Pine Hill Fire District #1
Special Meeting Minutes
June 16, 2026

SPECIAL MEETING HELD TO ADDRESS PERSONNEL ISSUES

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order by Chairman Wakeley at 5:00 P.M. Chairman Wakeley led the salute to the flag and read a statement regarding the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL: Commissioner Briggs – present, Commissioner Hagarty – present, Commissioner Harris – absent, Commissioner Waddington – absent, Commissioner Wakeley – present.

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Chief Hunter, Solicitor Long

OPEN THE FLOOR TO THE PUBLIC: Chairman Wakeley asked for a motion to open the floor to the public. A motion to open the floor to the public was made by Commissioner Hagarty and seconded by Commissioner Waddington. All were in favor. Motion passed.

Joshua Craig, whose family's house at 195 Erial Rd burned down on June 2nd, read a letter from his sister who couldn't make it to the meeting: "I am writing to show my support for Battalion Chief Pizzo both personally and as a member of the Pine Hill community. Our family recently suffered a devastating house fire. June 2nd, our family lost our home to a house fire. During one of the most traumatic experiences of our lives, Battalion Chief Pizzo was there to help. He treated our family with compassion, professionalism, and genuine concern when we needed it most. The support and leadership he showed during that difficult time will never be forgotten. My family has known Chief Pizzo for decades, and throughout that time he has consistently been a dedicated member of our community. He has spent years serving the residents of Pine Hill, helping people during emergencies. His commitment has spoken louder than any mistakes from his distant past. I believe people should be judged by their character they demonstrate today, not solely by events that may have occurred many years ago. We all want to live in a community that believes in redemption and the ability to learn from their experiences. In my view, Chief Pizzo has demonstrated through his service that he is dedicated to helping others, making a positive difference. As someone that has personally benefited from his leadership during one of the worst moments of our lives, I can honestly say that I feel safer now knowing that he is a part of the Pine Hill Fire Department. His experience and commitment to the community are valuable assets to the residents he serves. I respectfully ask that his years of service, his contributions to the community, and positive impact he has on countless families be taken into serious consideration. Thank you for your time and your consideration."

Dylan Pierce, whose address is 4 Dunwoody Lane, Clementon, NJ 08021, read a letter that stated: "We, the members of the Pine Hill Fire Department, formally present this vote of no confidence to Commissioner James Wakeley regarding his fitness to serve as Chairman or in any other position as Commissioner of the Board of Fire Commissioners. The members have spoken in agreement that the operability, readiness, effectiveness of the Pine Hill Fire Department has been compromised under Commissioner Wakeley's leadership. The Board has been unwilling to replace two career firefighters that have resigned back in October 2025 and January 2026. A hiring process began in January 2026, ended in March 2026, when De'Andre Ralston finished number one, as was the Chief's recommendation, but was skipped for the number two candidate hired in May 2026. Several commissioners have openly expressed that they personally do not like Mr. Ralston, calling him an idiot after a Commission meeting. Ralston was President at the time. For the cost of the two career firefighters that have resigned, three firefighters could have been hired at the base rate. The career firefighters have been working without a contract since January 2026. Negotiations had begun in September 2025. There have been minimal conversations. The Board has been unwilling to meet to discuss issues. Chief Hunter has been working without a contract since January 2026. The Board has ignored and disregarded his requests to meet. The board has agreed to give an employee of the Board a significant salary increase. They will not increase the salaries of the Chief and firefighters. The Board attempted to retaliate against Chief Hunter after his vote in support of new candidates running for the Board. The Board thought by refusing to renew the Chief Hunter's contract, this was considered firing him. They went as far as to post a job offering for the Chief's position on the Fire District website and other outlets. The Board has refused to provide or discuss the plan for funding towards the purchase of a new tower ladder. A truck committee was formed in 2022 to discuss a new tower. The cost of the new tower ladder has increased 600k to 800k since 2002 with wait times being three to four years compared to two years back then. The current tower ladder is in its 21st year of service. It has cost tens of thousands in repairs each year and will continue to cost thousands. The Board has been hemorrhaging money for attorneys, private investigators, and solicitors more than previous years combined. Most recently, the board was quoted $8,000 for an investigation, but was billed nearly double at $13,800 to investigate a personnel matter. The Board has refused to help funding towards improvements and upkeep for building and grounds. They claim they do not have the money to do so, nor have they agreed to meet to discuss the plan to allocate funds. The department has fundraised to come out of pocket towards improvements and upkeep. There have been no negotiations towards the lease agreement. This could help the department save money. The Board currently has at least one lawsuit against them, and several accusations of unethical behavior. The Board is completely divided, hardly on the same page with any decision being made. Complaints were made about Commissioner Wakeley posting photos of his private parts on social media. These complaints were made to Personnel Director Harris, never investigated. Instead, Commissioner Wakeley has been appointed Chairman. Commissioner Wakeley and Commissioner Harris have lied on state documents each year when

