



## CACHE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kathryn Beus – Board Chair  
David Erickson – Trustee  
Lyndsay Peterson – Trustee  
Larry Jacobsen - Trustee

George Daines – Trustee  
Steve Miller – Trustee  
Aaron Rudie – Trustee

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### BOARD OF TRUSTEES WORKSHOP MINUTES

June 2, 2026

7:00pm

The Cache County Fire District Board will meet Monday, **June 2, 2026**, commencing at **7:00 p.m.** in the **Cache County Council Chambers**, 179 North Main Logan, Utah 84321.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Beus called workshop to order @ 7 PM

2. **WORKSHOP DISCUSSION**

-The intent of the workshop is to provide an opportunity for fire chiefs, firefighters, and other responders from across the county to share their thoughts, concerns, and perspectives with the Board regarding the proposed direction of funding and service delivery.

The workshop provided an opportunity for those in attendance to express their concerns, thoughts, feelings, and perspective. It also gave them the opportunity to ask questions.

-Lewiston Chief Jacobsen expressed service as the top priority regardless of budgets, equipment, or politics. Volunteer recruitment and retention are becoming an issue due to the lack of participants. Chief Jacobsen emphasized its significant reliance on support provided by the Cache County Fire District (CCFD) to sustain operations and maintain service levels. This support includes administrative assistance, OSHA and SCBA compliance, firefighter training, resource coordination, and mutual aid and equipment support. Department leadership stated that these services help fill critical gaps that a volunteer department, limited by staffing and time constraints, cannot consistently manage independently. The department also highlighted the CCFD's role in supporting firefighter health and safety. This includes cancer prevention efforts through turnout gear decontamination and access to specialized extraction/cleaning equipment provided by the county following fire incidents. Additionally, the CCFD provides mental health resources to help firefighters cope with traumatic emergency responses and job-related stress, which department members described as essential to firefighter well-being and retention. Chief Jacobsen expressed his concern that funding alone will not resolve the operational challenges facing volunteer fire service. Jacobsen emphasized that fire protection functions as a county-wide system rather than an isolated city responsibility. Mutual aid, shared training, administrative support, specialized resources, and coordinated emergency response were described as essential components of maintaining service levels across communities. Department members expressed concern that individual cities may struggle to independently sustain the same level of fire protection without continued county coordination and regional support.

-Smithfield Fire Chief Hunt expressed that the voucher system is underdeveloped and unclear. Staffing, not equipment is the biggest fire service problem. Hunt disapproves of the 8-mil tax on unincorporated areas, feels the North end was overlooked. Hunt feels that Smithfield gets little practical benefit from county fire services. He mentioned that Smithfield can already do the fit testing, equipment cleaning training and compressor testing that the county can offer. He feels that Smithfield is largely self-sufficient and doesn't rely on county support unlike smaller departments. The current process feels one-sided, he argues that there has been little negotiation with departments, the county appears to dictate payment terms instead of collaboratively determining value, and alternative training and support options already exist through the state or neighboring departments. Hunt mentioned the delay and uncertainty are hurting the fire service. Hunt says years of unresolved discussions are slowing department growth, damaging relationships between agencies, and keeping departments "on hold." His warning: firefighters and residents will ultimately pay the price through understaffed responses and strained cooperation.

-Smithfield Battalion Chief Cory Larson empathized that fire service cohesion in the county has broken down. Departments used to work together more effectively, relationships and cooperation have deteriorated. He believes the current district debate is making divisions worse. The county fire system has been underfunded for decades, he argues the core issue is not the voucher system itself but chronic underinvestment. Fire service has been neglected for years. The population growth—especially in the north end—is increasing demand rapidly. The county is reaching a critical moment where leaders can either solve the problem or continue postponing it. Larson feels that Smithfield doesn't receive proportional value for what they contribute. Smithfield became self-sufficient because the county system was only partially implanted over decades. Which is why cities invested their own money, staffing, and infrastructure, departments built local systems out of necessity, and firefighters and communities have invested "blood, sweat, and tears" into those systems. Larson feels that the real conversation should be about new funding, not redistribution. The voucher system is "kicking the can down the road." There needs to be transparency and informed decision making matter more than politics.

