

**Western Lane Ambulance District
Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue
Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority
2625 Highway 101 North, Florence, OR 97439
Joint Board Meeting Minutes, March 26, 2026, 6:00 p.m.
The Zoom recording will be on the WLFEA Website.**

SVFR & WLFEA BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Director David Carrillo, Director Keith Stanton, Director Jim Palisi, and Director Laurie Heppel (via Zoom)

Not Present: Director Stephanie Restrepo

WLAD & WLFEA BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Director Cindy Russell, Director Mike Webb, Director Adam Holbrook, Director Vanessa Buss, and Director Linda Stent (via Zoom)

STAFF PRESENT:

Fire and EMS Chief Michael Schick, Deputy Chief Rob Chance, Division Chief Andy Gray, Office Manager Trish Lutgen, and Recording Secretary Holly Lais

Chief Chance called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. The flag salute was completed, and a roll call established a quorum for SVFR, WLAD, and WLFEA.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

PRESENTATION: CARL WILKERSON, LANE COUNTY SHERIFF

Chief Chance welcomed Sheriff Carl Wilkerson of the Lane County Sheriff's Office, who introduced himself and stated he was attending to build relationships with Florence-area organizations and address questions regarding evacuation routes, county evacuation zones, and emergency planning. Sheriff Wilkerson shared his experience responding primarily to the Eastern portion of the county, including evacuating the City of Oakridge during the previous year's Emigrant Fire. He explained that the Sheriff's Office utilizes multiple systems during emergencies, including robust communication and tablet-based systems. He also had managed animal evacuations and other incidents such as tsunamis and floods. He noted that the department is centrally located, is in the process of bringing on a new Search and Rescue Manager with expertise in evacuation planning and has recently replaced the County Emergency Manager. Sheriff Wilkerson inquired about appropriate contacts for future coordination and opened the floor for questions.

Director Webb asked how communication is managed in outlying areas during events such as wildland fires when power outages occur. Sheriff Wilkerson responded that social media is often the fastest method, though not accessible to all, and referenced a new statewide system, Genesis, which allows for location-based cell phone notifications. He added that the county follows the Ready, Set, Go evacuation model and incorporates search and rescue resources.

Director Palisi asked whether the county is directly connected to the Watch Duty application. Sheriff Wilkerson replied that it is not, explaining that Watch Duty gathers and shares information from various sources and is not an official communication channel of the Sheriff's Office or Emergency Management. He noted that the application does not provide real-time updates, except when evacuation levels reach "Go."

Director Webb further inquired about how information is distributed between agencies and who serves as the emergency operations center during large incidents. Sheriff Wilkerson explained that information typically originates from the Public Safety Answering Point (911) in Florence and is then relayed to the Sheriff's Office. He stated that the Sheriff's Office, or the highest-ranking authority on scene, serves as the emergency command center, with the

potential to establish a Unified Command depending on the incident. He emphasized the importance of maintaining strong interagency relationships and continuing tabletop discussions.

PRESENTATION: WLCR UPDATE

Melissa House, Western Lane Crisis Response (WLCR) Manager, provided a program update. She reported that the program is continuing to grow and that planning efforts are underway for future expansion. Call volumes have increased significantly, and she commended her team for their strong response efforts. She noted that staffing levels are stable, with the recent hiring of two additional part-time responders, bringing the total team to ten members. She also shared that a Transport Driver position is being added as part of a pilot program.

She reminded the Board that WLCR can respond independently without law enforcement within the Florence district area, which reduces the call burden on law enforcement agencies. She noted that due to recent cuts to youth funding in the Riverview area, WLCR has taken on an increased role in supporting young people. Currently, they are working with 5 to 10 youths each month.

House reported that WLCR received an award recognition from the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) and was featured in the newspaper twice. She shared that WLCR is now managing the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) program and is working to increase community awareness of available social services. She also noted that WLCR has applied for a \$3 million Department of Justice (DOJ) grant to support transport services over the next three years, with the first year anticipated to overlap with the SAMHSA grant.

Director Russel asked how WLCR is working to stabilize funding for youth services. House responded that youth funding will be part of discussions in the coming year, with the intention of seeking approval at the state level.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Meeting Minutes: Regular Meeting February 22, 2026

Staff Reports

Correspondence

Director Webb made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Director Russell seconded the motion. A roll-call vote occurred; all WLFEA Directors voted in favor, and the motion passed.

REVIEW OF FINANCIALS – WLAD, SVFR, WLFEA:

Office Manager Trish Lutgen reported that staff are actively working on the preparation of the upcoming budget. She stated that the WHA Insurance Agency had submitted their forecast for the next fiscal year and is in the board packet. WLFEA is planning to budget insurance at a 10% increase; however, we are still waiting on finalized figures. She is still waiting to receive the AFG grant funds, and approximately \$113,000 from the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) program is anticipated to be received next month. Additionally, staff have been testing payroll software that would integrate with the existing financial software.

Director Palisi inquired about the disallowed Medicare reimbursements. Chief Chance explained that with Medicare and Medicaid, a portion of the Basic Life Support (BLS) transport costs are reimbursable. Discussion followed regarding reimbursement limitations. Director Buss suggested the Authority explore additional opportunities for reimbursement. Office Manager Lutgen said that with the GEMT program, the Authority is trying to recover a portion of those costs. Director Russell explained that reimbursement rates are established by the government based on previously agreed-upon codes and their associated rates. Office Manager Lutgen said 49% of Florence's population is over 65 years old, and Chief Chance said the Authority received back an additional 22% because Florence is considered super-rural. He added that System Design West, our billing company, does a great job and is a great advocate. They notify us when information is missing in the charts.

