



**WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS  
WESTFIELD FIRE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 12, 2026**



Fire Commissioner Chairperson Jeffrey Trant called the meeting of the Westfield Fire Commission (hereinafter WFC) of January 12, 2026 to order.

Location: Westfield Fire Department Station 2  
Community Room  
366 Little River Road  
Westfield, MA

**RECEIVED**

**FEB 10 2026**

Date: Monday, January 12, 2026

**WESTFIELD CITY CLERK**

Time: 18:00 hours

**MINUTES TAKEN:**

Christie Fillion, Westfield Fire Department (hereinafter 'WFD') Office Manager

Chairman's announcement:

Westfield Fire Commissioner Chairperson Jeffrey Trant in accordance with the Open Meeting Law Changes (Reference Memorandum dated June 18, 2010 'Open Meeting Law Changes'), from the Office of the City Solicitor, made the following announcement to all participants and attendees that the Westfield Fire Commission meeting of January 12, 2026, is being audio-recorded.

Westfield Fire Commissioner Chairperson Jeffrey Trant also made the following inquiry. If there is anyone making a video or audio recording of the meeting, please provide your names and addresses to the Commission. No one else was recording the meeting.

PRESENT IN ATTENDANCE:

Fire Commissioners Jeffrey Trant, Jeffrey Siegel and Brian Sutton. Chief Patrick Egloff. Deputy Chiefs Eric Bishop, Seth Ellis, and Chris King. Personnel Director Anne Larkham. Firefighter Clarke Robinson. City Councilor Dan Knapik. Albert Masciadrelli.

Commissioner Trant requested a roll call.

ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Jeffrey Siegel	Present
Commissioner Brian Sutton	Present
Commissioner Jeffrey Trant	Present

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**READING OF THE RECORD OF:**

**a.** WFC Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2025. Vote to accept.

**Motion:** Fire Commissioner Jeffrey Trant ascertained a motion to accept the WFC Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2025.

Commissioner Siegel made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of December 12, 2025.

Fire Commissioner Sutton seconded the motion.

**Roll Call**

Commissioner Brian Sutton	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Siegel	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Trant	YES

YES (3)      NO (0)

**b.** WFC Regular Executive Session Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2025. Vote to accept.

**Motion:** Fire Commissioner Trant ascertained a motion to accept the WFC Executive Session Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2025.

Commissioner Siegel made a motion to accept the executive session meeting minutes.

Fire Commissioner Sutton seconded the motion.

**Roll Call**

Commissioner Brian Sutton	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Siegel	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Trant	YES

YES (3)      NO (0)

)Note: The December 2025 meeting was held on December 8, 2025 and not December 12, 2025 as listed on the agenda and motions made. These minutes will have to be voted on again at a future meeting.)

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Chief Egloff introduced the new WFC liaison, newly elected City Councilor Dan Knapik and Chair of the Finance Committee to the Fire Commission. Councilor Knapik was present at tonight’s meeting. Chief Egloff petitioned Councilor

Betrandi for a new liaison since a City Councilor has not attended a WFC meeting since before COVID.

### **ROUTINE BUSINESS:**

- a. Introduction – Introductions were made by the three Fire Commissioners.
- b. Letters and Communications – Chief Egloff read a thank you note from a resident in Westfield who was transported on Christmas night for the care received in their medical emergency. The Sorel Family sent a monetary gift of \$250 which was deposited into the Ambulance Gift Account. The EMTs who were on this call were Firefighters Clarke Robinson, Jacob Sanborn, Scott Bullock, Matt Marchesi and Captain Joe Szenda.

Chief Egloff also read a thank you note from the Westfield Middle School Administration & Counseling Teams for our participation in their WMS Community Coffee Hour.

Lastly, Chief Egloff read a letter received by Deputy Chief Seth Ellis for a \$5,000 award for the FM Fire Service Grant to support the department's pre-incident planning efforts. This is a grant from Factory Mutual Insurance Company in Johnston, RI.

Deputy Ellis said that this grant was applied for to purchase two iPads for Engine 6 and Med 60 and approximately \$1,000 will be used for interface mapping for Brycer and First Due.

