

MINUTES
MEETING POLICE & FIRE COMMISSION
BERLIN, WISCONSIN
BERLIN CITY HALL – 2ND FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS
July 01, 2026 -6:30pm

President Ron Ross called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Present: Commissioners Morgan Monohan, Ron Ross, Gary Podoll, Denise Krentz, and Keith Hess. Seated virtually: None. Absent: None. Also present: Interim Police Chief Noah Knetzger, Fire Chief Doug Dewhurst, liaison Hill, Mayor Burgess, City Admin Jesse Balcom, and Berlin Journal: Paul Weigel. Public appearance: None.

Under general public comments, Ross read a memo from Mayor Burgess. It stated that she would like to be apart of the panel for the hiring of the Police Chief but in an observer capacity. She understands that the Commission has the final say in the hire of the new Police Chief but would like to see the candidates.

Under approval of minutes, Hess moved to approve the open and closed P&F Commission minutes of June 03, 2026. Krentz seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

Podoll moved to approve the fire department expenses as presented. Hess seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

Under Fire Department reporting and updates Fire Chief Dewhurst explained there were 15 calls for last month, and 81 calls for the year. Maintenance issues, all of the trucks had their annual pump test and DOT inspections completed. Upcoming events, we will be participating in the upcoming Neshkoro 4th of July parade and the festivities for the 3rd of July activities here. Training, this past month we held water movement training. The next training will be for water rescue drills. We will also be hosting a family night for all the members of the department.

Hess moved to approve the Police Department expenses as presented. Krentz seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

Interim Police Chief Knetzger stated that the chart provided to the commission shows last month's calls. The chart shows that there were 229 traffic stops, 14 drug investigations, 6 welfare checks, 4 theft investigations, and 4 domestic abuse investigations. The chart indicates, traffic contacts have increased along with OWI enforcement. Theft reports returned to a more average amount while domestic cases have increased.

Under Police reporting and updates, Interim Police Chief Knetzger explained that we have not heard yet from the small rural tribal body worn camera grant. I have completed command college and it was a very good experience. We had officers present during the farmers market hometown hero event. Officers executed four residential search warrants pertaining to separate drug investigations. The DOJ training fiscal year is coming to an end. All of our officers have met or exceeded the minimum training requirements and we will submit for the re-imbursement for this training in July. I have also looked into revamping our open records fee schedule to include the body worn cameras. As of now we do not have that language so we would like to include that. The department is ready for the 3rd of July festivities and have adequate staffing for patrol.

Under Police Chief interview process, timeline, and interview panel, Ross asked the Commission what they would like to see as the next step. Podoll explained that he would like to see the following people on the panel. He stated that he would like to have two Commission members, Green Lake Sheriff's department, a Chief from a nearby city, City of Berlin Administrator, and either the mayor or an elected official from Common Council. All of these panel members would complete what we need to choose the right person. The Commission can only have two members on the panel otherwise it would become a quorum. I have spoken with the Sheriff's department already and the Deputy Chief is willing to sit on the panel and they stated they would be willing to choose a Chief from a nearby city to also sit on the panel. I think this is a good option since they know all of the Chiefs around and can pick a person who would know Berlin PD the best. The city admin would sit on the panel for the financial reason of the city and the elected official I think should be the mayor since they work closely with the police department. This is my type of panel and we can change whatever but the more people we have the better chance we have on picking the right person for this job. I am hoping that we can have a person chosen by September. As stated, before the Commission is the one who ultimately chooses the next Police Chief so this panel would have to come back to the Commission and give their thoughts but we would make the ultimate decision. Krentz stated that we would like to have the input from those who work within the department too. So perhaps we ask them a question and the officers can respond back. Ross stated I agree and those comments could go to Jesse and then back to the panel. Jesse stated that is fine but the panel would need to make agendas and set meetings as they are now a short-term governing body. Ross asked what question should we ask the officers? Podoll stated the question could be what do you want to see in the police chief. Ross asked if this should be left open ended or have them choose options. Krentz stated yes. Monohan stated that if you leave it open ended it could become too broad. Perhaps we have a multiple-choice option and they could explain if they wanted. Ross stated let's form a question and those answers can then go Jesse to get to the panel before the interviews. Jesse stated she will send the question to all of the officers but would they like them to be anonymous. Ross, yes, we would have them type up their response and leave it anonymous, and place into an envelope that will get picked up. Let's go with the question of "what would you like to see in a Police Chief" and leave it open ended so they can give their prospective. Hess I would agree but we need to give them time to really think on this. Krentz asked if the 10th would be a good date since that is when the deadline is for submission. Hess asked Knetzger if that would be enough time for the officers. Knetzger stated that it may be a little too short of a turn around since there are vacations coming up for officers and regular time off. I would go with more like a two week turn around so they have enough time. Ross stated that would be okay and if the 15th would be better for the officers to get their thoughts in. Knetzger agreed that would be enough time. Ross asked what will the timeline look like now and who sits on the panel. Podoll stated the Chief Deputy of the Green Lake Sheriff's office, a Chief from nearby PD, Mayor Burgess, City Admin Balcom, Commissioner Hess, and Commissioner Podoll. Ross stated that he is fine with the panel as Podoll has mentioned but would like to express that the Commission has a clear separation of powers. So, I have a concern with the mayor sitting on the panel verses being an observer. Podoll stated that the panel is there to give us feedback, ask questions, and give us their vote. But we as the Commission have the ultimate say on who gets hired. As the panel gets formed, they are expected to keep us informed. They will need to meet and pick dates for the next steps. I would say the panel would need to meet between July 15 and before August 5 to set dates. That way they can inform us of the next steps during our regular meeting of August 5. Jesse asked if the panel will be compiling the questions for the interview. Ross stated yes. Jesse stated okay I will get the question out to the officers to reply to and will pick up their responses on July 15 for the panel to review.

Under old business: None.

Under new business: None.

Under closed session Ross stated there is no need anymore for the closed session so we will not go into closed. With that Podoll motioned to adjourn at 7:17pm. Hess seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

*Submitted by Stephanie Skivers
Administrative Assistant*

Next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, August 5, 2026 at 6:30pm at the Berlin City Hall