

Board of Fire Commissioners • Public FAQ & Transition Handout

Special Session: June 15, 2026 • Official Transparency Portal Publication

CORE TRANSITION PRINCIPLES

The Board of Fire Commissioners is strictly dedicated to executing this dual-vacancy transition with absolute statutory correctness, uncompromised transparency, and localized self-determination. By structuring an objective, merit-driven recruitment framework, we guarantee the preservation of local control over our taxing district's assets while actively evolving our administrative infrastructure to the executive level our taxpayers deserve and expect.

SECTION 1 — GENERAL PROCESS QUESTIONS

Q1 — Why is the Board of Fire Commissioners holding this Special Meeting?

The Board is executing its explicit statutory duties under **RCW 42.12.070** to formally establish the procurement framework, recruitment rules, and public transparency safeguards necessary to fill an immediate vacancy on the board. This highly structured session ensures that the upcoming transition is executed with absolute procedural correctness, thereby maintaining local control over district governance and preventing external county intervention.

Q2 — Why are there two separate vacancy tracks occurring simultaneously?

The district is navigating two distinct operational timelines:

- **Position A (Active Vacancy):** Commissioner Mick Lamar executed an immediate written resignation on June 3, 2026, creating an open seat.
- **Position B (Prospective Vacancy):** To guarantee a smooth, professional, and transparent handoff, Commissioner Mike Payne executed a prospective written resignation under the authority of **RCW 42.12.020**, explicitly designated to take effect at the regular board meeting on July 16, 2026.

Q3 — Why can't the district wait until July 16 to address both seats at once?

Waiting is a statutory impossibility that would jeopardize the district's independence. Under **RCW 42.12.070(1)**, the activation of Position A's vacancy on June 3rd triggered a strict, non-negotiable 90-day local appointment clock. If the remaining board fails to act immediately to build an Active Candidate Pool, local appointive authority automatically forfeits to the Chelan County Board of Commissioners. Taking immediate action is required to preserve local self-determination and evolve the department to the executive level the community deserves.

SECTION 2 — TRANSPARENCY & OPEN GOVERNMENT

Q4 — How can the community be certain that this selection process was not predetermined behind closed doors?

To guarantee absolute institutional neutrality, all foundational materials—including the application dossiers, timeline maps, and objective evaluation rubrics—were constructed by the Chief, administrative staff with Commissioners input. In strict compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (**RCW 42.30**), commissioners have prohibited all out-of-session discussions, communications, or consensus-building

regarding potential applicants. Every candidate examination will be conducted completely in open, public session on July 7, 2026.

Q5 — Will the public have access to view candidate application materials?

Yes. Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue operates under an absolute commitment to open government and institutional transparency. Pursuant to the Public Records Act (**RCW 42.56**), all submitted portfolios, letters of interest, and resumes instantly become public records open to community inspection upon receipt. To safeguard basic constitutional privacy boundaries, administrative staff will cleanly redact personal cell numbers, home emails, and residential street numbers under **RCW 42.56.250** prior to pack distribution.

Q6 — Why is the district utilizing such a highly structured, scripted meeting format?

Modern emergency service leadership demands rigorous professional standards. This highly standardized process ensures that the recruitment pipeline remains completely fair, neutral, and consistent. By using a unified framework, the board insulates the district against procedural errors and guarantees that every single applicant is measured against the exact same executive-level criteria. This professionalized approach is precisely how we are evolving the department to the level the community expects.

SECTION 3 — APPOINTMENT TIMELINE & PROCEDURES

Q7 — Why is the formal appointment for Position A scheduled to occur on July 7, 2026?

This date represents a critical, calculated checkpoint known as the 'Quorum **Shield**.' The board must evaluate, select, and swear in a qualified resident for Position A on July 7th to restore the board to three active members. This structure ensures that when Commissioner Payne's resignation becomes effective on July 16th, the district is never left with a depleted, single-member board. Executing this sequence is vital to protect the district's statutory voting quorum under **RCW 52.14.050** and preserve local control.

Q8 — Why can't the Board vote on and appoint both positions during the July 7th meeting?

