Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District No. 1 was held on Thursday, October 8, 2026 at 6:00 P.M.

Commissioner John C. Kenny called the meeting to order.

Commissioner John C. Kenny led a pledge to the flag.

A moment of silence for our departed members and for those serving overseas.

PRESENT:	Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr., Commissioner Jay Barcellona, Commissioner Jeffrey Moran, Commissioner John C. Kenny
EXCUSED:	Commissioner Patrick Kenny
ALSO PRESENT:	Mayor John E. McCormac Chief Robert Minkler Deputy Chief Mark Minkler Christopher Howell, Attorney (Arrived 6:16 P.M.)

Commissioner J.C.K.: I need a motion to suspend the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting on October 7, 2026 to the next Regular Meeting.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to suspend the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting on October 7, 2026 which was seconded by Commissioner Jay Barcellona and carried unanimously.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay, thank you all for coming tonight. This is a very special night. We really enjoy this and I'd like to turn it over to our mayor, Mayor McCormac if you would like to say a few words.

Mayor John E. McCormac: I just want to say congratulations to the four new Woodbridge firemen. Carol Ehrlich and I have to get to three other events tonight but I wanted to stop to say congratulations. You're joining a great fire department and we wish you the best of luck; stay safe.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay, thank you Mayor.

Audience applauds

Commissioner J.C.K.: Okay, at this time I'm going to turn the program over to Chief Minkler.

Chief Robert Minkler: Good evening, my name is Robert Minkler. I'm the Chief of the Woodbridge Fire Department. I welcome you all to our home, the firehouse here. I'd like to thank the Board of Fire Commissioners and the Fire Department Administration. The Board of Fire Commissioners keep supporting the department and the administration so we can continue to grow and offer more services of our

department. By adding these members who completed their training it's going to help us fulfill our goal and move this department forward. With that, I'd like to turn it over to Deputy Chief Minkler, our training officer. He'll explain what these members have gone through.

Deputy Chief Minkler: Good evening Chief, Commissioners, Officers, members of the department, family and friends and most importantly the firefighters we are here to recognize tonight. My name is Deputy Chief Mark Minkler. I am the Chief of Training of the Department. As the training officer I have the privilege of seeing our newest members at a point in their careers that many others do not. I see them when they first arrive. I see the uncertainty behind their confidence. I see them putting on equipment that doesn't quite feel natural yet. I see them learning how to move in turnout gear, don an SCBA and breathe from it, how to operate a hose line, throw a ladder, force a door, search a room and trust the member working beside them. I also see the mistakes and that is exactly what training is for. Over time something begins to change. The equipment becomes more familiar, the movement become deliberate, the questions become more thoughtful, the hesitation begins to disappear and in its place comes confidence. Not the confidence that I know everything but the confidence that comes from preparation, repetition, discipline and experience. Tonight represents an important milestone in that transformation. Tonight you advance from Recruit Firefighter to Firefighter. That title may sound shorter but the responsibility that comes with it is much greater. During your recruit period you are expected to learn. From this point forward you will still be expected to learn but you will also be expected to perform. When you respond to a call the public will not know how long you have been a firefighter. The family standing outside their home waiting for our arrival will not ask how many fires you have been to. The person trapped in a vehicle will not care whether this is your first extrication or your hundredth. They will simple see the name of this department on your uniform and expect you to be ready and they have every right to expect that. This is why our training must never end. There is a saying in the fire service, and it holds true, "you can't train hard enough for a job that can kill you". Those words are more than a slogan; they are the responsibility we have to ourselves, to our family, to the members of this department, to the residents, commuters and stake holders in Fire District #1. Every evolution you have completed, every drill you repeated, every time you were tired and still had to perform correctly; it all had a purpose. Training creates habits. When conditions are at their worst, when visibility is zero, the heat is intense, communications are difficult and seconds matter you will fall back on those habits. So continue building good ones. Never become too experienced to train, never become too senior to accept criticism, never become too confident to ask a question and never allow the complacency to convince you that yesterday's preparation is enough for tomorrow's call for service. There is another lesson I hope you carry with you throughout your careers. Being a firefighter is much more about being good at the job. Skills matter, knowledge matters, physical ability matters but character matters just as much. Your reputation in this department will be built by what you do when nobody is keeping score. Be the firefighter who takes initiative without being asked. Be the firefighter who notices when another member is struggling and steps in