Director Stanton noted that WLAD has multiple funding sources and that approximately 40% of revenue is recovered through Medicare and other reimbursements. He inquired about the source of the remaining 60%. Chief Chance responded that the balance is funded through tax revenue. He added that a cost analysis had previously been conducted to determine the cost per call and indicated that it may be necessary to revisit that analysis to reassess and potentially adjust rates.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Policies reviewed from the February 26, 2026, meeting:

- a) 900 – Illness and Injury Prevention Program
- b) 901 – Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration Inspections
- c) 902 – Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration Notification of Injury or Death
- d) 903 – Communicable Diseases
- e) 904 – High-Visibility Safety Vests

NEW BUSINESS:

1. SVFR: Annexation:

Chief Schick presented a map to the Board identifying properties north of Florence that SVFR is considering for annexation. He explained that homes not currently within the fire district or located more than seven miles from a fire station would require a contract to become annexed into the district. He said there were no charges if a home is within 6.6 road miles of a station, and he estimated the tax revenue from the annexed properties would be around \$10 thousand dollars a year. Chief Schick asked whether the Board wished for him to proceed by sending letters to pursue annexation of the five to six identified properties.

Director Stanton inquired if Station 4 had to be manned to qualify for the annexation. Chief Schick clarified that a station was not required to have crews living there, crews only need to respond from that location.

Director Palisi recommended requiring fire sprinklers in any new habitable structures seeking annexation. Chief Schick responded that he had explored that option but does not have the authority to mandate such a requirement.

SVFR: Director Carrillo made a motion to authorize Chief Schick to pursue annexation of the identified properties. Director Palisi seconded the motion. A roll-call vote occurred; all SVFR Directors voted in favor, and the motion passed.

2. Fire Extinguisher Training Equipment:

WLFEA Resolution 2026-02 was presented, requesting an additional \$17,000 for the purchase of fire extinguisher training equipment. The resolution proposes transferring funds from Operating Contingency to the Materials and Services – Fire Prevention fund.

Chief Schick described the benefits the training equipment would provide for the district and community members, such as training the staff from the Casino. He said WLFEA was interested and could apply for grants to help cover the cost, as WLFEA would initially have to pay for the equipment up front.

WLFEA: Director Palisi made a motion to approve the purchase of fire extinguisher training equipment as outlined in WLFEA Resolution 2026-02. Director Buss seconded the motion. A roll-call vote occurred; all WLFEA Directors voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Director Heppel inquired whether there would be fees associated with lending the equipment to other agencies or allowing use of the trainer. Chief Schick responded that staff would need to accompany the equipment to operate it. He added that he would develop a policy addressing equipment lending, including use requirements and procedures in the event of damage.

WLFEA: Director Webb made a motion to adopt WLFEA Resolution 2026-02, approving a supplemental budget adjustment for fiscal year 2025–26 within the General Fund. Director Holbrook seconded the motion. A roll-call vote occurred; all WLFEA Directors voted in favor, and the motion passed.

3. Policies for Review:

- a) Job Description: WLCR Part-Time Transport Drivers
- b) Job Description: WLCR Part-Time Responder
- c) 905 – Body Armor
- d) 906 – Apparatus/Vehicle Backing
- e) 907 – Heat Illness Prevention Program
- f) 908 – Respiratory Protection Program
- g) 909 – Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) Devices

DIRECTOR COMMENTS:

- Director Stanton inquired about transport options for WLCR and whether RideSource ADA Paratransit is utilized. Chief Chance responded that RideSource is based in Eugene and that there is no current contract in place. He noted that RideSource does not have the capacity to transport individuals back to Florence but will often serve as an intermediary between Medicare and WLCR.
- Director Buss expressed appreciation to WLCR for transporting a recent patient to Salem.
- Director Russell shared that she recently had lunch with a group of EMTs, medical retirees, and other healthcare professionals, including an individual who began his career with the district as an EMT and is now an anesthesiologist. She expressed pride in the district’s role in inspiring individuals to advance their careers in the medical field.
- Director Stanton reported that he had four items to share with the Board. He provided an overview of the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) meeting, including a discussion of their senior disability plan. He also summarized key takeaways from the SDAO Conference, highlighting the importance of proactively addressing media threats and narratives, focusing on education rather than advocacy regarding levy ballots, and maintaining compliance with Public Meeting Law, including avoiding “reply all” communications. He further encouraged fellow directors to seek lower-cost lodging options for conferences. Director Buss inquired about the metrics Director Stanton was using for conference lodging costs and noted that WLFEA follows government per diem rates.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Per ORS 192.660(2)(a), to consider the employment of a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual agent. The board entered into executive session at 7:30 p.m. Executive session ended at 7:57 p.m., and the directors returned to the regular meeting.

Chief Schick informed the public that no decisions were made during the Executive Session.

FUTURE BUSINESS:

A Special Joint Board Meeting is scheduled for March 30, 2026, at 5:30 p.m., and the next regular Joint Board Meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Holly Lais, Recording Secretary