

Fire Chief Six-Month Self-Assessment

Fire Chief: Tim McHargue

Assessment Period: October 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026

This self-assessment mirrors the Board evaluation framework and provides context regarding progress, challenges, and leadership focus during the first six months of service.

Introduction:

Sustainability serves as the guiding principle for my leadership of the District under the direction of the Fire Board. My objective is to position the organization for long-term success by building an operation that is both fiscally sustainable and supported by a strong and stable workforce; one that operates responsibly within its financial realities while maximizing the District's ability to deliver high-quality fire and EMS services to our community and maintain a stable, professional, and meaningful workplace for our personnel.

1. Organizational Sustainability and Financial Resilience

Self-Assessment: *As Expected*

Organizational Sustainability

My concerns regarding organizational stability fall into several key areas:

- **Equipment:** Replacement planning for ambulances and fire engines.
- **Personnel:** Retention, recruitment, succession planning, and competitive pay and benefits.
- **Post-Employment Benefits:** Long-term fiscal obligations.
- **Governance and Policy:** Updating policies, Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), and eliminating all forms of unwritten "informal handshake" agreements."
- **Financial Practices:** Ensuring the District's operations are funded through reliable recurring revenue rather than one-time funding sources.
- **Capital Funding:** Using one-time funding appropriately for capital purchases.
- **Development Impacts:** Participating in all construction development within the District to ensure appropriate offsets and augmentation of fire and EMS services for long-term sustainability.

- Organizational Direction: Reviewing and updating the District's mission, vision, and core values.
- Strategic Planning: Developing a Strategic Plan to guide decisions that impact the District's future.

Financial Resilience

Upon my hiring, I received an initial financial briefing from the Business Manager (BM). I was advised that the District's financial situation required further analysis to fully understand its stability.

Historically, the former Fire Chief maintained primary authority over budget decisions, with some input from the Assistant Chief (AC) and BM. This structure resulted in an information silo, limiting the AC and BM's full understanding of the District's financial condition. At the time of my hiring, the BM was already in the process of assessing the District's finances.

Through discussions with the BM, she engaged an accountant to assist with the annual audit and to help correct financial processes so that we can obtain a clearer and more accurate understanding of the District's financial position.

As time progresses, we are developing a more complete understanding of the District's fiscal condition. The most recent annual audit identified three findings and one repeat finding, which we are actively addressing.

I have directed the BM to assume full operational authority over budget management. I am pleased with the accountability she has demonstrated in this role. With support from the AC, she has begun implementing new financial processes and industry best practices. The BM has proven to be a significant asset to the District.

The District is currently engaged in collective bargaining negotiations with two bargaining groups, which will also influence long-term financial sustainability.

On March 5, 2026, the AC, Board President, North Lyon County Fire District Chief, Mason Valley Chief, and Smith Valley Chief and I attended the Lyon County Board of Commissioners meeting to discuss the anticipated impacts of the proposed Microsoft Data Center and related electrical substations planned for Silver Springs. During that meeting, I addressed the Commissioners regarding the fire and EMS service impacts associated with this development. Specifically, I identified the need for funding to support additional firefighter positions, the purchase of necessary apparatus and equipment, and potential fire station improvements to house additional personnel.

Moving forward, we will continue to work with Lyon County planning officials to ensure that development projects include appropriate offsets or mitigation measures to support the District's ability to provide long-term fire and EMS services.

My assessment is that the District is addressing several structural and financial issues in a deliberate and responsible manner while improving our overall understanding of the District's fiscal condition. As my tenure continues and my situational awareness of the District's finances improves, I will be able to analyze our budget in greater depth and identify additional opportunities for improvement, cost controls, and strategic financial adjustments.

2. Public Trust, Transparency, and Fiscal Stewardship

Self-Assessment: *As Expected*

Public Trust

As part of the Board-adopted Priorities and Expectations related to Public Trust, we have arranged for myself, the AC, the Fire Marshal, Battalion Chiefs, or other staff members to attend nearly every Citizen Advisory Board meeting throughout the District each month. We have received very positive feedback and appreciation from residents and Commissioners for maintaining this presence and engagement.

In addition, we attended a Lions Club meeting to recognize their continued support in providing gift cards to residents of our District who have experienced fire loss. The District has also recognized citizens who have performed CPR and other acts of meritorious service to the community.

