



City of West Allis

Meeting Minutes

Police and Fire Commission

Thursday, February 20, 2025

6:00 PM

West Allis Fire Department
7332 W. National Ave.

REGULAR AND CLOSED SESSION MEETING

A. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Manthei called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Mark Manthei, Michelle Sutinen, Kimberly Cosby and Sagar Tolani

Excused: Commissioner Danielle Romain

Also present: Police Chief Pat Mitchell, Deputy Chief Chris Marks, Deputy Chief Robert Fletcher, Sergeant Joseph Mathy, Sergeant Alex Iskandarani - Police Department; Interim Fire Chief Jason Schaak, Interim Assistant Chief Armando Suarez Del Real, Interim Deputy Chief Joe Breznik, Battalion Chief Mallory Erke, Captain and Union President, Mark Sura - Fire Department; Richard Pfaff, Assistant City Administrator/Talent & Strategy Director - City of West Allis; Kevin Haase, District Five Alderperson; Bridget Morawetz, Recording Secretary

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the January 16, 2025 Regular and Closed Session Minutes as well as the January, 21, 2025, January 22, 2025, January 23, 2025, January 28, 2025 and January 29, 2025 Special Meeting and Closed Session Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made by Commissioner Tolani and seconded by Commissioner Sutinen to approval all the above minutes as presented.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani

Nay: 0

D. POLICE AND FIRE COMMISSION

1. Closed Session: Fire Department Deputy Chief Interview(s)
2. Closed Session: Police Department Lieutenant Interview(s)

For agenda items #1 and #2, the board may convene into closed session pursuant to the provisions of Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wis. Stats. which permits a governmental body upon motion duly made and carried, to convene in closed session for the purpose of considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.

The Board may reconvene into open session after completion of the closed session to consider the balance of the agenda.

On a motion made and seconded, the meeting convened into closed session at 6:07 pm

On a motion made and seconded, the meeting reconvened into open session at 7:10 pm

E. POLICE DEPARTMENT

3. Request for approval: Promotion to Lieutenant of Police - Sgt Joseph Mathy

A motion was made by Commissioner Sutinen and seconded by Commissioner Tolani to approve this promotion as presented.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani
Nay: 0

4. Request for approval: Promotion to Lieutenant of Police - Sgt. Alex Iskandarani

A motion was made by Commissioner Sutinen and seconded by Commissioner Tolani to approve this promotion as presented.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani
Nay: 0

5. Request for approval: Lieutenant of Police eligibility list

Chief Mitchell stated that this was simply a communication and not a request for approval.

6. Request for approval: MOU to grant lateral vacation credit to existing department members

Chief Mitchell presented to the Commissioners a MOU with the police union regarding granting lateral vacation credit to existing department members. He noted that this MOU will assist with retention and is consistent with other law enforcement agencies who offer the same type of lateral vacation benefit.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sutinen and seconded by Commissioner Cosby to approve this MOU as presented by Chief Mitchell.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani
Nay: 0

7. Request for approval: Lateral vacation credit to existing department members

A motion was made by Commissioner Tolani and seconded by Commissioner Cosby to approve this request as presented by Chief Mitchell.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani
Nay: 0

8. Communication: Final police officer eligibility list

Chief Mitchell stated that 13 candidates have been given conditional offers of employment pending their successful completion of medical/drug testing and psych exams.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

9. Communication: 2024 Annual Crime Stats

Chief Mitchell reviewed with the Commissioners the 2024 crime statistics noting that violent crimes in West Allis have decreased 18.18% compared to 2023 and property crimes decreased 24.01% compared to 2023.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

10. Monthly Performance Report

Chief Mitchell stated that after a traffic stop and a probable cause search was conducted, the driver was found to be a felon and in possession of a loaded pistol found in the center console. Additionally, Chief Mitchell stated that it was discovered the gun was linked to a 2024 homicide that occurred in the City of Milwaukee. He stated that the driver was arrested and charged with numerous offenses including felon in possession of a firearm.

Chief Mitchell stated that during his annual review with the Commissioners, he was tasked with investigating and reviewing pedestrian safety issues around the skate park located on 84th and National. He stated that after a discussion with city engineer Melinda Dejewski, it was determined that this intersection currently has the appropriate pedestrian safety measures in place.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

11. Training Bureau Report

Chief Mitchell stated that the spring in-service training focused on the implementation and handling of firearms with the newly purchased red dot optics. Chief Mitchell clarified that a red dot is only visible in the optic portion of the gun, not projected onto a suspect. He noted that all sworn employees have been trained on this new program.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or concerns and the report was placed on file.

