

Hamilton Fire Board Meeting

Thursday December 18th, 2025, 7:00pm

Call to Order: Chair Ron Jones

Prayer: Bob Yonker

Roll Call: Fillmore Township Bob Yonker & Mark Geurink. Heath Township Ron Jones & Missy Harvey. Manlius Township Barbara VanGelderren & Matthew Rooks. All present & no absentees.

Approval of Minutes: October 28th, 2025. Missy Harvey brought up many issues needing correction & noted where they were on the October 28th, 2025, minutes. Matthew Rooks acknowledged those issues & advised he would make corrections to the mistakes & resubmit them for approval.

1. Fire Board Officers: Ron Jones advised he is stepping down but he is open to the Vice Chair position. These are 2-year terms.
 - A. Chairperson: Missy Harvey made a motion to appoint Bob Yonker who turned it down. Bob Yonker made a motion to appoint Barbara VanGelderren, seconded by Matthew Rooks. All in favor 5 ayes-Bob Yonker, Mark Geurink, Matthew Rooks, Ron Jones, Barbara VanGelderren. Oppose-Missy Harvey. Vote 5-1, motion approved.
 - B. Vice Chairperson: Missy Harvey made a motion to appoint Ron Jones, Matthew Rooks seconded the motion, all in favor of Ron Jones as Vice Chair: Barbara VanGelderren, Matthew Rooks, Missy Harvey, Bob Yonker, Mark Geurink, Ron Jones. No opposition, vote 6-0 & motion is approved.
 - C. Secretary/Treasurer: Bob Yonker motioned to appoint Matt Rooks, Mark Geurink seconded the motion. Vote-ayes: Bob Yonker, Mark Geurink, Ron Jones, Barbara VanGelderren. Opposition: Missy Harvey; vote 4-1, motion carries & passes.
2. Appointment of Fire Chief: Barbara VanGelderren spoke about anonymous letters & explained Matt Rooks & Barbara VanGelderren made 7 random calls from the township hall to fire fighters about the

leadership of the Hamilton Fire Department. We received good feedback, but the fire fighters wanted the Inter-local settled. Also called 2 area fire chiefs & received good reports. Barbara VanGelderren also explained the compensation of the area fire chiefs. Also spoke about putting together an anonymous survey & looking into a full-time fire chief for the future.

The board discussed compensation & salary for the current fire chief & a future full-time fire chief.

Ron Jones made a motion to recommend Dave Haverdink to the 2-year term of Hamilton Fire Chief seconded by Bob Yonker, rollcall vote: Mark Geurink-yes, Bob Yonker-yes, Missy Harvey-no, Ron Jones-yes, Matt Rooks-yes, Barbara VanGelderren-yes; vote 5-1 in favor of Dave Haverdink for Hamilton Fire Chief. Next step is to take it to the township boards for approval. Chief Dave Haverdink advised he would not accept a future full-time fire chief assignment.

3. Appointment of the fire department administrative clerk: Missy Harvey was opposed to this item being up for discussion. A discussion was held on how this was put on the agenda & when the agenda was put out. How the administrative clerk is hired & the history of the position. Bob Yonker motioned this administrative clerk position & the survey discussion be tabled until April 16th, 2026, seconded by Matthew Rooks, rollcall vote: Mark Geurink-yes, Bob Yonker-yes, Missy Harvey-no, Rone Jones-yes, Matthew Rooks-yes, Barbara VanGelderren-yes. Vote 5-1 motion approved.

4. Year End Report-Chief Haverdink:

Current Status: Call volume has increased by 20%-21% (587 calls through December 1st). Operational expenditures are 7% below budget & revenue is up.

Proposed Budget: The Board reviewed the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget, assuming a 4-5% increase in call volume. Legal fees were increased to \$20,000.00, while insurance savings are expected by switching to VFIS.

Motion by Bob Yonker & supported by Matthew Rooks to approve the budget as proposed & then brought to the township boards for discussion. Barbara VanGelderren called for a rollcall vote, Mark Geurink-yes, Bob Yonker-yes, Missy Harvey-no, Ron Jones-yes, Matthew Rooks-yes, Barbara VanGelderren-yes. Vote 5-1 & motion passes.

