

AGENDA
FIRE MERIT COMMISSION
Monday, June 9, 2025
3:30 P.M.

Council Chambers

Municipal Building, 229 S. Second Street, Elkhart, IN 46516

<https://signin.webex.com/join>

MEETING NUMBER (Access Code): 2313 128 0465 MEETING PASSWORD: Fire25
JOIN BY PHONE: 1-415-655-0001

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Approve Agenda**
- 4. Approve Minutes- Regular Meeting April 28, 2025**
- 5. Fire Department**
 - **Notice of Charges, Tentative Hearing Date and Rights- FF Jason Lantz**
 - **Certification of Suppression Driver Promotion Exam Results**
 - **Promotions- Matthew Bryant, Corey Hill, Josh Patterson, Jafet Moya, Drew Belue**
 - **Designation of Lead Attorney- Deputy City Attorney Kevin Davis**
- 6. IAFF Local 338**
- 7. Public Participation**
- 8. Adjournment**

FIRE MERIT COMMISSION
Monday, April 28, 2025

President Mandy Leazenby called a regular meeting of the Fire Merit Commission (FMC) to order at 3:30 p.m., Monday, April 28, 2025. Clerk Nancy Wilson called the role. Commissioners Mandy Leazenby, Jim Rodino, Regina Fultes and Bunita Fields-Buggs were present. There is a one-member vacancy on the Fire Merit Commission.

1. AGENDA

On motion Bunita Fields-Buggs, seconded by Jim Rodino and carried 4-0, the agenda approved as presented.

2. MINUTES

On motion by Bunita Fields-Buggs, seconded by Jim Rodino and carried 4-0, the minutes from the Regular Meeting on April 14, 2025 were approved.

3. FIRE DEPARTMENT

Discipline

Division Chief Jason Gour presented notification of disciplinary action. Battalion Chief Mike Hochstetler was issued a written reprimand for violating Indiana Code 36-8-3.5-17 Section 17 (2)(C). Mandy accepted the notification and placed it on file.

Division Chief Jason Gour requested permission to initiate the Medic Driver's testing process. On motion by Jim Rodino, seconded by Bunita Fields-Buggs and carried 4-0, the FMC granted permission to begin testing for Medic Drivers effective today.

Division Chief Jason Gour requested permission to initiate the Medic Lieutenant testing process. On motion by Regina Fultes, seconded by Bunita Fields-Buggs and carried 4-0, the FMC granted permission to begin testing for Medic Lieutenant effective today.

4. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Bunita Fields-Buggs, seconded by Regina Fultes and carried 4-0, the City of Elkhart, Indiana Fire Merit Commission was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

Mandy Leazenby, President

Attest: _____ Bunita Fields-Buggs, Secretary

Elkhart Fire
500 East Street
Elkhart, IN 46516

Phone: (574) 293-8931
Fax: (574) 522-1023
Fire.Admin@Elkhartfire.org



Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

June 2, 2025

Firefighter Jason Lantz
500 East Street
Elkhart, IN 46516

Re: Notice of Charges, Tentative Hearing Date and Rights

Dear Firefighter Lantz:

I have offered charges of misconduct against you pursuant to Indiana Code § 36-8-3.5-17. I am recommending to the Fire Merit Commission that you be terminated from employment with the Elkhart Fire Department.

On November 6, 2024, while off duty and on medical leave, you proceeded to enter the emergency room at Elkhart General Hospital. You accessed the emergency department by means of the coded security door that is accessed by emergency responders while on duty. You did not have a medical or business reason for the visit, therefore, by entering the emergency room by using the access code that is reserved for firefighters there on official business was not authorized. Your actions did not comply with the established protocols of the Elkhart Fire Department.

Upon entering the premises, you harassed the emergency room medical staff by questioning certain employees regarding a personal matter. You exacerbated the situation by following one of the emergency room staff members to a treatment room while she was trying to perform her duties. On three (3) separate occasions, you entered a treatment room where you had no official reason to be and yelled at the nurse while she was performing her duties. She stated, while she was in the bedside commode room, that you stated, "I was trying to rat him out and that I was getting him in trouble." When I asked what he was talking about he was referring to a conversation that took place with someone outside of work who has no affiliation with either profession. He then started getting aggressive while I was in the room of commodes and stating that, "I was going to get paperwork and show her." I at this time told him I have absolutely no way of getting paperwork so not sure what he is even talking about. He came back into the cubby 3 different times.