to help. Be the firefighter others want to be beside them when conditions are at their worst. And when a new recruit walks through these doors unsure of themselves and trying to find their place remember where you started. Teach them, challenge them and encourage them. Pass along what others took time to teach you. That is how our department progresses. To the family and friends in the audience, upon advising our candidates that they were selected we make one thing clear, early is on time and on time is late. We firmly believe that the foundation for a successful firefighter begins long before they ever step foot into the fire academy. Our goal is to provide every recruit with the knowledge, skills, confidence and discipline necessary to succeed. Not only in the academy but throughout their firefighting careers. The members we are recognizing here tonight began their journey by completing an intensive four week in-house pre-academy training program. During those four weeks our training division introduced them to the fundamental skills of firefighting, established expectations and instilled the importance of team work, accountability and dedication to the fire service. This program is designed with one clear objective, to give our recruits every possible advantage and compare them for success as they enter the demanding two hundred and seventy-six hour firefighting training program at the Middlesex County Fire Academy. Through their hard work, determination and commitment these members successfully completed that program and graduated as New Jersey State Division of Fire Safety Firefighter Two Certified Firefighters. Upon returning from the academy these members entered into a twenty-eight in-house post-academy training program where we reinforced and sharpened the fire perfect skills they had acquired from our in-house pre-academy and during the fire academy. As part of their professional development each member completed a six week rotation within in our Fire Prevention Bureau under the direction of Battalion Chief Officer Robert Fizer. While detailed to the Fire Prevention Bureau they seen valuable insight into the daily operations of Fire Prevention, Fire Code Enforcement, Community Education and the importance of Fire Prevention in protecting our community. Just as importantly this rotation provided them with the opportunity to become familiar with the buildings, businesses and occupancies throughout our response area. These members also returned to the Union County Fire Academy on three separate occasions to participate in advanced structural firefighting training, further development in their occupational skills, decision making abilities and confidence in challenging the firefighting environments but their training did not stop there. Recognizing that today's firefighters must be prepared to respond to far more than just fires these members continued their education by successfully completing several specialized emergency service training programs. They completed sixty hours of motor vehicle extrication training earning their certifications as Motor Vehicle Extrication Technicians. This demanding program provided them with the knowledge and hands-on skills necessary to stabilize, lift, move and disassemble passenger in commercials vehicles of various sizes. They completed fifty hours of emergency medical responding training to become certified emergency medical responders. During this program they received instruction in patient management, patient lifting and movement, airway management, medical and traumatic emergencies and obstetrical emergencies. This training is especially important because emergency medical response is one of the services our department provides

to the community. It prepares these firefighters to deliver immediate potentially lifesaving care to individuals experiencing medical emergencies. They also completed thirty-two hours of swift water rescue training earning their certification as Swift Water Rescue Technicians. This specialized training equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform rescue operations involving moving water including individuals trapped in disabled vehicles on flooded roadways or people endangered by rapidly moving flood waters. These are extremely hazardous situations that require specialized training, sound judgment and thorough understanding of water operations. In addition, these members completed a thirty hour Fire Apparatus Pump Operator course where they learned the principles of operating fire apparatus pumps, calculating friction loss and conducting drafting and foam operations. These skills are essential to ensure that firefighters conduct in fire suppression, receive the water supply necessary to safely and effectively perform their duties. Building upon that training each member also successfully completed the department's twenty-eight day in-house apparatus driver operator training program. This comprehensive program placed the emphasis on safe emergency vehicle operation, apparatus position, apparatus pump operations and aerial operations. The objective was to build the knowledge and confidence in operational proficiency necessary to safely operate this specialized equipment. When you consider everything these members have accomplished it becomes clear that their journey has evolved far more than simply attending a graduation from the fire academy. They have dedicated countless hours to classroom instruction, practical skilled developments, hands-on training and professional education across multiple emergency service disciplines. To the firefighters of Recruit Class 2025 you have not chosen just a job you have chosen a profession that is hard. A mentor of mine, Deputy Chief Paul Drennan of the Jersey City Fire Department once told me, Mark if it was easy everyone would be doing it. You should be proud of reaching this point but do not mistake this ceremony for a finish line; it is a starting line. Continue learning, continue training, continue asking questions, take care of your equipment, take care of this department, take care of the public, take care of yourself and above all take care of each other. There will be difficult calls for service ahead. There will be long nights. There will be months that test your training, your judgment and even your character. When those moments come remember what you have learned there. Trust your training, trust your brothers and sisters and make sure the member standing next to you can trust you. Never stop training, never stop learning and never forget why you are here; to serve our community, to protect one another and to make sure everyone goes home. In closing I would like to take a moment to recognize and sincerely thank Captain Cory Snyder and Captain Daniel Aquino of our Training Division along with the Officers and Firefighters who have dedicated countless hours of their time, knowledge and experience to the training and development of these members. Recruit Class 2025, congratulations!

