

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

Those Present:

Interim Fire Chief Bryce Cranch
Chairman Ben Johnson
Vice Chair Stacy Noyes
Trustee John Breaux (Virtual)

Trustee Dan Kruger
Trustee Ben Ward
Legal Counsel Kara Hayes

1. Call to Order

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 2:32 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

Steward Shipley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

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

Chairman Johnson led a moment of silence in memory of Chris Anderson, a local helicopter pilot who lost his life fighting the Widemouth Fire in Utah.

4. Approval of Agenda

Vice Chair Noyes made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Second: Trustee Kruger

Motion approved: 5-0

5. Public Comment

None.

6. Trustee Comments

Johnson thanked staff for their efforts in ensuring Chris Anderson was properly recognized by the State of Nevada, including having flags lowered to half-staff. He described Anderson as a tremendous individual and significant loss to the community. Chief Cranch recognized Fire Inspector/PIO Turner for her efforts in obtaining a proclamation from the Governor's Office.

7. Approval of the Consent Agenda

- a. Board Meeting Minutes 07/22/2026
- b. Job Description – Defensible Space Inspector
- c. Job Description – Fire Chief
- d. Job Description – Assistant Fire Chief
- e. Job Description – Battalion Chief

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Trustee Breaux made a motion to approve items a., b., d., and e., as presented and move item c. forward for discussion.

Second: Vice Chair Noyes

Motion approved: 5-0

8. Consent items moved forward:

Trustee Breaux proposed adding the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer (EFO) program to the Job Description for the Fire Chief. He noted that the EFO is comparable in value to Fire Officer III and could be beneficial when considering external candidates.

It was clarified that the EFO would not be a required qualification but could be considered as one of several ways to demonstrate relevant experience and training. The Board agreed that adding the EFO would provide flexibility without limiting internal or external candidates.

Vice Chair Noyes made a motion to approve the Fire Chief job description, with an amendment to the "Experience and Training" section to add the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) designation as an additional pathway for "a typical way to gain required knowledge, skills, and abilities."

Second: Trustee Breaux

Motion approved: 5-0

9. Edward Jones Financial Report

Stuart Shipley, Financial Advisor

Stuart Shipley discussed the current interest rate environment, noting that interest rates have risen significantly in recent years and that bond prices and interest rates move in opposite directions. He explained that the primary concern with the District's longer-term municipal bonds are interest rate risk and duration, rather than the credit quality of the bonds.

Shipley noted that the municipal bonds currently have approximately \$83,000 in unrealized losses but remain high-quality investments and have an estimated average yield of approximately 4.6% if held to maturity. He identified three considerations for the Board:

- The primary objective of the funds
- The amount of interest rate risk the District is willing to accept
- Would the District purchase the same bonds today if the funds were held in cash?

The Board discussed the potential risks and benefits of reallocating some longer-term investments to shorter-term securities. The bonds have a current value of approximately \$259,000. The Board discussed maintaining the current diversified portfolio given the District's liquidity and low likelihood of needing the funds in the near term. Shipley recommended making no changes to the portfolio at this time.

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10. Special Recognition

Service Recognition:

Interim Fire Marshal Kris Rowlett	7 Years of Service
Explosive Detection Canine Tracker	5 Years of Service
Firefighter/Paramedic Everett Bertolone-Smith	3 Years of Service (Hired as seasonal in 2019)
Firefighter/Paramedic Jeffrey Fairley	2 Years of Service

New Employee:

Jennifer Hawker-Lawton	Accounting Specialist I
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11. Discussion and possible action to dissolve the Fire Chief Hiring Committee previously approved by the Board

Chairman Ben Johnson

Chairman Johnson explained that the previously established two-member Fire Chief Hiring Committee should be dissolved because the committee is subject to Nevada Open Meeting Law requirements. He stated that requiring the committee to conduct its work in public meetings would not be practical.

Trustee Breaux made a motion to dissolve the previously formed Fire Chief Hiring Committee.

