TOWN OF SCHERERVILLE SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA

FIRE MERIT BOARD MEETING August 7, 2025

The Fire Department Merit Board Regular Meeting was called to order by President Roger Florkiewicz at 6:01 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, Town Manager Jim Gorman and Town Council member Tom Schmitt.

THEREUPON, Approval of the Minutes

Secretary Petrie made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2025 Regular Meeting, seconded by Vice President Arvanitis. Motion Carries (5 – 0).

THEREUPON, Correspondence

ITEM A. NONE

THEREUPON, Old Business

ITEM A. NONE

THEREUPON, New Business

ITEM A. Discussion/public comments, staffing/paramedic contractual agreement

Chief Patterson reported that three (3) employees had previously signed an agreement committing to obtain their paramedic certification within a two-year time frame from the start date of the class. The agreed time period lapses as of August 7, 2025 and the employees have not successfully passed the paramedic exam. Chief Patterson noted that this matter may be brought forward for consideration of possible termination for not meeting the agreement. He also stated he had been discussing this with Attorney Bartholomew to weigh in on matter.

Attorney Bartholomew stated that no board action is being requested at this meeting; however, as the contractual time period concludes today, the matter may appear on the agenda for an upcoming meeting. He stated his office is currently reviewing the situation to ensure all procedures are followed correctly should action be necessary. He noted the process would involve Chief Patterson presenting recommendations for discipline/termination in which affected employees would have five days to request a hearing. If requested, the board would schedule a hearing within thirty days, providing the employees with at least fourteen days' notice. Attorney Bartholomew noted that any potential hearing could be scheduled to correspond with a regular Board meeting, but the matter would be conducted in closed session. He commented that if the employees obtain paramedic certification after the agreement deadline but prior to any hearings/actions, the matter would be considered resolved and no further action necessary. Attorney Bartholomew and Chief Patterson will remain in communication as the issue develops.

President Florkiewicz expressed concern about potential impact on staffing, noting the importance of not having to repeat training opportunities.

ITEM B. Discussion/public comments, of Merit Board Rules amendments

Attorney Bartholomew acknowledged receipt of a letter from Attorney Austgen concerning proposed amendments or issues with the Merit Board's Rules the day after Board passed the rules. He stated he could prepare drafts of proposed amendments for certain items needing correction, including typographical errors and clarifications to align the rules with the statute.

In response Tom Fulk inquired to the date the email letter was sent, and proposed that confirmation read receipts be sent for future emails as some board members didn't recall receiving it.

Attorney Bartholomew advised the letter was dated June 6th and would recirculate the letter to give the Board a chance to review for discussion, specifically the topic of involving the pension board in the hiring process since it's not statutory. He concluded by stating that toward end of the year, looking to have an operable draft of revisions, which would require another public hearing. One item Attorney Bartholomew noted to be discussed for revision would be part time firefighters that are not part of the pension system therefore not subject to the merit system.

President Florkiewicz emphasized the need to schedule further discussions and review relevant precedents regarding how similar matters have been addressed in the past with input from the Fire Chiefs as part of this process.

ITEM C. Request approval for time in service and paygrade increase for Jason Noto from Firefighter/Paramedic Second Class to Firefighter/Paramedic First Class

Chief Patterson explained that newly hired firefighters begin at entry level. After one year, they are reviewed and are eligible for advancement to Third Class Firefighter EMT or Paramedic. Six months thereafter, they may advance to Second Class and after an additional six months they become eligible to First Class Firefighter EMT/Paramedic. Mr. Jason Noto successfully completed all advancement requirements within the two year period. Chief Patterson requested approval from the board for the pay increase and advancement in rank.

President Florkiewicz inquired whether the expense had been included in the budget in which Chief Patterson confirmed.

Attorney Bartholomew informed the Board of the rules governing promotions such as interviews, testing, approvals and the availability of a vacancy. Following discussion, Board members clarified that the matter under consideration does not constitute a promotion, but rather a time-served advancement.

Mr. Fulk made a motion to approve the time in service & paygrade increase for Jason Noto from Firefighter/Paramedic Second Class to Firefighter/Paramedic First Class, seconded by Secretary Petrie. Motion Carries (5 – 0).

THEREUPON, Reports

ITEM A. Fire Department – NONE

THEREUPON, Board Members

Vice President Arvanitis expressed his strong appreciation for the Fire Department, noting both his own admiration and that of town residents, who frequently observe the department's responsiveness to calls. He spoke about the community's growth and wanted it noted of his support of staffing ratio of one firefighter per 1,000 residents. He inquired since budget planning typically occurs in July and August and whether additional staffing were part of that discussion. Chief Patterson responded that the budget does not sustain the addition of more firefighters, but they continue to explore funding opportunities to meet long-term staffing goals.

Attorney Bartholomew stated that the Safety Board began their study session at 5:00pm and concluded by 5:15pm and Safety Board Meeting adjourned by 5:30pm. He reported there was discussion among Merit Board members regarding the possibility of adjusting the meeting time to move it up to 5:30pm.

Vice President Arvanitis expressed support for adjusting the schedule, provided that if the Police Department has substantial business, give advance notice to Merit Board so meeting may be moved back to 6:00pm.

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 6:37 p.m.

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