



LEBANON FIRE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2025

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Taylor, Board President | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dale White, Vice President | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Tacy, DC of Operations |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wyatt King, Secretary/Treasurer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ken Foster, Fire Marshal |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Matt Herb, Member | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mark Fitzwater, DC of Training |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robbe Boren, Member | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Desiree Barker, Chief Administrative Officer |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Perkins, Recruitment Lt. via Zoom |

CALL MEETING TO ORDER AT 5:30 PM

FLAG SALUTE

MINUTES: APPROVAL OF JANUARY 14, 2025 MINUTES

Secretary/Treasurer King made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Vice President White 2nd the motion.

Vote:

President Taylor-Yea

Vice President White-Yea

Secretary Treasurer King-Yea

Member Herb-Yea

Member Boren-Yea

The motion to approve the minutes as written was approved.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

(Limited to 3 minutes per speaker)

There were no citizen comments.

AGENDA ITEM #1 – APPOINT BUDGET OFFICER AND REVIEW BUDGET CALENDAR

Chief Rodondi noted this is the time of year to begin preparing the budget. Chief asked for the declaration of him as Budget Officer and the Budget Calendar

Member Boren nominated Chief Rodondi for Budget Officer and to approve the Budget Calendar as presented, Vice-President White 2nd the motion.

Vote:

President Taylor- Yea

Vice President White- Yea

Secretary Treasurer King- Yea

Member Herb- Yea

Member Boren- Yea

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The motion to approve appointing Chief Rodondi as the Budget Officer and the Budget Calendar as presented was approved.

AGENDA ITEM #2 – BUDGET REDUCTION STRATEGY PRESENTATION

Chief Rodondi began a highlighted presentation of the Budget Reduction Strategy Report. In short, our fiscal health is in a structural deficit.

Introduction:

- We are spending more than we are taking in.
- In 2015, the master plan showed expenses were exceeding revenues. Then the pandemic happened, and expenses have increased far more.
- The double-digit inflation 17%-21% versus 3% inflation is having a detrimental effect on the budget. Insurance continues to increase, and Worker's Compensation is up 26%.
- The cost of an apparatus was \$600,000 and has increased to \$800,000 for a four-year delivery. We will spend \$200,000 for next 4 years to refurbish 2 engines, rather than replace them with new.

Revenue Outlook:

- LFD's primary source of revenue is from property taxes. Property Tax revenue funds fire protection service.
- Fees for ambulance service is the other main revenue source.
- We receive a small amount of revenue in other fees.
- We updated our fee schedule in response to increased costs.
- The EMS service failing due to lack of funding is a national issue. It is underfunded by CMS. CMS cuts up to 69% from the invoice. It doesn't cover the expenses to offer the service. This is a critical issue. A CMS cost report was hopeful to increase reimbursement, but that is in the future, not right now.
- May 24th, 2024, we were hopeful for a levy, however the levy did not pass.
- Taxpayers are willing to assume the risk to self and property versus paying more taxes. LFD tried to explain the issues without presenting a dire need scenario.
- Annexation of those not annexed in is still possible, but that won't begin the evaluation process until later this year and will take time to generate revenue.

Bridging the Gap:

- We know we cannot continue to provide all the same services. Oregon law requires us to provide a balanced budget. Chief Rodondi commended his staff, stating they have collectively done a phenomenal job in determining spending based on a "need to have vs nice to have". In 2021 the projection we anticipated \$1.6 million deficit in 2025/2026. The efforts have reduced the deficit, but we still have \$860,000 to go.
- Positions have been left vacant each year since 2021.
- We've eliminated 7.5 FTE. Some positions were removed through attrition.
- Medic 36 was parked. That reduced 4 FTEs from the budget.
- Medic 30's service has been reduced in 2024. Medics are becoming much harder to find.
- In 2024/2025, we removed 0.5 FTE Fire Inspector, and a 1.0 FTE ambulance biller.

