TOWN OF SCHERERVILLE SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA

FIRE MERIT BOARD MEETING April 2, 2026

The Fire Department Merit Board Meeting was called to order by President Roger Florkiewicz at 5:39 p.m. in the Schererville Town Hall Meeting Room, 10 E. Joliet Street, Schererville, IN.

Attendance was taken with the following Board Members present: President Roger Florkiewicz, Vice President Tim Arvanitis, Secretary Paul Petrie and Tom Fulk. Staff members present: Fire Chief Robert Patterson, Deputy Fire Chief David Meyer and Recording Secretary Jenn Chatel. Also present: Attorney Christian Bartholomew. Not present was Board Member David Turoci.

THEREUPON, Approval of the Minutes

Paul Petrie made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 5th, 2026 meeting, seconded by Vice President Arvanitis. Motion Carries (4 – 0).

THEREUPON, Correspondence

ITEM A. Fire Department

Chief Patterson shared that the swearing in ceremony for new hire Donald Jones III will be held next Tuesday, April 7th at 1:00pm in the Schererville Town Hall Meeting Room and invited the board to attend.

THEREUPON, Old Business

ITEM A. Fire Department – Continue Review of Merit Board Rules

Attorney Bartholomew sent out revisions via e-mail earlier and brought copies as well to review changes. He reiterated the discussion from the previous board meeting about assigning a passing written score for the general aptitude test. The Pension Board recommended a 75% score. Discussion ensued on how to get highly qualified candidates without unnecessarily taking anybody out of the running – different percentages were discussed from 70-75 percent. Board members debated whether requiring a minimum score for each component, in addition to an overall average created redundancy. Attorney Bartholomew explained that the online portion of the testing is comprised of 2 parts – a written aptitude test and also an oral portion. The percentage would be a combined number from both tests, so if the applicant performed a little bit less on one portion, they could make it up on the other. Deputy Chief Meyer shared that they wanted to make it a combined 70% (which is a passing grade in school). If an applicant falls below a 70% (combined) then they do not proceed to the in-person interviews.

It was noted that previously, all candidates were permitted to participate in oral interviews regardless of their online scores, as no minimum threshold had been established at that time. The in-person oral interview is comprised of 20 questions each worth 1-5 points. Attorney Bartholomew advised that the statute requires a minimum score for the in-person interview portion as well which needs to be determined. It was noted that scoring retains a degree of grader discretion and that, if a minimum score is required by statute, a lower threshold would allow for a broader and more inclusive candidate pool. Tom Fulk suggested if the passing score for the in-person interview was put at 50% or 60%, it would still put them on hiring list, just ranked lower down the list. Members agreed that a 50% would fulfill the requirement of having a set score. Clarification was provided that the final candidate rankings are determined by combining the general aptitude online portion and the in-person interview score, along with any applicable preference points (e.g., paramedic certification +5 points, honorably discharged veteran +5 points, lateral transfer +5 points – subject to a maximum cap of +10 points).

Deputy Chief Meyer stated the language in the rules needs to specify that you must be an honorably discharged veteran to qualify for veteran preference points. Following discussion, consensus supported requiring verifiable documentation (such as their DD-214) to confirm veteran status and establishing a minimum service threshold of 2 years to quality for veteran preference

points. The Board agreed this approach ensures the preference is applied consistently, reflect meaningful service and remains administratively workable.

Chief Patterson had requested the language regarding proof of successful completion of the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) be more specific as to timeframe. It was noted that the existing wording – requiring completion "within one year prior to selection" was potentially unclear and could create confusion. Attorney Bartholomew suggested to reworded it to state "Applicants must have completed the CPAT within one year prior to their selection and must have proof of successful completion at or before the time they are selected (unless you are a lateral transfer). The Board agreed to this clarification.

Vice President Arvanitis motioned to approve the stated changes to the Merit Board Rules and Regulations, seconded by Paul Petrie. Motion Carries (4-0). The Board directed that the revisions be finalized and prepared for publication, with final approval to occur at the next public meeting.

ITEM B. Fire Department - Update on Full Time Firefighter/EMT hires

Chief Patterson provided an update stating that two candidates from the existing eligibility list are actively progressing through the hiring process. One candidate is a lateral transfer, the other is undergoing required evaluations including psychological and physical/agility testing. Results are pending and it is anticipated that both candidates will continue moving forward upon completion. Chief further advised that there is still one full time position to fill as will be discussed in New Business. Chief asked the Board to terminate the list since the remaining people on the list are not qualified due to not having all their certifications at this time.

Vice President Arvanitis motioned to terminate the current list, seconded by Tom Fulk. Motion Carries (4-0).

THEREUPON, New Business

ITEM A. Fire Department – Request Permission to Start New Hiring Process

Tom Fulk made a motion to allow permission for a new hiring list to be established, seconded by Paul Petrie. Motion Carries (4-0).

Attorney Bartholomew acknowledged the timeline for the application process for the new hiring list is open for one month which will align with our next scheduled meeting. Pending approval of the updated board rules at the next meeting, the new rules would be utilized in the grading and evaluation of the applicant pool.

THEREUPON, Reports

ITEM A. Fire Department - None

THEREUPON, Board Members

Vice President Arvanitis inquired about what the firefighters have available at the fire stations for exercise needs. Chief Patterson explained there is a dedicated facility at Station 3 and also equipment located at Stations 1 and 2. It was further advised that the new station will include a fitness facility as well.

THEREUPON, Business from the Floor

Schererville Firefighters Profession Union Local 4279 Secretary Collin Zackavec appeared before the Board to ask for consideration in future statutes, allowing for emergency lateral hiring. He explained that last month a vacancy came up leaving a crew with one paramedic. Emergency lateral hiring would not take the place of the hiring list; however, when there is an unexpected vacancy, it would fill that position quickly. He further explained the qualifications would be a firefighter paramedic who would already be in Perf, so not having to go through the physical/ psychological process – saving money for the department.

Attorney Bartholomew shared that had been a discussion between himself and the Fire Chief and although they love the idea, there is no provision in the merit board process for any exceptions to the regular hire process in the statute. It was reiterated that once the hiring list is established, it is a requirement to go down the list in order, so cannot "skip" to a lateral with paramedic certification. Tom Fulk suggested increasing the bonus points to 10 points for having a paramedic certification to improve hiring efficiency. Discussion ensued that excessive bonus points could disproportionately inflate candidate scores in which members acknowledged the need to balance prioritization with fairness in scoring while also considering the need to place greater emphasis on paramedic certification. Vice President Arvanitis suggested eliminating the maximum cap of 10 bonus points and upping that to a cap of 15 bonus points.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Tom Fulk to reopen the review of the merit board rules to consider modifications to the bonus point structure. This motion was seconded by Vice President Tim Arvanitis. Motion Carries (4-0).

The Board discussed the bonus points that currently were not to exceed 10 points as well as possible increased points for both paramedic and lateral hire. It was agreed to place emphasis on having a paramedic certification. A motion was made by Paul Petrie modifying Item 9 by giving 10 points for paramedic certification and removing the maximum of 10 points. This motion was seconded by Vice President Arvanitis. Motion Carries (4-0).

THEREUPON, Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice President Arvanitis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Paul Petrie. Motion carries (4 – 0). The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

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ROGER FLORKIEWICZ
SCHERERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
MERIT BOARD PRESIDENT
A TRUE COPY

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TIM ARVANITIS
SCHERERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
MERIT BOARD VICE PRESIDENT
A TRUE COPY