answering questions about earned income. The stipend income for membership has been capped at lower than reasonably allowed. This puts the department at risk of not putting a truck on the street if it cannot be adequately staffed. This puts the residents of Pine Hill at risk. This was very close today. An adequately staffed firehouse will respond to an emergency in under two minutes, arriving on scene in under four minutes. Relying on a home response means a response time of over four minutes. This substantial response time could mean someone's life. We are averaging three CPR saves per year, just within the fire department, with the EMS engine arriving before the ambulance. Rescues made at Kirk Lane fire, for those that remember, was under five minutes. Staffing was not once an issue under the Chief of Battalion Chief. This has not become an issue until Commissioner Wakeley had become Chairman. Some shifts only have one member assigned, typically a career firefighter. Some shifts do not have any firefighters assigned, relying on a home response, again, over four minutes. The Fire District was awarded grant funding to pay for a large part of the stipend firefighters. Battalion Chief Pizzo has been assigned to home since June 2026 with no further guidance from the Board. They cannot supply him with means to work from home. He cannot respond to emergency calls nor can he ride the apparatus, while staffing is already suffering. This was done in the midst of the Battalion Chief working on grants for funding. We now stand to lose those grants. This puts the financial burden of the department needs back on the taxpayers, something that Commissioner Waddington had campaigned on during his reelection. Once again, this puts the public at risk when day-to-day operations cannot be properly managed. Therefore, my closing argument: therefore, be it resolved that the Pine Hill Fire Department declares it has no confidence in Commissioner James Wakeley's abilities to lead. Be it further resolved that we demand Commissioner Wakeley tender his resignation for the Board of Fire Commissioners effective immediately. Thank you for your time."

Union President Keith Kemery addressed the Board: "Good evening, Mr. Chairman, and Fire Commissioners. For the record, Keith Kemery, President, International Association of Firefighters Local 3249. I show the time being 5:10 pm as I start my remarks. Commissioners, first, to what my understanding is with regard to outstanding issues with regard to Battalion Chief Pizzo, I respectfully submit for your consideration that Battalion Chief Pizzo has served with distinction and honor and represented the Pine Hill Fire Department at all times in a positive light. I am aware he has a past. We are all aware he has a past. He made the fire department aware he had a past when he applied as a volunteer, and it was again on record when he was considered for full-time employment, and it was, of course, there when he was considered for promotion, not once but twice. And since his latest promotion of Battalion Chief, Battalion Chief Pizzo has been among firefighters who responded to a motor vehicle accident where a natural gas main was breached and there was a significant risk of explosion, and he exposed himself, along with other firefighters, to rescue and save the life of the trapped motorist in that motor vehicle accident. He's been recognized, along with the other firefighters, both locally and nationally, for that. I submit to you, Commissioners, you will not be rendering judgment on the

Sal Pizzo of today. If you vote to take him out, you are rendering judgment on the Sal Pizzo that was 25 years ago. He paid his dues, he rehabbed himself, and he more than made up for his mistake in his service, not just in this town, but other towns. So I ask please restore Battalion Chief Pizzo to duty, as there is no statutory requirement for him to be removed. He can continue to work, he can continue to be in the pension system that he is included in. There is no provision on the books that says you have to take him out. So please restore him to duty, and end this. Enough's enough. Next issue, I just listened to information proffered by the fire company. Commissioners: We got a fractured fire department here. I said this. I warned you about this when we were having discussion about the Chief's continued employment. It's starting to impact our ability to answer 911 calls. The rigs are not responding with the staffing levels that they did. Sometimes we've had near misses. We haven't actually had a direct hit where an apparatus had to respond understaffed. But it's been close. People who have been away from the station have come back just in time for a significant alarm. Today was one of those, and granted, today was a mutual aid alarm, but again, I remind the Commissioners: you have a responsibility to provide mutual aid, you go help the other towns, so they can help you. If you cannot provide mutual aid, it's not mutual, then the towns nearby have to consider whether or not they're able to come help the residents of Pine Hill. So again, approximately I believe it was the May Fire Commissioners meeting, I asked for a labor management meeting between union representatives, the Fire Chief, and the Board. I've had no contact. Would you please? Maybe it's an oversight with everything that's going on. It probably was. I just ask you, please review your schedules and get back to me. Can we please have that labor management meeting and discuss how
to address the staffing issues? And then the final issue being the staffing. We have vacancies. You've hired one. Ask you to please, because of what's going on with staffing and response, we don't have a home response. I think my information is you have maybe six people that live in the town who respond from home in a timely fashion. We got to do something different. So, again, if we get the vacancies filled, and even if we have to talk about that in labor management before you take an action, I can appreciate that. Thank you very much for the time."

