



OFFICIAL MINUTES REGULAR MEETING

MEETING: Police & Fire Commission
DATE/TIME: Monday, July 27, 2026, at 7:30 AM
LOCATION: Wausau City Hall — Council Chambers
407 Grant Street, Wausau WI, 54403

MEMBERS:
Kathy Stasser (P) Thomas Garver
Cheryl Bahr Vylius Lyskys
Katie Rosenberg

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

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.

I Call to order by the presiding officer.

Roll Call

Commission Members:
K. Strasser, C. Bahr, K. Rosenberg, T. Garver, V. Leskys

Also Present:
Mayor Diny, Chief M. Barnes, Chief J. Kopp, Deputy Chief T. Baeten, HR Director L. Nowak,
City Attorney A. Jacobson, Captain M. Pauls, Captain N. Cihlar

II Public Comment and the reading of the City of Wausau's Public Comment Statement

Public Comment Pursuant to Section 19.84(2) of the Wisconsin State Statutes, which allows a governmental body to provide a period during which it may receive information from members of the public.

No public comment.

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

June 22, 2026 Regular Police and Fire Commission Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Bahr to approve minutes from June 22, 2026
Second by Commissioner Garver
Motion Carried 5-0

IV Closed Session.

a.

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; for the purpose of interviewing two candidates for Firefighter/EMT with the Wausau Fire Department.

Motion by Commissioner Bahr to go into closed Session
Second by Commissioner Leskys
Motion carried 5-0

The Police & Fire Commission convened into Closed Session at 7:33 AM.

b.

Closed Session Pursuant to Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wisconsin State Statutes for considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governing body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility; for the purpose of strategizing the recruitment and appointment of a new Deputy Police Chief and for discussion and deliberation on a hiring process.

Motion by Commissioner Bahr to go into closed session
Second by Commissioner Leskys
Motion carried 5-0

The Police & Fire Commission convened into Closed Session at 7:34 AM.

V Open Session.

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

Motion by Commissioner Rosenberg to go back into open session
Second by Commissioner Leskys
Motion carried 5-0

VI Discussion and possible action.

Open for General Agenda Items

Motion by Commissioner Bahr to appoint, contingent upon successful completion of the hiring process, Jessica Peace and Brody Blaskacek as Firefighter/Paramedic with the Wausau Fire Department.
Second by Commissioner Garver.
Motion carried 5-0.

President Strasser and the Commission agreed to begin developing a formal internal recruitment and selection process to appoint the next Deputy Chief, in anticipation of Deputy Chief Todd Baeten's retirement in January 2026. The Commission intends to complete this process by the end of 2026. Additional information on the process will be provided at future Police and Fire Commission meetings.

President Strasser announced the retirement of Commissioner Cheryl Bahr after 28 years of service on the Police and Fire Commission. The Mayor will look to appoint a new commissioner at the next City Council meeting.

VII Presentations.

a. Monthly Police Department Operations Update:

- Presentation of current Police Department activities
- Quarter 2 Report

Chief Barnes discussed the challenging overtime situation within the Police Department and the various factors contributing to it. He noted three unanticipated vacancies due to recent resignations, along with a significant number of officers currently on injured reserve. Together, these issues amount to the equivalent of an entire patrol shift. He explained that the Department is using creative and cost-effective strategies to fill shifts while minimizing financial impact to the City.

He stated that the Department is expecting approximately six retirements in the coming year, with three occurring within the first three to four months of 2027. As a result, the fall hiring process will be substantial, with the Department planning to hire 8 to 10 officers, making November a particularly busy month for the Police and Fire Commission.

Chief Barnes addressed recent news coverage about the potential relocation of the Police Department to the UW campus off Stewart Avenue, which would allow the Fire Department to use the current Police Department space as a new Central Fire Station. He noted that final decisions on this matter are not expected until sometime between April and June of 2027.

He also spoke about the significant transition the Department undertook in switching from iron sights to red-dot optics, which included providing a full day of training to every officer.

Finally, Chief Barnes addressed concerns regarding e-bikes and e-motor bikes. He discussed the age range of children using these devices, the high speeds they can reach, and referenced the tragic incident in Sheboygan to highlight safety risks associated with these motorized bikes.

Commissioner Leskys asked about the Q2 report, noting a period of 14 days in April and May during which Bridge Street Mission generated approximately four law enforcement calls per day. He asked whether the situation has stabilized since then.

Chief Barnes explained that any new organization goes through a period of setting expectations. He noted that some of those calls were simply extra patrols intended to maintain a presence and build a relationship with Bridge Street Mission. He stated that Bridge Street Mission and the Police Department work together to establish expectations for the clientele within the community.

b. Monthly Fire Department Operations Update:

- Presentation of current Fire Department activities
- Updates

Chief Kopp discussed the new scheduling software that both the Fire Department and Police Department are transitioning to. He stated that he is looking forward to its ability to more accurately track overtime and identify what types of events or situations are contributing to overtime needs.

He noted two recent resignations and asked the Commission to consider scheduling a special meeting to accommodate a promotional interview to fill one of the vacancies. The Commission stated that the special meeting previously scheduled for August 3rd had been canceled after the Police Department indicated it was no longer needed; however, it could be reinstated to conduct the promotional interview.

Chief Kopp provided an update on the Community Care Paramedic Program, describing it as a game changer for the Fire Department. He said the program has been highly successful and that he has held several meetings with Aspirus and other communities interested in adopting a similar model. The three-year trial period for the program will conclude in mid-2027, and he hopes to identify a creative budget solution to retain the position. He noted that Matt Kozloski has made significant improvements and built numerous community relationships.

Lastly, Chief Kopp stated that the Department is currently short-staffed, with five open positions due to resignations and retirements. The two positions filled at today's meeting will

require several weeks to complete the initial hiring process before beginning the four-week academy. He anticipates that they will be ready to operate solo on the ambulance and fire engines by October or November.

VIII Adjournment.

Next Meeting (s): Special Meeting August 3, 2026

Regular Meeting August 24, 2026

Special Meeting on August 3, 2026, to be held at the Wausau Public Safety Building — Community Room

Regular Meeting on August 24, 2026, to be held at Wausau City Hall — Council Chambers.

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



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