



## Teton County Fire Protection District

P.O. Box 474

911 N. Hwy 33

**Wednesday March 4, 2026- Driggs Fire Station, as well as Teleconferenced via Zoom**

### **In Attendance:**

Jason Letham, Fire Commissioner, absent

Bob Foster, Fire Commissioner

Erin Borbet, Fire Commissioner via zoom

Mike Maltaverne-Fire Chief- absent

Kevin Brown – Fire Marshal

Ed Schauster – Deputy Chief of Operations

Jared Colson – Battalion Chief of EMS via zoom

Mariana O’Neill -CFO

Rutte, Fox, Stiny-Local 4667

***Meeting began @ 0911 hours***

Commissioner Foster called the meeting to order.

The group agreed to postpone discussions about wages, benefits, and pay to the end of negotiations. They decided to add two new items to their negotiation list: revisiting the article regarding two people being off for union business, and addressing mandatory overtime policies.

### **Staffing and Promotion Process Updates**

Chief discussed staffing challenges, explaining that the current 3.8 person shortage due to extended leaves and injuries is affecting the organization's ability to approve training, PTO, and overtime. The Union decided to remove additional compensation requirements for shift assignment changes from station to station and discussed improvements to the promotional process by adding detailed feedback to candidates about their scores and rankings. Chief proposed providing specific information about panelist feedback rather than just generic content analysis, arguing this would improve transparency and allow candidates to understand performance evaluations better.

## **Evaluation Process Improvement Discussion**

The group discussed challenges in promoting fairness and objectivity in evaluation processes, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and mandatory feedback for ratings. Chief proposed revising the promotional process to include a closed-loop feedback system and suggested that all wildland revenue should be reinvested into training, equipment, and personal protective equipment rather than being tied to specific training initiatives. Chief noted ongoing management efforts to increase training opportunities and budget allocations, and the group agreed that formalizing these changes in the collective bargaining agreement might not be necessary given current management adjustments and will be updated in the policy manual.

## **Wildland Policies and Reimbursement Guidelines**

The group discussed policies around wildland participation and reimbursement, with Chief proposing to create a philosophy statement in the budgeting policies that would require maintaining a \$25,000 reserve fund for wildland activities, with funds reinvested in equipment maintenance, PPE, and training. Rutten proposed to use a percentage of the WL revenue rather than a fixed amount. They also addressed ambulance transport policies for members and their immediate family, agreeing to waive fees for covered family members with certain caveats, including that the member cannot treat their family member and that insurance must be billed first before any remaining balance is waived. The discussion concluded with considerations about distance limitations for transports, ultimately deciding to handle such cases on a case-by-case basis using existing medical necessity guidelines.

## **Retirement Benefits Policy Updates**

The group discussed several policy updates, including a new article about retirement benefits. They agreed to add the existing language to the policy manual regarding employees' option to buy health insurance at full premium upon retirement, as this benefit was already being utilized. The team also examined a proposal for monetary payouts of long-term sick leave, calculating potential costs based on current salaries and overtime rates. While they acknowledged potential financial risks, particularly for multiple retirements in the same year, they noted that such events are rare and discussed ways to manage the budget impact, including considering wage savings from not hiring entry-level staff temporarily.

## **Retirement LTS Payout Benefit Discussion**

The Union proposed implementing LTS payout benefit for retiring employees, with a proposed maximum payout of 50% of total LTS hours. They explored potential funding mechanisms, including using 25% of the budget reserves, and debated whether to cap the benefit or make it organization-wide. The group expressed support for the concept, noting its potential as a retention tool and to bridge health insurance gaps, while acknowledging the need to carefully consider financial liability and implementation details. Commissioner Foster mentioned capping the total pay, however the Union and Chief did not agree. They agreed to draft proposed language and run financial calculations before making a final decision. Mariana raised concerns about potential retirement impacts over the next five years, noting that with several captains retiring, costs could increase from \$50K to \$60-65K. The group discussed calculating worst-case scenarios for retirement impacts and agreed to research current employee data to assess potential future retirements.

## **Long-Distance Patient Transfer Challenges**

The team discussed challenges around long-distance patient transfers, including staffing concerns and organizational policies. Chief expressed concerns about the hospital's current situation and the potential impact on their relationship, suggesting they should maintain value to the hospital's operations despite challenges. The Union debated whether financial incentives or intrinsic value would be more effective in addressing staff morale issues related to these transfers, ultimately concluding that while the transfers are infrequent (approximately once per year per crew), they represent an important part of the organization's mission and revenue generation. Chief expressed concerns about declining more transfer requests and the potential impact on staffing and revenue, particularly noting that Madison handles most acute care transfers.

## **Union Business**

Stiny discussed the impact of House Bill 45, which could affect the department's ability to send staff to union meetings on the public dime.

## **Comp Time and Mandatory OT**

Due to time constraints this item was briefly discussed. The group explored options for addressing staffing gaps, including mandatory overtime and on-call systems, though concerns were raised about implementation and feasibility. They also discussed the need to demonstrate that all reasonable options have been exhausted before seeking community support for staffing solutions.

**Commissioner Foster made a motion to adjourn at 1045 hours.**

**Commissioner Borbet seconded the motion.**

**Commissioner Foster asked for all in favor. All replied “aye”, and the Board of Fire Commissioners were adjourned**