

KETTLE MORAINÉ FIRE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Approved
August 27, 2026

Call to Order: President D. Miresse called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm on August 27, 2026, at the North Prairie Municipal Building at 130 N. Harrison St, North Prairie, WI.

Roll Call: C. Mommaerts, J. Davis, W. Konichek, R. Spurrell, A. Shird, C. Wood and D. Miresse were all present.

Pledge of Allegiance: D. Miresse led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Discussion/action as necessary to approve minutes from July 23, 2026: Motion by J. Davis to approve. Motion seconded by C. Wood. No further discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Citizen comments/concerns:

Art Rydzik, 115 North Harrison St, commented on department morale. He stated that the district has added new members in recent months and we continue to move forward. However, he expressed concerns with the ongoing disagreements among the three boards, discussions with other municipalities, wanting to disband the district and the negative comments on social media. A. Rydzik stated that the longer this drags out that will be what hurts the morale in the department and encouraged the boards to work toward a resolution.

Wyatt Rydzik, 115 North Harrison St, also addressed concerns regarding morale within the department. He stated that public criticism of the department by certain municipal and fire board members has negatively impacted morale. He further expressed concern about negative comments and untruthful information being shared on social media, stating that such communications reflect poorly on the department and its public image. Wyatt noted the department continues to work hard and to keep it together every day despite the ongoing challenges and that the current circumstances have made it difficult to maintain morale. He is asking for a little more support from everyone involved.

Chief Steve Wilton read the following statement:

Good evening, Board Members.

I have served on the fire department in this community since 1997. During that time, I have stayed through many changes, challenges, and transitions, including the merger that created this department in 2022.

I have always believed in this department and, more importantly, in the people who serve our communities.

The past nine months have been extremely difficult. There has been significant turmoil surrounding this department, and I believe it is important for the Board to understand the effect that turmoil is having on the employees who continue to provide the services our communities depend on.

There are clearly disagreements among the three municipalities and among members of the various boards about the future of this department. Those disagreements are for the governing bodies to work through. But I want to make one thing very clear:

The employees of this department did not create the merger. They did not make the decisions that have brought the boards to where they are today.

Yet these employees continue to show up.

They leave their homes, often in the middle of the night. They respond to medical emergencies, accidents, fires, and calls for help from their neighbors. They continue to do their jobs regardless of the uncertainty and negativity surrounding the department.

These employees are the biggest asset this district has.

I am increasingly concerned that the ongoing turmoil, public criticism, rumors, and statements being made about the department—including information being shared on social media that is not factually accurate—are damaging morale and creating an environment where employees may eventually decide that they no longer want to be part of this organization.

Once we lose experienced firefighters and EMS personnel, replacing them is not as simple as hiring someone else. We lose experience, training, institutional knowledge, and people who have made a commitment to serving these communities.

I also want the Board to understand the position I have been placed in as interim chief.

I was given a department that is already in turmoil, and my responsibility has been to keep it operating and continue providing services to all three communities. Despite the circumstances, I have continued to do everything I can to accommodate all three communities, including staffing both departments when we have enough personnel available to do so.

I cannot control the decisions made by the boards. I cannot control what is posted on social media. But I can control how I lead this department, and I am doing everything I can to keep our employees focused on the job they were hired to do: serving the people in our communities.

What I am asking from this Board is that, regardless of what decisions are ultimately made about the future of this department, we remember the people who are standing in the middle of this.

They are not responsible for the political disagreements. They are not responsible for the decisions that created this situation.

They are the people answering the phone when someone calls 911.

They are the people showing up when someone's house is on fire, when someone's family member is having a medical emergency, or when someone is trapped in an accident.

They deserve to be treated with respect, and they deserve to know that their work is valued.

I have given nearly 30 years of service to this department and this community. I am proud of that service, and I am proud of the employees who continue to show up and do their jobs every day despite everything that is happening around them.

I am asking this Board to consider the consequences of continued division and negativity—not just for the future of the organization, but for the people we depend on to provide emergency services to our communities.

Because at the end of the day, this isn't just about a merger, a board, or a political disagreement.

It is about the people who answer the call when our neighbors need help.

And we cannot afford to lose them.

Respectively,

Steve Wilton

Interim Chief

Kettle Moraine Fire District

Donna Samuels, trustee from the Village of North Prairie, acknowledged the concerns and frustrations expressed by the district members. She expressed that her biggest concern when all this turmoil started was where this would leave us as far as personnel and feels we put them in a horrible position. Donna encouraged all parties involved to conduct themselves professionally in working towards some sort of reason, solution, or be done with this. She also expressed her concern about the amount of misinformation being circulated on social media. D. Samuels

concluded by expressing her appreciation for the individuals who have remained committed to serving the district.

