

## I. REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Public Safety met in the Regular Meeting at 9: 15 a.m. on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 with Board President Dan Jones, and Board Members Al Kirsits, Pamela Claeys, and Charles King III were present. Also, Police Chief Scott Ruszkowski, Fire Chief Carl Buchanon, and Attorneys Tom Panowicz, Adam Taylor, Kylie Connell and Board Clerk Hillary Horvath were in attendance. The meeting was held on the Council Chambers 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, South Bend City Hall Bldg., 215 S. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd., South Bend, Indiana and virtually via Microsoft Teams at the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/2025-2026-BPS>

Attorney Panowicz asked that everyone mute their microphone when not speaking and reminded attendees that comments from the public should be saved for the Privilege of the Floor portion of the meeting. Attorney Panowicz then read through the agenda to note any additions or corrections.

### A. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Board President Dan Jones welcomed the public, called roll, and confirmed the presence of the Board Members.

### B. APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Upon a motion by Pam Claeys, seconded by Al Kirsits and carried by roll call, the Board approved the Minutes of January 21, 2026, regular meeting.

### C. POLICE DEPARTMENT

#### 1. ACKNOWLEDGE YEARS OF SERVICE

Jose Aguilar  
Daniel Lawecki

Chief Ruszkowski stated the above officers have retired from SBPD. Chief noted that Officer Aguilar was a lateral officer with a retirement date of January 24, 2026 and Officer Lawecki served over twenty-five (25) years with a retirement date of February 6, 2026. Chief Ruszkowski asked the Board to join him, wishing them success in their endeavors, along with thanking them for their many years of service with the SBPD.

#### 2. APPROVE LEXIPOL POLICES

334 - Public Safety Video System  
606 - Unmanned Aerial System

Attorney Kylie Connell provided a brief overview of the Lexipol policies, explaining that the software incorporates best practices and legal updates and is used to determine which changes the Police Department will implement. Attorney Connell further stated that Policies 334 and 606 are being presented for approval due to recent revisions and updates.

Attorney Connell explained that, due to rapidly evolving technology and the implementation of the Real Time Crime Center, the Police Department is updating Policies 334 and 606 to better align with current practices and equipment. Policy 334 (Public Safety Video System) includes a minor revision adding unmanned aerial systems (drones) so live drone footage may be monitored through the Real Time Crime Center. Policy 606 (Unmanned Aerial Systems) updates the authorization process to reflect actual operations, clarifies that drone use will follow Policy 334 and FAA regulations (including potential nighttime deployment), removes outdated or misleading warrant language while maintaining constitutional protections, and adds a definition for "drone as a first responder." The department is exploring this technology for priority 911 calls, as drones may reach incident scenes more quickly than responding personnel. Approval of the policy revisions

was requested.

Attorney Connell explained that drones have recording capability, and any footage captured is treated similarly to other public-safety cameras. Routine recordings in permitted public areas are considered standard security video and are retained for a set period before deletion, while footage identified as evidence is preserved for longer according to retention requirements.

Chief Ruskowski clarified the distinction between routine monitoring and investigative surveillance: drones will not be used in areas requiring a warrant without obtaining one, and constitutional protections remain in place. At the time a recording is made, personnel classify the footage in the system, which determines how long it is stored and whether it must be preserved as part of a criminal case.


Upon a motion by Al Kirsits, seconded by Pam Claeys and carried by roll call, the Board approved the Lexipol Polices 334 and 606.

3. FILE MONTHLY STATISTICAL ANALYSIS REPORT FOR JANUARY 2026

Police Chief Scott Ruskowski submitted the January 2026 Monthly Statistical Report and noted that, for the first time in several years, there was a 4% monthly increase in Part I crimes. The most significant change was homicides, which rose from zero to three incidents. There were also notable increases in residential burglaries (up 79%) and non-residential burglaries (up 400%). No arsons were reported. Chief Ruskowski indicated the burglary increases were likely related to the holiday season, when residents were away and returned to discover incidents had occurred. Chief also noted that rapes had a decrease as well for the past 2 months.