Transparency

The District now produces a monthly public dashboard that shares key operational statistics from the previous month. The District website has been redesigned; Board agendas and supporting agenda reports are now posted on the website to improve accessibility and transparency for the public.

Fiscal Stewardship

The BM is implementing additional checks and balances to strengthen financial oversight, improve tracking of fiscal actions, and ensure responsible and transparent management of District resources.

In support of fiscal prudence, I recommended that the District not accept a SAFER Grant to hire additional firefighters due to the current uncertainty regarding our long-term fiscal outlook. We are also temporarily holding two firefighter positions vacant to allow additional time to assess the District's budget and revenue trends.

We are negotiating one-year Collective Bargaining Agreements with both labor groups. This approach will allow the District to better evaluate recurring tax revenues versus one-time revenues before entering into longer-term financial commitments.

Met with three air ambulance providers to explore collaborations to place an air ambulance at fire station 38. Discussed the provision of fire dispatch services to be provided by a third party to all Lyon County fire agencies using lease payments from use of the fire station to offset the costs of dispatch. Met with the Comptroller, County Manager, Sheriff, and neighboring fire chiefs to explore the concept. In-process of initiating a fair market valuation of Fire Station 38 as a base for air ambulance transportation.

3. Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement

Self-Assessment: *As Expected*

Internal Stakeholder Engagement

Initiated meetings with the following internal stakeholders: shift meetings with Line personnel, Administrative staff, Fire Prevention staff, Risk Reduction Crew, Fleet Manager, Local #4728, Chief Officers' Association, Volunteers, Board of Directors individual member meetings with one left to complete.

Initiated monthly Labor Management meetings to discuss any concerns of Labor and work towards a mutually respectful and harmonious relationship.

Completed nearly all employee evaluations; This effort addressed a backlog of employee evaluations, some of which had not been completed for several years.

External Stakeholder Engagement

Initiated meetings with Storey County Fire Chief, North Lyon County Fire Chief, Mason Valley Fire Chief, Smith Valley Fire Chief, initiated a monthly Fire Chief lunch with all Lyon County Fire Chiefs along with the Storey County Fire Chief to encourage dialog regarding mutual interests, Lyon County Comptroller, Lyon County Manager, Lyon County Sheriff, Lyon County DA, Lyon County Sheriff Dispatch site visit, Carson City Fire Chief, East Fork Fire Chief, Lake Tahoe Regional Fire Chiefs Association, Northern Nevada Chief's Association-appointed Treasurer, Silver Springs Advisory Board, Mound House Advisory Board, Dayton Advisory Board, Stagecoach Advisory Board, unable to attend the Silver City Advisory Board due to concurrent meeting dates with Central Lyon, Board of County Commissioners discussions with Commissioners Hendrix, Keller, and Cassinelli.

4. Operational Assessment, Compliance, and Performance Benchmarking

Self-Assessment: *As Expected*

Operational Assessment

Full assessment of Operations of the Fire District will require more than six months to accomplish. Current assessment has consisted of new weekly meetings with the AC and BM to review each work week's plan.

Assessment of current and future oversight of all personnel and assurance that every employee has a supervisor and expectations, based on policy, occurs through the monthly Staff Meetings that occur on the first Thursday of the month. These meetings are preceded by pre-meeting notes that are compiled the preceding week, by the Battalion Chief (BC) that will be working the day of the meeting. These notes are disseminated to all attendees prior to the meeting to facilitate an efficient meeting. Additionally, detailed Staff Meeting Notes are taken that are shared with all personnel that include a deliverable list with responsible names and delivery dates to assure effectiveness. This approach helps to assure that all personnel are familiar with the direction of the District on a monthly basis.

The Fire Chief, AC, and BM also meet with Administration Staff in a separate meeting to discuss all things related to Administration.

Updates to the Policy Manual are overdue by several years. The AC has created a timeline to update policies with input from various groups including the Chief Officers and Local 4728. This is a daunting task that requires many staff hours and input to assure that all perspectives are considered and District operations are legal, compliant and based in industry best-practice.

With regard to Fleet, meetings have been held with the Fleet Manager as well. With regard to fleet, the following areas are being assessed and actions are as follows: consider selling of the ladder truck that was purchased 2+ years ago, assessment of reserve fleet and other equipment with recommendations to retire certain apparatus, fund purchase of two new ambulances with delivery dates in Fall 2026, explore possible purchase of two retired Cal-OES Type-I engines as fleet reserves, begin to form a long-term fleet replacement process.

