

TAHOE DOUGLAS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
February 19, 2026

Those Present:

Chief Scott Lindgren

Trustee Dan Kruger (Virtual)

Chairman Ben Johnson

Trustee Ben Ward

Vice Chair Stacy Noyes (Virtual)

Legal Counsel Kara Hayes (Virtual)

Trustee John Breaux

1. Call to Order

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted.

3. Roll Call

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Noyes (Virtual), Trustee Breaux, Trustee Kruger (Virtual) and Trustee Ward were all present. A quorum was met.

4. Approval of Agenda

Trustee Ward made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Second: Trustee Breaux

Motion approved: 5-0

5. Public Comment

Elisabeth Lernhardt raised concern about transparency, inquired about salary increases, questioned legal counsel's experience, and requested guidance on how to obtain answers.

Beth Wallace, a Zephyr Heights resident, expressed concerns about transparency, referenced possible self-approved raises, emphasized that competent public auditors and legal counsel should have discovered any issues and criticized rescheduling a board meeting during a popular vacation time and severe weather.

Brett Tibbits, a 16-year resident and president of the Tahoe East Shore Alliance, praised Scott Lindgren especially for his advocacy during the Highway 50 safety efforts. He criticized the board for a lack of transparency in handling Lindgren's potential departure and for recent legal decisions. He urged a slower, more transparent process with possible mediation to restore trust.

Robert Byren, a Hidden Woods resident, voiced strong support for Chief Scott Lindgren, urged the Board to reconsider accepting his retirement, and opposed appointing an interim chief. He

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cited Lindgren's leadership in evacuation planning, aviation, wildfire preparedness initiatives, and defensible space efforts, and asked the Board to reinstate him.

Dana Tibbets expressed concern over the treatment of Chief Scott Lindgren, emphasizing his leadership in wildfire response, fuels management, and evacuation readiness. She questioned the board's focus on personnel disputes over public safety, noted no evidence of improper compensation, and urged transparency and continuity in leadership to protect the community.

Greg Felton, a former 12-year TDFPD board member, explained that the board oversees budgets, policies, and operations, while the Fire Chief handles personnel. He noted that neither auditors nor the board typically review individual employee salaries. He stated that Chief Lindgren submitted his own resignation and the board did not force him out, noting some details remain private.

William Darr, local 2441 union president, reported widespread distrust of Chief Scott Lindgren among employees, citing surveys showing 97% had no trust and high turnover, 48% of the District's firefighters resigned in five years. He credited the board for investigating the issues and fully supported hiring an interim chief, noting morale improved immediately after Lindgren's resignation. Captain Darr urged the community to build a positive relationship with the next chief.

Curtis Baker, Vice President of Local 2441, expressed concerns about employee turnover, stating that 26 employees have left during Chief Lindgren's tenure, representing significant loss of experience. He also raised concerns about equipment including aging apparatus and lack of a water tender and described operational challenges impacting response. He thanked the Board of Trustees for their engagement and stated that District members remain committed to serving and protecting the community.

Staci Baker raised concerns about Chief Lindgren's residency, use of a district vehicle, compensation and salary increases. She also alleged concerns regarding his leadership conduct and involvement of the State Fire Marshal in matters related to the Kingsbury General Improvement District. She stated her belief that he lacks integrity and is not fit to lead the department, and she thanked the Board for acting in what she views as the District's best interests.

Cory Labato, Stateline resident and local postal worker, supported Bryce Cranch for interim Fire Chief, describing him as calm and responsive, citing a Fourth of July fireworks incident as an example. He stated that Chief Cranch would help restore department morale and emphasized the importance of trust and firefighter safety.

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Derek Hirsch, a Round Hill resident and professional firefighter in Nevada, expressed support for the Board's decision to remove Chief Lindgren and appoint an interim chief.

Ed Andrews (virtual), a resident of Zephyr Heights, expressed concern about a lack of transparency regarding recent personnel decisions. While he acknowledged Chief Lindgren's positive community involvement and leadership, particularly in wildfire mitigation, he stated that the unclear circumstances surrounding the situation are troubling.

6. Trustee Comments

Trustee Breaux recognized Chief Lindgren's remarkable accomplishments.

