

**MINUTES OF A CIVIL SERVICE BOARD SPECIAL MEETING HELD
MAY 27, 2026**

The St. Tammany Fire District No.3 Civil Service Board met in special session at 4:03p.m. May 27, 2026, at the Administrative Building located at 27690 Main St. Lacombe, LA.

Call to Order:

Roll call: Samantha Osbon and Justin Stiehl were present. Matt Bindewald was absent.

Chief Geissler and Chad Danenhower, and M. Guillot were also present.

Discuss request for an investigation by an employee.

Ms. Osbon stated that an employee has submitted an appeal for a hearing and investigation.

At this time, wanted to request amending the agenda to add an item for the board to consider and vote on adopting a resolution to engage special legal counsel for the Civil Service Board. This request is being made because the Board has received a proposed engagement resolution from Attorney Henry Olinde, and we need to address it formally. Captain Stiehl made a motion to amend the agenda. Ms. Osbon seconded. A vote was taken. Motion carried.

Ms. Osbon stated that the motion to amend the agenda passed unanimously and may now include consideration of the attorney engagement resolution.

Ms. Osbon stated that each board member has been provided with a copy of the proposed resolution. The purpose of this item is for the Board to determine whether to adopt the resolution and formally engage counsel as outlined in the document. There was no further discussion. Captain Stiehl made a motion to adopt the resolution engaging Attorney Henry Olinde and the law firm of Olinde & Mercer as special legal counsel for the Board. Ms. Osbon seconded. A vote was taken. Motion carried.

Discuss request for an investigation by employee.

Ms. Osbon stated that the special meeting convened to determine whether the petition filed by Michael Guillot alleges facts sufficient under La. R.S. 33:2555(C) and the St. Tammany Fire Protection District No. 3 Civil Service Board Rules to warrant a full hearing. Ms. Osbon stated that the statutory grounds for appeal after a working test of more than six months is limited to whether the employee was not given a fair opportunity to prove his ability in the position. Ms. Osbon stated that the only responsibility today is to determine whether the written request shows just cause to move forward with a hearing and investigation. Ms. Osbon stated that just cause at this stage means the appeal raises a legitimate question under civil service law – specifically, whether the employee may not have been given a fair opportunity to prove his ability during the working test period. If the petition presents a plausible basis for the at claim, the Board must grant a hearing.

Ms. Osbon stated that Mr. Guillot submitted a written appeal on May 21, 2026, alleging that he was not given a fair opportunity to prove his ability during the working test period as Assistant Chief.

In his appeal, he states that he received no notice of deficiencies, no counseling or documentation, and that the refusal to confirm occurred only days before the end of the working test. These allegations form the basis of his request for a hearing and investigation.

Ms. Osbon stated that before going further she wanted to mention that she was reading the Civil Service Board rules for Fire district 3 and rule number 6 which is procedures on appeal hearings and other hearings and investigations, because this is not a disciplinary or corrective action, in section 2 it says *“any member of the board who is the immediate supervisor or direct work associate of any officer or employee appealing removal, suspension, demotion, discharge, or any other disciplinary action by the appointing authority and who is directly involved in the incident out of which such action arose shall recuse himself/herself from voting on any decision by the board to affirm, reverse, or modify the order of the appointing authority.”* Ms. Osbon asked Captain Stiehl if he fit into this description where he would need to recuse himself. She asked if Mike Guillot had been his immediate supervisor or direct work associate. Captain Stiehl stated yes. Ms. Osbon stated that Captain Stiehl said yes and based on the STFD3 Civil Service Board rules he must recuse himself. Ms. Osbon read the board rules further as follows: *“If such recusal by a member of the board results in the inability of the board to reach a decision by the concurring votes of two (2) members,”*

She stated that since there are only two members of the board because the third member is out of the country and has mentioned resigning from the board. *“the board shall be considered to have affirmed the action of the appointing authority.”* Ms. Osbon stated that based on this rule that Captain Stiehl recused himself and there is no third member, Chief Geissler’s decision stands.

