

Divide Fire Protection District

Work Session of the Board of Directors
April 28th, 2026 6:00 P.M.

AGENDA

- 1) Call to Order – Roll Call
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) Work Session – Discussion of Chief Search
- 4) Adjournment

Link for Teams Meeting:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/221206113310426?p=swjU4be7JBCW5C6szK>



DIVIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Board of Directors Work Session

Shoemaker Fire Station, 103 Cedar Mountain Road (Mail: PO Box 941), Divide Colorado, 80814
April 28th, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order / Role Call

Board Vice-President Reynolds called to order the work session of the Board of Directors of the Divide Fire Protection District (DFPD) at 6:08 p.m.

Director Reynolds called roll with the following present:

Steed Lopez – President via Teams
Robert Reynolds – Vice-President
Peter Atwater – Treasurer
Dennis Luttrell – Director
Patricia Franke - Secretary

Interim Chief Hinkle and District Administrator Diana Perkins were also present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Motion to Amend Agenda – Director Reynolds asked to amend the agenda as follows: Add Section 4 Public Comment, Section 5 Executive Session to discuss applicants for Fire Chief Position. Motion by Director Luttrell to approve the amended agenda. Second by Director Atwater. The motion passed with all in favor.

3. Discussion of Chief Search – Director Reynolds gave an overview. The job has been posted since January. There have been three applicants and he summarized each briefly. Director Lopez noted that none of the applicants live in the district and that there are 19 chief job postings in Colorado currently. He commented the district had no relocation fees budgeted. Director Franke noted that the district did have \$5000 budgeted for the search that might be used to bring a candidate in for an interview. Director Atwater added that if the board wants to bring someone in it could be afforded.

4. Public Comment Opened - Volunteer Mike Babiarz: Recommended at least talking to each of the applicants even if by Zoom/Teams. Director Lopez noted that an online participant wished to comment. Ryan Smedra, taxpayer: He said not spending money on any out of state candidates. He said response time of 30-45 minutes is not going to make a significant difference and Chiefs should not be responding to all calls anyway or they get burnt out. He knows and has worked with Chief Hinkle previously and recommends him.

Discussion of Chief Search Continued – Director Franke noted it was important to get input from stakeholders. Director Reynolds noted not many showing up this evening, but Director Franke noted that originally the agenda was posted with no public comment. Director Lopez asked if all the directors had compared the resumes with the posted minimum requirements, and received affirmative answers from Director Franke and Director Atwater. Director Atwater expressed his opinion that personal experience working with a person was the best indicator of performance to him and that nothing in the resumes would sway him from believing Hinkle is the best candidate, but he was willing to support whatever process the board decided.

Director Franke expressed that the district owes it to the candidates to consider the resumes with an open mind or we shouldn't have posted the position. She recommended a survey to the volunteers and employees about Chief Hinkle's leadership. She presented a draft of the survey but confirmed it was not ready for online distribution. The survey draft was compiled from industry standards for leadership, culture, and engagement.

Director Lopez expressed that there was no intention to give the cold shoulder or ignore any of the candidates. He wants to take time to dive into the candidates and discuss if they meet qualifications what the next steps should be. Director Franke expressed that she felt obligated to bring up that there was a conflict of interest since Chief Hinkle helped compile the job description and requirements and that it was important to look at the whole applicant. Director Lopez responded that the requirements did not vary in any significant way from previous requirements and does not see a conflict of interest, and they could see the job descriptions to compare if there were any concerns.

Director Reynolds expressed that he was not opposed to collecting department member's input but that the board's responsibility to hire the Fire Chief.

Mr. Babiarz expressed that there was already a perception of bias, noting that the hiring timeline corresponds to Hinkle's retirement at his other department, that he was a friend of Director Lopez, and that Director Atwater had already commented that he thinks in-house is best. Babiarz commented on previous protocols that were not followed by Hinkle but he was given leeway from the board. He also expressed his concern about the budget not being followed and the board allowing excess expenditures by Chief. Director Atwater disagreed and said the budget was good and would end up with increased reserves. Director Lopez asked for less comments about the negatives and more productive recommendations to go forward. Mr. Babiarz responded his comments were not negative they were just facts that have occurred, and also that he felt it was unfair that Hinkle had access to the other applicant's information. He also mentioned the purposed salary for the position goes up to \$135,000 but the amount in the budget is only \$120,000. Director Atwater expressed that no one is perfect and that a new person would come in totally unknown and the district could end up being much worse off.

5. Executive Session – Motion by Director Lopez to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters related to applicants for the chief's position. Second by Director Reynolds. The motion passed


with four in favor and Director Franke abstaining. Executive session began at 7:05 p.m. Executive session ended and regular session resumed at _____.


6. Adjournment

Motion by Director _____ to adjourn the meeting. Second by Director _____. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at _____ p.m. The next regular meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 12th, 2026, at 6 p.m.

APPROVAL

We attest that the foregoing minutes, which have been approved by the affirmative majority vote of the Board of Directors of the Divide Fire Protection District, are a true and accurate record of the meeting held on the date stated above.

 President
Name and Title

 Vice President
Name and Title

5 / 12 / 2026
Date

05 / 12 / 2026
Date

Section 1: Trust & Confidence

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

1. I trust the current leadership to act in the best interest of the district and its members.
2. Leadership decisions are consistent, fair, and well-reasoned.
3. I have confidence in the direction the district is heading.
4. Leadership follows through on commitments and **stated priorities**.
5. I feel safe raising concerns or offering input **without fear of negative consequences**.
6. DFPD is currently better than it was 1 year **ag** under Chief McLeod. *(Do NOT answer this question if you were not affiliated with the department while JT McLeod was Chief)*
7. DFPD is currently better than it was under volunteer leadership. *(Do not answer this question if you were not affiliated with the department prior to 2022)*

Comments or context related to any specific ranking

Section 2: Communication & Transparency

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

1. Leadership communicates expectations clearly.
2. Important **decisions** are explained in a timely and transparent manner.
3. I understand the rationale behind major operational or administrative changes.
4. Information flows effectively between leadership and line personnel.
5. My **input** is valued by leadership and taken into consideration when making **decisions**.
6. I am fully **informed** of operational ongoings, activities, and expectations in a timely and appropriate way to enable me to be effective and successful in my role.
7. My questions or concerns are addressed promptly and completely to provide clarity and confidence.

Comments or context related to any specific ranking

Section 3: Engagement & Morale

(Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

1. Morale within the district is generally positive.
2. I feel valued and respected by district leadership.
3. Leadership encourages involvement
4. I enjoy participating in district training under current leadership.
5. I enjoy responding to calls under current leadership.
6. Leadership inspires me to want to give my spare time to help the district
7. I plan to maintain or increase my level of involvement in the department over the coming year if Chief Hinkle remains as the DFPD Fire Chief.

Comments or context related to any specific ranking

Section 4 Input & Recommendations

(Strongly Agree, Agree, ~~Neutral~~, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

1. The most important thing to me in a chief is _____
2. If I could change one thing about DFPD to make it better I'd change _____
3. The following are strengths of Interim Chief Hinkle _____
4. The following are areas needing improvement for Interim Chief Hinkle _____
5. Other comments, concerns, or recommendations _____
6. I would like to request a meeting with the board to further discuss my feedback - if yes, provide name here or send email request to DFPDSecretary@dividfire.com - note, your name will be redacted in the instance of any CORA request for will not be shared in connection with any of your specific answers within the survey.