

North Township - LaPaz Fire Protection Territory, Executive Committee, Public Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 at 6:00pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

Present:

Roger Ecker, Town of LaPaz, (virtually by Zoom)
Cathy Welch, Town of LaPaz
Stephen Barber, North Township
Judy Fisher, North Township
Steven Davenport, North Township (appointed by Ms. Haskins)

Also present:

Emily Haskins, Trustee
Mathew Haskins, Fire Chief
Please refer to the sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

* The reader will note that meetings are now livestreamed. Please refer to our website for a schedule of our meetings, links for the live streams, and additional information: <https://northtownship.org> .

The meeting consisted of the following: Ms. Haskins called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

1. Approval of 11/17/25 Meeting Minutes (attached): Mr. Barber moved to approve the minutes as printed, seconded by Mr. Davenport. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye
2. Board Positions Nomination/Election
 - a. Ms. Welch nominated Mr. Ecker for President, seconded by Mr. Barber. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye.
 - b. Mr. Barber nominated Ms. Fisher for Vice President, seconded by Mr. Davenport. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye.
 - c. Mr. Ecker nominated Mr. Barber for Secretary, seconded by Ms. Fisher. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye.
3. Updates regarding billing service (the reader is referred to the attached handout): Ms. Haskins explained the data and answered questions. The data includes
 - a. Mr. Barber asks that billing sent to collections be monitored.
 - b. Mr. Davenport asks that data be collected according to calendar year so that patterns and trends can be examined.
4. Updates regarding insurance:
 - a. Renewal for Property and Casualty Insurance will be in the summer and an increase is anticipated.
 - b. Renewal for Malpractice Insurance: Last year it cost \$10,762.50. This year (with the increase in number of runs) it will cost \$12,735.63. Mr. Barber moved to approve the additional payment for the Malpractice Insurance, seconded by Mr. Davenport. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye.

c. Ms. Haskins reported that one of the employees asked if the Township would consider providing Short Term Disability Insurance, as a benefit for the employees. She did some research and she has one quote. To cover our 3 employees (at this time) the quote is \$2,954.08 annually. It is a 0-7 day elimination period with 3 month of coverage for 30% of pay or max of \$2,000 per month. Some departments in the area provide this for their employees. If we were to add employees, the cost would go up according to number of employees and their ages. Mr. Barber expressed a desire to have the policy assessed to determine whether it is a satisfactory product that would truly benefit our employees. As part of the conversation, Mr. Haskins indicated that the volunteer fire department is due to review their insurance benefits. Mr. Davenport agreed to be present and review policies.

5. Employee Updates (see handout attached): Mr. Haskins reported that he has advertised for our open position and has talked to several people in the area, but has not received any completed applications. He recommended that we increase the salary schedule as follows.

1 st class Firefighter (FF I/II and Advanced EMT)	\$62,500
2 nd class Firefighter (FF I/II and Basic EMT)	58,000
3 rd class Firefighter (FF I/II and Basic EMT)	55,000

a. Mr. Haskins explained that the budget upon adoption of the Fire Territory identified a salary of \$65,000, which has been lowered to \$55,000 in the current budget. He also pointed out that the budget identified health insurance costs at \$12,000 per employee which has been lowered to \$4,000 per employee.

b. Mr. Ecker reported that One Marshall County has identified several key areas that need to be addressed. Unfortunately, while there was agreement that the high cost of providing Fire/EMS services is a problem, this is not a current priority. Therefore, we cannot expect help from the outside in the near future.

c. Mr. Davenport and Ms. Haskins also indicated that the State of Indiana continues to hold townships more accountable, which may also impact future costs for Fire/EMS services.

d. Mr. Haskins clarified that the Township previously approved hiring 4 full time employees and that it takes 6 full time employees to provide 24 hour coverage.

e. Mr. Barber suggested we approve the proposed salary schedule, approve an additional hire (for a total of 5), and that upon adoption of proposed salary schedule all current employees be brought up to that schedule beginning on the next pay period. A discussion ensued. Mr. Haskins pointed out that it is very difficult to properly accommodate/schedule a 5th person (as compared to hiring the full contingent of 6 full time employees). He also says that when we become an advanced service, an advanced EMT cannot act as an "Advanced EMT" unless they have at least a "Basic EMT" with them. Mr. Ecker suggested that we prioritize boosting the pay package as proposed and moved to recommend that the Township adopt this proposed pay schedule. Ms. Fisher seconded the motion. It was clarified that the motion also included the stipulation that current employees' pay would be boosted up to this level beginning with their next pay period. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye.

6. Set 2026 Meeting Schedule

- a. Monday, May 18
- b. Monday, July 27
- c. Wednesday, September 16
- d. Wednesday, September 30

- e. Wednesday, December 16
- 7. Good of the order announcements or updates from Fire Department
 - a. Ms. Haskins shared a letter from the CTE program in Plymouth thanking us for the donation of our old SCBA equipment. Mr. Haskins reported that this program has helped to train staff that has volunteered with our department. Mr. Ecker also spoke highly of the CTE program.
 - b. Mr. Haskins reported that Engine #4 (our oldest) is having some brake issues and will be serviced tomorrow.
 - c. Mr. Haskins would like to submit a request to the County for their grant to obtain radios and pagers. Mr. Ecker moved to approve \$50,000 and apply for the grant with the County for communication equipment, seconded by Mr. Barber. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye.
 - d. Mr. Haskins would like to do what is needed to attain “Advanced” level and would like to know the Board’s input at this time. This would take several months and the costs would be about \$11,000. The Advanced level would significantly improve the care that could be provided to patients in an emergency. This would include first line cardiac drugs for a full arrest, nitro for chest pain, starting IVs, etc. He believes we could reduce the number of times we would need a medic assist (at our cost). Mr. Barber asked if there was any estimate how much “Advanced” would increase revenue. Mr. Robertson explained that there would be higher charges for patients who needed Advance services. Mr. Haskins stated that he did not believe it would double our revenue. Ms. Fisher, Mr. Davenport, and Mr. Ecker spoke in favor of moving in the direction of providing Advanced services. Mr. Haskins reported that regulators/inspectors have spoken in favor of our Territory moving in the direction of providing Advanced services. The first ambulance leaving the station must, upon arrival at the site of the emergency, be able to provide an advanced level of service. Part time Advanced level staff would likely need a pay increase as differentiated from the current part time rate for “Basic” staff. Moving to the Advanced level would not require 6 staff but Mr. Haskins highly recommends that move to 6 full time staff. Mr. Barber said that he is a little nervous about moving to 6 full time staff because of the unknown and outstanding obligation to provide more suitable housing for our full time staff. Ms. Haskins indicated that some of the pushback she is aware of pertains to not providing the services that were promised at inception. Mr. Barber indicated that he accepts the responsibility of pushing for lower budget numbers. He says he is trying to thread the needle by providing services needed to meet the needs of our community but not be too much of a burden to our constituents. Ms. Fisher said that if we budgeted for 6, then we should honor that and hire 6.
- 8. Public Comment: None
- 9. Mr. Ecker moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Barber. Roll Call vote: Mr. Ecker – Aye; Mr. Barber – Aye; Mr. Davenport – Aye; Ms. Fisher – Aye; Ms. Welch – Aye. Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Stephen Barber, Secretary

Approved: As written As Amended As Corrected



Roger Ecker, President

4-28-26

Date



Judy Fisher, Vice President

4/22/26

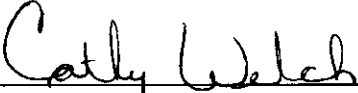
Date



Stephen Barber, Secretary

4-22-26

Date



Cathy Welch

4/22/26

Date



Steven Davenport

4/22/26

Date

North Township-Lapaz Fire Territory Executive Committee Public Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 at 6:00pm
LaPaz-North Township Fire Station

- 1. Approval of 11/17/25 Meeting Minutes**
- 2. Board Positions Nomination/Election**
- 3. Updates regarding billing service**
- 4. Updates regarding insurance**
- 5. Employee Updates**
- 6. Set 2026 Meeting Schedule**
- 7. Good of the order announcements or updates from Fire Department**
- 8. Public Comment (Limited to 2 minutes per person)**

Sign-In Sheet

1. Steve Barber
2. Stan Davenport
3. Alice Oyer
4. Judy Fisher
5. Al Roberts
6. Sandy Robertson
7. Susan Klingman
- 8.
- 9.
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- 21.

NORTH TOWNSHIP–LAPAZ FIRE TERRITORY FIREFIGHTER COMPENSATION PROPOSAL

Date: March 23, 2026

Why This Matters

To remain competitive in northern Indiana, the North Township–LaPaz Fire Territory must offer wages that:

- Attract qualified firefighter/EMTs
- Retain trained personnel
- Reflect increasing training and EMS responsibilities

We have had an open position advertised on social media being shared across multiple sites since our last meeting in January and have had no completed applications turned in.

Indiana & Regional Pay Snapshot¹

Indiana average firefighter salary: ~\$84,231/year

Typical statewide range: \$67,000 – \$96,000

Nearby Department Comparisons (Northern Indiana)²

Department / Area	Estimated Salary Range	Notes
Plymouth Fire	~\$48,000 – \$80,000	Larger department, Paramedic
Liberty Township	~\$65,000	EMT-only
Union Township	~\$63,000 – \$66,000	Closest neighboring, similar size
Nappanee	~\$55,000 – \$80,000	
Bremen	~\$65,000 – \$81,000	
Argos	~\$42,000 – \$63,000	
South Bend	~\$70,000-\$128,000	Larger city
Mishawaka	~\$58,000 – \$88,000	Mid-sized city
Elkhart	~\$57,000 – \$95,000	
Goshen	~\$72,000 – \$81,000	
Jefferson Township	~\$66,000 – \$87,000	Elkhart County township
Michigan City	~\$66,000 – \$73,000	Regional market
Portage Fire	~\$62,000 – \$70,700	

Key Takeaways

- Most comparable departments fall between \$63,000 – \$65,000
- More competitive departments (NW Indiana) exceed \$75,000+
- Entry-level pay below ~\$55K risks recruitment challenges

¹ Information obtained from GovSalaries.com.

² Numbers pulled from Gateway, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, personnel.

Proposed Salary Structure

1 st class Firefighter		
FF I/II and Advanced EMT		\$62,500
2 nd class Firefighter		
FF I/II and Basic EMT		\$58,000
3 rd class Firefighter		
FF I/II or Basic EMT		\$55,000

Recommendation

Approval of this salary structure will:

- Strengthen recruitment and retention
- Come closer to aligning the department with northern Indiana standards
- Support long-term operational stability

Prepared by: Mathew Haskins, Fire Chief