Discussion/action as necessary to approve the financial report and monthly account

payables: Motion by C. Wood to approve the financial report and monthly account payables as submitted. Motion seconded by W. Konichek. No further discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Report from Administrative Assistant: C. Cliffgard reported that the audit timeline had been distributed to the board via email on August 4th, and noted that Chris, Dan and Rich can share the information with their boards. She also reported that the \$2545.33 recorded under Other Taxes expense account was for penalties assessed by the IRS for the late filing of the June 2023 Form 941. C. Cliffgard stated that a letter requesting the penalties be waived was submitted to the IRS in Aug 2025; however, the request was denied and payment of the penalties were required. C. Cliffgard further reported that during a conversation with an IRS agent, it was discovered that the district's annual Form 940 have been submitted but have not been applied to our account. The IRS agent initiated an internal inquiry with the appropriate department to investigate the matter. A response is expected within approximately 16 weeks. W. Konichek inquired whether documentation had been provided by the IRS agent. C. Cliffgard stated she got the agent's name and ID# for a reference. W. Konichek also asked whether the audit timeline could be shared with the public. C. Cliffgard responded it could and noted that the timeline is available on the KMFD website.

Discussion regarding morale update on the organization: Chief Wilton reported that overall morale within the department remains positive during training activities. However, he noted that morale declines when comments are posted on social media, when board members show up at the fire house and when board members are going to other fire departments. He expressed concern that the Workshop Committee is not making any progress in amending this situation. A. Shird requested clarification regarding whether Chief Wilton was referring to Fire Board members or municipal board members. Chief Wilton clarified that his comment pertained to municipal board members. He further stated that social media activity has had a negative impact on department morale. Although he does not personally use social media, he receives screenshots from others who do. C. Wood expressed appreciation for Chief Wilton and the department's employees. He feels for our citizens, and employees the number one priority should be ensuring the continued success and stability of the Kettle Moraine Fire District. He understands the heartfelt presentations that were made and why they feel the way they do, especially with the uncertainty about the department's future. D. Miresse agreed with C. Wood comments and stated that it is in the best interest of all parties to work together to figure this out and make it work. C. Mommaerts felt that the comments made at the Village of North Prairie meeting on Tuesday placing blame on the Village and Town of Eagle for the district's current situation, were unfair. She emphasized that the Town of Eagle wants to continue working together, not disband the fire district and wants to make this work. C. Mommaerts agrees that the boards need to work together and that the Intermunicipal Agreement needs to be restructured. W. Konichek asked R. Spurrell whether a meeting with all three municipal boards had taken place. R. Spurrell responded that it had not. He stated that the Village of Eagle has expressed they want to move forward with just the Village and Town and declined meeting with all three

boards. R. Spurrell noted that he is confused, the Village Board is saying the Village and Town want to go separate, but C. Mommaerts is saying they want to work this out. He feels the three boards should meet to determine whether they can continue working together and make a definitive collective decision regarding the district's future. W. Konichek asked whether Kettle Moraine Fire District could continue if one municipality chose not to agree with the percentages and withdrew from the district. R. Spurrell replied that, technically, the district could continue operating if one municipality withdrew. W. Konichek also asked whether the departing municipality could contract with KMFD as another option. R. Spurrell replied that he doesn't think it would be feasible because if it didn't work when they had a say on the board they wouldn't want to contract with us and not have a say on it. J. Davis suggested that the Fire Board prepare a formal request to all three municipalities asking for a joint meeting to discuss the future of the Kettle Moraine Fire District, and whether we are going to restructure or be done. R. Spurrell stated for the record North Prairie currently has five board members, the Town of Eagle has 5, and the Village of Eagle has 7, we have three boards that are having a hard time making decisions together collectively. We also have 17 individuals that have their own ideas and opinions. His suggestion would be the fire district, the employees, the management staff and the fire board, that we don't listen to any one individual, we listen to the directions from the boards. If a board says this is what we are doing, we go with that but if one person is saying this is what we need to do I suggest we table that idea and we wait for the board to decide and not take the action off one person. Chief Wilton asked whether a joint meeting could just be scheduled or if approval is needed from each municipal board. R. Spurrell responded that if a special meeting were to be scheduled, he would like input from the boards regarding their availability before selecting a date. W. Konichek stated that a deadline should be established for scheduling the meeting. C. Mommaerts suggested September 21st, 22nd, or the 23rd as possible meeting dates for the three boards to meet. Chief Wilton asked if the Fire Board be included in this joint meeting, noting he would like to see all the Fire Board members present. J. Davis responded that the decision is based off the three municipal boards and that the Fire Board does not have a vote or a voice, however, Fire Board members should attend the meeting as observers. Discussion only.

Discussion/action regarding conducting an employee morale survey: Discussed morale in agenda item # 7. No action taken.

