

Janet Helbig, Council Co-Chair | Kevin Farkas, Citizen Co-Chair  
West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee  
4609 W. 8th Ave, Beaver Falls, PA 15010  
[FSRC Online](#)

NOTICE: Official correspondence of the Fire Service Review Committee may be regarded as part of the public record.

March 20, 2024

Lou Little, President and Fire Chief  
c/o Michael Caler, WMVFD Secretary  
West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department  
706 37th St Ext., Beaver Falls, PA 15010

RE: Response to WMVFD accommodation requests regarding representation on FSRC, and other issues.

Dear Fire Chief Little,

On March 16, 2024, we received a communique from WMVFD secretary Mike Caler via the West Mayfield Fire Department Facebook group in response to FSRC's request for WMVFD representation on the committee. Here is the complete message chain:

*Mike Caler: Hey Kevin, So talking to Lou yesterday, it looks like it will be me, Wendy and Jamie as the representatives for the committee. But the three of us were talking, if Lou and Billy are not allowed to be on the committee because of being on council and in fire dept. we feel that Bob shouldn't be on it because he's president of council. Kind of a conflict of interest in our eyes, besides he made the motion. Let's keep this as fair as possible and not a witch hunt to do damage to the people that protect the borough.*

*Kevin Farkas: Thanks for the response Mike. I appreciate your thoughts on these matters. I will have a response from the committee in the near future. I have a question for those who would be on the committee: The FSRC has agreed to meet on the first Thursday of each month to prepare for the month and to consolidate our report to council the following week. How does this schedule work for your group?*

*Mike Caler: That won't work until after May 2 of us bowl on Thursdays[.] And I also think we should have some input into what citizens will be on this committee. It can't be the ones that are just against the fire department.*

We are appreciative of the nominations you've put forward to represent the fire department. We look forward to working with Mike Caler, Wendy Harker, and Jamie Hoskinson. As for the other issues raised in your communication to us, here are our responses:

### **Limiting the number of council members on the FSRC**

Having council representation on the Fire Service Review Committee is part of our mandate. Specifically, having no more than 3 council members on borough committees is standard practice in West Mayfield and in boroughs across the Commonwealth to avoid quorum issues. In most cases committees are working groups, not deliberative bodies empowered to make decisions. This holds true for the Fire Service Review Committee. We have achieved our objective of seating three councilmembers. Therefore, the committee's current council cohort will stand at three.

### **Request to remove Bob Tate from the FSRC**

As duly elected president of council, Bob Tate is considered an ex-officio member of the FSRC. In that capacity, president Tate has a right to be seated on the committee and his council leadership position offers us necessary advice and counsel. Therefore, we find no professional conflict of interest and by authority of council president Tate will remain on the FSRC.

### **Assertion that president Bob Tate made the motion to form the FSRC**

It is customary practice that the president of council does not make motions; however, it is also customary practice for presidents to suggest motions, which councilmembers may or may not consider at their discretion. Regarding the formation of the FSRC on February 8, 2024, president Tate did raise the issue and asked for a motion. Meeting minutes show that councilmember Seybert laid the motion on the table, duly seconded by councilmember J. Tate. More importantly, after sufficient deliberation the motion to create the Fire Service Review Committee was unanimously approved by council. It should be noted that councilmembers Heaton and Little (both members of the WMVFD) voted in favor of the motion. Therefore, we find the assertion that president Tate made the motion to form the FSRC to be factually incorrect, but also without relevance to the work of the committee.

### **Request to alter FSRC meeting dates to accommodate WMVFD**

As per the February 8, 2024 motion (see meeting minutes), an effort to populate the FSRC with representation from council, citizens, and WMVFD began on February 15, one week after the committee was created. Within days the FSRC seated a sufficient number of councilmembers and citizens. In total, we extended invitations seeking representation to WMVFD on February 15, February 23, March 7, and March 14. On March 16, the WMVFD informed the committee of their chosen representatives.

While the FSRC waited to hear from the WMVFD, those councilmembers and citizens who had already joined the committee decided that it was in the best interest of the committee to begin their work. The members agreed to hold an "in-person" steering meeting on March 7 to discuss the FSRC mission, goals, objectives, and to prepare for the committee's obligatory

report to council on March 14.

It is our understanding from Mr. Caler's communique (see above) that two WMVFD representatives can not attend these meetings until after May because of previous recreational commitments. In this case, we encourage one WMVFD representative to attend the FSRC meeting. Also, you might consider appointing stand-ins from among the other WMVFD leadership, such as Line Officers 1st Lt. Imogene Harker or 2nd Lt. Scotty Maxwell, Fire Administration Treasurer Eli Kosanovich, or WM Firemen's Relief Association Administration Vice President Denise Sabella or Treasurer Ron Sano.

Therefore, the committee understands that from time to time not all members may be able to attend the monthly "in-person" meeting on the first Thursday of each month. However, it is the consensus among committee members that our regular "in-person" meeting dates will stand on the first Thursday of each month.

### **WMVFD "input into what citizens will be on this committee"**

We want all FSRC citizen representatives to have a voice; however, we do not expect all members to agree on all issues. Dissent and disagreements with our methodology, findings, and conclusions will be duly noted as part of the public record. Regardless of personal experiences, opinions, or biases each citizen representative on the Fire Service Review Committee has resolved to stay true to the committee's mission, goals, and objectives. Each pledges to proceed fairly in our rigorous investigation and fact-finding regarding all aspects of the borough's fire prevention and fire protection situation. Each has resolved to make reasoned, evidenced-based recommendations to council. Therefore, the FSRC has full faith and confidence in the current citizen cohort seated on the committee.

Chief Little, we hope you understand our thinking on the matters above; you have every right to disagree. However, the FSRC is moving forward with its work and it is time for the WMVFD representatives to take their seats on the committee. The "Committee Membership" roster on the borough's website has been updated to include Michael Caler, Wendy Harker, and Jamie Hoskinson as WMVFD representatives. We look forward to welcoming these representatives (or their surrogates) at our next FSRC meeting in council chambers at 6pm, Thursday, April 4, 2024.

Sincerely,

Janet Helbig, FSRC Council Co-Chair

Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair