

# **Wasatch County Fire Board of Directors Meeting**

**Tuesday, June 10, 2025**

Meeting held at the Wasatch County Administration Building located at 25 N Main, Heber City

## **Those in Attendance:**

Mark Nelson

Erik Rowland

Colleen Bonner

Fire Board Vice Chair Karl McMillan

Kendall Crittenden

Luke Searle - not present

Fire Board Chair Spencer Park

Chief Eric Hales

Assistant Chief Jason Provost

County Manager Dustin Grabau

Kierstan Smith, CPA

Matt G - Squire

Councilmember Park called the Wasatch County Fire Protection Service District board meeting to order on Tuesday, June 10, 2025.

## **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

**A motion was made by Councilmember Nelson to approve minutes from the 5/13/2025 fireboard meeting. It was seconded by Councilmember Crittenden and it passed.**

## **APPROVAL OF WARRANTS**

Warrants totaled \$1,064,282.69 for the month. Chief Hales said most of it is payroll with a few straggling bills from Big D. There will be a few of those over the next couple of months as we finish some minor projects. There is also one vehicle for about \$40,000 to Labrum for a staff vehicle that was budgeted for.

Councilmember Park commented that most of the other items listed were for health insurance, staff retirement, payroll. Chief Hales replied that this will become the new normal, going forward, the warrants will be about this amount.

**A motion was made by Councilmember Rowland to approve the warrants as presented. It was seconded by Councilmember Crittenden and it passed.**

## **CHIEF'S REPORT**

- 2025 YTD - May

The highlight of May was the Station 51 open house. It was really well attended by the community. People really enjoyed coming through the station for the self guided tour. They were able to walk through the museum, the community rooms, admin offices and the living quarters. It was a very positive thing for the community.

May was a busy month with two significant incidents with fatalities. One was on Highway 40 and the second was at Victory Ranch where a backhoe fell into the river.

We did have a couple significant tanker slide offs. One was up at Strawberry, and just a few hours later there was a tanker fire near Jordanelle.

Chief Hales asked the board to reference the photo in their packets for the tanker fire. It breached through the outer shell, but they were able to extinguish it before it got into the actual tank full of fuel.

As with every end of May, we like to support the local school district and visit various elementary schools to send the kids off for the summer.

Chief Hales then added a request to purchase a 2013 F 550 with a dump bed from public works for \$25,000. It is not budgeted for, but there is money available in capital. The purpose would be to use this for the fuels reduction team to pull the chipper. If we were to upfit a vehicle we'd spend closer to \$100,000. But here's a vehicle that has 60,000 miles on it already, with the dump bed.

Councilmember Parks commented that Public works is getting rid of it early because of a crane upgrade or something? Chief Hales confirmed.

Councilmember Crittenden commented that we could probably get a lot more life out of it. Chief Hales agreed and said that it's not going to be a high mileage vehicle and that in the winter we could actually put a plow on it and plow some of our facilities. We have budgeted for the plow piece of it. We'll do the amended budget towards the end of the year.

Councilmember Bonner asked if we found people to do the chipping? Chief Hales said we did hire two employees.

Chief Hales said he knows it's not a line item on the agenda, but he wanted to bring up purchasing the truck because it would be beneficial to the district.

- Policy 416 - Employee Benefits

Chief Hales said there was one policy that had been brought to the board before about verbiage defining full time employees. In talking with Dave in HR we removed that verbiage and revolved the policy around benefit eligible employees. Any employee over 21 hours and that was a permanent employee on the admin side are eligible for URS. So we are trying to find that balance. So we can provide them with some benefits on a prorated tiered basis. For example, if you work 21-30 hours you can pay up to 50% of that benefit and earn vacation leave during that time at a prorated amount.

We also added something that the county does. It's an in lieu of. If we have a new employee that already has proof of insurance with their spouse and they don't need our coverage, in lieu of paying that benefit to them, it's defined at the rate of a single employee. That money can be offset into a 401K for them instead of losing that benefit.

Councilmember Nelson commented that the employee could switch that benefit if their spouse is no longer employed or loses that? Chief Hales confirmed that during open enrollment times or if there is a life change that happens, they would be eligible to change over that benefit.

Councilmember Park asked if we needed to make a motion to approve that policy. Chief Hales confirmed.

**A motion was made by Councilmember Nelson to approve Policy 416-Employee Benefits as presented. It was seconded by Councilmember Rowland and it passed.**

### **PRESENTATION OF 2024 AUDIT**

Chief Hales let the board know that because the district is getting bigger, cutting checks once a month is not enough. There are several utilities and about 15 checks that need to be cut during the month. We'd like to do a second check run, maybe every two weeks. We'd do the bulk

check run like we do today, and then come again right before a council meeting, so we don't have to call you and track you down.

Councilmember Rowland said the problem is our Council meetings are generally the week before fireboard and the week after. So there's not one in the middle. That's the only problem because fireboard is on the second Tuesday and we have a 1st and second and 3rd Wednesdays that we have meetings on. But we don't have one on the 4th meeting a week early.

Chief Hales responded by saying that he wanted to give the board a heads up that we are going to try to do that and we don't want to inundate you with the check run that you just did. But those once every month are not enough.

Several Councilmembers spoke up saying they don't mind getting the calls and Chief Hales noted it.

Chief Hales then turned the time over to Matt G with Squire.

MattG - Squire: Thank you for having me and allowing me to join remotely. As you know, we've been engaged to perform an audit of Wasatch County Fire Protection Special Service district and the financial statements and ultimately issue an opinion on those financial statements.

