

# Board of Fire Commissioners

## Regular Meeting Minutes

Held on January 21, 2026  
at Inverness Fire Station 35 Ela Road, Inverness, IL

Minutes:

**Call to Order** The regular meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Commissioner Tiedje.

**Roll Call** Present: Chairperson Tim Tiedje, Commissioner William Murray, Commissioner Russell Toms

Others Present: Fire Chief Kurka, Admin Asst Diercks

**Pledge of Allegiance** Commissioner Tiedje led all present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Comment** – None

**Approval of Minutes** Motion by Commissioner Murray, seconded by Commissioner Toms, to approve the minutes from the October 8, 2025 Regular Meeting as presented. A voice vote showed unanimous approval.

**Communications** - None

**Fire Chief's Report** Chief Kurka updated the Board of Fire Commissioners on District activities and call volume from 2025.

### Unfinished Business

Lt. Jon Arthur joined the meeting at 3:11 p.m.

Lieutenant Promotional Process:

#### Ascertained Merit Scoring

- The CBA requires seven evaluators for Lieutenant promotions—three Lieutenants, three Assistant/Deputy Chiefs, and the Fire Chief.
  - The District currently does not have Assistant or Deputy Chiefs, leaving only four evaluators.
  - With the CBA requirement to throw out the high and low scores, this would leave only two valid scores, reducing objectivity.
- Possible solution discussed:
  - Use the Captain process wording instead, which relies on four evaluators reaching consensus.

- Would require bargaining with Local 3764.
- Chief noted this entire section was tabled in the last negotiation cycle.

### **Peer Review**

- Consensus that the current model has little value and is not well understood.
- Concerns:
  - Candidates may feel incentivized to negatively evaluate peers.
  - Commissioners do not find the peer review useful and seldom reference it.
- Discussion:
  - Should subordinates complete the peer review instead?
  - Need to explore how to make the component more objective and less subjective.
- No objections to removing or substantially revising this section.

### **Education Component**

- All attendees agreed the education category is clear, objective, and acceptable as written.

### **Seniority**

- Current language awards 1 point per full year (rounded to nearest day).
- Issues identified:
  - No explicit cutoff date for determining years of service.
- Commissioners discussed:
  - Option of quarterly cutoff: Not recommended.
  - Agreement to keep full-year increments, based on service time as of the written test date.

### **Mandatory Mini-Seminar**

- The CBA mandates a 2-4 hour assessment-center seminar.
- Commissioners recommend:
  - Changing this from mandatory to voluntary.
  - If a candidate does not attend, the process would reflect that choice in scoring or preparation, but no penalty language should exist.

### **Testing Schedule Language**

- Recommendation to revise language to ensure tests are scheduled on days when no candidates are scheduled to work.
- Assessment center scoring may take 24-48 hours, and scores must be finalized before the written test.
  - Recommendation to remove Section B requiring the order currently outlined.

### **Reading / Study Materials**

- Current requirements include five books plus outside resources such as SOGs, FOG manuals, past tests, etc.
- Concerns:
  - Volume is excessive for a 90-day preparation window for working firefighters.
- Recommendations:
  - Make the list shorter and more relevant.
  - Ensure all resources are aligned with district operations.
  - Commissioners prefer it not to be “too easy,” but still reasonable.

### **Notification of Scores**

- CBA requires candidates be advised of their score after each component.
- The Chief currently provides only individual scores, not the full distribution.
- Commissioners agree the current practice is acceptable; consider a change to the wording in the rules.

### **Evaluation of Promotional Process**

- Current language requires each candidate to submit an evaluation form within 10 business days.
- Concern:
  - What happens if they don't submit one?
- Recommendation:
  - Change language from “required” to “encouraged” or “allowed.”
  - No punitive action for failing to submit.

### **Oral Interview**

- There is a desire to remove the written portion of the oral interview component.

### **Assessment Center Review**

Issues identified in previous assessment center:

### **Tactical Exercise**

- Last assessment center:
  - Did **not** match Inverness FPD operations.
  - Candidates were graded down for following district Field Operations Guide (FOG)s correctly.
  - Incident command inconsistencies—Battalion Chief role was not integrated properly.

- Recommendations:
  - Include an assessor familiar with Inverness FPD operations, such as the Palatine training officer.
  - Emphasize rural operations, which better reflect district realities.

