

Minutes

WEST CENTRAL FIRE DISTRICT

This meeting is a meeting of the West Central Fire District in public for the purpose of conducting the fire district's business and is not to be considered a public community meeting.

August 12, 2026
11329 Railroad Street, Arcola IN 46818
6PM (-5 UTC)

This meeting was recorded with Video and Audio

Board Attendees

Chuck Dwyer-Present
Mike Meyers-Present
Lance Dafforn-Present
Chandler Branning-
Present
David Guadnola-Present

Additional

Gale Stelzer- Present
Chris Perez- Present

Attendees

- Chief (Speaker 6), Steve (Speaker 3), Dave Steele, Speaker 1, Speaker 5, Speaker 7
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Key Decisions and Approvals

- Proceed with lift rental for bay maintenance (department internal budget).
 - Proceed with FLSA back pay payout recalculated to \$109,668.19; compliance on 27-day pay cycle affirmed.
 - Commitment focus on the promised purchase the Arcola Fire Department building despite ongoing council and GIS study considerations.
 - Change roofing specification from shingles to steel, pending competitive quote (Ramco).
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Project and Construction Updates

- Station Addition:
 - Current GMP just under \$2,000,000; uses full \$1.7M construction allocation plus \$300,000 originally designated for equipment.
 - Siding: use modern, durable material aimed at eventual replacement of existing station siding.
 - Windows: plans ' "wood windows " are placeholders; actual selection will be non-wood modern materials.
 - Water Supply:
 - Existing 2-inch line from Homestead High School is inadequate.
 - Likely requirement: 12-inch city utilities line from Homestead & Aboite Center Road at department expense.
 - Contractor (Fleming) conducting flow calculations; city utilities to finalize required size; cost significant and pending.
 - Roofing:
 - Steel roof preferred; initial steel quote (\$80k) too high vs. shingles (\$35k); seeking new Ramco quote via Speaker 1 's contact.
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Budget and Financial Overview

- Construction Funding:
 - \$1.7M council-approved; \$300k drawn from gear/equipment capital to reach ~\$2.0M for addition.

- o New \$300k equipment allocation must be requested from County Council for gym equipment, beds, and miscellaneous.
 - o \$450,000 remains in budget designated for construction/renovations (untouched as of meeting).
 - **Operations Budget:**
 - o Overtime line item will be over budget due to FLSA corrections and staffing dynamics.
 - o Part-time salaries ~32% spend; fully staffed operations may reduce usage, but vacation payouts could push over.
 - o Overall operations budget impact manageable; monitor variances.
 - **Command Vehicle (Battalion Chief 's Silverado):**
 - o Budgeted: \$80,000; actual likely under \$90,000; line item over.
 - o Adds: truck cap, compartments, roller/slider (~\$1,500 + installation).
 - o Vehicle pricing context: half-ton ~\$50,000; fleet purchase \$51,000; other configs up to ~\$70,000.
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Consolidation, Governance, and Strategic Planning

- **District Consolidation:**
 - o Allen County Fire and EMS district established effective 2027-01-01.
 - o Assistant chiefs assigned; new BCs Jared Burke and T.R. Haggerty started 2026-08-03.
- **Council Vote and Opposition:**
 - o Critical County Council budget vote scheduled October 2026; failure halts consolidation plan.
 - o Council member Lindsay Hammond opposing due to tax and fiscal concerns; active public messaging.
- **Representation:**
 - o Promise to include representation from all quadrants (Arcola side) may be at risk due to appointment process; council to appoint three board members.
- **Station Strategy:**
 - o Original plan: renovate Aboite station and purchase Arcola station; council split the agreement, stalling Arcola purchase.
 - o If Arcola is not purchased, \$1/year lease becomes void; must budget fair market value.

