



KITTITAS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 7

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Board of Fire Commissioners-Meeting Minutes

September 11, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 1800 hours at Station 72; Commissioner Robert Cernick led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Commissioner Chair Jeff Myers and Commissioner Robert Cernick attended; Commissioner Vice Chair Justin Zipperer attended via Teams Meeting; Chief Aaron Lowe, District Secretary Micallef, ten full-time firefighters, three volunteer firefighters, and two members of the public attended.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve the agenda, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The August meeting minutes were presented for approval. Commissioner Cernick made a motion to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign the meeting minutes.

CORRESPONDENCE: No correspondence.

FINANCIAL REPORT: The Financial Report was provided to the Board; the total monthly expenditure was \$725,455.15. There were no questions from the Board, as this report had been emailed in advance for Commissioner review.

Commissioner Cernick made a motion to approve, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign the expense and payroll registers as presented.

CHIEF'S REPORT: A copy of the Fire Chief's performance goals for the year was presented by Commissioner Chair Myers, and he requested they be reviewed and updated at each meeting; goals will be noted as they are achieved.

- August Call Statistics – Calls and types were presented; a discussion on whether a list of every call should be presented to the Board; the Commissioners advised the full list of calls for the month is not necessary.
- Significant Calls –
 - Sun Country Fire.
 - Big Lake Fire-this wildfire response was effective because of unified command with DNR, plus a great response from our volunteers. Air resources arrived quickly; over 200 responders were on the incident within the first two hours.

- CPR assist to District 3 at Lake Easton.
- Trailer Fire in Thornton Creek.
- Significant Events –
 - Ice Machine installed at Station 76 by Life Support to support rehab efforts.
 - Nightshade Solutions interfaces with ESO for rapid recovery of available insurance payments from freeway collision responses.
 - Station 76 Fire Sprinkler project completed.
 - Updated website for KCFD7 Station information.
 - Shift Meetings.
 - Social Media summary: Added 1,058 followers on Facebook (6,058 total) and 235 followers on Instagram.
 - September 11th remembrance ceremony at Station 76 with neighboring public safety agencies and dignitaries.

Training Summary: A summary of volunteer and career firefighter training was provided with a total of 443 hours for the month.

Fleet Summary: The fourth pending brush truck is finished, and all-terrain tires are being installed. On the drive back, the vehicle had a mechanical code issue, and the mechanic will be coming in on his day off to make sure it is ready for the weekend.

The pump repairs to E771 will likely cost around \$25,000 to fix. But due to the size of the facility in Liberty at Station 77, finding and purchasing another engine would likely be more than the repair. The Commissioners advised to proceed with the repairs.

Facilities Summary: The report was provided to the Board. Items worked on ranged from installing the ice machine at Station 76, and painting inside the Station 76 crew quarters in anticipation of the Administrative Office moving out.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Commissioner Chair Myers detailed the September 11th remembrance ceremony and thanked everyone who helped make the great event possible. This ceremony was organized by Chief Lowe and will become an annual event.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Training Tower Update: The Training Tower is progressing quickly. Everyone is pleased to see the progress as the training tower takes shape. The goal is for it to be finished and ready for use in October, at which point the burn prop will be installed.

Administrative Office Lease: Administrative office space within the Cle Elum/Roslyn School District office has been explored and a plan for the move has been put into place. KCFD7 will have our own exterior entrance, and four offices immediately, with two more offices to follow when needed. All offices will be in the same end section of the building surrounding the outside of a shared meeting room. The Lease Agreement as presented has been reviewed by our attorney.

The Lease Agreement was presented to Commissioners for approval. Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve and sign the Lease Agreement, Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign the Cle Elum/Roslyn School District Lease Agreement.

Interlocal Agreement for Automatic Aid with City of Cle Elum: Chief Lowe has worked with the Cle Elum Mayor and Fire Chief to remove the language about emergency water usage from the agreement. Chief Mills will be taking the agreement to their next Council Meeting for approval.

Currently, the only remaining Automatic Aid Agreement pending is with Kittitas County Fire District 6.