Second: Trustee Ward

Motion approved: 5-0

12. Discussion and possible action to determine Fire Chief recruitment process including without limitation whether recruitment will be limited to internal candidates or open to both internal and external candidates.

Chairman Ben Johnson

Chairman Johnson stated that the Board should establish a Fire Chief recruitment process that allows for public input, perspectives from partner agencies, and staff input. He discussed the different options of internal recruitment, external recruitment, direct appointment, or a hybrid approach.

Trustee Breaux supported promoting from within to encourage employee morale, development and advancement. Breaux stated that agencies typically recruit externally when qualified internal candidates are unavailable.

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Board members agreed that the recruitment should be internal only.

The Board discussed whether to use a third-party consultant to assist with the recruitment process. Nalder noted that neighboring agencies have recently used outside consultants and that preliminary estimates for an internal recruitment process were approximately \$10,000. Potential process options discussed included interviews, an assessment center, and a town hall or stakeholder meeting to obtain public input.

Legal Counsel Kara Hayes advised that, if recruitment is limited to internal candidates, the Board could conduct interviews in an open meeting. She also noted that application screening and scoring should not be assigned to staff members who work with the applicants.

Trustee Kruger expressed support for obtaining honest feedback from staff, potentially through an anonymous 1–5 rating survey. Trustee Breaux explained that he had used a similar peer analysis process for internal promotions and found it useful in evaluating candidates based on their day-to-day working relationships and leadership qualities. Hayes raised concerns regarding confidentiality, anonymity, and the reliability of the survey results. Captain Darr stated that staff wanted to have a voice in the recruitment process, whether through a survey or another method.

HR Specialist Nalder stated she and HR Specialist Vindel would work with Hayes to develop a simple ethical recruitment process for the Board's consideration possibly at the next meeting.

Chairman Johnson stated that he would like to have a new Fire Chief selected by the end of the year, with the recruitment process brought back to the Board in September and a special meeting held in October or November to obtain public input and select the new Chief.

Chairman Johnson expressed concern that publicizing staff survey results could unintentionally have a negative impact on candidates' reputations and careers.

Trustee Breaux made a motion that the Fire Chief recruitment process will be limited to internal candidates.

Second: Trustee Kruger

Motion Approved: 5-0

Chairman Johnson made a motion to direct staff to come up with a process, incorporating the Board's discussion, for the selection of the new Fire Chief, and to bring a recommendation back to the Board at the September meeting. Staff would be free to utilize legal counsel as they see fit throughout the process.

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Second: Trustee Ward
Motion Approved: 4-1

13. Discussion and possible approval of Resolution #006-2026 delegating authority over litigation decision-making to the Board Chair.

Chairman Ben Johnson

Chairman Johnson stated that this resolution was recommended by legal counsel as a best practice and that there was no pending litigation requiring its use. Legal Counsel explained that the resolution would allow the Board Chair to make time-sensitive litigation decisions on behalf of the Board, such as directing counsel to proceed with an appeal or scheduling depositions, without requiring formal Board action for each matter.

Vice Chair Noyes made a motion to approve Resolution #006-2026 delegating authority over litigation decision-making to the Board Chair.

Second: Trustee Breaux
Abstain: Chairman Johnson
Motion Approved: 4-0

14. Discussion and possible approval of Resolution #007-2026, proposing Fees for Service for rate changes to become effective on October 1, 2026. First hearing – no action to be taken.

Finance Manager Carrie Nolting
Interim Fire Chief Bryce Cranch

Chief Cranch presented the proposed Fees for Service rate changes, noting that updating the fees was identified as a revenue-generation objective. He stated that labor costs have increased approximately 16% since the last review, along with increases in operating and EMS-related costs. He explained that this was the first reading and that changes could still be made before final adoption.

Vice Chair Noyes supported higher increases, particularly for special events and for-profit activities. Chairman Johnson agreed, noting that overhead should also be considered and recommending that rates be adjusted annually to reflect increases in wages and operating costs.