### **REPORTS FROM THE WFD & WFC:**

- a. Chief Egloff to report on the status of key areas of the department.

#### Organization Status

Currently there are two openings in the department and Chief Egloff will work closely with the Personnel Department to hire two Paramedics using the new Civil Service Hybrid Hiring Practice. The hope is to have candidates interview at the February 9, 2026 WFC meeting for these two positions.

Firefighter Aidan King is our newest Paramedic, finishing his Paramedic program and passing his certification in record time. He is currently working days to get his minimum number of 30 calls that our Medical Control requires before being signed off to work with another Paramedic.

#### Replacement Equipment

Engine 3 has made the trek from Wisconsin to Massachusetts and is getting some finishing touches done to it at the Pierce dealership in Walpole. We are hoping to have it delivered and put into service by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

Technology

Deputy Ellis approached Chief Egloff and asked if he would support Deputy Ellis' request in applying for a FM Fire Service grant. Chief Egloff gave him the okay to run with it. As mentioned in Letters and Communications, the department was notified on January 8, 2026 that we were awarded the grant in the amount of \$5,000.00. Chief Egloff will write a letter to Mayor McCabe requesting him to send this to the City Council for acceptance.

Call Volume

December 2025:

338 Fire Apparatus Responses

645 Ambulance Responses

Calendar year 2025 total:

3,642 Fire Apparatus Responses

7,880 Ambulance Responses

The total number for 2025 was 11,522 calls for service.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. Discussion and report on the committee meeting to implement the recommendations from the MRI review.

Deputy Bishop reviewed what was last discussed:

1. Deputy Ellis provided data relative to response time which sparked some enthusiastic exchange between members.
2. Bishop discussed working on a wellness check-ins and provided updates on how the City can support initiatives.
3. Kopatz provided an update on the training center- discussed ideas on how to move forward.
4. Captain Kane put some groundwork in on the Joint Labor Committee (JLC) and the group worked on how the JLC purpose is and what it is to accomplish.
5. Robinson provided an outline of the awards ceremony but needed further information on resources available to support the endeavor.
6. The group was clear that if there were no resources and no support then the MRI committee would be a token committee.
7. The group discussed that the creation of officers or new positions was cut from the budget. We discussed how this issue relates to problem blindness and how to create a pathway to eliminate the blindness. Urgency, value and impact were the key elements that were discussed. The issue was tabled until the next meeting.

- b. Updates to the Fire Chief job description, as presented by Personnel Director Anne Larkham at the November and December 2025 meetings.

Personnel Director Anne Larkham said that the job description went to the City Council in the December 18, 2025 meeting. The first January 2026 meeting was cancelled. The job description went to the Personnel Action Committee, and there are two meetings before the job description has to come out. She is hoping that it will be reviewed at this coming week's meeting or the first meeting in February.

- c. Continued discussion regarding establishing a defined protocol for interviewing and hiring the next Fire Chief, including a process that invites all members of the Westfield Fire Department to submit written input to help inform the process.

At the December WFC meeting, the Commission granted the Chair to move forward by sending a survey to all WFD members asking for general input to help with topics of the interview questions. Commissioner Trant shared two documents with the other two Commissioners. One was the raw data from anonymous survey, and the other document was an analysis of the survey with an overview of the general themes for conversations for the Commissioners to consider.

Commissioner Trant read the 5-page analysis out loud. The three questions asked in the survey were:

1. What qualities and leadership characteristics do you believe are most important in our next Fire Chief?
2. What are the key strategic challenges the Westfield Fire Department will face in the next 1 – 3 years?
3. Is there any additional information you would like the Commission to consider as we design the interview process?

In summary:

Only 18 employees responded to the survey out of 90 employees.

