



Meeting Minutes: Friends of Townsend Fire

Membership Meeting

Date: Saturday May 16, 2026, 9:30AM

Attendees:: John Zeller, Wanda Laste, Gary Birr, Duane Bann, Terri Heyrman, Anita Szyszkiewicz, Linda Vander Heiden, Dean Vander Heiden, Donna Fischer, Bruce VanOss, Pam VanOss, Linda Ziegler

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:31AM by Chairperson Wanda Laste

2. Review and Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes from March 21, 2026, Membership Meeting were reviewed.

Motion: A motion to approve the minutes was made by Dean V seconded by Terri. The motion was approved.

3. Treasurer Report

- The budget report up to April 30, 2026, was circulated. It was noted that this budget is largely consistent with figures from the Annual Meeting. Membership was instructed to return the physical budget sheets before leaving, as the documents are for internal room use only.
- Funds Requests Action by Board:
 - **Item 2026-005 (Positive Pressure Fan):** Approved for \$5,500. This item had been denied twice under previous grant cycles but was moved to Chief Dawn's top priority list.
 - **District Training Meals:** The board approved a \$250 budget for Townsend's turn to host the multi-department (6+ northern Oconto area departments) monthly training meal in May. It was emphasized that this is an administrative item and not a funds request and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, not an annual blanket budget item.

- **Life Events Fund (Cards & Flowers):** Chief Dawn requested an annual budget for flowers/cards for hospitalized or deceased members and their families. The board decided an annual blanket budget was too unpredictable.
- **Decision:** Approved a discretionary allowance of \$100 per life event for the Chief/Acting Chief to use for flowers, cards, or charitable donations in lieu of flowers. Cash donations directly to individuals are strictly prohibited. (Note: It was noted that the Town of Townsend already independently manages retirement gifts and separate town expressions of sympathy).

4. Donations Received

Donations were received from Gary Birr and include a corporate match. Remember FOTF is a 501c3 making donations tax deductible for the donor.

5. Grant Writing Committee Report:

- **State Farm Grant:** Gary submitted a request for \$5,700 on May 1st (during a strict 48-hour application window) for a gear extractor (industrial washer system). Results are expected in August 2026.
- **WPS Grant:** Attempted to apply for Thermal Imaging Cameras (\$1,700 each with charger), but the application was disqualified because the organization received WPS funds last year.
- **Discussion:** Dean presented an example of a thermal imaging camera. To clarify any confusion regarding last year's purchase of two large cameras via WPS funds, the two new compact units currently requested by Chief Dawn are smaller, individual tactical units meant to be worn directly by firefighters inside smoky environments for victim location and hot-spot detection.
- **Menards:** Gary mailed a physical letter request to a contact named Jasper H. The waiting period is underway.
- **Fleet Farm & Walmart:** Gary is taking over files from Ray. He will investigate the \$250 monthly Fleet Farm allowance (previously capped at a \$50 gift card). Walmart previously funded a computer for the fire department through Chief Dawn's direct financial clearance.

6. Public Relations Committee

- **Committee Status:** Anita and Donna met on April 30th. Joni has stepped back from PR due to family obligations (new grandchildren, a son-in-law's military deployment, and health issues).

- **Fourth of July Flyers & Tickets:** 4th of July flyers are available at the back of the room. Members soliciting business donations are asked to distribute flyers simultaneously and track contacts to prevent double solicitation.
- **Ticket Deadlines:** All raffle tickets left at local establishments (bars, etc.) must be collected by the original distributor and turned in by June 27, 2026 (one week prior to the event).
- **Media & Digital Reach:** Anita is coordinating a half-page advertisement in the *Nicolet Express* for the June 22nd issue (deadline for submission is June 5th). Website traffic is temporarily down 38% (124 visits over 7 days), but Facebook metrics have spiked significantly with 328 total followers and a 198% increase in engagement over the last month.
- **Next PR Committee Meeting:** Scheduled for June 4, 2026, at 10:00 AM at Anita's house. All are welcome.
- **Plaque Project & Memorabilia**
 - **Discussion:** Anita talked with Chief Dawn regarding the historical plaque. Because it covers a thirty plus year span and certain exact service dates are missing/unverifiable, the decision was made to omit operational dates entirely to avoid inaccuracies. A notation will be placed at the bottom asking community members to submit verifiable missing dates if known.
 - **Decisions Made:** Anita will contact Brian from Wabeno Fab Lab on Monday to finalize the printing and assembly before school terms end. Linda V. will take over the organization and aesthetic mounting of old department patches into a display case (crafting task originally assigned to Joni).

