

## TOWN OF SCHERERVILLE

SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA

## FIRE MERIT BOARD MEETING

December 4, 2025

The Fire Department Merit Board Meeting was called to order by President Roger Florkiewicz at 5:37 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, David Turoci 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.

THEREUPON, Approval of the Minutes

Secretary Paul Petrie made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 meeting, seconded by Vice President Tim Arvanitis. Motion Carries (5 - 0).

THEREUPON, Correspondence

ITEM A. Fire Department - NONE

THEREUPON, Old Business

ITEM A. FD – Jenkins Personnel Hearing

Fire Chief Patterson advised the board that as of December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Firefighter Jenkins turned in his resignation which was accepted making the scheduled formal hearing not necessary.

ITEM B. FD - Pulido Personnel Update

Firefighter Enrique Pulido provided a status update advising he had gotten his EMT recertified through the State of Indiana and submitted the paperwork to the chiefs at Schererville Fire Department. Chief Patterson gave confirmation to the Board that the EMT certification was verified with the state. Firefighter Pulido further advised that he underwent surgery on the 12<sup>th</sup> and has been continuously studying since that time. He requested an additional 90-day extension to allow sufficient time to complete his remaining paramedic certification exam attempts. He indicated that this extension would allow him to take his remaining three exam attempts during that timeframe and inquired if he could read a statement he wrote. Attorney Bartholomew clarified that this discussion was not a formal hearing and that no evidence would be considered at this time at which time Firefighter Pulido advised he will wait to read his statement.

Attorney Bartholomew noted that this had been tabled at the last meeting and now with Firefighter Pulido's request for more time, the Board now reached the time to decide on whether to grant additional time or proceed with scheduling a hearing.

Schererville Firefighters Professional Union Local 4279 President Jacob Thorton appeared before the Merit Board alongside Firefighter Enrique Pulido and requested a 90-day extension. He noted the Board previously granted a 90 day extension to another Firefighter and stated that Firefighter Pulido's circumstances were different due to time spent in recovery facilities where access to study materials was restricted. The Board discussed the actual amount of time off versus the 90 days – that an extension to appropriately offset the actual time he was unable to prepare, rather than automatically granting the full 90 days may be fair. The Board posed questions to which Union President Thorton confirmed that Firefighter Pulido feels prepared at this time to retake the test and may begin scheduling the exam immediately; that a two week waiting period is required between exam attempts; and that Firefighter Pulido has three remaining exam opportunities.

Mr. Turoci asked Chief Patterson whether granting an extension would negatively impact staffing levels. Chief Patterson responded that any delay does affect staffing; however, he could not assess where Firefighter Pulido is at with this test. Chief Patterson further explained that after a third unsuccessful exam attempt, requirements mandate completion of a remediation course, which includes a specified number of instructional hours. Union President Thorton confirmed that the employee has completed the required remediation and is now eligible to schedule the remaining certification exams.

Vice President Arvanitis expressed his support for granting additional time, citing Firefighter Pulido's circumstances and the Board's goal of maintaining and growing departmental staffing while emphasizing the importance of accountability to Firefighter Pulido. Vice President Arvanitis further stated he would love to see the department grow to one firefighter for every thousand residents and to be the best department in the state.

Mr. Fulk made a motion to grant a 90 day extension, seconded by Vice President Arvanitis. Motion carries (5-0)

Following the vote, the Board clarified that granting the 90-day extension would table any disciplinary status determination and the scheduling of a disciplinary hearing until after the expiration of the extension period. The Board indicated it would reconvene after the 90 days had elapsed to review the employee's status and determine whether further action would be necessary. Meanwhile, if Firefighter Pulido passes exam, he can report results to Chief Patterson who would then present any recommendation he has at that point to the Board.

ITEM C. FD – Continue reviewing of merit board rules

Attorney Bartholomew explained the two documents he emailed the board earlier in the day. One is a memorandum from Town Attorney Dave Austgen outlining his legal analysis and recommendations regarding various provisions of the current rules; and second is a marked up version of the existing Merit Board Rules reflecting proposed revisions. Attorney Bartholomew further explained that the proposed revisions were intended to address issues identified in the memorandum, correct typographical errors, and clarify areas where the current rules lacked alignment with statutory requirements. He noted that while many concerns raised in his memorandum were addressed in the revised draft, certain items may require additional discussion during a future study session. He highlighted several areas of clarification including use of third party vendors for testing, scope of applicability (full time vs. part time firefighters), time based promotions, merit board meeting frequency, separation from Board of Safety scheduling, age requirements of firefighters and filing requirements.

