

TOWN OF SCHERERVILLE

SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA

FIRE MERIT BOARD MEETING

April 3, 2025

The Fire Department Merit Board Regular Meeting was called to order by President Roger Florkiewicz at 6:03 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, Tim Arvanitis, Paul Petrie, David Turoci, and Tom Fulk. Staff members present: Fire Chief Robert Patterson, Deputy Fire Chief David Meyer, and Interim Recording Secretary Stephanie Bottiger. Also present: Attorney Christian Bartholomew, Town Manager James Gorman, Director of Operations Andrew Hansen, and Town Council Liaison Thomas Schmitt.

THEREUPON, Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Arvanitis made a motion to approve the minute of the March 18, 2025 Special Meeting, seconded by Mr. Turoci. Motion Carries (5 – 0).

THEREUPON, Correspondence

ITEM A. NONE

THEREUPON, Old Business

ITEM A. Update on full-time hiring

Chief Patterson informed the Board the two candidates have been set up to take their physical and psychological tests.

ITEM B. Formulate Personnel Procedures

President Florkiewicz informed those present that the Board had been presented with a significant amount of information on today's date, April 3, 2025, by Attorney Bartholomew. He state that he reviewed the data before the meeting and now sought clarification on certain particulars, such as the Fire Department Administration. President Florkiewicz reported that Attorney Bartholomew had included examples, for purposes of illustration, of how other municipalities had implemented policies and procedures. One such municipality, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, did not allow an individual to become Chief with less than ten years' experience, unless voted on by the Town Council. He further stated that Indiana Code 36-8-3.5-11(b) (2) specifies that the Chief must have five years' service in a full-time department or agency. President Florkiewicz requested the Fire Staff in attendance to review this information with the rest of the Department and provide an update at the next meeting based upon standards and accepted practices of the Town of Schererville, as well as the groups' assessment. Deputy Chief Meyer informed the Board that the Fire Chief serves at the discretion of the Town Council. President Florkiewicz clarified, that the statue specifies that removal can only occur in rank, not from the department itself.

Attorney Bartholomew advised the Board that the examples he provided were to show the Board how other local governments had taken the language of the law and integrated it into local policy. He further stated other municipalities have chosen to implement policies that were extremely straightforward and cross-referenced state statute. Attorney Bartholomew informed the Board he would consult with Town Attorney Austgen to determine if a town ordinance is required, since state law does not mandate all Board rules to be included in an ordinance.

Attorney Bartholomew informed the Board that state statute mandated they had ninety days from when the last two members of the Board were selected to implement the rules and regulations of the Board, which, in the case of Schererville, is May 22, 2025. He indicated that the notice and agenda for this meeting, along with the proposed rules, must be posted ten days in advance of said meeting, on May 12, 2025, which is a little over a month's time. Attorney Bartholomew advised the Board to hold one or more study sessions due to the complexity of the issues at hand.

President Florkiewicz strongly supported composing the Merit Board Rules and Regulations by blending the long-standing procedure to which Fire Department Personnel are accustomed, together with state statute. He elucidated further, stating the document should be written without obfuscation language to avoid the need for the Board to repeatedly revise the rules, stressing that the primary task of the Board was to handle the appointments, promotions, demotions, and dismissals of Fire personnel and not the operational issues of the Department.

The Board commenced discussions concerning the document from the Gary Fire Department, distributed to them by Mr. Petrie, ranging from the document’s age, policy formulation based on older state statutes, dismissal and demotion determinations, Town Council authority for certain decisions, and progressive discipline.

Mr. Arvanitis requested to schedule the study session dates and times at this time. The Board discussed suitable dates and times for the sessions as well as their duration. President Florkiewicz consulted Attorney Bartholomew on the transparency of the study session. Attorney Bartholomew confirmed that the sessions would be publicly accessible and live-streamed. Motion made by Mr. Fulk to hold the first session on April 15, 2025, at 6 p.m., with the second session to take place on April 22, 2025, at 6 p.m., seconded by Mr. Petrie. Motion carries (5 – 0).

ITEM C. Budget

President Florkiewicz informed the Board that the Merit Board Budget is included within the Fire Department Budget. As they have not been granted budget authority by the Town Council, he sought to officially confirm through a vote that their budget is zero. Chief Patterson confirmed that this expense would be covered by the Fire Department Budget and provided details on the total compensation for the members. Attorney Bartholomew recommended that the Town Council deliberate on whether the Merit Board should have its own distinct budget. President Florkiewicz requested any feedback or insights from the attendees regarding the Board of Safety Budget. Town Manager James Gorman informed those assembled that the Board of Safety Budget is taken from both the Police and Fire Budgets. Mr. Arvanitis made the motion that the Merit Board had no budget. Mr. Turoci stated that he did not understand the reasoning behind the motion. President Florkiewicz stated that the statute required the Board to discuss the budget. Attorney Bartholomew further expounded that the motion was to proceed under the existing Fire Department Budget instead of creating a separate one for the Merit Board. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fulk. Motion carries (5 – 0).

ITEM D. Recording Secretary

President Florkiewicz requested Chief Patterson to provide an update on the progress of securing a new Recording Secretary for the Board. Chief Patterson announced that the positions of Recording Secretary and Secretary for the Fire Department had been posted both internally and on the Town’s Website, and they were now waiting for the application deadline to pass. He elaborated further stating that he intended to utilize the Fire Department Secretary as the Recording Secretary.

THEREUPON, New Business NONE

THEREUPON, Reports

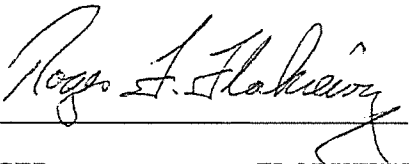
ITEM A. Fire Department - NONE

THEREUPON, Board Members NONE

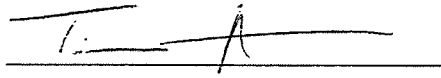
THEREUPON, Business from the Floor NONE

THEREUPON, Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Fulk made motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Arvanitis. Motion carries (5 – 0). The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.



ROGER FLORKIEWICZ
SCHERERVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
MERIT BOARD PRESIDENT
A TRUE COPY



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