Michael Nolan, 615 10th Ave, Lindenwold, NJ, approached the Board and said: "For people who don't know it, Sal is my son-in-law, and also I am a past chief and 42 year member of Lindenwold Fire Department, Chief for over 28 years until I resigned due to health reasons. What I want to tell you is that that young man, even though he, again, is my son-in-law, came to this fire department in Lindenwold as a volunteer. He gave up his time and went to school, did firefighter one and two, did everything he was required to do to become a full-time firefighter. Before he was allowed to join, I did everything, not myself, we independently did a study on everything that was Sal's passed. Everything was cleared by our solicitors, and he was allowed to join the Lindenwold Fire Department as a volunteer member. He then took that and went into the career side and became a member, first volunteer, and then paid member of Pine Hill Fire Department. He is very well respected in the county, member of the County Chiefs Association,

represents this town in the greatest of ways, as you've seen recently with the fire you had that could have led to many fatalities that did not happen. That occurred under the leadership of the Chief and Deputy Chief. What you would do to this town by taking these men away is hurt this town. They have done nothing to deserve what they are going through right now. And I plead with you that you rescind everything and put these men back to work. It is good, as it was stated, for the mutual aid in the towns. We provide mutual aid to Pine Hill, Pine Hill provides it to Laurel Springs. You know, there was an alliance that was started because of the staffing issues. We don't have paid members in Lindenwold, alright, so we're not as lucky as what it is. And it is a good, strong fire department that's being fractured and torn apart. Put a stop to it now."

De'Andre Ralston, whose address is 26 Bromley Drive, Sicklerville, NJ and who is the pastor of Hope Chapel in Pine Hill, addressed the Board saying: "I wasn't sure if I was going to share anything or if I was going to say anything. Listening that my name is brought up in matters and issues, I feel that it is appropriate for me to approach the Fire Commission, and I respectfully thank you for the opportunity to be able to do that. I understand that the Board of Fire Commissioners' responsibility is to ensure the safety, integrity, and professionalism of the Fire District, and to protect the people that are in Pine Hill. Those responsibilities are extremely important, and we do not take them lightly, and I truly believe that you do not take them lightly either. Other than being a firefighter, I've been a pastor for almost 10 years, been running a nonprofit organization for 10 years, and I have experience with having a Board and being on the Board for 10 years. Every single time as a Board that we have to make a decision, we have to ask ourselves that is that decision that we are going to make reflect the years to come on the decision in which we make, which means that if the Board is to make a decision, and someone communicates that decision, the Board is making that decision as a whole, and if we realize that a decision is about to be made and there is division and we are torn as a Board, as an entity, we say this probably is not the right decision. I think that it is on record how many times this Fire Commission has called for a vote and multiple Commissioners have abstained and/or voted against the vote that was there. My first ask is that you consider that not just the Fire Department is torn and divided, but as an entity, as a Board, you're not on the same page. This is a wagon with wheels that are loose and if not fallen off. This puts the people of Pine Hill at risk. And in regards to potential employment, I cannot think of any reason, other than personally, that I was not given the opportunity to serve this community in the capacity of being a career firefighter. I put all of that aside for one reason, and one reason only: because the most important matter out of all of this, is that there should be absolutely no reason why Battalion Chief Pizzo's job is at risk. Absolutely not. I take you back to the first paramedics that ever existed in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who had colorful pasts and saved lives and had an experience of redemption through that. That is what it means to be a first responder. So I ask you the question for the decision that you're going to make, right, whatever you decide to do, understand that it is going to potentially affect anybody that ever wants to process and think that because something

happened years ago, I may not have the opportunity to do something that I'm passionate about, and if you pay attention to the news in the last couple of weeks, you would see something that he's also very, very, very good at doing. As someone who has experience of being on a Board for a decade, I know it doesn't look like I'm that old, but a decade. Ask yourselves, are we doing what we are supposed to be doing, or are we doing the wrong thing? You all are very good at doing the right thing. So, are you doing the wrong thing, or are you doing the right thing? Thank you so much for your time."

CLOSE FLOOR TO THE PUBLIC: Chairman Wakeley asked for a motion to close the floor to the public if there were no questions. There were none. A motion to close the floor to the public was made by Commissioner Hagarty and seconded by Commissioner Waddington. All were in favor. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION 26-34 CLOSED SESSION: Chairman Wakeley said there was a need to enter a closed session to discuss personnel issues.

- A motion to approve resolution 26-34 was made by Commissioner Hagarty and seconded by Commissioner Waddington.

Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Briggs – yes, Commissioner Hagarty – yes, Commissioner Harris – yes, Commissioner Waddington - yes, Commissioner Wakeley - yes. Motion passed with five yes votes.