Your negative actions that evening were captured on the hospital security camera and were witnessed by the on-duty staff as well as the emergency room patients. Your behavior that evening caused an unnecessary and stressful disruption to the operations of the Elkhart General Hospital emergency room.

During the investigation, Emergency Room staff statements detailed your disruptive and negative behavior. The investigation also revealed in statements from other nurses at Elkhart General Hospital that you have a long pattern of harassment and stalking which is unprofessional and unacceptable

behavior. Your actions that evening as well as your history of harassing the nursing staff cannot be tolerated by the Elkhart Fire Department.

Staff Nurse One

Staff Nurse One stated that on November 6, 2024, while she was on duty, you entered the Emergency Room through the ambulance bay doors. She stated while in the process of assisting another nurse that you confronted her regarding a personal matter. When she turned to walk away from you, you followed her to the bedside commode closet. While she was in the closet, she stated that you became aggressive towards her regarding this personal matter. She also stated while she was working in Cubby Three that you entered Cubby Three on three occasions and on each occasion, you raised your voice and harassed her while she was attempting to perform her duties. Your actions were loud and hostile, and you created an unnecessary disturbance in her workplace. She also stated there have been constant problems with you and your disrespectful actions and she felt compelled to report these incidents to the hospital administration.

Staff Nurse Two

Staff Nurse Two observed you on November 6, 2024, in various locations including the medication area (Pyxis), POD area, and ambulance bay. She stated that the altercation between you and Staff Nurse One was so loud she was able to overhear it. She observed you leaving through the ambulance bay which is an unusual exit route for visitors since you were not duty. This nurse observed you following Staff Nurse One to the bedside commode room. She states she witnessed you in an argument with Staff Nurse One. She noticed Staff Nurse One was upset after the altercation with you.

Staff Nurse Three

Staff Nurse Three stated that on November 6, 2024, you harassed Staff Nurse One to such a point that your actions upset Staff Nurse One. Your actions were so egregious they were reported to the nursing supervisor.

Staff Nurse Four

On the evening of November 6, 2024, Staff Nurse Four heard you make a statement to Staff Nurse One, 'Why are you in my business?' You confronted Staff Nurse One with a personal matter while she was working. Staff Nurse Four witnessed this incident and saw you had cornered Staff Nurse One on several occasions and that you were yelling at Staff Nurse One. You did not have a business reason to be in the emergency room.

During your encounter, Staff Nurse Four saw that you cornered Staff Nurse One on several occasions and witnessed you yelling at her.

Staff Nurse Four stated that you failed to follow her directions when you were leaving the emergency room when you decided to exit the emergency room through the ambulance bay doors rather than through the waiting room. She informed you that it was not the exit for a patient, or a visitor and you continued to leave through the ambulance bay doors in direct conflict with the nurse's directions.

Staff Nurse Four stated that you have a reputation for making inappropriate comments to the staff and that you try to intimidate the staff. She also stated that you have a reputation for cornering

nurses. She stated you have a pattern where when a nurse rejects or ignores you, that you would call the emergency room secretary, not for official business or to follow up on a patient but for the secretary to get the particular nurse who rejected you. Then you would question that nurse, again not for official business or to follow up on a patient, but to question them on why they were not returning your texts or calls.

Staff Nurse Four also provided the names of other Elkhart General Hospital employees that you had harassed and stalked. This information expanded the investigation and revealed more disturbing behavior.

The investigation also revealed a disturbing pattern where you will connect with a nurse on social media or through texting in an attempt to begin a relationship and when the nurse is no longer interested in you and rejects you, you begin a pattern of harassment and stalking that puts the nurse in fear for their safety and creates a hostile work environment.

Staff Nurse Five

Staff Nurse Five stated that you connected with her through social media, and she gave you her personal phone number; however, when you became more involved to the point of romantic involvement, she decided to end the relationship. Staff Nurse Five told you to stop calling and texting her, but you continued to pursue and question her about not responding to your attempts to contact her. Staff Nurse Five provided text messages indicating your persistence against her wishes.

Staff Nurse Five stated there was an incident where you brought a patient into the Emergency Room and after leaving, you proceeded to call the Emergency Room allegedly to check on the patient and spoke to the secretary and asked for Staff Nurse Five; however, when you spoke to Staff Nurse Five, you questioned her about not responding to your text messages or phone calls and not about the patient.

Staff Nurse Five felt compelled to report your behavior to management because it was that egregious and made her uncomfortable.