The JANUARY 2026 analysis is as follows:

PART 1 OFFENSES	YEAR TO DATE			YEAR TO DATE		
	2025	2026	CHANGE	2025	2026	CHANGE
HOMICIDE	0	3	3	0	3	3
JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE*	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAPE	10	6	-4	10	6	-4
ROBBERY	14	10	-4	14	10	-4
AGGRAVATED ASSLT	62	63	1	62	63	1
BURGLARY RES	19	34	15	19	34	15
BURGLARY NON RES	4	20	16	4	20	16
LARCENY	136	128	-8	136	128	-8
MOTOR VEH THEFT	26	21	-5	26	21	-5
ARSONS	2	0	-2	2	0	-2
GRAND TOTAL	273	285	12	273	285	12

Respectfully submitted,  
  
 Scott Ruskowski  
 Chief of Police

SR/ijj

Month: JANUARY 2026

PART 1 OFFENSES	2025	2026	CHANGE
HOMICIDE	0	3	300%
JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE*	0	0	0%
RAPE	10	6	-40%
ROBBERY	14	10	-29%
AGGRAVATED ASSLT	62	63	2%
BURGLARY RES.	19	34	79%
BURGLARY NON RES.	4	20	400%
LARCENY	136	128	-6%
MOTOR VEH THEFT	26	21	-19%
ARSONS	2	0	-100%
GRAND TOTAL	273	285	4%

4% CHANGE IN PART 1 CRIMES THROUGH JANUARY 2026

D. FIRE DEPARTMENT

1. FILE MONTHLY STATISTICAL ANALYSIS REPORT FOR JANUARY 2026

Chief Buchanan submitted the monthly statistical analysis report for January 2026. Chief reported that the department’s monthly statistical report had been overly streamlined and will be expanded to include clearer explanations and year-to-year comparisons so the Board can better understand the data.

Chief noted in January 2026, the department responded to 2,060 calls, including 24 fires, 1,479 EMS calls, and 557 other incidents (such as alarms, rescues, hazmat, and public assistance). There were also 52 false alarms. The department continues proactive fire-prevention efforts, including smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector installation and follow-up visits to residents, often supported by partners like the American Red Cross and donated equipment.

Pam Claeys asked if FD informed residents and businesses that these safety measures and the city’s ISO Class 1 rating may help with insurance discounts. Chief Buchanan noted they do inform the residents and businesses to reach out and inform there insurance providers of there safety measures.

The Chief emphasized a focus on prevention rather than only response and agreed to include additional reporting details, including activity by individual fire stations, to help identify service trends and planning needs.

January	2026
<b>Incidents</b> Monthly Count: 2060 Year to Date: 2060	
<b>False Alarms:</b>  52: 2.76%	<b>Fire:</b> 24: 1.17% <b>EMS:</b> 1,479: 71.80% <b>Other:</b> 557: 27.04%
<b>Smoke Alarms &amp; C/O Installations</b>	
Smoke Alarms: 46  C/O: 17  Combinations: 0	Batteries: 12  Impaired: 0
<small>T. DAMIANO</small>	<small>DREW L. FROHART</small>
<small>TODD L. SEWARAN</small>	<small>ANDREW I. MYER</small>
<small>BRANDON S. ROARK</small>	

January 2025	January 2026
\$446,600	N/A
INVESTIGATION DIVISION	
N/A Investigations	9 Investigations
INSPECTION DIVISION	
179 Inspections 56 Reinspections	182 Inspections 55 Reinspections

E. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Attorney Panowicz reminded the public to use the hand-raising function of Microsoft Teams to indicate their desire to speak during Privilege of the Floor. He reminded attendees that they would be allotted three (3) minutes to speak.

**Board Member Pam Claeys** thanked the South Bend Police Department for assisting with the St. Margaret’s House Winter Walk, noting the event raised approximately \$70,000, exceeding the previous year. Pam also acknowledged that the state legislature passed a law recognizing firefighters who die from cancer as line-of-duty deaths. Chief Buchanon confirmed the law was passed and noted it has been a long time coming.

**Attorney Tom Panowicz** concluded the meeting with the introduction and welcome of new board member Pastor Charles King III.

F. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, upon a motion by Pam Claeys, seconded by Al Kirsits, and carried by roll call, the meeting was adjourned at 9:51 a.m.

BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daniel Jones, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Al Kirsits, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Claeys, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Charles King III, Member

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hillary Horvath, Clerk