

I. REGULAR MEETING

The Fire Merit Commission met at 2:02 p.m. on Wednesday, June 11, 2025 with Commissioners John Pinter, Dan Jones, and Kenneth Marks present. Also, Fire Chief Carl Buchanon, Assistant City Attorney Adam Taylor, Assistant City Attorney Kylie Connell and Commission Clerk Theresa Heffner were present. The meeting was held at the Central Fire Station, 1222 Michigan St., Classroom #2, South Bend, Indiana and virtually via Microsoft Teams at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/2025FireMeritComm>

Commission Attorney Connell asked if there were any additions or corrections to the agenda before turning it over the President Jones.

A. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

President Jones called roll and confirmed the presence of the Commissioners.

B. APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Upon a motion by John Pinter, seconded by Kenneth Marks carried by roll call, the Board approved the Minutes of the May 14, 2025, regular meeting subject to the correction to the minutes.

C. DISCUSSION OF THE PROMOTIONAL PROCESS

Chief Buchannon referred to Assistant Chief Brandon Roark in charge of training to lead the discussion.

Assistant Chief Roark updated the board on the captain promotion process following an initial meeting where leadership, including the Union President, advocated for moving the process forward. Applications are currently being accepted through the 29th, after which testing will begin.

The selection process includes:

1. **Written Assessment** – Conducted over two days, graded anonymously by two individuals. Results determine who moves on.
2. **Assessment Center** – Takes place three weeks later and includes:
 - A **strategic/tactical exercise** to evaluate operational leadership.
 - An **in-basket exercise** simulating real-world firehouse management issues (e.g., HR, policy).
 - A **professional development portfolio**, submitted on the written test day, reviewed and scored by the board.
 - Candidates present their portfolio and have 15 minutes to discuss or clarify their career development.

Only those who pass the written and tactical components (both pass/fail) will continue. The remaining elements are scored. Candidates then proceed to a yet-to-be-selected **interview panel**, after which a **final ranked list** is produced.

The top three candidates from this list are submitted to the Fire Chief (as required by statute). While the Chief typically follows the list, there is some discretion to bypass a candidate if warranted by concerns about competency or conduct during the process.

President Jones asked what happens if there are more than three openings.

Assistant Chief Roark explained that the board will accept and validate the entire list ranking and then over the course of the next two (2) years or until that list is exhausted every time there's a captain's vacancy. The Fire Chief will make an announcement to you, and then you'll submit the next top three candidates for his review.

Kenneth Marks asked how many Captain positions are open.

Assistant Chief Roark noted that there are four (4) openings before January 2026. He noted that if someone goes through the disciplinary process and comes before the board for disciplinary issues, and you see them on the Captain's list, it gives you a better idea of how the top three (3) ranked.

Kenneth Marks asked if the top three get submitted to the Fire Chief and he picks number

three (3), that number gets eliminated and now it is number one (1) and two (2) or does number four (4) move up.

Assistant Chief Roark noted that it is always the top three remaining on the list.

President Jones asked if their scores would be included with the list.

Assistant Chief Roark responded yes.

John Pinter asked how soon they would be looking to fill the Captain positions.

Assistant Chief Roark advised that they will be looking to fill the positions at the September meeting. He added that for the assessment they will be bringing in a member of their organization who has rank, then another person from outside the organization from another Fire Department, and a third (3) person from outside that is a minority to keep things as pure as possible.

John Pinter asked if they would be selecting one (1) at a time and then moving the next person up.

Kenneth Marks asked about their attendance, their commitment to being on the rig, and where that falls in the process.

Assistant Chief Roark advised that attendance comes in during their evaluation.

Kenneth Marks stated that he would like to see attendance included in the list they receive. He doesn't believe a person will make a good leader if they don't show up on the rig.

Assistant Chief Roark did not disagree.

Jon Pinter asked how the current process differed from the past.

Assistant Chief Roark advised that they did not have a robust system before and did not consider seniority.

President Jones asked how disciplines were factored in.

Assistant Chief Roark advised that this is something that the board would determine how to handle. They follow the discipline matrix when determining the days of suspension.

D. APPROVE RESOLUTION 02-2025 – A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTH BEND FIRE DEPARTMENT MERIT COMMISSION ACCEPTING CERTAIN AUTHORITY FROM THE BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY OF THE CITY OF SOUTH BEND

Attorney Connell advised that after today's date, upon passage of this resolution, that it would be official that the Fire Merit Commission is up and running and able to handle all appointments, promotions, demotions, disciplinary actions and discharge.

Upon a motion by John Pinter, seconded by Kenneth Marks carried by roll call, the Board approved the electronic meeting resolution.

E. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Attorney Taylor noted that the Board of Public Safety still has control over the collective bargaining agreement and that negotiations are currently underway. He is the lead negotiator for the City and there are three (3) Council Members. The union is represented by an attorney from the Chicago area.

John Pinter asked when they expected to wrap up.

Attorney Taylor advised that they are trying to wrap it up by the end of August to align with the budget cycle.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, upon a motion by Kenneth Marks, seconded by John Pinter, and carried by roll call, the meeting was adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

FIRE MERIT COMMISSION

Daniel Jones, President

John Pinter, Secretary

Kenneth Marks, Vice President

ATTEST:

Theresa Heffner, Commission Clerk

APPROVED

**City of South Bend
Fire Department Merit
Commission**

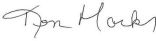
Date: _____



Daniel Jones, President



John Pinter, Member



Kenneth Mark, Member