Discussion/action regarding a change in the Intermunicipal Agreement percentages: C. Mommaerts wanted to put her request that the percentages be one third, one third, one third on record. She suggested that this topic be added to the agenda for the joint meeting. R. Spurrell mentioned he will draft an agenda for the joint meeting and will send it to Dan and Chris to take to their boards to see if they want to add anything to it. Discussion only. No action taken.

Discussion/action regarding staffing and equipment for station 33: No discussion or action taken.

Discussion/action regarding compliance with and enforcement of the staffing policy: C. Mommaerts requested this item to revisit this topic. Chief Wilton reported that September is well staffed except for Labor Day weekend so he will reach out to Palmyra to cover us. Discussion only. No action taken.

Discussion/action regarding exit interviews: C. Mommaerts presented the board with a draft Exit Interview Questionnaire and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and requested guidance. She indicated that she would like to add which board should receive the completed questionnaires. W. Konichek suggested conducting exit interviews online through a secure link, noting that departing members may be more comfortable completing a questionnaire electronically rather than discussing their responses with a clerk. This would allow the board to access the questionnaire to review and address any issues identified. Chief Wilton expressed support for implanting exit interviews but recommended that we wait until a decision is made regarding the future of this district. R. Spurrell suggested researching options for incorporating the questionnaire into the department website in the meantime. Chief Wilton stated he would contact Richard from IT to explore the possibility of including the exit interview process online. Motion by W. Konichek to approve Chris's SOP and Exit Interview form. Motion seconded by C. Wood. Further discussion, R. Spurrell requested that Chief Wilton update the SOP to the standard SOP form with a number. No further discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Discussion/action regarding the Fire Chief job description: C. Mommaerts presented a draft Fire Chief job description for the board to review. R. Spurrell mentioned that he would like more time to read over the job description and was wondering if the board is designating if it's full-time or part-time. C. Mommaerts responded that this designation could be added following the joint meeting. C. Wood noted that the title on the first page should be revised, changing "Department" to "District." Chief Wilton also provided comments regarding the draft. He asked whether the board intended to require residency within a specified distance of the district. He also recommended #8 under Essential Physical Requirements, stating they need to be available all year round to resolve emergency situations, to be removed. Motion by J. Davis to table until the next meeting for everyone to have a chance to review and look it over. Motion seconded by R. Spurrell. No further discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

Discussion/action regarding the 2027 Budget: Chief Wilton presented a draft of the 2027 Budget to the board for review. R. Spurrell identified several items for discussion. He noted that there's a reference cell that's hidden; he suggested that he give it out as a PDF. R. Spurrell mentioned a few years back there was talk about adding an extra page to the budget that shows what the membership is buying to help offset costs and would like to have that included again. Chief Wilton stated he will ask the membership if they are ok with it being in the budget. Regarding the capital balance, R. Spurrell indicated that estimating the year-end balance could be beneficial, allowing the Board to consider investment options such as CD's or money market account at the beginning of the following year. R. Spurrell noted that the proposed budget contains an increase, which he believes should have an increase every year, however, not knowing where the municipalities stand, he is considering presenting the budget with no increase this year. He commented that if the municipalities do not approve a budget increase, the previous year's budget would remain in effect and requested feedback from the board. He further noted that training and mileage reimbursement expenses are currently over budget, which is a good thing, but there were no increases made in the budget for these items. Chief Wilton stated that the salaries expense was the biggest increase. C. Wood commented that salary compensation appears to be the Chief's primary focus and immediate concern. He added that a reasonable budget increase would help show the three individual communities future financial needs and prepare them for the future. R. Spurrell recommended increasing basic

training and legal fees if we plan to present the budget with an increase. Tabled to next month's meeting. Discussion only. No action taken.

Chief's Monthly Report: Chief S. Wilton summarized his written report. He stated that as of August 28th, we are at 346 calls, and all apparatus are in service. He reported that only one Saturday day shift had not been filled on the schedule, however, when a call was received, five members responded. Chief Wilton mentioned that he will be requesting coverage from Palmyra for Labor Day weekend. J. Davis was wondering if Palmyra had been scheduled to provide coverage on the Saturday shift that was unfilled and, if so, did they try respond to the call as well. Chief Wilton explained that he was available that day and therefore did not request coverage from Palmyra, but they were called out for mutual aid. He clarified that Palmyra will only provide station coverage when advance notification is given.

Upcoming Meeting: The next regular Fire Board meeting is Thursday September 24, 2026, at 6:30pm at Eagle Municipal Building.

Motion to adjourn: Motion by C. Mommaerts to adjourn. Motion seconded by J. Davis. All in favor. Motion carried. D. Miresse adjourned the meeting at 8:12pm.