The key themes to the desired leadership qualities were:

1. Integrity, honesty and ethical leadership (6 respondents)
2. Empathy and respect (10 respondents)
3. Advocacy for members (4 respondents)
4. Communication and transparency (4 respondents)
5. Decisiveness and calmness under pressure (2 respondents)
6. Team-oriented and collaborative (5 respondents)
7. Vision and strategic thinking (2 respondents)
8. Humility and accountability (3 respondents)
9. Open-mindedness and adaptability (2 respondents)

The following were identified as the key strategic challenges:

1. Recruitment and retention (12 respondents)
2. Budgetary constraints and funding (5 respondents)

3. Facilities and infrastructure (4 respondents)
4. Training (4 respondents)
5. Morale and department culture (5 respondents)
6. Consistency and standardization (2 respondents)
7. Increasing call volume (1 respondent)

The following were the suggestions for the Commission to consider:

1. Consider outside candidates (7 respondents)
2. Evaluate candidates beyond test scores (2 respondents)
3. Use external assessment and HR Professionals (1 respondent)
4. Address the "Red Flags" of the MRI Review (1 respondent)
5. Engage in meaningful conversations with Department leaders (1 respondent)
6. Consider peer-based scenarios in interviews (1 respondent)
7. Ensure a fair and open process (2 respondents)
8. Address Commissioner engagement (1 respondent)

Commissioner Trant's conclusion: The Westfield Fire Department Fire Chief Selection Survey provides valuable insights into the concerns and priorities of the department's members. The findings highlight the need for a Fire Chief who can address the challenges of recruitment, retention, morale, and facilities, and who possesses the leadership qualities necessary to foster a positive and productive work environment. The Commission should carefully consider these findings as they move forward with the selection process.

(Note: The survey analysis can be found at the end of these minutes.)

Commissioner Trant asked the other 2 Commissioners if they had any questions and to open it up for a discussion. They expressed their gratitude for work Commissioner Trant put into the survey findings. They were disappointed in the lack of participation with only 20% of employees participating. There was a discussion regarding civil service process, civil service test results and limited candidates.

Anne Larkham spoke about the Police Department and how they hired for the most recent Chief. She did tell the Commission that because the Fire Chief list only has one name on it, it is considered "a short list" and they do not have to hire from it. There would be other things that would have to be done to make it happen through Civil Service because it is still a Civil Service position. But she believes the Fire Commission had voted to move forward with the hiring off the list which Commissioner Siegel agreed was part of his recollection.

Commissioner Sutton asked about the new hybrid method for new firefighter candidates and how this will be announced. Chief Egloff mentioned that it will be on the City's website, the Fire Department's Facebook page and in the local newspaper. A flyer is being produced currently, and this is what will be distributed. Deputy Chris King spoke about the updates as to where we are in the process of advertising for the open

job opportunities with the hope to have interviews occur at the February 2026 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Trant brought the discussion back to the agenda item and mentioned he was grateful to the 18 employees who submitted their input. With the analysis in hand, this input will be helpful with working with Personnel in determining the interview questions. He said that as the Commission has voted on and agreed upon, they will continue with the interview of the one candidate at the February 9, 2026 meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. Discussion and VOTE to call for a Captains’ exam for 2026.

The current Captains’ list will expire approximately in August 2026. The exam is usually called for every two years and there are members in the department currently studying for the next exam. Chief Egloff is asking the Commission to vote to call for a Captains’ exam that is being held in April 2026.

**Motion:**

Fire Commissioner Trant ascertained a motion to call for a Captains’ exam for 2026.

Fire Commissioner Siegel made the motion to call for the exam.

Fire Commissioner Sutton seconded the motion.

Commissioner Trant asked for a discussion. Commissioner Siegel asked if that those taking the exam that the outcome of this exam will most likely not effect the hiring of the next Fire Chief. The question was deferred to the Chief. Chief Egloff answered yes that we normally call for the exam every two years and that there could be a retirement of a Captain in the spring of 2027. This upcoming list from this exam would be good for that promotion of a new captain.

**Roll Call**

Commissioner Jeffrey Trant	YES
Commissioner Brian Sutton	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Siegel	YES

YES (3)      NO (0)

**Motion Passed**

Deputy Bishop mentioned the call of hikers lost in the woods and C Group's response to help find them. The call came in through Montgomery, and the information came to the Westfield Fire Dept. through the Mass State Police. With the help of an app called What Three Words, they were able to pinpoint the exact location of the lost hikers even with elevation and weather barriers.

**Motion:** Fire Commissioner Trant ascertained a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Fire Commissioner Siegel made the motion.

Fire Commissioner Sutton seconded the motion.