Audience applauds.

Chief Robert Minkler: We are going to call up our first firefighter, Orest Yaropud. He's going to be sworn in by his sister, Marina Zof. Please have your family come up.

Marina Zof: I, Orest Yaropud, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter of Fire District No. One, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my ability and render full service to the district and to the fire department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the governments established in the United States in this State so help me God.

Firefighter Orest Yaropud: I do.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Congratulations.

Firefighter Orest Yaropud: Thank you.

Chief Robert Minkler: Next to be sworn in will be Firefighter Robert Beattie. Firefighter Beattie will be sworn in by his father, Retired Battalion Chief from the North Plainfield Fire Department.

Audience applauds.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: Repeat after me. I, Robert Beattie.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: I, Robert Beattie.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: Do solemnly swear.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: Do solemnly swear.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: That I will faithfully.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: That I will faithfully.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And conscientiously.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And conscientiously.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: Discharge the duties of.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: Discharge the duties of.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: Firefighter of District One, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: Firefighter of District One, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: According to the best of my ability.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: According to the best of my ability.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And render full service to the district.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And render full service to the district.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And to the fire department.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And to the fire department.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And will at all times.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And will at all times.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: Be subordinate to the orders.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: Be subordinate to the orders.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And directions of my superiors.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And directions of my superiors.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And in conformity with the rules.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And in conformity with the rules.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: I further solemnly swear.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: I further solemnly swear.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: That I will support the Constitution of the United States.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: That I will support the Constitution of the United States.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And the Constitution of the State of New Jersey.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And the Constitution of the State of New Jersey.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And to the governments established.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And to the governments established.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: In the United States.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: In the United States.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: And in this State.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: And in this State.

Retired Battalion Chief Beattie: So help me God.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: So help me God.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Congratulations.

Firefighter Robert Beattie: Thank you.

Chief Robert Minkler: Next we are going to call Firefighter Ryan Fizer who is going to be sworn in by his father, Battalion Chief Robert Fizer.

Audience applauds.

Battalion Chief Robert Fizer: I, Ryan Fizer.

Firefighter Ryan Fizer: I, Ryan Fizer.

Battalion Chief Robert Fizer: Do solemnly swear.

Firefighter Ryan Fizer: Do solemnly swear.

Battalion Chief Robert Fizer: That I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter of Fire District No. One, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey to the best of my ability and render full service to the district and to the department

and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United State and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the governments established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Firefighter Ryan Fizer: I do.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Congratulations.

Firefighter Ryan Fizer: Thank you.

Chief Robert Minkler: Lastly, we would like to call up Firefighter Nicholas Michael who his brother will read the Oath of Office.

Audience applauds.

Brother of Nicholas Michael: I, Nicholas Michael.

Firefighter Nicholas Michael: I, Nicholas Michael.

Brother of Nicholas Michael: Do solemnly swear that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge the duties of Firefighter of Fire District No. One, Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey according to the best of my ability and render full service to the district and to the fire department and will at all times be subordinate to the orders and directions of my superiors and in conformity with the rules. I further solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United State and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the governments established in the United States and in this State so help me God.

Firefighter Nicholas Michael: I do.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner J.C.K.: Congratulations.

Firefighter Nicholas Michael: Thank you.

Chief Robert Minkler: Before we close the evening on behalf of myself and the Administration congratulations for your hard work. You earned this. Do not become complacent at work though. Every day you are going to learn something new and every call is going to be different and unique so you need to learn from that. We wish you the best of luck for a healthy career and a long career. To the members in the

back thank you for being here and supporting these members. It's nice to see the unity of this department and from our out of town departments that are with us today thank you for being here and thank you for being patient in training them. As Deputy Chief Minkler said, remember we were all in their shoes at one point and (inaudible). So Commissioner Kenny do you have anything in closing?

Commissioner J.C.K.: I just wanted to recognize Retired Chief Michael Balog. Michael was very instrumental in helping us develop this plan and following our business plan going forward so evening Chief and thank you.

Audience applauds.

Commissioner J.C.K.: There is coffee and cake and everything in the back so you are more than welcome to have something. Thank you for coming and have a good night.

Commissioner Robert Minkler, Sr. made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 6:30 P.M. which was seconded by Commissioner Jay Barcellona and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Bucsanszky
District Clerk