12. Patrol Bureau Report

Chief Mitchell informed the Commissioners that after a call of shots fired around 89th and Greenfield was received, investigation resulted in the arrest of two suspects who were charged with second degree recklessly endangering safety and disorderly conduct while armed.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

13. Criminal Investigations Bureau Report

Chief Mitchell did not speak to anything contained in the report and the Commissioners had no additional questions or comments.

The report was placed on file.

14. Community Services Bureau Report

Chief Mitchell did not speak to anything contained in the report and the Commissioners had no additional questions or comments.

The report was placed on file.

15. Communications Bureau Report

Chief Mitchell stated that the dispatch center has submitted the necessary paperwork for accreditation and a final decision is expected by the end of February.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

16. Tavern Violation Report

Chief Mitchell did not speak to anything contained in the report and the Commissioners had no additional questions or comments.

The report was placed on file.

F. FIRE DEPARTMENT

17. Request for approval: Promotion to Deputy Chief

A motion was made by Commissioner Cosby and seconded by Commissioner Tolani to approve this promotion as presented by Interim Fire Chief Schaak.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani
Nay: 0

18. Communication: Promotion to Captain

I/FC Schaak noted that given the promotion of Ct. Breznik to Deputy Chief, Lieutenant Jesse Schwark will be promoted to the rank of Captain effective February 21, 2025.

19. Request for approval: Promotion to Lieutenant

I/FC Schaak presented Firefighter Antonio Gibilian as the Chief's pick for promotion to Lieutenant. He stated that FF Gibilian did well on the Lieutenant Promotional process testing requirement, is a West Allis resident, a hometown hero award recipient, completed the smoke diver challenge and is part of the department's Honor Guard. He also stated that he is part of the coaching staff for the Nathan Hale wrestling team.

A motion was made by Commissioner Sutinen and seconded by Commissioner Tolani to approve this promotion as presented by I/FC Schaak.

The motion carried by the following votes:

Aye: 4, Commissioners Manthei, Sutinen, Cosby and Tolani
Nay: 0

20. Communication: Resignation of a firefighter

I/FC Schaak stated the Firefighter Anthony Bilderback submitted his resignation effective at 0800 hours on February 22 after seven years of service with the department.

21. Communication: Update on firefighter hiring process

I/FC Schaak stated that the department extended conditional offers of employment to four recruit candidates and all accepted. He noted that pending results of the medical, psych and background checks, their start date with the city will be Wednesday, April 23, 2025.

22. Fire and Rescue Report

Chief Schaak stated that 2025 marked the 40th anniversary of the Survive Alive program and in early January the program was delivered to 900 first and fourth grade students from the West Allis and West Milwaukee school districts.

Chief Schaak also reviewed an early morning fire that happened on January 2, 2025. He stated that crews were able to bring the fire under control within 10 minutes of arrival but unfortunately heavy smoke and water damage made the home inhabitable. He noted that the cause of the fire has not been determined and is under investigation.

Chief Schaak also reviewed some of the benchmarks included with this report.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

23. Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) and EMS Report

Chief Schaak stated that the department has worked with Hoppe Tree service over the years to provide their company with hands on CPR training and most recently, this training also included stop the bleed and Narcan training. Additionally, all Hoppe attendees were encouraged to download and join the Pulsepoint community.

Chief Schaak stated that the high utilizers group (HUG) was at an all time low of four patients and the MIH bureau has been working to assist them accordingly. He also spoke to substance abuse calls and stated that overall, these calls have reduced which could be attributed to the awareness and availability of Narcan within the community. Chief Schaak also reviewed the highlighted EMS calls included within this report.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

24. Administration and Communications Report

Chief Schaak stated that PFF Kempen, Plagens and Schneider continue to progress through their training requirements and have done well on their examinations and all have shown to be an asset to the organization. Chief Schaak shared with the Commissioners that a survey was sent to all members to gain feedback and ideas on career development and training for the immediate future and beyond. He shared the feedback with the Commissioners by way of a handout at the meeting. Lastly, he noted that the department will hold one of three Officer Development meetings the first week in April.

Chief Schaak stated that all members are required to participate in an annual hearing and spirometry test and this testing is currently underway through February.

The Commissioners had no additional questions or comments and the report was placed on file.

25. QPR Performance Report

I/Fire Chief Schaak did not speak to anything contained in the report and the Commissioners had no additional questions or comments.

The report was placed on file.

G. POLICE AND FIRE COMMISSION**26. Discussion: Potential creation of a joint fire department**

Commissioner Manthei stated that the purpose of this agenda item was to discuss this situation and, if necessary, create a resolution regarding their concerns about such a merger. He then opened a discussion with meeting attendees to include Alderperson Kevin Haass, Interim City Administrator Richard Pfaff and Fire Union President, Mark Sura.

