



Board of Fire Commissioners

Regular Meeting Minutes April 21, 2026

Clark County Fire District 5
11606 NE 66th Street, Suite 103
Vancouver, WA 98662

Call Meeting to Order

Chair Lyons called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Gibson and Commissioner Rhine were in attendance. Also present at the meeting were District Administrator Jennifer Bethke, VFD Chief Drake and Deputy Administrator Chris Cohen.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Rhine motioned to approve the March 3, 2026 regular meeting minutes with one minor edit. Commissioner Gibson seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Chief's Report

Proposal for Staffing Financial Support – Chief Drake presented a comprehensive proposal to the Board for the District's financial support of needed administrative positions. He defined the strategic plan to bolster VFD's staffing model to meet the needs of the growing population and infrastructure within the City of Vancouver and Fire District 5. Chief Drake presented an updated organizational chart for eight FTE administrative positions that he wants to augment, including four positions that were cut previously. He expressed the absolute need for these eight positions to move VFD forward as a stronger, more efficient, and well-prepared department. He remarked that he proposed this to the City on several occasions and the response he was given was the City did not have the money in the budget to fund these positions.

Commissioner Rhine stated his concerns regarding District 5 being asked to financially support what the City of Vancouver should be fulfilling as its obligations to its constituents regarding Fire protection and EMS services.

Chair Lyons made a motion to financially support Chief Drake's proposal for approximately 3 million dollars for 3.5 years to enhance VFD staffing. Commissioner Gibson seconded the motion. Chair Lyons asked if more discussion was needed. The Board continued the discussion that the City be held accountable for these positions and what happens at the end of the 3.5 years.



Commissioner Rhine said he would support Chief Drake's proposal, if there was an additional agreement that the district allot up to \$1 million for the purchase of two parcels. The other two board members were not in support of this additional agreement.

Administrator Bethke recommended issuing a press release to emphasize the District's ongoing support for VFD, contrasting it with the City of Vancouver's stance.

Commissioner Lyons again made a motion to financially support Chief Drake's proposal for approximately \$3 million for 3.5 years to enhance VFD staffing. Commissioner Gibson seconded the motion. Commissioner Rhine abstained. The motion passed.

Chief Drake discussed the timeline and cost for the procurement of a new fire truck. The cost for the truck is estimated to be 2.5 million, which the district will incur in 5 years.

Commissioner Rhine requested a short recess from the meeting at 6:42. Chair Lyons moved to recess for 5 minutes or until 6:47 p.m.

Chair Lyons called the meeting back to order at 6:47 p.m.

Citizens' Communications

None.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Rhine moved to approve items A through K as submitted. Commissioner Gibson seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed.

The consent agenda included the following items:

A. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	32,539.80
B. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	7,790.79
C. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	2,421.38
D. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	13,702.41
E. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	23,600.97
F. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	8,294.82
G. Commissioners' Fund 6209	\$	26,356.44
H. Payroll Transmittal – February 16 to 28, 2026	\$	28,040.16
I. Payroll Transmittal – March 1 to 15, 2026	\$	31,202.05
J. Payroll Transmittal – March 16 to 31, 2026	\$	33,979.87
K. Sales Refunds – March 2026	\$	8,148.79



Secretary's Report

- A. **Commissioners' Fund Financials – March 2026** - Provided to the Board for informational purposes.
- B. **Classes Taught – March 2026** - Provided to the Board for informational purposes.
- C. **New CPA Firm** – Administrator Bethke informed the Board that the District has moved forward with a new CPA firm, Teresa D. Johnson CPA, Inc. The District's previous CPA firm, Plymale & Gillispie, recommended the new CPA firm based on the District's growing complexities and government requirements.
- D. **Sales Tax Recoup** – Administrator Bethke updated the Board on the recoup of Sales Tax that was not collected in the last quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026. The District has addendums for contracts with all applicable agencies to annotate the updated Sales Tax Law. The agencies have also been invoiced to recoup the funds that were not taxed.
- E. **Updates to Employee Handbook** – Administrator Bethke is working on amending the Employee Handbook to reflect new laws. She also stated the need for more frequent employee feedback, citing that annual performance appraisals are insufficient. She indicated that she will be replacing annual appraisals with quarterly informal performance appraisals that will attach to annual merit increases.

Board Communications

RFA Meeting – Commissioner Rhine attended the recent Vancouver Fire awards ceremony, where he spoke with Mayor McEnery-Olge. The Mayor requested a meeting with Chief Drake and Administrator Bethke to discuss the potential Regional Fire Authority (RFA).

Street Access Concerns – Commissioner Gibson updated the Board concerning the street access in certain neighborhoods. The streets in these neighborhoods are too narrow to allow emergency vehicles access with cars parked along the sides.

The Board requested Chief Drake investigate the problem and report back to the Board with a solution.

Old Business

None.



New Business

- A. **Dizzy Castle Lease Renewal** – Administrator Bethke informed the Board that she is in negotiations with the owners of District 5’s building tenant, Dizzy Castle, as their 10-year lease contract is expiring at the end of May. She plans to establish a new 5-year contract that will include modifications to the financial agreement that will cover all costs incurred by the District. The owners of Dizzy Castle asked Administrator Bethke if the Board would entertain selling that portion of the building to them. The Board had no interest in doing so because the value of the building as a whole is worth more when the time comes to sell.

- B. **Draft of Amendment to Fire Services Agreement Section 6** – Administrator Bethke presented drafts of the amendment to the Fire Services Agreement with the City of Vancouver. The amendment would change the way the City collects payment from Fire District 5. Currently, the District pays the City based on its projected annual budget. The amendment would allow the District to pay based on actual expenditures per quarter.

Commissioner Rhine requested a short recess from the Board. Commissioner Gibson made a motion at 7:44 p.m. to recess for 2 minutes. Chair Lyons moved to recess for 2 minutes or until 7:46 p.m.

Chair Lyons called the meeting back to order at 7:46 p.m.

Executive Session

At 7:46 p.m. Commissioner Rhine requested to move to Executive Session to discuss complaints against an employee for 15 minutes. The executive session will be until 8:01 p.m.

At 8:01 p.m. Chair Lyons moved the meeting back to regular session.


No official board action was taken following the Executive session.

Adjournment


The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 5:30 p.m.

Chair Lyons adjourned at 8:02 p.m.


Sincerely,



Chair



Secretary to the Board



Commissioner



Commissioner