DRAFT MINUTES

Subject To Change Before Approval By The Holmen Area Fire Department Board

Holmen Area Fire Department Board
Meeting Minutes – October 26th, 2026

Town of Holland Town Hall | 6:30 p.m.

1. Call to order

President Barlow called the regular board 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: Travis Elam, Patrick Barlow, Jeff Herlitzke, Rick Hauser
Absent: No Board members; Chief Ryan Ostreng (staff)
Guests/Staff: Captains Jeremy Cook and Lavery, Engineer Brindle, and on-duty department personnel

4. Consideration of agenda order

Motion by Herlitzke, second by Hauser, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of meeting minutes

Motion by Hauser, second by Elam, to approve the August 31, 2026, special meeting minutes and September 15, 2026, regular meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Resident or employee concerns/comments

Jeremy Cook commended the department's progress in recent years but expressed concern about staffing, increasing call volumes, and employee burnout. With minimum daily staffing and more accrued leave, members may be required to work more overtime days than they receive in vacation days, affecting work-life balance.

7. Financial Review (Treasurer)

Treasurer Herlitzke reviewed the balance sheet, profit and loss budget versus actual, and check detail. Total expenses were at 79.3% of the annual budget. A DeBauche Truck C Diesel payment was discussed in connection with Engine 1 transmission service.

Staff requested replacement of aging monitoring equipment: four BW Clip single-gas carbon monoxide monitors, two SENSIT Gold G2 multi-gas monitors, and one IR Link data download device from Fire Safety USA, quoted at $6,087 plus shipping. Staff described the limited lifespan of monitors, sensor exposure and calibration needs. Board members noted that future replacements should be included in recurring equipment budgeting; the purchase would be funded through Fire Capital Expenditures.

Motion by Herlitzke, second by Hauser, to approve the requested gas-monitoring equipment purchase in an amount not to exceed $7,000. Motion carried unanimously.

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The department reported a Wisconsin DNR Forest Fire Protection Grant award of $1,599.50 toward a $3,198.99 project for a backpack leaf blower with an integrated water tank and five VHF pagers. No further grant action was requested.

Donations included $400 from HAFD Operations Staff for Fire Prevention Week prizes and $1,520 from Sandra Haag from a handmade quilt drawing. The Board also noted appreciation from Holmen Cheese for the department's picnic participation.

8. Fire administrator report (Chief Ostreng)

The Board reviewed September 2026 incident activity: 116 calls, two fewer than September 2025, and 1,101 calls year-to-date. Calls included 83 medical, 19 no-emergency, 11 public-service, two hazardous-situation, and one fire incident. Staff described a successful cardiac-arrest resuscitation using basic life support measures.

Four department members took and passed the officer examination. No other specific personnel action was reported. Engine 1 received transmission work, with other fleet maintenance described as routine.

Staff reported water intrusion near the gym during a severe rainstorm, with no recurrence since that evening. An asphalt maintenance company had offered to donate end-of-season materials and work to reseal the parking lot if scheduling permitted.

Staff reported that member training hours had doubled or tripled compared with the prior year. Plans include sending members to outside training and having them share what they learn. The Board requested a brief training-hours report. Personnel also noted that family leave and outside training could increase overtime coverage needs.

Staff expressed concern about ambulance response delays and the effect of Onalaska's automatic-aid arrangement with La Crosse on mutual-aid availability. Examples discussed included an approximately 44-minute ambulance wait and a period of roughly 70 minutes of overlapping emergency demands. Personnel raised concerns about some ambulance responses lacking paramedics. Staff also reported that Emplify generally no longer stages ambulances at Station 5 on Circle Drive. The Board discussed the long-term possibility of department-operated ambulance transport, including staffing, vehicle, station, billing, and administrative requirements. No action was taken.

9. Update on fire department collaboration workgroup

The project is slightly behind schedule, with a draft report of approximately 80 pages being reviewed. Final recommendations and financial projections were being prepared for a final presentation anticipated in early to mid-November. No action was taken.

10. Update on new fire station project

No substantive project discussion occurred. President Barlow noted that the participating communities had scheduled a special meeting for October 29, 2026, to continue station planning. No Board action was taken.

11. Consideration of and Possible Action on the Proposed 2027 Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed 2027 budget of $2,233,000, including $2,128,000 in municipal assessed contributions ($2,078,000 operating and $50,000 capital), a 5.28% increase over 2026. Both participating municipalities had approved resolutions related to the state joint fire/EMS levy-limit exception. Health-benefit costs were projected to increase approximately 47.81%, from about $267,706 to $395,701.

Motion by Herlitzke, second by Hauser, to approve and adopt the proposed 2027 budget as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

12. Announcement and Future Agenda Items

Future agenda topics included medical transport and ambulance service coverage, training opportunities, and a summary of department training hours. President Barlow described the county EMS commission's ongoing review of ambulance-service funding and response requirements and offered to share its meeting information.

13. Next Regular Meeting - 11/17/2026

The next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, November 17, 2026, subject to confirmation of a possible Village Planning Commission scheduling conflict. Any change would be communicated to the Board.

14. Adjourn

Motion by Herlitzke, second by Elam, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

*Minutes by **Travis E. Elam**, Secretary*

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