**Roll Call**

Commissioner Brian Sutton	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Trant	YES
Commissioner Jeffrey Siegel	YES

YES (3)      NO (0)

**Meeting Adjourn:**

Time: 19:01 hours

Respectfully submitted,



Jeffrey Trant, Commissioner Chairperson  
Westfield Fire Commission  
caf

## Analysis of Westfield Fire Department Fire Chief Selection Survey

### INTRODUCTION

In anticipation of Fire Chief Patrick Egloff's retirement in April 2026, the Westfield Fire Commission (Commission) initiated a survey to gather input from members of the Westfield Fire Department (WFD) regarding the selection of the next Fire Chief. The survey, distributed on December 17, 2025, sought feedback on desired leadership qualities, strategic challenges facing the department, and suggestions for the interview process.<sup>1</sup> This analysis summarizes the key themes emerging from the survey responses.

### METHODOLOGY

**Data Source:** The analysis is based on 18 anonymized responses to the survey.

**Distribution:** The survey link was distributed via email to the "WFD All Fire" email group, consisting of 90 firefighters, administrative support staff, officers, and the chief. An announcement about the survey was also posted on Fire Manager.

**Anonymity:** Respondents were assured that their feedback would be confidential and accessible only to Commission members.

**Survey Questions:** The survey included three open-ended questions:

1. What qualities and leadership characteristics do you believe are most important in our next Fire Chief?
2. What are the key strategic challenges the Westfield Fire Department will face in the next 1–3 years?
3. Is there any additional information you would like the Commission to consider as we design the interview process?

**Analysis Approach:** The responses were reviewed to identify recurring themes and sentiments related to each question. The number of respondents who mentioned each theme was noted to gauge the prevalence of each concern.

### Key Themes and Findings

#### *1. Desired Leadership Qualities (Question 1)*

The most frequently mentioned desired leadership qualities can be grouped into the following themes:

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<sup>1</sup> On December 17, 2025, a survey link was distributed to all 90 members of the Westfield Fire Department via email and a Fire Manager announcement by the Office Manager on behalf of the Fire Commission, providing 19 days to respond until the deadline of January 5, 2026.

Integrity, Honesty, and Ethical Leadership (6 respondents): Respondents emphasized the importance of a chief who is honest, ethical, and transparent in their dealings, setting a high standard for the entire department.

Empathy and Respect (10 respondents): A significant number of respondents highlighted the need for a chief who is empathetic, understanding, and respectful of all members, regardless of rank. This includes active listening, valuing input from subordinates, and avoiding a condescending or dismissive attitude.

Advocacy for Members (4 respondents): Several respondents expressed a desire for a chief who will advocate for the needs of the department and its members, fighting for resources and support.

Communication and Transparency (4 respondents): Clear, open, and consistent communication was identified as a crucial leadership quality. Respondents want a chief who keeps the department informed and fosters a culture of transparency.

Decisiveness and Calmness Under Pressure (2 respondents): The ability to make timely decisions and remain composed in stressful situations was also mentioned as an important attribute.

Team-Oriented and Collaborative (5 respondents): Respondents want a leader who fosters teamwork, collaboration, and a sense of unity within the department, avoiding internal politics and "us vs. them" mentalities.

Vision and Strategic Thinking (2 respondents): The ability to develop and implement long-term strategic plans for the department's future was also noted.

Humility and Accountability (3 respondents): Respondents want a leader who is humble, admits mistakes, and takes responsibility for their actions and the actions of their staff.

Open-Mindedness and Adaptability (2 respondents): A willingness to consider new ideas and adapt to changing circumstances was also mentioned.

## **2. Key Strategic Challenges (Question 2)**

The following strategic challenges were identified by respondents:

Recruitment and Retention (12 respondents): This was the most frequently cited challenge. Respondents expressed concern about the department's high turnover rate, difficulty attracting qualified candidates, and the loss of experienced personnel to other departments or agencies. Low morale, non-competitive compensation, and a negative work environment were cited as contributing factors.

Budgetary Constraints and Funding (5 respondents): Respondents expressed concern about inadequate funding from the city, the need to advocate for resources, and the potential impact of budget cuts on the department's ability to provide services.