Staff Nurse Six

Your history of harassing the Elkhart General nursing staff is not new. You have a history of harassing nurses that dates back over eight years. Staff Nurse Six stated while she was working on a 3pm to 3am shift, that you had dropped off a patient and instead of returning to service after you dropped off the patient, you proceeded to stalk her. While she was going to her vehicle in the parking lot, you returned to the ambulance, turned on the ambulance lights and proceeded to block her exit from the garage. She states that you recorded this event and posted it on social media without her consent. Additionally, on subsequent ambulance runs to the emergency room, rather than giving Staff Nurse Six a proper patient turnover, you have refused to provide her with a proper handover. Your failure to act professionally and act responsibly sacrificed proper patient care.

Staff Nurse Seven

Staff Nurse Seven stated that even though she never gave you her phone number, you felt compelled to reach out to her on Facebook and that you would frequently message her on Facebook. She stated

that no one had messaged her as much as you did. She stated that when you left the hospital after runs, you would message her on Facebook which is strange behavior.

Staff Nurse Seven stated that during her time at the hospital, she heard rumors about you from other staff and those rumors raised her suspicions concerning you. She stated in 2022, when she returned to the hospital, she did not respond to your attempts to contact her and did not respond to any of your continued efforts to text message. Staff Nurse Seven recalls a time when you came into the Emergency Room and you entered one of the treatment rooms where she was working and you cornered her. You trapped her and she was in fear of you and felt cornered and scared. Even after this event, you felt compelled to contact her on Instagram.

Staff Nurse Seven stated your actions were so egregious that she brought her concerns to hospital management and that other nurses had issues with you they brought to management's attention. You were so persistent in contacting nurses that you would contact those that had not blocked you to contact those that had blocked you.

During your interview with the Human Resources Director, concerning the events of November 6, 2024, you admitted you were off duty and in the emergency room, therefore you did not have a business reason to enter the emergency room without following the proper protocols. You admitted to using the emergency ambulance entrance code with no legitimate reason to use the code nor enter through the ambulance bay entrance. You stated that you stayed in the room until your friend was released and that was not a true statement. There is video evidence as well as statements from the emergency room nursing staff indicating that you traveled throughout the Emergency Room. Therefore, your statement was untrue.

You stated you were there to see a patient that was your friend; however, you admit you spent time confronting a nurse regarding your divorce. Therefore, you were not in the treatment room as you stated, and you traveled outside the treatment room.

Prior Discipline

There was prior discipline that was not in accordance with what is expected of City of Elkhart firefighter. On August 26, 2023, you were dispatched to a residence for a pandemic call. While on scene, you were observed by other members of the Elkhart Fire Department acting in a rude and insolent manner towards the patient. Specifically, you were observed yelling, using profanity and striking the patient on the head. This behavior continued for the duration of the call at the patient's residence. If your patient had decided to press charges, you would have been accused of Battery under Indiana Code § 35-42-2-1(c)(1) which is defined as touching another person in a rude, insolent or angry manner. Your actions on August 26, 2023, violated Indiana Code §36-8-3.5-17(b)(2)(G) and (H) with respect to interactions with the public. Your actions were not acceptable of an Elkhart Firefighter. For your actions on that day, the Fire Merit Commission demoted you from your position as a Paramedic Lieutenant and you received a thirty (30) day suspension.

The findings substantiated violations of the following State laws and Fire Department Rules and Regulations:

Indiana Code § 36-8-3.5-17(b)(2)

(F) Immoral Conduct

(G) Conduct Injurious to the Public Peace or Welfare

(H) Conduct unbecoming a member

Section 301(M) Conduct Unbecoming a member


301 (M)(6) Discourteous behavior to the public or other personnel

Pursuant to Indiana Code § 36-8-3.5-17 (c), you may request a hearing on this matter. You have five (5) days as of the date of this letter to request a hearing. If you request a hearing and upon receipt of this letter by the Fire Merit Commission, the Commission is required to conduct a hearing on this matter within thirty (30) days. The Commission is available to hear about this matter on June 23, 2025 at 3:30 PM in the Council Chambers, Elkhart Municipal Building, 229 S. Second Street, Elkhart, Indiana. At this hearing, you are entitled to be represented by counsel, to call and cross examine witnesses, to require the production of evidence and to have subpoenas issued, served and executed.