Meeting temporarily adjourned at 5:22 pm.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Wakeley called the meeting back to order at 6:12 pm and asked for a roll call.

ROLL CALL: Commissioner Briggs – present, Commissioner Hagarty – present, Commissioner Harris – absent, Commissioner Waddington – absent, Commissioner Wakeley – present.

OUTCOME OF CLOSED SESSION: Solicitor Long said Mr. Chairman had one additional resolution this evening. This resolution is to issue notice of disciplinary hearing and charges against employee SD and designate a hearing officer pursuant to the rules of conduct. Chairman Wakeley asked for a motion.

- A motion was made by Commissioner Waddington and seconded by Commissioner Harris.

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Roll Call Vote: Commissioner Briggs – no, Commissioner Hagarty – no, Commissioner Harris – yes, Commissioner Waddington - yes, Commissioner Wakeley - yes. Motion passed with three yes votes.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order by Chairman Wakeley at 5:00 P.M. Chairman Wakeley led the salute to the flag and read a statement regarding the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL: Commissioner Briggs – present, Commissioner Hagarty – present, Commissioner Harris – absent, Commissioner Waddington – absent, Commissioner Wakeley – present.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order by Chairman Wakeley at 5:00 P.M. Chairman Wakeley led the salute to the flag and read a statement regarding the Open Public Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL: Commissioner Briggs – present, Commissioner Hagarty – present, Commissioner Harris – absent, Commissioner Waddington – absent, Commissioner Wakeley – present.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Wakeley asked if there were any other issues that needed to be addressed. There were none. A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Harris and seconded by Commissioner Waddington. All were in favor. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Michelle Briggs
Commission Secretary

Hannah Lower
Fire District Business Administrator

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FIRE DISTRICT #1
BOROUGH OF PINE HILL

CLOSED SESSION
Resolution 26-34

WHEREAS: The Open Public Meetings Act of the State of New Jersey permits certain conditions and situations when a Public Body as the Board of Fire Commissioners may exclude the public and discuss certain matters in closed session, and

WHEREAS: The Board of Fire Commissioners has determined that there does exist a need to discuss matters of Personnel, Litigation, Collective Bargaining/Contract Negotiation, Purchase or Sale of Real Estate, Law Enforcement Techniques or Investigation of Violation of Law, matters of Attorney Client Privilege, matters of Employment, The Board of Fire Commissioners.

NOW THEREFORE, It is herein Resolved and Approved that the Board of Fire Commissioners shall discuss personnel matters in closed session.

Date: June 16, 2026

Michelle Briggs, Secretary

Record of Vote:

Commissioner	Motion	2nd	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Hagarty	✓		✓			
Harris			✓			
Briggs			✓			
Wakeley		✓	✓			
Waddington		✓	✓			

I, Hannah Lower, Business Administrator of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District #1, Borough of Pine Hill, County of Camden, State of New Jersey, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Commissioners at the special meeting held on June 16, 2026.

Hannah Lower, Administrator

RESOLUTION 26-35

TO ISSUE DISCIPLINARY NOTICE AND CHARGES AGAINST EMPLOYEE S.D. AND TO DELEGATE A HEARING OFFICER PURSUANT TO THE RULES OF CONDUCT

WHEREAS, the Pine Hill Fire District #1 ("District") has completed an independent investigation into certain conduct involving employee S.D; and

WHEREAS, following review of the report, the District desires to pursue appropriate charges against S.D ; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Rules of Conduct/Disciplinary Code, and relevant New Jersey law, the District shall hold a hearing before a Hearing Panel prior to the issuance of a final disciplinary decision; and

WHEREAS, the District desires to delegate the role of Hearing Panel to an outside Hearing Officer as may be necessary; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Fire Commissioners for Pine Hill Fire District #1, County of Camden in the State of New Jersey as follows:

1. The provisions of the WHEREAS clauses set forth above are incorporated herein by reference and made a part hereof.
2. The District is hereby authorized to issue any and all paperwork as may be necessary to initiate disciplinary action against employee S.D. to be issued by the Personnel Commissioner.
3. The District hereby delegates the authority under the Rules of Conduct/Disciplinary Code for a Hearing Panel to an independent Hearing Officer as may be necessary in the discretion of the Personnel Commissioner.

Date: June 16, 2026

Michelle Briggs, Secretary

Record of Vote:

Commissioner	Motion	2nd	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Hagarty				✓		
Harris		✓	✓			
Briggs				✓		
Wakeley			✓			
Waddington	✓		✓			

I, Hannah Lower, Business Administrator of the Board of Fire Commissioners, Fire District #1, Borough of Pine Hill, County of Camden, State of New Jersey, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Commissioners at the special meeting held on June 16, 2026.

Hannah Lower, Administrator