A board cannot legally vote on an appointment to fill an office that is still occupied by a sitting official. Because Commissioner Payne remains actively in office until July 16th, the Position B vacancy does not legally exist until that date. Voting early would violate Washington State law and invalidate the appointment. Therefore, the vote for Position B will occur cleanly on July 16, 2026, matching the exact hour the seat is vacated.

Q9 — Why is Commissioner Payne permitted to vote on the selection for Position A if he has already submitted his resignation?

Under Washington law, a prospective resignation does not strip an official of their current duties or voting rights. Commissioner Payne remains a fully seated, active public official possessing complete constitutional authority until his exit hour on July 16th. He is legally obligated to participate in managing the affairs of the district, protecting the board quorum, and ensuring an orderly transition of leadership. He is structurally prohibited, however, from casting a vote for his own replacement.

SECTION 4 — CANDIDATE ELIGIBILITY & EVALUATION

Q10 — What are the mandatory minimum qualifications required to apply for these positions?

Pursuant to **RCW 52.14.010**, **RCW 42.23**, and Article III, Section 25 of the Washington State Constitution, an applicant must satisfy all four of the following criteria at the physical time of application submission:

- Continuous United States citizenship.
- Active status as a registered voter within Chelan County, WA.
- Uninterrupted physical residency within the geographic bounds of Fire District 9 for a minimum of thirty (30) days preceding appointment.
- Possess zero prohibited financial, beneficial, or employment contract conflicts of interest with the district.

Q11 — How will candidate applications be objectively evaluated by the sitting board?

To eliminate favoritism, all applicants will be systematically evaluated utilizing an approved, five-point objective candidate scoring matrix. Commissioners will score candidates across five key leadership competencies: Statutory & Fiscal Literacy; Labor, Volunteer & Personnel Dynamics; Governance Posture; Capital Asset Oversight; and Transparency Alignment. Every single candidate will face identical interview prompts to preserve absolute evaluation integrity.

Q12 — Is the Board permitted to discuss the applicants during a private Executive Session?

Yes. Under the strict provisions of **RCW 42.30.110(1)(h)**, the board is legally authorized to recess into a non-public executive session for the sole purpose of evaluating the professional qualifications of public office applicants. However, this privacy is strictly confined to evaluation. In compliance with the OPMA, all final debates, nominations, board motions, and formal appointment votes must occur exclusively in open public session.

SECTION 5 — PUBLIC COMMENT & COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Q13 — Why is the public comment period tonight strictly limited to vacancy-related transition topics?

This is a legally protected boundary under Washington State law. Because this is a Special Meeting, the Open Public Meetings Act (**RCW 42.30.080**) dictates that the board's discussions and actions are strictly limited to the specific legislative items displayed on the published public notice. To preserve the integrity of the meeting record, all public input under Item 5 must directly correspond to the transition framework.

Q14 — What if a resident wishes to address the board regarding general fire district operations or equipment issues?

Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue values all community feedback. Residents wishing to speak on operational items, equipment procurement, or general district business will be respectfully redirected to attend the next Regular Board Meeting. Regular meetings are not bound by the strict statutory limitations of a special session, allowing for an open, unrestricted public comment block.

Q15 — Is the district rushing this recruitment and evaluation process?

No. The timeline is an aggressive but necessary response to the statutory limits imposed on the district. Position A must be filled within a strict 90-day window to prevent a total forfeiture of local control to Wenatchee. The two-week application window (June 16 to June 30) provides ample time for sophisticated, prepared local leaders to submit their credentials. Accelerating this process is an intentional strategy to protect local governance and evolve our administrative infrastructure to the executive level our taxpayers deserve.

SECTION 6 — COUNTY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL QUESTIONS

Q16 — Have the Chelan County authorities been formally apprised of this transition plan?

To maintain absolute inter-agency coordination, the district transmitted a formal, signed Co-Notification of Active and Prospective Vacancy via electronic transmittal and certified mail will be sent on June 16, 2026. This notification will be delivered directly to Acting Chelan County Auditor Brandt Cappell and the Board of Chelan County Commissioners.