Alderperson Haass stated that as a past Commissioner for nine years, he understands and appreciates the importance of a city fire department. However, as a council member and steward of the community, it comes down to the dollars and cents of running a fire department effectively without burdening the city in the process. He stated that the city needs to find a new funding mechanism without cuts to service and available grants to the city, given a successful merger, would provide relief from the levy limits currently limiting the city's ability to raise taxes and fund other essential services for residents. He asked Commissioners and the fire department to continue to keep an open dialogue with council members during this process.

Interim City Administrator Richard Pfaff stated that Council members for Wauwatosa and West Allis have requested a study be conducted on the feasibility of this merger and Richard noted that a company has been identified and is in the process of creating a proposal to move forward with this study. He stated that the proposal will need to be approved by both councils and the cost of the study will be shared equally between Wauwatosa and West Allis. Richard stated that the focus of the study will be the successful merger of two departments and keeping best practices intact for both communities not how to receive the grant money by merger. He noted that after completion of the study, results will be presented to both councils for review and next steps. Richard stated that the study is expected to be completed sometime in July. Lastly, he noted that if approved, the consultant group will be retained to assist with implementation and navigation procedures for a successful merger.

Interim Fire Chief Schaak stated that in conversations with Chief Case from Wauwatosa, he speaks highly of the selected consulting firm and the consultants. Chief Schaak also stated that North Shore Fire Chief Whitaker is a consultant with this firm and Chief Whitaker had experienced a large department consolidation in 1995. Chief Schaak stated that he has met with some Alderpersons already to educate them on exactly how the fire department is an essential part of the community and plans on meeting with the remaining members as time allows.

Fire Captain and Union President Mark Sura stated that members are concerned about rushing this merger and that he contacted the State of Wisconsin Department of Revenue regarding this proposed grant money and was told that the award of the grant money is not a given and could potentially not be awarded to the city regardless of a successful merger. Ct. Sura stated that lack of understanding how the funding will be awarded and distributed and the potential for lost positions makes him question the benefit of this merger for both cities and their respective communities. Ct. Sura stated that the Union will reserve their involvement until the study has been completed.

Commissioner Cosby indicated that as the city's population grows due to the ongoing construction of new apartments and condos within the city, she is concerned that the potential loss of firefighter positions with such a merger would directly affect the residents of West Allis. She stated that with growth comes an increase in taxes but once positions are cut and a fire station eliminated, services to residents becomes an issue. Commissioner Cosby stated that while she is against the merger as it stands now, the study results will be helpful to understand the benefits, if any.

Commissioner Tolani stated that he was very concerned about the merger as it was presented at the Committee of the Whole meeting earlier this month, however, as the city has agreed to engage a professional consultant group to help everyone better understand the pros and cons of such a merger, he is willing to wait for the report findings.

Commissioner Manthei stated that the PFC members had discussed presenting a resolution to Common Council indicating that they were not in support of such a merger. He stated that the loss of potential fire services to the residents as well as fire personnel were of major concern. Commissioner Manthei asked the Commissioners about their interest in creating the proposed resolution and it was determined to wait until the study had been completed before moving forward with any type of resolution at this time.

27. Closed session: Discussion and review of questions as it relates to the Board of Police and Fire Commission interviews of selected recruit candidates for the police and fire departments

This agenda item was tabled and will be added to the March 20, 2025 PFC meeting agenda.

28. Request for approval: Revised fire and police department candidate interview questions.

For agenda #27, the board may convene in closed session pursuant to the provisions of Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wis. Stats. which permits a governmental body upon motion duly made and carried, to convene in closed session for the purpose of considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.

Immediately upon completion of the closed session, the Board of Police and Fire Commission will reconvene in open session at said time and place to consider any other matters on the agenda

H. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on a motion made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm



All meetings of the Police and Fire Commission are public meetings. In order for the general public to make comments at the committee meetings, the individual(s) must be scheduled (as an appearance) with the chair of the committee or the appropriate staff contact; otherwise, the meeting of the committee is a working session for the committee itself, and discussion by those in attendance is limited to committee members, the mayor, other alderpersons, staff and others that may be a party to the matter being discussed.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The City of West Allis does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, age, marital or veterans' status, sex, national origin, disability or any other legally protected status in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its services, programs or activities.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT NOTICE

Upon reasonable notice the City will furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services when necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and to enjoy the benefits of a service, program or activity provided by the City.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City of West Allis to provide language access services to populations of persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who are eligible to be served or likely to be directly affected by our programs. Such services will be focused on providing meaningful access to our programs, services and/or benefits.