- o Team must correct prior “landlocked” narrative impeding Arcola sale; present as acceptable and expandable.
 - Studies:
 - o County-wide GIS study underway; department share \$2,000; results expected imminently.
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Personnel and Hiring

- Battalion Chief Hiring:
 - o External process ongoing; four candidates; expected start October 2026 for one BC.
 - Firefighter/Paramedic:
 - o Hiring to backfill BC Burke 's vacated position; testing scheduled 2026-08-26.
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Maintenance and Training Activities

- Bay Maintenance:
 - o Temporary lift rental: 1 month; ~\$1,600 -\$1,650; service both stations.
 - o Scope: clean ceiling fans, walls, rails; paint rails; replace failing ceiling tiles (~\$1,500).
 - o Labor by on-shift crews; funded from department budget (not professional services).
 - Training Burn (Noyer Road):
 - o School-owned house slated for training burn.
 - o Asbestos found; school to remediate and remove roof (asphalt shingles).
 - o Coordination with state completed; process extensive.
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Risks and Issues

- Council Vote Risk:
 - o October 2026 vote is pivotal; “dead in the water” if failed. Current funding ends 2027-01-01; positions effectively terminate 2026-12-31 without approval.
- Budget Uncertainty:
 - o No standalone 2027 budget prepared for single districts; consolidation budget must be approved and allocated.

- o Overtime and part-time salary overages likely; command vehicle line over; monitor to maintain balance.
 - **FLSA Liability:**
 - o Back pay resolves known issues; residual risk for future claims remains.
 - **Arcola Station:**
 - o Public relations challenge due to prior landlocked narrative; social media opposition needs counter-messaging.
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Actions and Owners

- **Station Addition GMP:**
 - o Finalize and sign GMP ASAP, ideally before 2026-12-31.
 - o Owners: Chief (Speaker 6) & Steve (Speaker 3).
- **Water Line Upgrade:**
 - o Determine required size and obtain competitive bids; coordinate with contractor and city utilities.
 - o Owner: Steve (Speaker 3); Fleming conducting flow analysis.
- **Roofing Quote:**
 - o Obtain competitive steel roof quote from Ramco; follow up on contact provided by Speaker 1.
 - o Owner: Steve (Speaker 3).
- **Equipment Budget Sourcing:**
 - o Prepare and present new \$300k equipment request to County Council; clarify funding approach.
- **Council Presentation:**
 - o Develop full sales presentation; align strategy and messaging; correct Arcola narrative; coordinate with Jeremy Bush.
 - o Owner: Leadership team.
- **Board Appointments:**
 - o Engage County Council regarding appointment of three district board members; ensure quadrant representation.
 - o Owner: District leadership.
- **Site Logistics:**
 - o Contact site management to resolve contractor parking/storage at Arcola.

- o Owner: Dave Steele.
 - **Budget Coordination:**
 - o Engage Allen County Fire Department budget owners to ensure station purchase allocation before 2027-01-01 and address water main funding.
 - o Owner: Finance/Admin.
 - **Maintenance Execution:**
 - o Schedule lift deployment; perform cleaning, painting, and ceiling tile replacement across both stations.
 - o Owner: Operations; on-shift crews.
 - **FLSA Processing:**
 - o Process back pay; continue 27-day pay cycle compliance; track overtime and part-time variances in monthly reports.
 - o Owner: HR/Payroll.
 - **Training Burn:**
 - o Coordinate with school for asbestos remediation and roof removal; finalize logistics with state.
 - o Owner: Training/Operations.
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Key Dates and Deadlines

- **2026-04-05:** All districts began 27-day pay period (FLSA compliance).
 - **2026-08-03:** Battalion Chiefs Jared Burke and T.R. Haggerty started.
 - **2026-08-26:** Firefighter/Paramedic testing date.
 - **September 2026:** Public hearing presentation of district budget at city/county council.
 - **October 2026:** County Council budget vote; private station siting study expected.
 - **2026-12-31:** Target to finalize and sign GMP; disputed final deadline to potentially pull out of district agreement.
 - **2027-01-01:** Consolidated district effective; must have station purchase plan/allocation in budget; unresolved project strategy questions need resolution with Jeremy.
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Information Requests and Follow-Ups

- Confirm final actuals for command vehicle spend and installation breakdown.
- Provide updated overtime and part-time salary forecasts through year-end.

- **Confirm lift scheduling and scope across both stations.**
- **Lock station purchase funding and water main approach in consolidated budget prior to 2027-01-01.**
- **Obtain final water line size requirement and cost estimates after city utilities review.**
- **Deliver revised steel roof quote (Ramco) and comparison to shingles.**