7. Can Collection Report

- **Discussion:** Kevin remains out of state, but the latest aluminum can collection yielded a record-high \$627 (compared to the usual \$250–\$350). This spike is attributed to high aluminum market pricing and rain/water weight in the collection bins.

8. Fire Department Report:

- **Change of Quarters:** Townsend deployed Tender 2913, Tender 2911, and a 7-person crew to stand by at the Wabeno Fire Station for 2.5 hours while Wabeno crews battled a massive mutual-aid fire in Laona. This marked a historic first "change of quarters" standby shift for Townsend.
- **DNR Fire Danger:** Oconto County is currently rated as "Very High" fire danger (Orange status). All burning permits are suspended by the DNR. Campfires and open burns are strictly discouraged due to rapid wildfire spread risks.

- **Live Burn Training:** On Sunday, May 3rd, crews participated in a controlled house-training exercise alongside the Wolf River / White Lake Fire Department. Townsend members (Anita, Joe, Terri, Michelle, and Dee) operated the Thrivent-backed rehab tent supplying refreshments. The training was safely interrupted by a real-time fire dispatch call, proving the efficiency of the volunteer fire department staff. The final structural burn-down was postponed due to high winds and dry conditions. Chief Dawn is attempting to reschedule the burn for late May (potentially May 30th or a weekday, subject to a 24–48-hour DNR weather window).

9. Scholarship Committee Report

- **Discussion:** The committee established a "First Responder" criteria framework in December (covering Fire, Rescue, Police, and Nursing). The committee received three applications from a local graduating class of 24 students.
- **Decisions Made:** Two applicants pursuing nursing degrees were selected to receive \$1,000 scholarships each (one 4.0 GPA student and one 3.7 GPA student). One applicant was rejected as her major (Global Health/Pre-PA track) fell outside the defined guidelines.
- **Award Presentation:** Dave and Donna will attend the high school award ceremony on May 28, 2026, to surprise the students, distribute the awards, and capture bios/photographs. Any FoTF member who would like to attend the event should contact Dave. Scholarship details will remain strictly confidential and will not be posted to Facebook until after the ceremony. The remaining \$1,000 of the budgeted \$3,000 will carry over into the next fiscal cycle.

10. Old Business:

- **Spring Cash Raffle:** Final profit calculations are on hold. The committee is waiting for one specific winner who won two separate cash prizes to clear their checks. There is a possibility they may choose to donate the winnings back to the organization.
- **July 4 Celebration:** Our first July 4 meeting was March 11. We still need lots of opportunities to Lead or Volunteer. Contact Linda Z, Volunteer Coordinator, if you are interested in assisting. Next meeting will be coming up in May, with envelope stuffing to follow. Thank you to Bruce and Pam VanOss for getting all the envelopes addressed again this year.
- **SuperValu Round Up:** A reminder that the month of July will be FoTF round up month.
- **2026 Annual Meeting Follow-Up:** Laste and Zeller were elected to the board. At the May Board Meeting the following officers were elected to board positions: Laste, Chair, Heyrman, Vice Chair, Seeber, Treasurer, Zeller, Secretary, members at large, Osadjn, Fischer, Birr. Two bylaw amendments were reviewed. The financial amendments were not moved forward, due to delay in paying invoices and necessity of urgent requests. The second amendment the board felt that the details would become too lengthy for the bylaws.

and was suited better in a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The Board will be reviewing the current election SOP and ensure that the filling of vacancies is addressed in the SOP. Heyrman is taking the lead on preparing the document for the Board's review.

11. New Business

- 2027 Annual Membership Meeting is being discussed to be changed to a date in May (possibly May 15, 2027) versus April. This date would still fall within the criteria of the bylaws. Exact date will be decided in the future.
- Pam led a discussion about recruitment of firefighters. Good discussion about various ways to try to recruit firefighters was had. No action was decided.

12. Announcements:

- **FoTF Online Store:** Remember the FoTF Online Store is available on the FoTF website. Order gear, dishware, hats, etc.
- **Let's Honor Parade:** The American Legion is hosting the parade and a subsequent Rib Fest on Saturday, June 13, 2026. Townsend Fire/Friends of Townsend Fire are invited to participate, but a leadership volunteer is needed as the current chair is out of town that weekend.
- **Truck Striping:** Terri and Anita noted that 1.5 trucks still require rear chevron reflective striping. Chuck has committed to assisting with the application process on an upcoming scheduled date.
- **Bratt Fry:** Joe is holding a Brat Fry at Mike's today, with funding assistance from Thrivent. The funds raised from the brat fry will be donated back to the Townsend Pickleball Court Project.

13. Adjournment:

Motion: A motion to adjourn was made by Teri, second by Anita. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:35 AM.