As I'm sharing my screen here, you can see on the Independent Auditor report. In our opinion, the basic financial statements present fairly in all material respects, the financial position and activities of the fire district. That means in non auditor languages as a board, and as users of the financial statements, you can reasonably rely on the financial statements to present and to make decisions, as you rely on that information.

In addition to the audit of the financial statements, we perform that audit in accordance with government auditing standards. Government auditing standards require that we review. Your internal controls over financial reporting and compliance. And if we had identified significant deficiencies or material weaknesses, we would be required to report those to you. Sometimes I describe those as items that should keep you awake at night or management awake at night.

In this report here on government auditing standards, we have not identified any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. So a clean report there. The final report we issue is in accordance with the State compliance audit guide and we issue an opinion on compliance related to the items that the office of the Utah State Auditor has asked us to perform. An audit of. You can see those items there in the center of the page.

In our opinion the district complied in all material respects with the compliance requirements outlined in the Compliance guide issued by the office of the Utah State Auditor. There was one item that we noted to be aware of during our testing, and that relates to Government fees. We noted that there was one government fee that was changed and not presented to the board. It was a minor change. It was a processing fee, but just as a reminder to management and to the board. As you do, change fees. Utah code requires that the Board approve those updated fees overall, a very good report, a very clean report.

The fire chief and all of their staff have been helpful. They answered our questions, and the audit was relatively efficient, and appreciate the time that they have given us to perform that audit. Any questions on the audit of the Fire district.

The council members commented they did not have any questions.

Councilmember Park: Anything else from, Chief? Do you guys have anything else on the audit?

**A motion was made by Councilmember Crittendon to accept the 2024 audit report as presented. It was seconded by Councilman McMillan and it passed.**

Division updates will be moved to next month.

- Station Updates

Chief Hales: Station updates will continue, even though Station 51 is complete. The RFP for the Hideout station has been put together and it includes the construction of the Victory Ranch station. We're looking for a general contractor manager to help us with the construction and design process. We want them to help us with scheduling, etc. We found not having a person in that role made it difficult to navigate everything. So we've put together an RFP to go out and try to select that.

Some notable dates are:

- June 30th - proposals due
- July 16th - conduct interviews

We'd like to get the fire board chair, vice chair, whoever you'd like a couple people to help with shortlisting some of the respondents. That'll help us while we coordinate items with UDOT. There's a lot of technical things that we're trying to accomplish in trying to get on that route.

Councilmember Crittenden asked if the RFP was for this person? Chief Hales confirmed it was. And then they would be associated with that construction company going forward, like Big D did for us, but we're bringing them on during the design phase.

Councilmember Bonner then asked if it was just temporary during the construction and design of both stations? Chief Hales said it was still up in the air if Victory Ranch is going to help us front load the financing for that station. They're still working on it with their board. But, if not, it'll be one after the other. We can do one and then the other.

Councilmember Bonner: Did you design these similar so they could just be easy? Chief Hales said that would be the idea in a perfect world. However, the lots are not the same. Living quarters are the same, the bay is the same, just configured a little differently.

Councilmember Crittenden asked if the Victory Ranch location has been set yet? Chief Hales confirmed it has, and they are finalizing that with the developers of Prospera and the new Benloch section right off Skyfall Road. It's at the bottom, so it's easy access onto Highway 32.

Councilmember McMillan: Easy access coming in from Victory Ranch?

Chief Hales: Off of Prospera Benloch, and then it'll go down into Victory Ranch. Just up from Hwy 32, on Skyfall Road. It's that big main road that they're building.

Councilmember Crittenden asked how many acres we have, and Chief Hales said it's just under one acre, maybe three quarters of an acre. We are still working out some of the in lieu of impact fees for that property. It's around \$500 to \$700,000. We're probably closer to \$500k.

Council McMillan: Do you need a bigger station than the three-quarter acres?

Chief Hales: No, because we're going to need another station on top by Jordanelle Ridge and one of the things we've been working with all these developers on is interconnectivity. What we can't do is put a station in Victory Ranch and then one in Benloch and then one over here. Each station is almost a million dollars a year to keep it going. So we've been working with these developers to look at the global picture and try to provide for that community.

Councilmember Bonner: Thanks for being responsible. Chief Hales said in the next 10 years there will be four more of these smaller stations. We will need to talk to UDOT and make sure we still have access off of Hwy 40 on Fitzgerald Road in that park. That station will be a little bit larger, because it's on the main road. It'll probably be a 3, but it won't be as big as this, but the station itself may be fairly similar, not the Admin and community side. We have a lot.

Councilmember Park asked Chief Hales to provide projections of past and future money that came in before the sales tax and after. And what we're getting compared to what we're spending in the next 10 years. See where we're at. We'd like to have that soon so we have time to make decisions.

Councilmember Crittenden: Where are you guys at on a needs assessment for impact fees? Chief Hales said that we're probably there. The current study provided for 3 fire stations or at least two. Heber and the Fitzgerald Road one. No, it was the Victory Ranch one. It was only about 3 million dollars a station. So it wasn't going to cover the real cost.

Councilmember Park: That was probably done before 2020, though. Right?

Chief Hales confirmed. It is something that does cover the ladder truck on order but it doesn't cover the new engine. It is something we will have to look at and decide how much do you really want to raise those impact fees?

Councilmember Crittenden: Well, the study will tell us how much we need to raise it.

Chief Hales said that when he presents the report to the board they'll see the impact fees and property tax are all going down due to the evaluations. This is exactly what we wanted with the sales tax. So we are in a really good position, especially for this growth.

**A motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Crittendon. It was seconded by Councilmember Bonner and it passed.**