

TOWN OF SCHERERVILLE

SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA

FIRE MERIT BOARD MEETING

June 5, 2025

The Fire Department Merit Board Regular Meeting was called to order by President Roger Florkiewicz at 6:00 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 Interim Recording Secretary Jon Gettemans. Also present: Attorney Christian Bartholomew.

THEREUPON, Approval of the Minutes

Vice President Arvanitis made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 1, 2025 Regular 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 that the swearing-in ceremony for the two new full-time firefighters took place earlier today. He noted that the event went well and had a strong turnout. Chief Patterson extended his thanks to President Florkiewicz for attending the ceremony.

Following Chief Patterson’s report, Vice President Arvanitis asked if the new hires were brought on as replacements. Chief Patterson clarified that one firefighter is filling a vacancy, while the other represents an increase in staffing.

THEREUPON, New Business

ITEM A. Discussion/public comments, approval of final draft of the Merit Board rules

President Florkiewicz invited comments from the Board, the attorney, and fire department staff regarding the final draft of the Merit Board rules, which have been under review and development over the past month. It was noted that there was no public attendance at the meeting.

Attorney Bartholomew announced that he had circulated the final policy, which included revisions approved at the previous meeting. He also confirmed that notice of the public meeting was published in the newspaper, and that he had not received any public comments or inquiries regarding the draft rules.

Chief Patterson also confirmed that no comments had been directed to him from staff or the public.

With no public comment received, President Florkiewicz entertained a motion for the approval of the Merit Board rules as presented.

Mr. Fulk made a motion to approve the final draft of the Merit Board rules, seconded by Secretary Petrie. Motion Carries (5 – 0).

THEREUPON, Reports

ITEM A. Fire Department – NONE

THEREUPON, Board Members

Following the approval of the Merit Board rules, Attorney Bartholomew mentioned that the next step would be to distribute the finalized rules to all members of the fire department, as required by statute. He advised that if any Board member identifies potential amendments or improvements in the future, those items can be addressed at upcoming meetings. However, he noted that with the rules now approved, there will likely be limited new business. He proposed if a scheduled meeting has no items on the agenda, it may be canceled with 48 hours' notice, and the Board can proceed to the next month's meeting.

President Florkiewicz requested if there were any issues previously brought up during study sessions that the Board would like to explore and address those issues further in future meetings.

Attorney Bartholomew informed the Board that the Safety Board had approved the hiring of three part-time firefighters. He noted that discussion had taken place regarding how this fits into the statutory framework. After reviewing the statute, Attorney Bartholomew stated that he agrees with the fire department's interpretation that part-time firefighters are considered at-will employees, are not sworn members of the department, and are not eligible for PERF benefits. Therefore, he believes the Merit Board rules, which apply to full-time members, do not currently govern part-time personnel. He stated that he would continue to look into this issue further and produce a report for the Board. If any recommended action arises from his findings, he will make the Board aware.

The President expressed concern that the statute presents a gray area and noted that it does not clearly state whether or not part-time members are subject to Merit Board oversight. He voiced his belief that it creates confusion to split hiring authority between the Board of Safety (for part-time hires) and the Merit Board (for full-time hires). He stated that the Merit Board rules should ideally apply to the department as a whole to maintain consistency.

In response, Attorney Bartholomew acknowledged the concern and suggested that an amendment could be considered at a future meeting to clarify the role of part-time personnel under the Merit Board rules. He reiterated that part-time members are currently not eligible for promotion, not placed on the full-time hiring list, and not subject to most elements of the Merit Board's scope.

The president concluded by expressing a desire for all personnel matters – including disciplinary actions – to be handled through the same entity to ensure consistency and fairness. He encouraged the Board and Attorney Bartholomew to continue exploring the issue and report back with findings and potential solutions.

Additional discussion followed regarding how part-time personnel are utilized and how they are compensated. Chief Patterson and Deputy Chief Meyer answered questions from the Board, providing clarification on scheduling practices, pay structure, and the operational role of part-time firefighters within the department.

Vice President Arvanitis voiced his support for a long-term staffing goal of one firefighter per 1,000 residents – approximately 30 firefighters – suggesting this be brought in front of the Clerk-Treasurer during budget discussion. Chief Patterson responded that current budget limitations do not allow for such staffing levels. Vice President Arvanitis acknowledged the financial constraints but emphasized that the town is continuing to grow, with increasing traffic and development, and he would like to see more firefighters added over time. He commented that he frequently sees the fire department responding to calls and wants to ensure that they are supported appropriately as demand increases.

THEREUPON, Business from the Floor NONE

THEREUPON, Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice President Arvanitis made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Turoci. Motion carries (5 – 0). The meeting was adjourned at 6:17 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