



# KITTITAS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT 7

## Board of Fire Commissioners

### Meeting Minutes

*October 9, 2025*

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 1800 hours at Station 72; Chief Aaron Lowe led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** A proposal was made to add the Interlocal Agreement with Kittitas County Fire District 6 to New Business. Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve the agenda with the addition, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve the agenda as amended.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No public comment.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The September regular meeting minutes and the October 1, 2025, special meeting minutes were presented for approval. Commissioner Cernick made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign the regular meeting minutes.

Commissioner Cernick made a motion to approve the special meeting minutes, and Commissioner Zipperer seconded. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign the special meeting minutes.

Commissioner Chair Myers asked that the draft minutes be forwarded for review to the Chair by the third Thursday of the month. Agenda items for the regular meeting should be turned in by the first Thursday of the month, with Board packets available no later than by the Monday before the meeting. If the packets could be available the Friday before, so Commissioners have the weekend to review the material, that would be even better.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** A letter from Local 4880 in support of the District hiring the Division Chief positions was presented.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** The Financial Report was provided to the Board; the total monthly expenditure was \$699,291.08. These reports were sent to the Board for review in advance of the meeting and there were no questions from the Commissioners.

Chief Administrative Officer Micallef briefed the Board as to the change in accounting software used by the county Treasurer's Office to process our payments. This has created a lot of confusion and resulted in an entirely new structure for the reconciliation reports which do not correspond to our budget process or spreadsheets. All the other junior taxing districts, including the school districts, are having the same challenges. The Treasurer's Office is aware of the issues and concerns and is working to provide the reports needed in a timely manner. Due to this unexpected change, CAO Micallef must manually pull the data needed to reconcile the expenditures; August was completed and she will work on September when the county makes the information available.

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

#### **CHIEF'S REPORT:**

- August Call Statistics – Calls and types were presented; Commissioner Myers requested that the total list of calls by date/time be left off if the reporting software can only print the first page and not the entire list. There were a total of 76 calls last month; Station 73 had the most calls; and C Shift handled the most incidents by shift.
- Chief's Performance Goals – The list of items was reviewed; Chief Lowe will update the list within his report each month as tasks are completed.
- Significant Calls –
  - Mutual Aid CPR call in Cle Elum, the Lucas device was used and successful.
  - Extrication of driver in one-vehicle into trees collision on Bullfrog Road. The new extrication tools donated by I-90 Life Support were used at the scene. The patient was transported to Easton and airlifted to Harborview. Chief Lowe thanked I-90 Life Support for providing this critical new equipment.
  - Roll-over traffic collision with entrapment on I-90. The new extrication tools were again used; the patient was transported to Harborview by Medic One.
  - Structure Fire on Lower Peoh Point Road. There was property loss, but the occupant was able to get out safely. KCFD7 was assisted by many Upper County agencies, including Cle Elum Fire, Roslyn Fire, District 3, Medic One, and the Sheriff's Office. Chief Lowe held an after-action review the following day.

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- Mutual Aid response to the Airlift NW helicopter crash off I-90 near MP 62; crews used our thermal imaging tools to find heat/fire in the engine area and extinguish.
- Significant Events –
  - Administrative Staff were able to move the administrative office into the leased space within the School District office on Bullfrog Road. We are currently working on signage for the office. Chief Lowe and CAO Micallef will have monthly meetings with the school Superintendent and their Business Manager to make sure we are good neighbors. In the future, we will discuss possibly moving the District's maintenance shop from Station 72 to the School District bus maintenance facility near the District's new office.
  - Shift Meetings, Officer Meetings, and Staff Meetings were completed during the month.
  - Working on radio issues with KITTCOM and Day Wireless as E721 and E731 are still experiencing radio issues. The District purchased one mobile Motorola radio, and KITTCOM provided a second one so both engines can test these radios versus the radios previously installed. KITTCOM Director Rich Elliott advised he is willing to speak to the Board about the radio issues and what is being done address them.
  - Levy Renewal and Staffing Station 76 Implementation Plan-Firefighter Hiring. Conditional offers have been made to two firefighters who are currently in the background process. They have a planned January start date and will enter the State Fire Academy immediately thereafter, with a planned April graduation date. With the graduation of these two new firefighters, and the reassignment of the Training Captain, Chief Lowe anticipates staffing Station 76 soon thereafter.
  - New type 1 Engine for Station 76. The Washington Local Program funding application is in process and will be submitted soon. The Engine has been ordered to beat the 2026 price increase.
  - Evaluations for Lieutenants have been finished.
  - Suncadia Harvest Fest. The District attended both weekends of the event and the antique fire engine was used in the Suncadia display.
  - Washington Wildfire Caucus in Spokane. Chief Lowe and CRR Administrative Specialist Davies attended.
  - Chief Lowe presented at the Association of Washington Cities conference regarding wildfire danger; the Chief was asked to present at the AWC conference again next year. In addition to networking with our local mayors, AWC was a great opportunity to

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talk to city leaders across the state about the critical needs in wildfire planning, prevention, and response.