Chairman Johnson explained that an open public meeting regarding the Chief's contract had been planned but became unnecessary when Chief Lindgren announced his retirement. He noted that the Chief requested a quiet, graceful exit, which the Board honored, and emphasized the Board's commitment to transparency.

7. Discussion and Possible Action to (a) appoint an Interim Fire Chief to ensure continuity of District operations during the Fire Chief's transition to retirement; (b) determine the scope of the Interim Fire Chief's interim managerial authority; (c) delegate interim managerial authority to the Interim Fire Chief; and (d) provide direction regarding coordination of transitional administrative responsibilities.

Chairman Ben Johnson

Chairman Johnson explained that two Board members were asked to evaluate options for an interim Fire Chief. Once a recommendation was received, he called a special meeting to consider the appointment.

The Board noted challenges in evaluating candidates due to missing performance reviews, leading them to rely on rank and existing roles. They emphasized the need for continuity, particularly with the budget, and cited Bryce Cranch's experience and administrative responsibilities as supporting his appointment. All six applicants were recognized as qualified, and the Board praised the depth and professionalism of the Battalion Chiefs.

Trustee Breaux made a motion to appoint Assistant Chief Bryce Cranch to Interim Fire Chief, effective today.

Second: Trustee Ward

Motion approved: 5-0

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The Board discussed a possible 10% pay increase for the additional responsibilities and agreed to place the item on the agenda for the Board meeting in March.

Motion:

Trustee Breaux moved that the Interim Fire Chief be responsible for daily operations of the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, including interim personnel decisions, timely completion of the FY 2026/2027 budget, earning employee trust and respect, and ensuring all employees receive at least one annual performance evaluation. Chief Lindgren shall assist the Interim Fire Chief with the FY 2026/2027 budget and other matters as requested.

Discussion:

Chairman Johnson requested a collaborative leadership style moving forward as the District works to reset its organizational culture.

Trustee Ward suggested additional support for revenue generation and review of the current budget. Chairman Johnson requested that Interim Chief Bryce Cranch or a designated Battalion Chief help lead the revenue generation committee.

Chief Cranch thanked the Board, staff, and community for their support during the leadership transition. He emphasized the department's competence, continuity from his experience under Chief Lindgren, and a focus on collaboration, restoring relationships, and maintaining high-quality service delivery.

Public comment:

Captain Darr congratulated Chief Cranch and expressed support for a collaborative, transparent, and trusting partnership to strengthen the department.

Greg Felton publicly thanked Chief Lindgren for his significant contributions, experience, and leadership, noting his valuable guidance through challenges and his dedication to the District, both visible and behind the scenes.

Elisabeth Lernhardt expressed appreciation for Chief Lindgren's leadership during regional wildfires and hoped the new Fire Chief will bring similar innovative thinking to address wildfire challenges in the basin.

Second: Trustee Ward

Motion approved: 5-0

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8. Public Comment

Brett Tibbits expressed support for Scott Lindgren and suggested pursuing additional funding for Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District from tourism-related taxes through the TRPA oversight process, noting Lindgren’s expertise and community connections would be valuable in that effort.

Elizabeth Lernhardt expressed concern about past financial practices that diverted fire department funds to the Event Center and Tahoe Douglas Visitor Authority, questioned the handling of property transfer taxes, and emphasized the need to investigate and address these fiscal issues.

Derek Hirsch stressed that Chief Lindgren was not solely responsible for past firefighting efforts, noting the efforts of Tahoe Douglas personnel and mutual aid agencies, and urged the community members to consider the broader perspective.

David Martland, a Tahoe Douglas firefighter/paramedic, said Scott Lindgren is a good person but not an effective chief, noting staff losses under his leadership and supporting the board’s efforts to improve morale and the department’s direction.

Janet Murphy, a former Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection board member, apologized for any issues that may have happened during her term. She noted that auditors were relied on to review payroll, etc. She praised the current board for their oversight and described Scott Lindgren as credible and inspirational, citing his role in keeping four lanes open on Highway 50.

9. Adjourn

Meeting Adjourned at 2:25 PM

Submitted by:

Kathy Donovan

Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk