

TOWN OF SCHERERVILLE

SCHERERVILLE, INDIANA

FIRE MERIT BOARD MEETING

March 5, 2026

The Fire Department Merit Board Meeting was called to order by President Roger Florkiewicz at 6:02 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 David Turoci. 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 Tom Fulk.

THEREUPON, Approval of the Minutes

Paul Petrie made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 5th, 2026 meeting, seconded by David Turoci. Motion Carries (4 – 0).

THEREUPON, Correspondence

ITEM A. Fire Department – NONE

President Florkiewicz shared that he received an email from Chief Patterson requesting approval for the hiring of a new person off the list. He advised that will be further discussed during the New Business portion of this meeting.

THEREUPON, Old Business

ITEM A. FD – Continue Review of Merit Board Rules

Attorney Bartholomew reported that only a few outstanding items remain, including establishing passing percentages for testing. Further revisions are pending receipt of additional data. It was noted that a more detailed discussion will occur under New Business during the agenda item concerning Pension Board hiring recommendations, as that matter is directly related to the passing percentages and other provisions that may need to be incorporated into the rules.

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

Chief Patterson apprised the Board regarding the hiring of candidate Donald Jones. His first day on duty is scheduled for Monday, March 9th. A swearing-in ceremony is planned for April 7th and Chief advised that an invitation would be sent to the Board as the date gets closer.

President Florkiewicz inquired and Chief Patterson confirmed that Jones would be the second hire that has been approved by the review board.

ITEM C. FD - Update on Firefighter Pulido

Chief Patterson shared that the Pension Board conducted a disability hearing on February 24th, 2026 for Firefighter Pulido in which they recommended moving forward with his disability enrollment. Legal counsel is currently preparing the necessary paperwork for submission to the State for disability enrollment. Chief further reported that Firefighter Pulido submitted his letter of resignation effective March 5th, 2026. As a result, an additional vacancy now exists on the hiring list. A request has been submitted to the Board to proceed with hiring to fill the position.

THEREUPON, New Business

ITEM A. FD – Pension Board Hiring Recommendation

Chief Patterson distributed the Pension Board hiring recommendations to the Board. It was reported that correspondence from the Pension Board dated February 13 outlined two recommendations concerning the administration of the firefighter hiring list. The first recommendation provides that, if the Fire Department must pass over a candidate due to a certification issue, the candidate shall be moved to the bottom of the hiring list one time.

A subsequent failure to meet certification requirements would result in removal from the hiring list. The second recommendation provides that if a candidate is passed over for failing to meet requirements of the 1977 Police Officers' and Firefighters' Retirement Fund, the candidate shall be removed from the hiring list. Attorney Bartholomew advised that existing statute already contemplates that candidates must satisfy Pension Board requirements, including physical and psychological examinations, at the final stage of the hiring process. It was noted that candidates reach the certified hiring list after completion of interviews and ranking; however, final employment remains contingent upon successfully meeting Pension Board standards i.e. physical and psychological exams.

Attorney Bartholomew further indicated that while the Board could reiterate these provisions within its rules for clarity, such action may not be necessary as the statutory requirements are already implicit. The Board was advised to review the recommendations and consider further discussion at the next meeting. He further gave an overview of the hiring process, explaining that candidates first complete the online evaluation and testing process, followed by interviews. Once a certified eligibility list is approved, candidates are selected in order and sent for required evaluations. These evaluations include psychological testing followed by comprehensive physical examinations to determine fitness for duty. Upon successful completion of those, the candidate's paperwork is submitted to the state for review and approval through the appropriate pension fund channels. Final acceptance into the pension system occurs after review and approval by the Pension Fund Board.

The Board discussed the recommendation from the Pension Board to pass over a candidate due to certification issues. Chief Patterson clarified that candidates must possess all required certifications at the time of hire. If a candidate lacks necessary credentials – such as EMT, paramedic, or firefighter certification or physical agility credentials – at the time an offer is made, the candidate may be passed over and moved down the eligibility list which could give them more time to obtain credentials. Attorney Bartholomew noted that state statute requires candidates to remain ranked by scoring, creating uncertainty about whether list order can be changed. Members also raised concerns about fairness, staffing timelines and limited life of eligibility lists. The Board discussed whether a structured delay period for a reasonable period could allow candidates to meet certification requirements while preserving their original ranking position. The Board further discussed proactively contacting candidates on the hiring eligibility list to confirm continued interest and to ensure certifications remain current before potential vacancies arise. Members noted this could help avoid delays, determine whether a new eligibility list is needed and maintain legal compliance by preserving rank order. It was clarified that such outreach would not constitute a job offer but would allow the department to assess readiness and staffing needs.

President Florkiewicz circled back to the correspondence received from Chief Patterson requesting approval for hiring a new person off the eligibility list to replace the recent resignation. David Turoci made a motion with a second from Vice President Arvanitis. Motion Carries (4-0).

THEREUPON, Reports

ITEM A. Fire Department - None

THEREUPON, Board Members

In addition to its being noted on record that there should be one firefighter per thousand residents in Schererville, Vice President Arvanitis inquired about the total training hours completed in 2025. Chief checked the data and advised there was a total of 8,055.26 hours of training in 2025 – which the Board commended. Chief Patterson in return thanked Assistant Chief Jon Gettemans who is in charge of the training.

The Board further discussed proposed revisions to the hiring process, including incorporating preference considerations such as paramedic certification, veteran status and lateral transfer experience. Members indicated these factors may be most appropriately evaluated during the oral interview phase, rather than the initial written testing stage. Discussion also addressed potential adjustments to the scoring structure, including determining the appropriate allocation of preference points and possibly capping total preference points at ten to maintain balance among evaluation categories. Members questioned a recommendation to increase the minimum passing score on the written examination from 70% to 75%, noting concern that such a change would have significantly reduced the number of eligible candidates on the current list (only 5 out of the 15

would have passed). Board Members expressed support for further review and refinement of the proposed structure in order to strengthen future eligibility lists and ensure compliance with statutory hiring requirements.

THEREUPON, Business from the Floor - None

THEREUPON, Adjournment

There being no further business, Paul Petrie made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by David Turoci. Motion carries (4 – 0). The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 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