If the Commission determines that you are indeed guilty of the misconduct alleged above, it will vote on your sanction. The Chief's recommendation is:

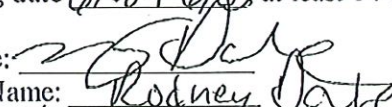
1. Termination of employment with the Elkhart Fire Department.

Sincerely


Rodney Dale
Chief of Fire

Certificate of Service

I swear under the penalty of perjury that I delivered a Notice of Hearing to Firefighter Jason Lantz in person or by a copy left at Firefighter Jason Lantz' last and usual place of residency on the following date 6/02/25 at least 14 days prior the date set for the Hearing.

Signature: 

Printed Name: Rodney Dale

Date: 6/03/25

Elkhart Fire
500 East Street
Elkhart, IN 46516

Phone: (574) 293-8931
Fax: (574) 522-1023
Fire.Admin@Elkhartfire.org



Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

DATE: 06/04/2025

Here are the results for the Suppression Driver Promotional exam. This list needs to be certified on Monday.

FINAL RESULTS

1. Matthew Bryant
2. Corey Hill
3. Josh Patterson
4. Jafet Moya
5. Drew Belue

Thank You,
Chief Dale

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Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

June 9th 2025

Fire Merit Commission
Municipal Building
229 S. Second Street
Elkhart, IN. 46516

RE: Promotion

Dear Commissioners:

I am requesting your permission to promote Matthew Bryant to the position of Suppression Driver as he has satisfied all of the established requirements and was selected in the proper order per the approved promotions list. I would like to make this promotion effective today.

Respectfully,

Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

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Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

June 9th 2025

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RE: Promotion

Dear Commissioners:

I am requesting your permission to promote Corey Hill to the position of Suppression Driver as he has satisfied all of the established requirements and was selected in the proper order per the approved promotions list. I would like to make this promotion effective today.

Respectfully,

Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

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Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

June 9th 2025

Fire Merit Commission
Municipal Building
229 S. Second Street
Elkhart, IN. 46516

RE: Promotion

Dear Commissioners:

I am requesting your permission to promote Josh Patterson to the position of Suppression Driver as he has satisfied all of the established requirements and was selected in the proper order per the approved promotions list. I would like to make this promotion effective today.

Respectfully,

Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

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500 East Street
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Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

June 9th 2025

Fire Merit Commission
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229 S. Second Street
Elkhart, IN. 46516

RE: Promotion

Dear Commissioners:

I am requesting your permission to promote Jafet Moya to the position of Suppression Driver as he has satisfied all of the established requirements and was selected in the proper order per the approved promotions list. I would like to make this promotion effective today.

Respectfully,

Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

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Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Kristi Sommer
Assistant Fire Chief

June 9th 2025

Fire Merit Commission
Municipal Building
229 S. Second Street
Elkhart, IN. 46516

RE: Promotion

Dear Commissioners:

I am requesting your permission to promote Drew Belue to the position of Suppression Driver as he has satisfied all of the established requirements and was selected in the proper order per the approved promotions list. I would like to make this promotion effective today.

Respectfully,

Rodney Dale
Fire Chief

Rod Roberson
Mayor

229 S. Second Street
Elkhart, Indian 46516



City of Elkhart
Department of Law

John M. Espar
Corporation Counsel

John.Espar@coei.org
Tel: 574.294.5471 Ext. 1060

May 9, 2025

Mandy Leazenby
President of the Board of Commissioners
Fire Merit Commission
City of Elkhart, Indiana

Via Email Only: mandy@tragreen.com

Re: Designation of Lead Attorney to the Fire Merit Commission

Dear Mandy Leazenby:

In an effort to enhance the responsiveness, competencies and efficiencies of the Department of Law, we have designated a lead attorney to work with each department, board and commission of the City.

Deputy City Attorney Kevin Davis has been designated as lead attorney for the Fire Merit Commission. By designating Deputy City Attorney Davis as your “go-to” attorney, we are confident that you will benefit from a legal advisor who is more familiar with the legal issues which arise in the work of the Fire Merit Commission, and more knowledgeable of the law which informs your attorney’s legal advice.

Although Deputy City Attorney Davis is your lead attorney, you should consider the entire staff of the Department of Law as a legal resource available to serve the Fire Merit Commission.

Respectfully yours,

CITY OF ELKHART
DEPARTMENT OF LAW

John M. Espar
Corporation Counsel

cc: Kevin Davis
Nancy Wilson

City of Elkhart – Department of Law

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