



OFFICIAL MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING

MEETING: Police & Fire Commission
DATE/TIME: Monday, February 23, 2026 at 7:30 AM
LOCATION: Public Safety Building, 515 Grand Ave
Community Room

MEMBERS:
Kathy Strasser Thomas Garver
Cheryl Bahr Vylius Lyskys
Katie Rosenberg

Members Present: Thomas Garver, Katie Rosenberg, Vylius Leskys, Kathy Strasser, Cheryl Bahr
Members Not Present:
Members Excused:
Present 5, Not Present 0, Excused 0

Noting the presence of a quorum, the Chairperson called the meeting to order at 07:31 AM.

1 Call to order by the presiding officer.

The meeting was called to order by President Strasser.

Roll Call

Commission Members:
Thomas Garver, Katie Rosenberg, Vylius Leskys, Kathy Strasser, Cheryl Bahr

Also present:
Mayor Diny, Lisa Nowak, Deputy Chief Baeten, Captain Pauls, Deputy Chief Pluess

2 Consideration of the minutes of the preceding meeting(s).

January 26, 2026 Regular Police and Fire Commission Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Rosenberg to approve minutes from January 26, 2026 meeting,
Second by Commissioner Lesky's.
Motion carried 5-0

3 Closed Session.

I. Closed Session Pursuant to Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wisconsin State Statutes considering employment of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility:

1. For the purpose of interviewing one candidate for promotion to Lieutenant with Wausau Fire Department
2. For the purpose of reviewing the Annual Performance Evaluation for the Chief of the Fire Department

Motion by Commissioner Bahr to go into closed session pursuant to Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wisconsin State Statutes considering employment of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility:

1. For the purpose of interviewing one candidate for promotion to Lieutenant with Wausau Fire Department
2. For the purpose of reviewing the Annual Performance Evaluation for the Chief of the Fire Department

- II. Closed Session pursuant to 19.85(1)(f) Considering financial, medical, social or personal histories or disciplinary data of specific persons, preliminary consideration of specific personnel problems or the investigation of charges against specific persons except where par. (b) applies which, if discussed in public, would be likely to have a substantial adverse effect upon the reputation of any person referred to in such histories or data, or involved in such problems or investigations, for Consideration and Deliberation Related to Citizen Complaint by J.C.V against Wausau Police Department Officers.

As well as pursuant to 19.85(1)(f) Considering financial, medical, social or personal histories or disciplinary data of specific persons, preliminary consideration of specific personnel problems or the investigation of charges against specific persons except where par. (b) applies which, if discussed in public, would be likely to have a substantial adverse effect upon the reputation of any person referred to in such histories or data, or involved in such problems or investigations, for Consideration and Deliberation Related to Citizen Complaint by J.C.V against Wausau Police Department Officers.

The Police & Fire Commission convened into Closed Session at 7:32 AM

4 Open Session.

Reconvene meeting into Open Session for purpose of potential action upon consideration of Closed Session Items.

Motion by Commissioner Rosenberg to reconvene meeting into Open Session, Second by Commissioner Garver.

The Police & Fire Commission reconvene into Open Session at 8:23 AM

Motion by President Strasser to re-agendize the interview for promotion to Lieutenant with Wausua Fire Department to the March 23, 2026 meeting. Second by Commissioner Rosenberg.

Motion carried 5-0

Motion by President Strasser to have Captain Pauls forward all documents pertaining to the citizen complaint to the City Attorney for a recommendation regarding further action, which will be re-agendized for the March 23, 2026 meeting.

5 Presentations.

I. Monthly Fire Department Operations Update:

- Presentation of current Fire Department activities and 4th Quarter report
- Update on State Legislature with Community Care Paramedic
- Update of Congressional Spending Grant

Chief Kopp began by reviewing the 4th quarter report, highlighting several significant calls for service and commending his staff for their dedication and professionalism, both during those major incidents and in handling the steady volume of daily calls for service.

He then addressed the substantial workload managed by the Fire Prevention Bureau despite staffing shortages over the past year. The bureau works with hundreds of local businesses to conduct inspections and ensure compliance with fire safety codes. In addition to these inspections, they successfully delivered fire safety programs to all but one area school. Chief Kopp emphasized his goal of re-engaging all schools in these programs, noting the challenge of updating contact information and follow up after the extended period during which COVID-19 prevented in-person programs.

Chief Kopp also provided updates on the State Legislature and the Community Care Bill. He shared that NTC has been awarded a Congressional Spending Grant totaling 3.2 million dollars over a three-year period. This funding will support nine apprentices during the first half of the grant period and an additional nine during the second half.

Finally, he highlighted several recent podcasts in which he has participated, reaffirming his commitment to community engagement and to ongoing education regarding the referendum and the Fire Department as a whole.

II. Monthly Police Department Operations Update:

- Presentation of current Police Department activities and updates

Chief Barnes opened with great pride in announcing that Wausau Police Officer Wade Shnowske will be receiving the Medal of Valor Award on February 24, 2026 at the City Council Meeting. He commended the officer's selflessness and bravery during the call for service and noted how rare and significant the Valor Award is to receive.

He then provided an update on the WMC shelter, stating that it will remain open until April 19th to continue serving the unhoused population until Bridge Street Mission opens. He spoke highly of Tracy Durante's tremendous dedication throughout this effort and her remarkable ability to make things happen. Chief Barnes added that the next challenge will be addressing the needs of the 20–25% of the unhoused population who are unable to care for themselves within traditional shelter settings and helping connect them to resources that support long-term stability.

In closing, he commented on the department's progress with In-Service training and highlighted the upcoming individual staff meetings. He noted that every staff member of the department will meet with both himself and the Deputy Chief for one hour to discuss succession planning, career goals, resources needed to support those goals, and their individual thoughts and ideas regarding the department. Chief Barnes stated that although this is a time-consuming process, he believes it promotes strong communication, professional growth, and a shared vision for the department's future.

6 Adjournment.

Next Meeting: March 23, 2026

Motion by Commissioner Rosenberg to adjourn, second by commissioner Bahr.

Motion carried 5-0

Meeting adjourned at 09:11 AM

The recording of this meeting may be viewed on
YouTube [@CityofWausauMeetings](#)



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