The Fire Chief has met with Fire Prevention Staff to begin to understand the fire prevention needs of the District along with funding processes, target hazards, and other prevention specific issues. The Fire Chief has participated in visiting target hazards with Staff to begin to understand District specific hazards.

The Fire Chief has met with the Fuels Division Chief and Staff to understand the Fuels Program, funding, solicitation of fuels projects, and the relationship with various stakeholders including NV Energy. The Chief, AC and Division Chief have attended several meetings regarding NV Energy contracts and have also sought out to diversify these fuels contracts to assure increased stability.

The Fire Chief has met with the Sheriff and District Staff to assess the current Tactical EMS Program that allows a District employee to provide paramedic services as part of the Sheriff

SWAT Team. This program needs additional District Administrative clarifying direction and support.

Compliance

The Fire Chief has reviewed compliance with current Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) in an effort to assure that all legal responsibilities with Labor and the State are being met. It has been discovered that there are multiple “hand-shake” agreements that are understood to exist between District Leadership, Labor and unrepresented Staff. These hand-shake agreements are a liability to the District and Staff alike and are opportunities for misunderstandings and distrust. The Fire Chief is in-process of replacing these informal “handshake” agreements with solid policies, amendments to future CBAs, updates to or eliminations of outdated Memorandums of Understanding, and the ceasing of the practice of creating these types of verbal understandings. The direction of the Fire Chief is that most, if not all, direction from the District to personnel will be predictable, have strong side-boards, and be supportive of our Staff to assure compliance, creativity when necessary, and thinking personnel.

The implementation of Industry Best Practices is occurring in the District now. In February, a near-miss incident occurred involving a vehicle fire and an emotionally unstable subject who brandished a firearm on an incident. Post-incident, it was determined that this was a near-miss situation. A Blue-Sheet after action report was created to share lessons learned and the document was shared with the Northern Nevada Fire Chief’s Association; this is a best practice. Additionally, Flash Reports are being created to quickly share information regarding consequential response in the District. These flash reports are shared with our cooperators, The Fire Board, the Sheriff, Lyon County Commissioners, and other government entities that would benefit from the situational awareness of District operations. On-duty BCs create the flash reports as soon as practical after emergency responses.

Performance Benchmarking

Performance benchmarking has not yet occurred regarding District operations during the first six months. Updates to dispatch software (First Due) are being implemented now and should serve to enhance data collection. As mentioned, call types and volumes are being shared monthly with the public during Fire Board meetings.

5. Alignment of Services with Community Risk and Legal Requirements

Self-Assessment: *As Expected*

Alignment of Services with Community Risk

Currently the best way of aligning services with community risk would be to create a Standards of Care (SOC) document. An SOC document provides a structured method for

evaluating how an emergency services agency delivers its core services to the community. Its purpose is to establish a comprehensive framework that assists in assessing community risks, defining baseline and benchmark response performance objectives, guiding future fire station locations, determining appropriate apparatus and staffing configurations, evaluating workload and unit utilization, measuring service delivery performance, and informing strategic planning and policy decisions related to the procurement and allocation of resources.

An SOC has not yet been created for the District. The cost of a SOC is around \$40,000-\$70,000 on the low-end. Planning to create a SOC will be part of our future strategic plan.

Legal Requirements

Fire service delivery must operate within a framework of statutory, regulatory, and governance requirements. During the first six months of service, attention has been given to ensuring that District operations align with Nevada law governing fire protection districts, collective bargaining requirements, open meeting and public records statutes, EMS regulatory requirements, occupational safety standards, and governmental financial reporting obligations. Continued attention to these legal frameworks will remain an important component of the District's operational and administrative decision-making.

In addition to aligning District operations with statutory and regulatory requirements, attention has been given to identifying and mitigating several governance and compliance risks that commonly affect fire districts in Nevada. These include ensuring strict adherence to Nevada Open Meeting Law requirements in Board deliberations, maintaining timely and lawful responses to public records requests, conducting collective bargaining and labor relations in accordance with state law, strengthening financial controls and transparency in the use of public funds, eliminating informal "handshake" agreements that can create legal ambiguity or labor disputes, and reinforcing clear policies and supervisory structures that support workplace safety and regulatory compliance. Addressing these areas early in my tenure helps reduce organizational risk, supports sound governance by the Board of Directors, and promotes a stable and legally compliant operating environment for the District moving forward.