Facilities and Infrastructure (4 respondents): The aging condition of Fire Headquarters and Station 3 was highlighted as a significant challenge. Respondents noted issues such as mold, poor air quality, lack of space, and inadequate parking.

Training (4 respondents): The need for improved training facilities and opportunities was also mentioned. Respondents expressed concern about the lack of a dedicated training ground and the impact of ambulance call volume on training availability.

Morale and Department Culture (5 respondents): Low morale, a negative work environment, and a lack of trust between leadership and members were identified as challenges. Some respondents mentioned "ego-driven" issues and a lack of support from the city.

Consistency and Standardization (2 respondents): The need for greater consistency in rules, policies, and procedures across different groups within the department was also noted.

Increasing Call Volume (1 respondent): One respondent mentioned the increasing demand on firefighters and the need to address call volume.

### **3. Additional Information for the Commission (Question 3)**

Respondents offered the following suggestions for the Commission to consider:

Consider Outside Candidates (7 respondents): A strong sentiment was expressed that the Commission should consider candidates from outside the department to bring fresh perspectives and address existing problems. Several respondents criticized the limited pool of internal candidates and the perception that the selection process was predetermined.

Evaluate Candidates Beyond Test Scores (2 respondents): Respondents cautioned against relying solely on test scores and urged the Commission to consider a candidate's leadership skills, experience, and reputation within the fire service community.

Use External Assessment and HR Professionals (1 respondent): One respondent recommended utilizing an HR professional or an external assessment center to ensure a standardized and professional evaluation process.

Address the "Red Flags" of the MRI Review (1 respondent): One respondent urged the Commission to address the issues raised in the Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI) review, particularly those that the City Council may have been reluctant to address.

Engage in Meaningful Conversations with Department Leaders (1 respondent): One respondent encouraged the Commission to have in-depth conversations with the department's leaders to gain a better understanding of their concerns and perspectives.

Consider Peer-Based Scenarios in Interviews (1 respondent): One respondent suggested using team-based or employee conflict scenarios in interviews to assess a candidate's ability to collaborate and resolve conflicts.

Ensure a Fair and Open Process (2 respondents): Respondents emphasized the importance of a fair and transparent selection process, free from bias or predetermined outcomes.

Address Commissioner Engagement (1 respondent): One respondent expressed concern about the level of engagement and understanding of the Fire Commission members themselves.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The survey responses reveal a department facing significant challenges, particularly in the areas of recruitment, retention, morale, and facilities. There is a strong desire for a Fire Chief who possesses integrity, empathy, and strong leadership skills, and who will advocate for the needs of the department and its members. A recurring theme is the need for a change in culture and a more open and transparent leadership style. A significant number of respondents expressed concern about the limited pool of candidates and urged the Commission to consider outside applicants to bring fresh perspectives and address the department's challenges. The responses also highlight the importance of addressing the issues raised in the MRI review and ensuring a fair and transparent selection process.

## LIMITATIONS

Response Rate: The response rate of approximately 20% (18 responses out of 90 members) may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Anonymity: While anonymity was intended to encourage honest feedback, it also prevents the analysis of responses by rank or other demographic factors.

Qualitative Data: The open-ended nature of the survey questions provides rich qualitative data, but it also makes it more challenging to quantify and compare responses.

## CONCLUSION

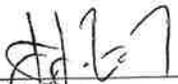
The Westfield Fire Department Fire Chief Selection Survey provides valuable insights into the concerns and priorities of the department's members. The findings highlight the need for a Fire Chief who can address the challenges of recruitment, retention, morale, and facilities, and who possesses the leadership qualities necessary to foster a positive and productive work environment.

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The Commission should carefully consider these findings as they move forward with the selection process.

This survey and its accompanying analysis were conducted and prepared by Jeffrey Trant, Chair of the Westfield Fire Commission. All findings, interpretations, and conclusions reflect the input of Westfield Fire Department members and are intended to inform and guide the Fire Chief selection process in accordance with the Commission's commitment to transparency and departmental engagement.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Jeffrey J. Trant  
Chair, Westfield Fire Commission

1/12/2026  
Date