-Logan Chief Nate Thompson, he presents a regional and operational perspective shaped by decades in Cache County fire service. He emphasized on the importance of mutual aid, the complexity created after the 2019 EMS split, and the difficulty of designing one system that works for very different cities. He mentioned that the mutual aid already works extremely well, it should not become transactional. Logan depends on County engines for structure fire response, County depends on Logan's ladder truck and career staffing when needed. No need for attaching dollar values to mutual aid. Thompson states that smaller departments cannot realistically support full fire operations from city budgets alone and therefore need county-level assistance. Thompson speaks on behalf of North Logan, Providence and River Heights. He explains that each city views the proposal differently. Logan already provides full-service coverage with cities through contract with fire suppression, EMS, fire prevention, emergency management, wildland planning, and staffed station response. Those services are funded directly by city contracts totaling about \$2.2 million annually, not through county fire district subsidies. The 10% retention is difficult to justify to contract cities. Thompson says cities are questioning why they should surrender large amounts of money, especially when they already receive many services from Logan independently.

-CCFD Deputy Fire Marshal Troy Fredrickson, emphasis that the county system helped create the cooperation and professionalism we have today. Don't forget how fragmented things used to be, and don't dismantle support structures before understanding what they've contributed. Frederickson is not opposed to independence, but wants departments that may now be self-sufficient, not to forget

the got there with county help. He criticizes the current district process, communication is poor and people assume the worst. Unfortunately, rumors are worsening the division of departments. Fredrickson expressed to the board members that they should be trying to advance the district as a county whole and not just for the city individually, and not dismantle the fire district. He suggests members seeking to withdraw their cities may be working against the organization they govern.

-Wellsville Fire Chief Mason McBride, emphasized that fire chiefs shouldn't have to choose between loyalty to their city and loyalty to the broader county system. He concerned with organizational fragmentation, the current situations are dividing departments and weakening cohesion. He feels the proposed voucher costs are financially alarming. The amount would exceed or nearly double parts of Wellsville's operational needs. Mason mentioned that the County training and coordination have real value. He feels that citizens need to see a measurable return on taxes, why ask Wellsville residents to fund improvements elsewhere if local service doesn't materially improve? Wellsville has already invested heavily itself with equipment purchased independently, bout its own air packs, purchased additional apparatus, and invested in local resources and effort. The county has contributed with providing Engine 60. McBride repeatedly redirects the conversation away from governance fights, the operational side is what matters most. Leaders need to clearly choose a direction because the hybrid model feels confusing and unsustainable.

-Hyrum City Fire Chief Tony Stauffer, mentioned that he is advocating for Hyrum and not the county. He believes that Hyrum can stand on its own. Hyrum has a strong volunteer based, good city support, strong equipment inventory EMT capability, and training capacity. Stauffer expressed that the prolonged indecision is harming relationships and cohesion. Stauffer feels that despite advocating independence, he acknowledges that the County training is beneficial with the standardized training that improves interoperability. However, he adds that Hyrum is capable of training itself if necessary. Hyrum is strong, self-sufficient, and capable of running independently. We value county training, but governance uncertainty and county expansion into our service area are creating problems.

-Paradise City Fire Chief Ashley Smith, stated that service quality, not politics should be the priority. The Core issue is how to preserve and improve fire/EMS service for residents. Communities expect service to improve over time, not decline. She criticizes how the voucher proposal was introduced, the issue may not be the ideas themselves, but how they've been communicated and developed. Paradise depends heavily on county support for fire/ems training, equipment support, and building firefighter capability. Overall fire/ems services are underfunded. Communities are behind the curve and need to invest more in emergency response. She feels that the ongoing conflict is damaging camaraderie that took years to build. She suggested that there needs to be less fragmented communication, and more large-group collaboration.

-Hyrum City Assistant Chief Luke Schmid, mentioned that the County training and support have real value, but Hyrum is experiencing costly duplication and governance confusion. We need better collaboration, more transparency about where district money goes, and a way to grow Hyrum without building two competing systems in the same town. The district vs department structure feels confusing, is district money helping every department grow, or mainly building the county's own department. If feels that Hyrum faces costly duplication with two fire systems that are effectively growing side-by-side in the same town. Instead of buying two sets of turnout gear, departments could collaborate and share resources more efficiently. Avoid building two separate departments in one city when cooperation could reduce costs and improve outcomes.