**Training Summary:** A summary of volunteer and career firefighter training was provided with a total of 563.6 hours for the month (the majority being company training).

**Fleet Summary:** The District Mechanic was unable to file a report, but Chief Lowe summarized that all repair backlogs have been caught up, but the pump repair to E771 was delayed by the vendor a few weeks.

**Facilities Summary:** The Facilities Report was presented. Commissioner Myers noted that the planned community work party to repaint the exterior of Station 71 will need to wait until next Spring.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:** Commissioner Chair Myers and Chief Aaron Lowe attended the recent KCFD7 Volunteer Association dinner. Commissioner Myers encouraged our volunteer members to review the monthly District Newsletter (by email) and emphasized the impact of accumulated trauma, supporting your peers, and seeking help and resources to stay healthy.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Training Tower Update:** The construction portion of the tower has been completed, now to be followed by electrical work and the installation of the burn prop.

**Chief's Performance Goals:** This item was covered in the Chief's report and will be incorporated within his report in all future meetings.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Division Chiefs:** Commissioner Zipperer recused himself from this part of the agenda.

As discussed at a prior meeting, these two new positions will be working firefighters, who (with the Chief) will also be required to provide 24/7 command and control coverage in conjunction with their assigned daily administrative responsibilities. The Chief outlined the proposed job description, required qualifications, and recommended compensation for the position.

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Chief Lowe used a by-the-hour calculation to justify the salary range proposal, which reflects the additional number of hours each of the two Division Chiefs would be working during the duty coverage. Between Chief Lowe and the two Division Chiefs, one command officer will be scheduled for duty coverage 24/7. These positions will be required to live within the District and be available to respond when scheduled for the duty coverage.

Commissioner Myers believes that FLSA exempt status does not lend itself to a calculation for by-the-hour compensation and the expectation for the 24/7 duty coverage for this position should be part of the base pay calculation. Chief Lowe explained that he had simply calculated the excess hours of duty coverage of 17.3 weeks to illustrate how he arrived at a recommended salary calculation of \$158,000.

Commissioner Myers pointed out that being FLSA exempt, these positions should be able to adjust their working hours to meet the needs of the District, while also trying to regulate their actual number of hours worked each week. Chief Lowe advised his expectation will be that the Division Chiefs still work their regular schedule during the week, plus respond to high-acuity incidents after hours when on duty coverage.

Chief Lowe explained that he appreciates all the work that the volunteer Battalion Chiefs have done over the years as our on-call incident commanders, but as volunteers they are not always available whereas these positions require scheduled duty coverage. Duty coverage from a command officer assures our shift Lieutenants and firefighters that they will have the support they need during high acuity incidents.

These positions also provide for future leadership opportunities for our District members.

The two Division Chief positions create a three-way shared duty coverage schedule with Chief Lowe so that one command officer will always be expected to respond while the other two can take time off, leave for vacation, or go to conferences. Commissioner Myers noted that Chief Lowe's salary should also reflect being scheduled for 17.3 weeks of duty coverage in rotation with these two new positions.

Chief Lowe has worked with this model of command staffing before at other agencies and believes this would be the best fit for our District now and in the immediate future. Commissioner Cernick expressed concern about the cost of these positions; Chief Lowe acknowledged the cost but made clear the expectations of these Division Chiefs in day-to-day responsibilities as well as being scheduled for duty coverage for 17.3 weeks per year is high and the salary recommendation takes that into account.

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After extensive discussion of the job expectations and review of different salary calculations provided by Chief Lowe, Commissioners Myers and Cernick agreed to a salary range of \$144,000 to \$153,000. The Commissioners expected that if someone was to be hired at the top end of the salary, they should have all of the top qualifications.

Commissioner Myers motioned to approve the job description and salary range for two new positions of Division Chief and Commissioner Cernick seconded the motion. The Board voted 2-0, with Commissioner Zipperer abstaining, to approve the job descriptions and salary range for Division Chief. The Employment Agreement will be reviewed and approved by the Board when the individuals are offered a position.

**Job Descriptions:** Commissioner Myers added several desired leadership skills and traits to the Fire Chief's job description that were encompassed within the original hiring announcement.

Commissioner Myers also asked to postpone the review of the job descriptions until the next meeting and asked that a box and date be added to each form to capture when it was originally approved, plus the effective date of any future changes or updates. He also asked that the new logo letterhead be added to all the job descriptions, which prompted a discussion about standardizing the format of forms and letterhead.

The Commissioners indicated the new logo with address letterhead should be used when the document is going outside the District, and just the logo header (no full address letterhead) would be preferred on internal documents and forms.

**Policy Review and Approval:**

- SOP 1025 Smoking and Tobacco Use
- SOP 1026 Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace
- SOP 1031 Work Related Illness and Injury Reporting

These are standard Lexipol model policies. Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve all three policies and Commissioner Zipperer seconded the motion; the Board voted 3-0 to approve the policies as presented.