6. Strategic Planning Preparation and Organizational Direction

Self-Assessment: *As Expected*

Strategic Planning

Writing a strategic plan has been a focus of the Fire Chief since October. The strategic plan will be a multi-year document that will be written with input from stakeholders to guide current and future decisions within the District. The Fire Chief had planned to begin the strategic planning process in April. This timeline has now been assessed to be too aggressive

and will not result in the best product due to the need for better situational analysis of District Operations. Based on the first six months of assessment, initiating the strategic planning process later in the year will allow for a more informed situational analysis and ultimately produce a stronger strategic plan for the District.

On December 16, 2025, the Fire Chief conducted a mandatory Captain's Meeting attended either in person or virtually by all Captains and Chief Officers. The meeting served as a leadership development session designed to reinforce expectations for supervisory leadership and introduce High Reliability Organization (HRO) principles as a framework for improving operational consistency, safety culture, and organizational resilience. Through facilitated discussions and group exercises, participants developed a candid assessment of the District's current culture and identified key opportunities for improvement, including consistent operations across shifts, enhanced training and mentoring, improved workload distribution, and greater organizational predictability.

Organizational Direction

During the first six months of service, organizational direction has focused on stabilizing governance practices, improving transparency, and establishing systems that support long-term sustainability. Emphasis has been placed on strengthening communication with internal personnel, regional partners, and the community while reinforcing expectations for professional leadership and consistent operations across the District. Early efforts have also focused on improving management oversight, clarifying roles and responsibilities, addressing legacy practices that created organizational ambiguity, and laying the groundwork for a formal strategic planning process that will guide the District's future direction.

Overall Self-Assessment Summary

Key Accomplishments:

Key accomplishments during the first six months include establishing consistent leadership engagement with internal personnel and external stakeholders; strengthening transparency through improved public reporting and communication practices; initiating structural improvements in financial oversight and fiscal stewardship; beginning the review and modernization of District policies and administrative practices; and conducting leadership development discussions with supervisory staff to align expectations for operational consistency and High Reliability Organization principles. Additional progress has been made in assessing fleet needs, strengthening regional relationships with neighboring agencies and Lyon County leadership, and improving organizational communication through regular staff and labor-management meetings.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learned:

The first six months of service have also highlighted several structural and cultural challenges within the organization. These include the presence of informal practices and “informal “handshake” agreements” that created uncertainty in expectations, the need for improved consistency in operations across shifts, and the importance of strengthening communication and mentorship within a workforce where a significant percentage of personnel have limited tenure. These circumstances reinforced the importance of establishing clear policies, predictable processes, and strong leadership alignment in order to support a stable and sustainable operational environment.

Focus Areas for the Next Six Months:

1. Strategic Planning and Organizational Direction

Determine appropriate timing and initiate a formal strategic planning process that includes internal and external stakeholder engagement and results in a clear roadmap for the District’s future mission, vision, service delivery priorities, and resource needs.

2. Operational Consistency and Performance Benchmarking

Continue evaluating operational performance and response models, while implementing systems that promote consistent practices across shifts and support data-driven decision-making.

3. Policy Modernization and Governance Clarity

Continue the systematic review and update of District policies, Memoranda of Understanding, and administrative practices to ensure clarity, compliance with legal requirements, and predictable expectations for personnel.

4. Workforce Development and Leadership Capacity

Strengthen training, mentorship, and leadership development efforts to support a workforce with significant early-career personnel while reinforcing professional standards and High Reliability Organization principles.

Summary:

The first six months of service have primarily focused on listening, assessing the organization, strengthening relationships, and establishing the foundational systems necessary for long-term sustainability. While significant progress has been made in improving communication, governance practices, and organizational alignment, it is

recognized that meaningful organizational improvement requires time, consistency, and shared commitment from leadership, labor, and the Board of Directors. Moving forward, the focus will remain on building a stable, transparent, and high-performing organization that operates within its fiscal realities while providing reliable and professional fire and EMS services to the residents of the District.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve the Board and the community and remain committed to building a sustainable, professional, and high-performing organization for the long term.