

**CLEARWATER FIRE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 3, 2025**

**1. Call to Order: 6:00 p.m. – Clearwater City Hall**

Mayor Lawrence called the Clearwater Fire Commission to order Monday, March 3, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at Clearwater City Hall. Members present were Andrea Lawrence Wheeler, City of Clearwater; Tom Plaggerman, Lynden Township; and Scott Miller, Clearwater Township. A quorum was present. Also present was City Administrator Annita Smythe and Fire Chief Mike Keller.

**2. Approve Minutes from January 31, 2024 Meeting**

**MOTION** by Plaggerman to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Miller, all voted aye.  
**MOTION CARRIED.**

**3. Review Annual Report**

- Fire Chief Keller provided an overview of the annual report.
  - o There was one change to officers, as Harvey Doble has been replaced by Tyler Knobbe as department Secretary.
  - o Calls have been trending upwards, driven again primarily by medical calls.
  - o Members asked what the goal was for total number of firefighters. Chief Keller noted that the department is authorized thirty and would like to achieve that number.
  - o Members discussed the pros and cons, along with city procedures, for billing out calls. Smythe noted that this is done primarily where there is a mutual aid call and information is provided by the requesting jurisdiction. It is difficult to bill for others, as the city does not typically have the information needed, and the call types can be sensitive where injuries or fatalities are involved. Members agreed that it may not be worth the effort to chase these down, but still like to have it as an option.

**4. Discuss 2026 Budget Draft**

- Smythe explained that this is a preliminary budget. It is intended to provide a basis for the townships' annual meetings in March. The draft includes an increase of about 3-4% and is subject to change if conditions merit.
- Members had questions about specific line items and spent some time discussing capital needs. Several purchase that used to be "operating supplies" are now considered "capital" due to price increases. These include things like turnout gear and radios.
- Members also discussed options for smoothing out the alternating surpluses and deficits that are an unintended consequence of the city's cash budgeting and how the contract reads. This led into the fire contract discussion under item #5.

**5. Discuss Fire Contracts**

- Smythe explained that because of the 12-month notice requirement for termination in the current fire contracts, renewal discussions should take place next year.
- Members discussed what works well in the current contract and ideas for improvements. After discussion, Members agreed to bring back a list of proposed contract changes to a second meeting later in the year. These will then be incorporated into a draft contract extension to be reviewed in 2026.

**6. Other Business**

- Member Miller asked for updates on the city's plans for extending utility services into orderly annexation areas. Smythe explained that the city council had discussed options and obtained cost estimates from the city engineer. However, funds are not yet available to pursue it further. County Road 75 will be the council's first priority area when funding is available.

**7. Adjournment**

**MOTION** to adjourn by Lawrence, seconded by Plaggerman, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**  
Meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

ATTEST

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Annita M. Smythe, City Administrator

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