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Current and Future Outlook:

- In fiscal year 2024/2025 the Board approved refurbishing an engine. \$99,000 is paid, and another \$99,000 is due in May. The remaining balance will come from 2025/2026 budget cycle.
- Finishing this current fiscal cycle, we anticipate being stronger due to vacancy savings.
- One FF will remain vacant for the remainder of this fiscal year.
- We received conflagration money that helped to bolster apparatus and some regular pay savings.
- LFD may be \$400,000 stronger than when we put the budget in place. We will continue to be fiscally responsible for the remainder of this fiscal year.
- LFD met with the Union and had a conversation regarding this discussion.
- Battalion Chief candidates will present ideas during one of their testing scenarios.
- Volunteers have offered suggestions.
- This is a current plan but may be adjusted as we continue to build the budget.

January's projection highlights included:

- 3% increased revenue
- 2% increase for the coming COLA
- 10% increase in work comp, that now needs to increase to 26%
- 8% for health insurance, but will likely need to be higher
- PERS biannual increase is increasing 4%
- Capital is up 25% for fleet improvement

District-wide Goals:

- The goals are to be strategic thoughtful and balanced.
- We want to absorb positions through attrition.
- We want to minimize the impact and cut minimal services while balancing that with choosing programs that can be rebuilt easier.
- We considered the ISO rating and complied with the ORS that governs budgeting.
- We will continue to look for other revenue sources.
- The plan is to use a phased approach and to preserve the organization as much as we can. Some changes occur in July 2025, while others are postponed until January 2026.
- The goal will be to rebuild as quickly as we can if funding improves.

Legislation Approach:

- LFD has become a big political player across the state. Our voice is being heard and we have an influence this year within legislation. Chief Rodondi thanked the Board for allowing us to be more politically active in local, state, and the federal political arena.
- Lebanon is the fastest growing city in the state, but it takes time to increase our funding. The revenue generated will not keep up with the needs. We cannot add other stations to address the new homes being built.
- The governor and other legislators recognize the need to carve out infrastructure for the addition of low income or affordable housing. We cannot increase our services because buildings are constructed. It'll take years to see an increase in our revenue.

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Anticipating the future:

- We have upcoming retirements, and they will allow absorbing positions through attrition.
- With the recommended deductions and increased revenue, we hope to be in the black \$200,000 in 2025/2026.
- We will eliminate the Recruitment & Retention Lieutenant position that was grant funded by two previous Safer grants. We will continue to apply for the Safer grant in hopes of maintaining the position.
- One Lieutenant will promote, leaving a vacancy for Lt. Perkins, our current Recruitment and Retention Lieutenant to return to the line.
- The R&R Lieutenant position has administered our community outreach and engagement. That outreach bolstered our volunteer numbers.
- The resident (aka student) volunteer program will be eliminated with the R & R Lieutenant. Our RVs have been wonderful, but it is an expensive program. We are downsizing not hiring and it was intended to assist with hiring challenges.
- The two vacant single role-EMS positions will remain vacant, and the 2 remaining single roles-EMS positions will be absorbed into dual role positions. The single role positions are funded solely by the ambulance fund.
- We have overtime reduction strategies.
- Alternative software programs are anticipated to bring savings.
- A strategic 2% reduction in services for 020 and 040 is the preferred method. It won't be a cut across the board. We must minimize the impacts.
- Contract monitoring to get the best price will continue.
- Healthcare packages will be reviewed in the future.
- The fee schedule implementation may generate an additional \$300,000 in revenue.
- Conflagration response generated \$100,000, but we may or may not see that in 25/26.
- We may choose to pursue an ambulance district.
- We may choose to pursue a future levy however levies are consistently failing.
- Cities and fire agencies that can charge fees and have pivoted in that direction. We cannot do that, so are within the voters' discretion.
- The State of Oregon established EMS as an essential service but provides no funding. LFD has 400 square miles service area.
- We will continue to review ways to save where possible, obtain grants, and focus on legislative efforts.

Impacts:

LFD we will be forced to do less with less.

- We will look at using a tiered response system. This will require more formalization. It means low acuity calls will be delayed.
- We may consider not responding to fire alarms.
- Different response vehicles may respond to calls.
- Mutual aid participation will require a conversation. Sweet Home's mutual aid responded to 30 calls compared to our 180 responses for them. We cannot supplant staffing of other agencies.
- We will look at our industry to see if there are other changes we can make.
- We still need volunteers, but we will not have a coordinator any longer. Chief Officers will continue the volunteer program.
- Overtime will be reviewed.

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Chief Rodondi will communicate the plans on the website and with a press release after our staff receives the report. Chief Rodondi will visit other stations to spread the correct information.

Member Herb asked why we send multiple vehicles to one alarm? Or other types of calls? Chief Rodondi would like to educate the public, so they understand why we send the vehicles.

- We work within a medical priority dispatch system that determines the vehicles required to respond.
- Response is also dependent upon volunteer availability.
- Call over-lap is another consideration. Overlapping calls is now at 60%, so that accounts for many sirens.

Member Herb asked if we have a 2-tier level of volunteers?

Chief Rodondi deferred to Division Chief Fitzwater.

- We have fire corps, tender operators, firefighter rehab on scene, and those that respond as a normal firefighter.

Member Herb mentioned a recent response near the hospital on highway 20 had nine (9) vehicles respond to an RV fire. The public views this as a large response.

- Fire Marshal Foster added an important point. 9 vehicles don't mean they are full of firefighters.
- It often requires multiple units to have enough staff to fight fires.
- Battalion Chief's are required to follow the same safety rules, and all may roll out to a structure fire. NFPA requires 14 people on scene to a house fire. It takes a team to do the many tasks required to fight a fire.

Secretary/Treasurer King asked if NFPA is legally binding or just guidelines?

Chief Rodondi explained they are guidelines.

- NFPA standards drive a lot of mandates.
- If there is an injury or litigation, a best practice approach is used.
- Federal OSHA is advocating for NFPA guidelines to become the rule. Converting NFPA guidelines into regulations, will cripple the fire service. It would have a detrimental effect to the volunteer assistance.
- We are fortunate that we haven't experienced a tragedy due to the limited staff and stacked calls. Our volunteer responders' step in when needed and they do phenomenal work.

Secretary/Treasurer King asked if the Board stipend can be waived, and on-line courses replaced with webinars.

- Chief Rodondi highlighted the board policy in that it states the board "will" receive a stipend. ORS allows other options. Chief said we could change policy but recommends a board member return the stipend if they choose to do so.
- Chief Rodondi recommends in-person training. It is beneficial. He believes SDAO to have has better training than OFDDA who has recently gone stale. He is considering recommending we cancel the OFDDA membership.
- Secretary/Treasurer King prefers to change the policy to eliminate the board member stipend.

Secretary/Treasurer King asked for an explanation on the reasoning in the overtime projection.

- Chief Rodondi explained how we support our students in paramedic school. It does require back-fill when they attend classes. We have three (3) paramedics remaining to test.

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- Chief Rodondi stated the need to train staff to drive the rigs and that requires overtime. Until they are trained, we have to hire into fill that position.
- OFLA and PLO impact our overtime. Time on leave impacts our overtime. Those with new babies generally take 3 months off.
- Overtime can come from vacations and conflag early in the year. Cash-flow tightens in the beginning of each year.

Secretary/Treasurer King asked if we see less overtime because we see less conflag response in the beginning of the fiscal year. Chief confirmed but added we also see summer vacations.

Secretary/Treasurer King asked if implementation/startup costs were included in software costs.

- Division Tacy explained that we have requirements mandated by the state and that we did include the startup costs in our projections. We have multiple programs now and a newer company is offering a good program with savings. We will see more savings in the second year.

Secretary/Treasurer King offered assistance in insurance negotiations.

Member Boren asked if our California responders were well.