**Forest Service Grooming Letter:** County Commissioner Cory Wright emailed a to the Board regarding an anticipated Forest Service budget cut and reduction in winter trail snow grooming with concern about the impact to areas served by the District, such as up the Teanaway. The Commissioners discussed whether this would hamper any District operations as Forest Service lands are adjacent but not actually served

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by the District. However, the Commissioners agreed it could be an issue during mutual aid responses for regional incidents such as snowmobile accidents.

The reduction of winter recreation opportunities at the state and federal level has been an ongoing problem over the past several years with regular budget cuts to grooming trails and plowing at snow parks; this is an issue to continue to monitor.

**Interlocal Agreement with Kittitas County Fire District 6:** Chief Lowe met with Chief Jackson and obtained their signed agreement for review and approval. This was the final interlocal agreement pending for automatic aid with our surrounding fire agencies. Commissioner Cernick asked that as with all the other agreements, we monitor how often the agreement is being used to make sure it is always reciprocal. Chief Lowe stated the meeting was very beneficial and per the agreement, Chief Jackson would send whatever response he has available depending on staffing and apparatus.

Commissioner Cernick motioned to approve and have the Chair sign the agreement with Commissioner Zipperer seconding the motion. The Board voted 3-0 to approve and sign the Interlocal Agreement for Automatic Aid with KCFD6.

**2026 Budget:** The Budget worksheet was presented and reviewed by the Board on the large meeting room video screen:

- The salary for the Division Chiefs will be updated to reflect the range specified earlier in the meeting.
- Prior overbilling for pest control will be adjusted to the correct pricing.
- Heating fuel/propane needed for the fire training tower should be identified within a specific line-item for tracking purposes.
- Using the 2026 Budget spreadsheet on the screen, the Commissioners, Fire Chief and District Secretary adjusted individual expenditures and capital purchase/reserve line-items to reflect the target ending fund balance of \$1.8 million. This ending fund balance carries forward as the 2027 beginning fund balance and is necessary to cover the first four months of operations/payroll until April property tax revenue is received.
- This Budget includes the two new Division Chief positions; two additional firefighters to staff Station 76; firefighter salary and benefit increases per the collective bargaining agreement; cost of living adjustments for administrative staff; payments for the new Station 76 engine; PPE for new personnel; cost increases for liability insurance; funds to bring in outside training and instructors; additional funds for contracted facilities maintenance/repairs/snow removal; increase in fire operational supplies

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(hoses, appliances, tools, SCBA maintenance, rescue equipment, wildland gear, and rehab); new IT services/software and moving to cloud-based servers; fire training tower operational expenses; additional funds for contracted fleet repairs; and the following capital/reserve allocations: back-up generator, Station 76 upfit, new Engine 76 upfit, roof repairs at Station 72, respiratory protection testing equipment, \$70,000 for handheld and mobile radios, \$50,000 for concrete around the fire training tower, \$110,000 to general reserve, \$200,000 to apparatus reserve, \$50,000 to capital facilities, and \$55,000 to capital equipment (SCBA, PPE, hose/appliances).

- Commissioner Candidate Keffer asked if the District was considering budgeting to clean firefighter bunker gear with the new CO<sub>2</sub> process and if new PPE will be free of PFAS chemicals; Chief Lowe advised he will investigate options and costs.
- The Commissioners thanked the staff for all their work on the budget.
- The recommended changes to the Budget will be updated and brought to the next regular meeting for final approval.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:** There has been a discussion from another fire district about charging government and non-tax paying entities for fire service per RCW 52.18.010. Currently KCFD7 only has a fire protection contract with the Yakama Nation for the Fish Hatchery. There could possibly be other benefit charges assessed for county or state facilities, such as the county road shop/transfer station, WSDOT maintenance shop and the Elk Heights Rest Area; Commissioner Myers will continue to work with staff to review this option.

A reminder that due to staff schedule conflicts the following week, the next Board of Fire Commissioner regular meeting has been moved to Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm in the meeting room at Station 72.

**ADJOURNMENT:** With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 2020 hours.

**APPROVED:**

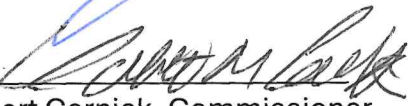
Kittitas County Fire District #7,  
Kittitas County, Washington

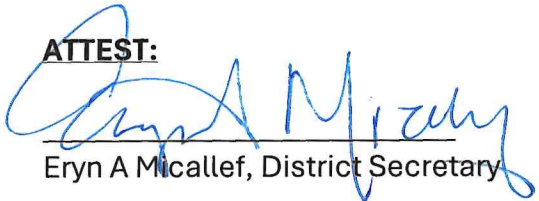
By:   
Jeff Myers, Commissioner Chair

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By:   
Justin Zipperer, Commissioner Vice Chair

By:   
Robert Cernick, Commissioner

**ATTEST:**  
  
Eryn A Micallef, District Secretary

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