5. New Business:

- A. Proof of ownership documents: Heath & Fillmore townships have sent in their documentation; the attorney's office is waiting on Manlius township.
- B. Legal Fees: Discussion was had about legal fees going up & who can call the fireboard/fire department attorney. Missy Harvey motioned that the fire board & fire department should go through the chairperson to ask questions of the attorney. Those questions & answers should be shared w/ the board. Motion seconded by Matthew Rooks. Rollcall vote: Mark Geurink-yes, Bob Yonker-yes, Missy Harvey-yes, Ron Jones-yes, Matthew Rooks-yes, Barbara VanGelderren-yes. Vote 6-0, motion passes.
- C. Deed Packet: Missy Havey brought up & her daughter, Stephanie, handed out a deed packet for 3440 Lincoln Rd, Hamilton MI 49419, the building that houses the Heath Township offices & the Hamilton Fire Department. The deed shows Heath Township is the owner of the property & building.

6. Public Comment: Motion made by Bob Yonker & supported by Mark Geurink that public comment be limited to 3 minutes for each person. All ayes & no nays, vote 6-0, motion passes.

- A. Brad Lubbers asked Chief Haverdink if any proposed battery facilities or data center projects were proposed in the Hamilton Fire District soon. Chief Haverdink did not know of any facilities proposed for the near future.
- B. Stephany Harvey stated Michigan law technically states that appointments & promotions to paid fire positions shall be ascertained by competitive examinations. Stephany Harvey thought

it be good in the future if the Hamilton Fire Board had a process for what competitive examinations mean. Barbara VanGeldereren advised that it is likely to come out in the survey as the Hamilton Fire Board moves forward into a full-time chief.

Stephany Harvey asked what questions were asked in the phone call survey Barbara VanGeldereren & Matthew Rooks conducted. She expressed what percentage the Board would accept when getting the surveys back. Barbara VanGeldereren advised the Board to consult with the attorneys on that.

- C. Chief Janik, Saugatuck Twp Fire Department, gave his experience when they dealt with doing a survey & it was positive. He suggested the Board move forward with an online survey. He also suggested the Board do performance reviews on the fire chief. He also said if needed he is willing to help with whatever is needed to get through this dispute.

- D. Marla Webber asked where the public will find minutes & agendas now that Matt Rooks will be the recording secretary. It was brought up that the Hamilton Fire Department should have their own website so it's not a specific township thing.

Marla Webber also asked if each township has 45 days to vote on the nomination of a fire chief & if the Fire Board is not meeting how does that work? It was explained to her by the Fire Chief that each township would vote on it at their next board meeting & if approved the fire board does not need to come back & meet. Barbara

VanGeldereren explained its spelled out in the Inter-local agreement.

Marla Webber also expressed concern that the Hamilton Fire Board does not have access to current salaries, & other stuff. The Fire Chief Dave Haverdink & Barbara VanGeldereren explained some of the breakdown with Dave Haverdink saying the former secretary Shiela used BS&A software & he agrees it needs to be cleaned up.

Another issue & question Marla Webber had was when the state of Michigan audits training records, is the Hamilton Fire Department

ready for this? Chief Dave Haverdink explained how every individual fire fighter is credited with their training hours & they are ready for any state audit.

- E. Bill Harvey asked who would be represented during the interview survey process, township or fire board representatives? Barbara VanGelderren explained the Fire Board & the attorneys would need to figure this out moving forward. Missy Harvey expressed that the department is growing & the fire fighters need to have a voice to express their thoughts. The surveys are 2 different things, 1 current feelings & ideas, 2 future full-time fire chiefs.
 - F. Connie Smith brought up her signature on a letter she submitted to the townships about doing a survey. She expressed that possibly the fire fighters did not feel comfortable answering the questions that were asked. Chief Dave Haverdink commented on how the fire department is a tight knit community.
 - G. Jeff Klien brought up issues for the taxpayers moving forward with a full-time chief & a growing fire department.
 - H. Emma VanOss brought up drone access & it was explained by chief Dave Haverdink who owns the drone & who has access to it.
 - I. Unk citizen explained of a slip when he was working with the Coopersville Fire Department. Barbara VanGelderren explained of the split of Fennville Fire Department, Manlius & Clyde Townships.
7. Adjourn Meeting: Next Hamilton Fire Board meeting scheduled for April 16th, 2026, 7:00pm. Motion to adjourn made by Matthew Rooks & seconded by Ron Jones. Motion passes at 8:57pm & meeting adjourned.