Finance Manager Nolting-Bammer explained that standby rates were calculated using burdened personnel costs and that she was comfortable the proposed rates captured the District's costs. She noted that equipment rates were already above FEMA and OES benchmarks and cautioned that fees should remain based on actual cost recovery.

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Interim Fire Marshal Rowlett explained that the proposed schedule would better recover costs associated with special events. The fireworks permit would be \$500, including 1.5 hours of plan review and 1.5 hours of inspection, with additional time billed hourly. A single fire prevention hourly rate of \$115 would apply to staff services and reflects overtime costs. Rowlett also explained that commercial plan review fees were revised to align more closely with other Northern Nevada agencies and the International Building Code valuation methodology.

Chief Cranch discussed the proposed EMS rate increase, noting that the District's last increase was in 2024 and a planned 3% increase in 2025 was missed. The proposed rates consider Medicare inflation, the District's increased costs, and regional rates.

Interim Fire Marshal Rowlett explained that the fee schedule included the next 6% wage increase for the following July, allowing the District to capture the increase without having to bring fees for service back before the Board.

Trustee Kruger raised the possibility of additional fees or fines related to illegal VHRs and requested that legal counsel review the District's enforcement authority. He also questioned fees associated with defensible space, outdoor burning, and tree permits, expressing concern that fees could discourage residents from performing fire-safety work. Chief Cranch noted that including fees provides a mechanism to recover costs when grant funding is unavailable while continuing to encourage fuels-reduction activities.

15. Discussion and possible approval to utilize the aviation fund to pay expenses associated with a drone program up to \$50,000.

Interim Fire Chief Bryce Cranch

Chief Cranch requested Board approval to use up to \$50,000 from the Aviation Fund to develop and establish a District drone program. He noted potential uses including fire detection, search and rescue, fuels reduction support, and community safety.

Legal Counsel Kara Hayes explained that the original resolution establishing the Aviation Fund authorizes the District to raise and collect funds for aviation purposes. She stated that drones could appropriately be considered part of an aviation program with Board approval. Hayes also recommended revisiting the original resolution to clarify and update its provisions.

Trustee Breaux made a motion to approve the utilization of the aviation fund to pay expenses associated with a drone program up to \$50,000.

Second: Trustee Kruger

Motion approved: 5-0

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16. District Divisions

Chairman Johnson accepted Division reports as submitted and gave Trustees the opportunity to ask any questions. Vice Chair Noyes asked for an insurance transition update.

HR Specialist Nalder reported that the transition to the Anthem plan has gone smoothly. She stated that the transition has been a significant improvement and that the District's investment in the change has been worthwhile.

Chief Cranch introduced a report on equipment proposed for surplus, noting the District's large fleet and associated maintenance costs. Chief Prather reported that nine vehicles had been identified for surplus through review by the mechanics and Equipment Committee, including an ambulance, patrol vehicles, a utility truck, three Ford Escapes, and the 1946 Seagrave. Chief Prather explained that the vehicles were selected due to age, mechanical issues, limited use, or ongoing maintenance costs.

Finance Manager Nolting-Bammer noted that the District's existing inventory policy addresses disposition of assets.

17. Review of Monthly Fire District Reports and Activities and Annual Goals and Objectives. No action will be taken.

Interim Fire Chief Bryce Cranch

- Chief Cranch reported on ongoing efforts to improve the District's financial position through expense reductions and revenue generation.
- Presented a proposal for a Standards of Cover study by AP Triton as a potential tool to support future funding and service-level discussions. The proposal was provided for Board review only; no action was requested.
- Discussed efforts to address staffing needs through an HR consultant and potential partnerships with other agencies.
- Reported that the District is pursuing a potential donation for equipment purchases and changes to transient lodging (TOT) licensing fees.
- Recognized the Wildland Fuels Reduction team and other District personnel for their efforts to complete project and deployment work, generate reimbursements, and support the District's financial position.

18. Public Comment

None.

19. Confirm next meeting, Wednesday, September 23rd, 2026, at 2:30 PM, possible agenda items.

Confirmed.

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20. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:08 PM.

Submitted by:

Kathy Donovan

Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk