

PIKE TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT MERIT COMMISSION

**4881 WEST 71ST STREET
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46268**

President: Steve Buschmann
Vice President: NaTrina DeBow
Secretary: Russ Sipes

Members:
Nancy Poore

May 20, 2026
Regular Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Merit Commission –Stephen Buschmann, Nancy Poore, and Natrina DeBow.

Pike Township – Chief Jeff Beam, HRM Jill Smith, Firefighter Brian Walsh, and Captain Steve Mills

CALL TO ORDER:

At 1806, President Buschmann called the meeting to order. The meeting began with The Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Prior to proceeding with the agenda, the Commission acknowledged the passing of former Commissioner Steve Hendrixson, who served on the Merit Commission since 1989. A moment of silence was observed in honor of his 36 years of service and dedication to the department.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Copies of the April 15, 2026, minutes were distributed for review. President Buschmann asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Vice President DeBow made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Poore and approved by all.

AGENDA/NEW BUSINESS:

Fire Chief Jeff Beam presented an overview of the current firefighter hiring process and proposed recommendations regarding the Physical Fitness Evaluation (PFE) component.

Overview of Current Hiring Process

Chief Beam reviewed the minimum qualifications and components of the hiring process, including:

Officer Appointment Information			
Officer Name	Appointing Authority	Term Start Date	Term Expiration Date
Stephen Buschmann	Pike Township Trustee	January 1, 2025	December 31, 2028
NaTrina DeBow	Pike Township Board	January 1, 2023	December 31, 2026
W. Russell Sipes	Pike Township Trustee	January 1, 2023	December 31, 2026
vacant	Pike Township Fire Dept.		December 31, 2028
Nancy Poore	Pike Township Fire Dept.	January 1, 2023	December 31, 2026

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- Applicants must be at least 21 years old and under 40 at the time of appointment. Applicants who are 20 years old may apply but must be 21 prior to appointment.
- Applicants must possess a high school diploma or GED.
- Applicants must be able to communicate effectively in English.
- Applicants must possess a valid driver's license or permit.
- Applicants must be United States citizens.
- Applicants may not have felony convictions.

Chief Beam explained that the eligibility list is determined through four primary components:

1. Written Examination (Pass/Fail – 75% cutoff)
2. Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) (Pass/Fail)
3. Physical Fitness Evaluation (PFE) – 50% of final score
4. Structured Oral Interview – 50% of final score

Additional preference points are awarded for:

- Pike Township residency or Pike Township high school graduation (+3 points)
- Licensed paramedic certification (+3 points)
- EMT certification (+1 point)

Only applicants with an overall score of 70% or greater are placed on the eligibility list.

Written Examination

Chief Beam reported:

- 62% pass rate in 2020
- 62% pass rate in 2022
- 91% pass rate in 2024 following redesign of the examination

The written exam is administered by an outside vendor and evaluates general knowledge, observation skills, spatial relationships, grammar, and math.

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Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT)

Chief Beam reviewed the CPAT process and explained that:

- The CPAT is a nationally standardized examination developed by the IAFF and IAFC.
- Pike Township Fire Department does not administer the CPAT directly.
- Applicants obtain certification through third-party licensed providers.
- CPAT cards must have been issued within one year of the testing process.

Physical Fitness Evaluation (PFE)

Chief Beam explained the current PFE structure and proposed changes recommended by the department recruitment committee.

Current PFE Components

The current PFE evaluates:

- Body composition
- Flexibility
- Lower body muscular strength
- Upper body muscular strength
- Lower body muscular endurance
- Upper body muscular endurance
- Cardiovascular fitness

Proposed Changes

The department proposed:

- Increasing the weighting of several muscular strength/endurance components from 10% to 12%
- Reducing cardiovascular fitness weighting from 40% to 30%
- Retaining body composition weighting at 10%
- Replacing the current lower body dynamometer test with a three-repetition deadlift assessment

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Chief Beam stated the proposed deadlift assessment:

- Better reflects functional firefighting tasks
- Has standardized scoring and safety protocols
- Is currently used within the United States Army Combat Fitness Test and other firefighter fitness programs

Chief Beam also noted the recruitment committee reviewed prior eligibility list data and determined the proposed weighting changes would moderately affect candidate rankings while maintaining overall standards.

Commission Discussion

Commission members discussed:

- The importance of cardiovascular fitness in firefighting
- The department's reputation for physical fitness and athleticism
- Concerns regarding reducing the cardiovascular component weighting
- The subjective nature of evaluating muscular strength deficiencies during recruit training
- The recruitment committee's process and composition
- Whether additional input from department Peer Fitness Trainers should be considered

Firefighter Brian Walsh addressed the Commission and expressed concerns regarding reducing the cardiovascular weighting component, emphasizing the importance of cardiovascular conditioning in firefighting operations and recruit success.

Commission members discussed balancing muscular strength and cardiovascular fitness while maintaining the department's high standards.

Chief Beam advised that the recruitment committee consisted of multiple department members representing varying experience levels and backgrounds and that the committee had met several times to review possible changes.

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The Commission also discussed timing concerns, noting applicants were already in the application process and would need finalized testing information prior to the July physical fitness evaluations.

Vice President DeBow made a motion to approve the recommended Physical Fitness Evaluation changes as presented by Chief Beam. President Buschmann seconded the motion. Additional discussion occurred regarding obtaining further input from Peer Fitness Trainers. The Commission encouraged Chief Beam to seek additional feedback and indicated a special meeting could be called if necessary. All present were in favor and approved the changes.

MISC. BUSINESS:

Commissioner Poore asked how members of the public may observe Merit Commission meetings. It was explained that meeting information, including login instructions and QR codes, are:

- Posted on the department front door
- Distributed to department personnel
- Posted on the Merit Commission webpage

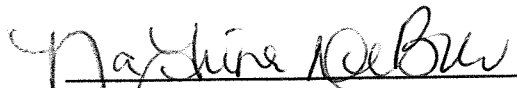
ADJOURNMENT:

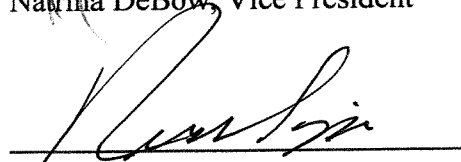
There being no further business, President Buschmann asked for a motion to adjourn meeting at 1902. Vice President Sipes made the motion, Commissioner Poore seconded, and all were in favor.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 21, 2026


Stephen Buschmann, President


Natrina DeBow, Vice President


Russell Sipes, Secretary


~~Steven Hendrixson, Member~~
vacant


Nancy Poore, Member

Signed July 22, 2026.