Q17 — What happens if the local board fails to appoint an individual within the statutory window?

If the board fails to execute an appointment for Position A by September 1, 2026, local jurisdiction over the vacancy instantly expires under **RCW 42.12.070(4)**. At that exact moment, the power to select your local fire commissioner automatically transfers to the Chelan County Commissioners. The current structured framework is explicitly designed to prevent this outcome, maintaining local control within the Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth communities.

SECTION 7 — STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE & HIGH-RISK QUESTIONS

Q18 — Is this framework pre-engineered to select political insiders or pre-determined friends of the board?

No. The transition rules are specifically engineered to eliminate personal bias. By adopting standardized interview prompts, an objective scoring matrix, mandatory open public session evaluations, and publishing all redacted dossiers online for public scrutiny, the board has created a transparent environment where raw competence is the only metric of success.

Q19 — Can an active fire district volunteer or employee apply for these vacancies?

Any resident who meets the foundational voter and residency criteria may physically apply. However, public office introduces strict fiduciary boundaries under **RCW 42.23**. An applicant cannot hold an active financial interest, contract, or position that fundamentally conflicts with the independent oversight duties of a Fire Commissioner. Any applicant possessing an irreconcilable statutory conflict will be disqualified by staff.

Q20 — Can the board modify these recruitment rules or timelines later in the cycle?

No. These guidelines were formally approved and adopted by unanimous resolution during the June 15, 2026 Special Session. They are now permanently integrated into the district's operational code and govern the entirety of the 2026 transition cycle, ensuring an immutable, fair, and legally sound process for all applicants.

Q21 — Why is the district using a single, unified candidate pool to fill two completely separate positions?

Utilizing a single procurement pipeline is a deliberate efficiency measure designed to protect public funds and streamline agency operations. Running two separate, consecutive recruitment cycles would require double the advertising costs, double the administrative staff hours, and create prolonged structural instability on the board. A unified pool provides a robust, highly qualified selection baseline, allowing the board to address both immediate and impending governance needs seamlessly while maintaining strict local control.

Q22 — Why is an outgoing commissioner (Payne) allowed to design the evaluation rules and scoring matrix right before he vacates his seat?

A retiring public official is legally bound to fulfill the duties of their office until their final exit hour. Commissioner Payne's prospective resignation was intentionally structured to provide the district with the administrative runway needed to draft rigorous transition guidelines. Designing these objective parameters before exiting is a responsible governance measure that insulates the fire district from operational chaos, ensuring the board is left with an institutional model designed to evolve the department to the executive level the community deserves.

Q23 — Does the 5-point evaluation matrix prioritize corporate and administrative competency over active fire suppression or volunteer firefighting experience?

The Candidate Evaluation Matrix is meticulously designed to test for the specific legal and fiduciary responsibilities of an elective policy board. Fire Commissioners do not manage tactical fire suppression—that operational authority vests strictly in the Office of the Fire Chief. The board's role is long-term strategic planning, statutory compliance, multi-million dollar capital asset allocation, and strict fiscal oversight. The matrix explicitly evaluates broad leadership capability and corporate-level fiscal literacy because that is the precise skill set required to evolve the agency to modern regional standards.

Q24 — How long will these appointed commissioners actually serve in office?

In strict compliance with [RCW 42.12.070\(6\)](#), both appointments are short-term transitional terms. Both selected individuals will hold office only until the official certification of the next district general election cycle in November 2027. At that point, the short-term appointments expire, and the seats will be placed on the public ballot. To retain either seat for the remainder of the unexpired terms, the appointees must formally run as active candidates, ensuring that final, long-term governance remains entirely in the hands of District 9 voters.

Q25: Why is this process so detailed and complicated?

Under state law ([RCW 42.12.070](#)), the remaining commissioners have the power to immediately hand-pick and appoint any resident behind closed doors with a direct vote—completely bypassing public applications, interviews, or scorecards.

We choose not to take that shortcut. We believe our community deserves better than a closed-door appointment. We are intentionally going the extra mile by creating a structured public framework so that every candidate is evaluated openly, transparently, and on pure merit.