reviewed the Profit and Loss – budget versus actual report. President Barlow noted that the department had used 38.5% of the total budget for the year.
- c. The Board reviewed the check detail. President Barlow highlighted the check to Lappins for the mold mitigation process. Hauser requested more information on a check for vehicle repairs and checks for uniforms.
- d. No quotes or invoices were presented for review.

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

8. Fire Administration Report (Chief Ostreng)

- a. The Board reviewed the April 2026 incident/activity report. Chief Ostreng noted there were 110 calls for the month and that the call volume exceeded last year's call volume again. President Barlow requested more information on the "No Emergency" category. Hauser requested information on the three fire calls to the Town of Onalaska. Chief Ostreng briefed the Board on notable fire calls for the past month.
- b. Chief Ostreng stated there were no staffing or personnel updates.
- c. Chief Ostreng stated that the cabinet for Rescue 1 had not started production due to a payment issue that he resolved. Chief Ostreng noted that he fixed the issue and got them a check to start production. Chief Ostreng also noted that the boat was back in for service.
- d. Chief Ostreng deferred discussion on the facility and mold mitigation to agenda item 11.
- e. Chief Ostreng notified the Board that the department would have the first-ever HAFD award ceremony to recognize the firefighters and their accomplishments. The Board questioned whether they would be allowed to attend the award ceremony. Chief Ostreng noted concerns about a quorum but stated that a document could be posted to notify the public that no official actions would be taken at the ceremony should multiple Board members attend.

The Board reviewed item 8e1. Chief Ostreng notified the Board that the apparatus work group met with a representative from Reliant Fire Apparatus to discuss and review the configuration for the future Engine 2. Chief Ostreng stated that the delay in ordering had caused the price of the truck to increase. Chief Ostreng explained that the way the truck was configured would allow firefighters to go from one call to the next and have everything they needed on a single truck. He emphasized the importance of this due to limited staffing and the frequency of overlapping calls.

Hauser questioned whether the department would be getting rid of anything with the purchase of a new engine. Chief Ostreng stated that it was his intent to get rid of the tender. Chief Ostreng explained that long term, he hopes to reduce the size of the trucks as staffing increases, and more trucks are available to be staffed.

Chief Ostreng briefed the Board on the FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant program. He explained that it was his intent to apply for the program and use the grant funds to hire more staff for the department. Chief Ostreng explained that the department needed at least three more firefighters, one per shift, so the department would be above minimum staffing. Chief Ostreng noted that staff were getting burned out with all the overtime required to meet minimum staffing levels.

The Board stated that they understood the need but voiced concerns about the

reduction in funding in years three and four of the grant. Chief Ostreng explained that he expected the communities would have to go to a referendum at the end of the grant.

Hauser questioned whether the department would have room for additional staffing in the current station. Chief Ostreng noted that this would not be an issue and that they would figure something out.

Elam voiced concerns about paying for staff with a grant and the possibility of a failed referendum causing people to lose their jobs but overall agreed with the idea. He also noted that by hiring more staff, the department would spend less of the budget on overtime, and those funds would instead go to the new staff.

Captain Lavery explained that, with the current staffing levels, it equates to about fourteen 24-hour extra shifts per person per year. He also noted that many staff who participated in overtime last year are less willing this year and reiterated the burnout that Chief Ostreng had mentioned. Captain Lavery noted that staff currently have more overtime days than vacation days.

G. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

Chief Ostreng stated that the group had its first meeting and that it was mostly comprised of introductions, expectations, and next steps for the collaboration. Chief Ostreng explained that McMahon and Robert Whitaker were working hard to set up future meetings and to produce a document for everyone to review laying out what collaboration might look like.

10. Update on fire station project

No discussion was held on this item. The Board consensus was to discuss this at next month's meeting when all Board members are present.

11. Consideration of fire station mold mitigation activities

Chief Ostreng stated that the temporary relocation of staff had occurred and that everyone was settled into their new location. He also noted that his office had been cleaned out and that Lappins intended to start work on June 1. Chief Ostreng stated that the roofers had not yet given him a date to start work, but that it should take roughly two days. He was also working on getting an electrician scheduled to address the roof fan. Chief Ostreng stated that it was his intent to get staff back into the station by July 1.

12. Consideration of 2025 Annual Report

Chief Ostreng requested that the agenda item be postponed to the June meeting. Motion by Elam to postpone the agenda item. Second, by Hauser. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Closed Session

The agenda item was skipped due to being postponed.

14. Reconvene in Open Session

The agenda item was skipped due to being postponed.

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

The agenda item was skipped due to being postponed.

16. Announcement and Future Agenda Items

President Barlow requested that the Board handle the fire chief evaluation at the next meeting and hopefully receive another update on the mold mitigation project. Hauser requested proper notice before any special meeting to address the SAFER grant.

17. Next Regular Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for June 21st, 2026.

18. Adjourn

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

Minutes by Travis E. Elam, Secretary