-Spencer Winn with Northern Utah Representative for the IAFF mentioned that the core problem is funding, not structure. Winn argues in favor of a fully funded fire district model because everyone contributes through equal taxation. Equal taxation creates a simpler, more sustainable funding structure than piecing together separate local systems. Departments need to move beyond territorial concerns and think about countywide sustainability. The biggest issue isn't local control or governance—it's funding. A properly funded fire district with equal taxation creates one shared budget, preserves local firefighters, and reduces fragmentation.

-CCFD Fire Chief Brady George, as the last speaker noticed and shared that almost everyone, regardless of position, agreed on several fundamentals: fire/EMS demand is growing rapidly, funding is insufficient and has lagged for years, volunteer recruitment/retention is getting harder, relationships between departments have deteriorated, operational cohesion and trust are weakening, and citizens should not receive diminished service. Even people disagreeing on structure largely agreed there is a real systems problem. Speakers like Frederickson, Ashley Smith (Paradise), Spencer Wynn, and Brady George emphasized that rural communities cannot sustain service alone, County coordination/training/logistics matter, shared funding and equal taxation could strengthen weak areas, a district reduces duplication and improves efficiency, and mutual dependence is unavoidable at major incidents. George mentions that governance matters only if service improves or at least stays stable, nobody wanted restructuring that accidentally weakens emergency response. Service levels matter more than politics, multiple chiefs repeatedly redirected the conversation back to operations. Common operation concerns are; response times, staffing, ISO ratings, firefighter training, apparatus replacement, turnout gear, cancer prevention, EMS readiness, and volunteer sustainability. George states that if the system keeps fracturing, citizens eventually absorb the consequences.

-In closing the board members acknowledged that communication has not been good enough, but encourage anyone to please speak up and ask questions and share insight. The board noticed that everyone shares the same goal, public safety and maintaining/improving service across the county. They acknowledge that the process is moving slowly, they admitted frustration is understandable and emphasized they are still trying to find a workable solution among many jurisdictions.

### **Summarize:**

#### **Service Quality Must Come First:**

Nearly every speaker emphasized that maintaining or improving emergency service levels should be the top priority, regardless of budgets or politics. Chiefs worried that proposed changes could weaken emergency response, staffing, and training.

#### **Volunteer Fire Departments Are Struggling**

#### **Smaller departments (like Lewiston, Paradise, and Wellsville) described growing challenges:**

Fewer volunteers and aging membership

Difficulty staffing daytime calls

Heavy reliance on county support for administration, training, equipment, cancer prevention, and mental health services

#### **Division Over the Proposed "Voucher System":**

The proposed funding model drew mixed reactions:

Supporters/conditional supporters saw potential flexibility.

Critics argued it was unclear, overly complicated, and could reduce funding available to departments.

Several questioned the county taking 10% "off the top" and asked for more transparency about how funds would be used.

**Different Cities Have Different Needs:**

There was a clear divide:

Smaller/rural departments (e.g., Lewiston, Paradise) said they rely heavily on county support and training.

Larger or more self-sufficient departments (e.g., Hyrum, Smithfield) argued they can operate independently and already provide many services themselves.

This created tension around whether all cities should pay into the same system equally.

County Support vs Local Independence

**Some chiefs praised the county for:**

Standardized training

Equipment support

Safety resources (gear cleaning, fit testing, mental health support)

Administrative help

Others argued their departments already fund most of their own operations and receive little direct value from county services.

**Concern About Long-Term Underfunding:**

Multiple speakers argued fire and EMS in the county are underfunded overall and that the county should consider higher taxes or more investment rather than redistributing limited money.

**Frustration With Process & Communication:**

A recurring complaint was:

Too many side conversations

Lack of transparency

Confusion about proposals

Growing mistrust between departments

Many asked for larger, open discussions involving all stakeholders at once.

**3. ADJOURN – meeting adjourned by Chair Beus @ 850 PM**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations (including auxiliary communicative aids and services) during this meeting should notify Janeen Allen, at 755-1850 at least three working days prior to the meeting.