### **Troubled Employee Scenario**

- Feedback: Good, relevant to district operations.

### **In-Basket Exercise**

- Not useful; many items did not align with actual Inverness FPD duties.

### **Group Project**

- Considered challenging, relevant, and worthwhile.

### **Evaluation Form Language Issues**

- On the officer evaluation form used for Ascertained Merit (Appendix D), issues noted:
  - Attendance wording unclear—possible typo or inconsistency.
    - Chief clarified: Legal leave (FMLA, Work Comp) should not negatively impact scoring.
  - Commissioners want improved clarity in:
    - “Usually counted on for a good job” → too vague
    - “Almost always aware of work in progress” → needs more objective language
  - Recommendation:
    - Replace subjective qualifiers (“usually,” “good,” “almost always”) with clear, measurable performance criteria.

Lt. Jon Arthur left the meeting due to an emergency response at 4:12 p.m. Chief Kurka will work on these changes for the Commissioners to review at the April regular meeting.

### **New Business**

Entry Level Testing: The District received 21 applications for the current entry-level firefighter/paramedic testing process.

The Chief proposed establishing a perpetual eligibility list, with candidates remaining on the list for two years, after which they are removed automatically.

Under this model, the list does not expire, and the Commissioners would determine how often to:

- Evaluate candidates
- Integrate new applicants

- Refresh or re-rank the list

Benefits identified:

- Provides additional time for paramedic students to obtain their licenses before they are eligible for hire.

Commissioners agreed that:

- If a candidate re-tests, they should retain their higher score and should not appear twice on the same list.

Current BOFC Rules require applicants to be 21 years old at the time of certification to an eligibility list. Commissioners discussed amending rules to:

- Allow candidates to test at age 20
- Require age 21 by date of appointment, consistent with practical hiring needs.

Chief will verify legal compliance before any rule change.

The Chief will contact legal counsel to confirm whether contract workers at a fire department or fire protection district should qualify for the age exemption (over 35 years of age).

- Current rules exclude private-sector contract service from preference point eligibility.

The rules require candidates to be of good moral character and allow disqualification for felony or moral-turpitude-related misdemeanors.

Commissioners requested:

- Mandatory background checks completed before oral interviews (rules currently require background checks before appointment)
- A clearer definition or explanation of “moral turpitude.”

Staff recommended not to conduct social media screening in this cycle, citing limited value in previous testing.

### **Oral Interviews**

- The Board plans to conduct oral interviews in February 2026, selecting approximately 10–12 candidates.
- Priority will be given to:
  - Licensed paramedics
  - Paramedic students actively enrolled in programs

- Interviews are scheduled for:
  - Saturday, February 14, 2026
  - Starting at 9:00 a.m.
  - 30-minute intervals
  - Location: Fire Station 36

Current Rules require CPAT and Ladder Climb certification issued within 12 months prior to orientation, and CPAT must remain current at time of conditional job offer.

On page 14 of the Commission Rules, “appointment subject to oral interview, medical evaluation and background investigation, which shall include fingerprinting” was discussed.

- Recommendation: update language to explicitly reflect that an appointment is also subject to an individual assessment (psychological evaluation), consistent with Section 4 requirements.

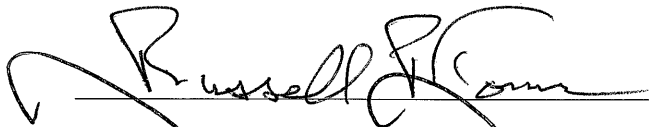
Chief asked how often the Board wants to conduct entry-level testing. Commissioners agreed testing should occur as needed, driven by operational vacancies and staffing projections.

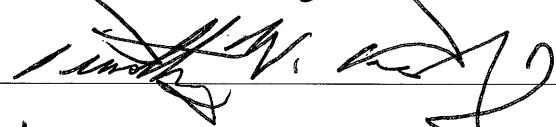
**Closed Session** - None

**Adjournment** There being no further business, motion by Commissioner Toms, seconded by Commissioner Murray, to adjourn the meeting at 4:51 p.m. A voice vote showed unanimous approval.

**Next Meeting** – April 8, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Date Approved: April 8, 2026

Commissioner 

Commissioner 

Commissioner 