Attorney Bartholomew identified an area relating to appointments to the department that may require further discussion at a future study session. Proposed revisions clarify firstly, the applicants who successfully complete the general aptitude test are eligible to participate in the oral evaluation phase (rather than the current practice of limiting advancement solely to the highest-scoring candidates); secondly, a passing score for the oral component should be established to align with statutory requirements; thirdly, completion of both testing tiers result in placement of qualified applicants on a certified eligibility list, which is forwarded to the Board of Safety. Attorney Bartholomew noted that applicants would still be ranked based on scores; however, the revised process focuses on qualification rather than eliminating candidates solely based on relative ranking after the initial written test phase. It was further clarified that no action was expected at this meeting and that the discussion was informational only. He indicated the proposed changes could have substantive impact and should be carefully considered by the Board moving forward.

Attorney Bartholomew reviewed additional proposed revisions to the rules, including clarification of appointment procedures upon the occurrence of a vacancy, confirmation that time-based advancements are not considered promotions for purposes of the rules, and revisions to disciplinary provisions to better align the Merit Board rules with applicable statutes and town personnel policies. He explained that the changes are intended to clarify existing authority, due process requirements and appeal procedures without substantively altering current practices. The Board discussed scheduling a future study session to further review the proposed revisions. After review/revisions at the study session, rules can be presented for approval at the following meeting then be posted at the town for public hearing.

Vice President Arvanitis made a motion to hold the study session directly after the January 8<sup>th</sup> 5:30pm Merit Board meeting, seconded by David Turoci. Motion Carries (5-0)

ITEM D. FD – Update on Full-time Firefighter/EMT hiring status

Chief Patterson advised the Board that all required paperwork has been submitted to the State for review and approval; however, due to the timing of Thanksgiving holiday, the review process was slightly delayed. Once approval is given, he will proceed with setting hiring dates.

The Board discussed questions related to Board member participation in the hiring and interview process. It was noted that while current rules reference participation in oral interviews, they do not specify a formal process for selecting which Board members will participate. Participation has occurred on a voluntary basis and Chief Patterson emphasized maintaining consistency by having the same members participate throughout the interview phases.

The Board further discussed continuing the current hiring process utilizing two volunteer Board members to score and evaluate candidates, with results presented to the full Board for final consideration. It was agreed that formalizing the process could be addressed in the study session, but that doing so now could delay the current hiring.

The Board clarified the hiring process, confirming that two designated Board members, along with the Perf Board, will tally scores, rank candidates and present a final certified list to the full Merit Board for

approval. It was noted that all candidates would continue through to the interview process, with no applicants eliminated at this stage, consistent with statutory requirements and legal guidance.

Motion was made by Vice President Arvanitis to continue the hiring process as structured, using Mr. Turoci and Secretary Petrie as the board members scoring and evaluating. Motion was seconded by Secretary Petrie. Motion carries (5-0)

**THEREUPON, New Business**

**ITEM A. Fire Department – None**

**THEREUPON,** Reports

**ITEM A. Schererville Firefighters Union Food Drive**

Chief Patterson reported that the annual Fire Department Food Drive will be Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at Strack and Van Til's parking lot on US30/41 from 10am – 2pm. Chief shared that Collin (Zackavec) has been working diligently on putting this food drive together and all the food and monetary donations go to the St. John Township Food Pantry to help the families in our community who are facing hardships.

THEREUPON, Business from the Floor - None

**THEREUPON,** **Board Members**

Mr. Turoci expressed appreciation to the Board for the confidence placed in himself and Secretary Petrie in carrying out their respective roles in the hiring process.

Vice President Arvanitis acknowledged and thanked Attorney Bartholomew for the work he has performed, his extensive knowledge of state law and his clear and thorough presentation of the material.

THEREUPON, Adjournment

There being no further business, Paul Petrie made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by David Tuocci. Motion carries (5 - 0). The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Roger Florkiewicz  
ROGER FLORKIEWICZ  
SCHERERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT  
MERIT BOARD PRESIDENT  
A TRUE COPY

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