- Battalion Chief Suing explained a few details of the 2-week deployment. California treated the teams well. Smog control rumors that 'held' LFD apparatus at the vehicle inspection station were untrue. An inspection checked all vehicles for safety. We passed inspections and were sent through quickly. It was agreed that the water tender handles much better with water when traveling that distance. They dropped the water off on the way to California and had a very bumpy (and very uncomfortable) ride down as a result.

AGENDA ITEM #3 – FINANCIAL REPORT

Chief Administrative Officer informed the group next year's budget in preparation is underway.

AGENDA ITEM #4 – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

- Chief updated the board on the 4000 bills that have dropped.
- Many bills won't make it out of committee. At a recent conference our lobbyist mentioned ODOT's \$1.8 billion deficit. \$1.60 gas tax would be required to bridge the gap.
- OSFM is requesting an early budget drop for early summer staffing.
- Chief provided written testimony on the \$1,000 volunteer tax credit. It has cleared the first reading.
- The status of recognition for Special District on a federal level, passed the house, but not the senate. Unfortunately, it was packaged together with others and had to be collectively decided upon. They will be rewriting and resubmitting it. It is recognized that we need to be codified.
- Division Chief Tacy provided an update on balanced billing, HB3243. It is a patient protection bill that allows a cap on out-of-pocket maximum on ground ambulance, and it counts toward out-of-pocket maximums. It sets a rate for insurers to pay. It allows the fire board to set the rate. Insurers are opposed to the out-of-pocket. The insurers pushed a state rate equal to 325% of Medicare rate. That would capitate the rate and

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takes the control away from agencies. A hearing is set for tomorrow where data may be presented.

- DC Tacy educated the group on the legislative concept, 3696. It is part 2 of EMS modernization. This includes the interstate compact allowing paramedics to work across state lines, apprenticeships, EMS workforce, rural access to emergency medical services, reinforces the state working with providers to improve GEMT funding. EMS Modernization part 1 passed 2 years ago.
- The governor is very aware of the challenges EMS is facing but offered no solutions. She spoke knowledgably on the topics, and that is encouraging.
- Member Herb requested a list of legislative bills that we and our lobbyists are watching. Chief Rodondi agreed to get a list from our lobbyists. They agreed that the letters sent to our legislators are important, but the letters with impact are individual letters telling their stories.
- Chief Rodondi plans to begin building a relationship with both Senator Wyden and Merkley's representatives. They are the gatekeepers to the Senator's office.

Member Herb asked if there was any legislation on prevention funding.

- DC Tacy noted that legislative prevention funding is minimal.
- DC Tacy reported on a countywide grant for four (4) people that would conduct onsite evaluations. The grant is being split up between agencies for many programs. We hope to receive \$700,000.

Chief Rodondi will check with our legal team before responding to Secretary/Treasurer King's question regarding asking our constituents to write letters over social media.

AGENDA ITEM #5 – NON-REPRESENTED STAFF ADDRESS THE BOARD

There were no non-represented staff present to address the board.

AGENDA ITEM #6 – UNION ADDRESS THE BOARD

President of the Union, Jason Carroll offered the Union's thanks to the executive team for the work on the budget gaps and their inclusion in the discussion is appreciated.

AGENDA ITEM #7 – VOLUNTEERS ADDRESS THE BOARD

DC Fitzwater informed the board of the coming 2-month academy starting in March. We are accepting applications.

AGENDA ITEM #8 – FIRE CHIEF REPORT

- Chief Rodondi appreciates the questions and dialog with the Board.
- Chief reminded the Board of the elections to come for 3 board members. It starts soon.
- Strugglewell class for leadership staff was at the beginning of February. 20 people attended.
- Staff awards are on March 27th at 6:00 pm.
- A recent Safeway incident was described. An employee in the breakroom collapsed. Another started compressions and AD. Our engine company arrived and shocked the patient, then another shock was administered by the medic. He was transported to Good

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Sam in Corvallis. The importance is that four (4) Safeway staff members saved his life with their quick action. They did a fantastic job.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

There were no other agenda items.

ADJOURN REGULAR SESSION AT 7:08 pm.

Robert Taylor, Board President

Joseph Rodondi, Fire Chief