NEW BUSINESS:

2025-2026 Chief Performance Goals Review: Commissioner Chair Myers asked to incorporate this to the regular Chief's Report and have staff mark off the goals as they are achieved.

Resolution No. 2025-7; Tool Allowance Clarification: This item was discussed at the last Commissioner meeting and legal advice has been provided by our attorney. This resolution makes it clear that the Facilities Technician position does not have a tool allowance. Commissioner Myers motioned to approve and sign the Tool Allowance Clarification resolution, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign Resolution No. 2025-7.

Resolution No. 2025-8; Hazard Mitigation Plan Adoption: This plan clearly identifies the wildfire threat in our District and adoption of the plan is required by FEMA. Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve and sign the resolution, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign Resolution No. 2025-8.

Room Use Agreement with Forest Service: This agreement was requested by the Incident Management Team working the Labor Mountain and Lower Sugarloaf

wildfires. The commissioner's meeting room is being used for their cooperator's meetings at no cost. The Commissioners authorized Chief Lowe to sign the agreement on behalf of the District.

RFP Needs:

- **Heavy Equipment** – Needed during structure fires to open-up or pull down buildings;
- **Sustenance** – Two or three vendors available to provide meals to District personnel during extended fire response incidents;
- **Snow Removal/ Field maintenance** – Contractors available for snow removal or general maintenance as needed;
- **Concierge Service-Maintenance/Repair**- A company which would manage and provide overall facility service and maintenance.

The District would like to seek bids for these services so that we have several options for vendors in each. By seeking bids, the District will have a predetermined list of vendors with known costs for each service.

The Commissioners supported this plan and would like staff to move forward with creating and seeking the bids.

WSRB Rating Date: The Washington Survey and Rating Bureau sent us a letter with optional dates for the next scheduled five year re-rating of the District. As this will require a large amount of staff time, Chief Lowe believes that May of 2026, before wildfire season, would be best.

It was noted that the District has made so many great strides in our training, apparatus and personnel that we are hopeful for what this new rating will bring to improve the impact of the insurance rating for our citizens. The Commissioners supported May 2026, and Chief Lowe will advise WSRB.

Station 76 Implementation Plan: The two new hire firefighters will start on January 19, 2026, and will attend the Washington State Fire Academy from January 22nd to April 17th.

The Administrative Office at Station 76 is being retrofitted back to firefighter crew quarters with the addition of the sprinkler system, and the office staff will be moving to the new office space with the School District across the street in the first part of October. This move may also require an update to our IT services and move to a more cloud-based computer solution for the District.

While the new hires are at the academy, staff will work on outfitting the crew quarters with furniture and other needs so that once the firefighters leave the academy, Station 76 can be opened as a full-time staffed station.

The current firefighter hiring list will expire in April of 2026, and the Chief would like to retire the list and conduct recruitment for a new list as needed. The Commissioners supported this plan and suggested Chief Lowe update the list whenever necessary because hiring lists become stale so quickly in the current workforce market.

Policy Review and Approval:

- SOP 100 Fire Service Authority
- SOP 1012 Discriminatory Harassment
- SOP 1013 Conduct and Behavior
- SOP 1023 Workplace Violence

All these policies have been reviewed through the District's internal policy review process. Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve all the policies, Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve the policies as presented.

Request to Order New Type 1 Engine: SeaWestern Emergency Vehicles informed us that the diesel motor in the two type-1 fire engines we just purchased will no longer be available next year, and the new motor will result in a \$93,000 cost increase.

Staff recommended ordering a third type-1 fire engine for Station 76 (which was part of the recent levy renewal plan) this year to avoid the cost increase in 2026. The District would submit a \$200,000 down payment from the Apparatus Reserve Fund and finance the rest through the Washington State's Local Program. CAO Micallef stated the rates are currently around 3%. As with the other two engines, this will be a Sourcewell bid purchase; the Commissioners would like our attorney to review the Sourcewell documentation (as we did for the first two engines) to verify this purchase will meet all state bidding requirements.

The Commissioners supported CAO Micallef in financing the engine through the state Treasurer's Office LOCAL Program over a period of seven years.

Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve the purchase (if our attorney verifies the Sourcewell documentation) and to move forward with the Local Program financing option. Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to move forward with the purchase of the Type-1 engine (which will match the other two

currently being delivered) and authorized the Fire Chief to sign the purchase agreement.

Fire District Reorganization Plan: Chief Lowe presented a reorganization plan for the District; an extensive discussion followed. Commissioner Zipperer advised he would like to recuse himself from this discussion.

The recent levy lift provided the revenue to fund the three additional firefighter positions and a new Type-1 engine necessary to open Station 76 as a full-time staffed station. However, as personnel and services expand, it has become clear the District lacks consistent middle or upper-level management and administrative support for fire prevention, operations, training, fleet, and facilities. All these areas are critical to provide the highest quality fire, medical, and emergencies services to the citizens we serve.

The District lacks consistent Chief Officer coverage to not only manage and lead day-to-day operations, training, and administrative duties, but also have a qualified all-risk incident commander available 24-hours a day and 7-days a week. Chief Lowe's proposal is to add two "Division Chiefs" to lead and manage what would become the Operations Division and the Training/ Facilities/ Fleet Division (or whatever it will be named). Chief Lowe would share on-call or duty officer responsibilities with the two Division Chiefs to assure 24/7/365 coverage for the District.

During the discussion, Commissioner Cernick expressed questions and concerns about the proposal, including the cost of hiring two more chief officers and the impact on the budget. He also expressed concern about hiring upper-level management instead of firefighters on the line. Chief Lowe explained the reasoning for supervision across the entire District, the lack of current upper-level or mid-level management, the need to mentor the first-level supervisors, and having 24/7 duty coverage. The current organizational structure also does not allow our Chief to have a work/ life balance since he is essentially always on-duty, and his span of supervisory control is too wide.

As for the budget impact, Chief Lowe outlined that the current Facilities Technician and Training Captain positions would be unfunded, with these duties (and others) assigned to one of the Division Chiefs. The current Training Captain has volunteered to return to the rank of firefighter, and he will fill one of the three new positions created by the approved levy lift and full-time opening of Station 76.

Chief Lowe explained how rapidly this area has grown, how the District is playing catch-up to match the service needs of our community, addressing the ongoing

wildfire threat, and transition the District to a professional organization which can meet current and future needs of our growing population. He believes this structure of a Fire Chief and two Division Chiefs will serve the District for many years to come, plus provide an internal path and mentorship for the next Fire Chief.

Gary Burrows, a District resident and retired career firefighter/paramedic asked if he could comment. He stated as a taxpayer he too has concerns about the costs for these positions, however the District has a very young, inexperienced firefighter staff which has been severely lacking oversight and management from experienced firefighters, leaders and mentors until Chief Lowe was hired. Mr. Burrows outlined that from a liability standpoint we are potentially exposed should we have a bad incident and would be liable as a district for not having command oversight in place. He strongly supports the hiring of Division Chiefs for this reason and said it is overdue as the District professionalizes its organization and service delivery model.

Commissioner Myers motioned to approve and move forward with Chief Lowe's reorganization plan to include the addition of two Division Chiefs in the 2026 budget. Commissioner Cernick seconded the motion, and the Board voted 2-0 with Commissioner Zipperer recusing himself from voting on the issue.

GOOD TO THE ORDER: The District's 2026 budget reading is scheduled for the regular October commissioner meeting. The budget format is currently being updated with additional line items to better track specific expenses. The goal will be to adopt the final 2026 budget at the November meeting.

As for the November meeting, District Secretary Micallef requested the November meeting be moved from the 13th to the 7th due to staff scheduling conflicts on the regular meeting date. The Commissioners had no objection to moving the regular November meeting to the 7th. The required public notice will be posted.

Commissioner Myers would like to have all the District job descriptions reviewed, updated, and provided to the Board for adoption at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 1933 hours.

APPROVED:

Kittitas County Fire District #7,
Kittitas County, Washington.

By: 
Jeff Myers, Commissioner Chair

By: _____
Justin Zipperer, Commissioner Vice Chair

By: 
Robert Cernick, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Eryn A Micallef, District Secretary