Ms. Osbon asked Mr. Guillot if it made sense to him and he stated it did not because he was not informed of any board member resigning or anything that would have affected his ability to have accurate representation. He stated that the purpose of the civil service board is to protect employees from the actions that he has incurred. He stated that he did not want his rights infringed upon because of technicality. Ms. Osbon discussed timelines that were brought up as when or if Guillot was a supervisor of Stiehl. Ms. Osbon stated that Mr. Guillot made a valid point. She stated that Captain Stiehl was recusing himself on the language alone and asked if he felt that his work relationship with Mr. Guillot would preclude him from making a decision one way or another. Captain Stiehl stated, “put like that no”. Ms. Osbon stated that after further discussion, Captain Stiehl is not recusing himself. Mr. Danenhower asked Captain Stiehl if he had received orders from Mr. Guillot. He stated that he had. Captain Stiehl stated that it is better if he recused himself, he has worked with Mr. Guillot. Mr. Guillot asked why today’s date was picked, Ms. Osbon explained that this date was not picked arbitrarily, it was based on when his appeal was received and the board had 10 days to respond. She explained that this date is only to see if he is eligible based on what he provided to the board, for a hearing and investigation.

Ms. Osbon took a recess to call the Board attorney, Henry Olinde. Time is 4:28.

Time is 4:48. Out of recess.

Ms. Osbon stated that the board spoke with Henry Olinde. Ms. Osbon asked Captain Stiehl again if he wanted to recuse himself because of the direct associate stipulation in the board rules. Captain Stiehl stated that after reviewing the rule and timelines he does not think that he has to recuse himself. She also asked Mr. Guillot if he was ok with Captain Stiehl not recusing himself which he stated

“absolutely”. Mr. Danenhower reminded Ms. Osbon that there was another party involved. Ms. Osbon asked Chief Geissler if he was ok with Captain Stiehl not recusing himself. Chief Geissler stated that he felt there was direct supervisory communication between them, but he would defer back to the employee representative on how he felt. Mr. Danenhower stated that there is a distinction between recusing yourself today and in the decision-making process.

Ms. Osbon would like to get with the Board of Commissioner’s Chairman to see if they can get Matt replaced as soon as possible since he said he was resigning. Mr. Hall stated that he cannot guarantee how quickly this was going to be. He did state that Matt was on the board until a replacement was found.

Ms. Osbon stated for the record that Mr. Guillot submitted a written appeal on May 21, 2026, alleging that he was not given a fair opportunity to prove his ability during the working test period as Assistant Chief. In his appeal, he stated that he received no notice of deficiencies, no counseling or documentation, and that the refusal to confirm occurred only days before the end of the working test. These allegations form the basis of his request for a hearing and investigation. Ms. Osbon asked Mr. Guillot if this was correct. Mr. Guillot stated yes, he had no documented PIP, no documented reprimands, no documented verbal reprimand, no disciplinary action, no official written notice before the refusal to confirm that he was failing the working test period from the Chief.

Ms. Osbon asked Mr. Guillot the following questions and his replies in red:

Mr. Guillot, is it your position that you were not given a fair opportunity to prove your ability during the working test period? **Yes**

2. Are you alleging that you were not informed—verbally or in writing—of any performance deficiencies before the refusal to confirm? **He stated nothing official like a negative performance review. He stated that he has had nothing through the civil service routes.**

3. Is it your allegation that you received no written counseling, no written reprimands, and no performance improvement plan during the working test period? **Yes ma’am. He stated nothing through the civil service process that he does with subordinates.**

4. Are you alleging that the refusal to confirm occurred only a few days before the expected completion of your working test period? **Yes ma’am**

5. Do these allegations form the basis of your request for a hearing and investigation before the Board? **Yes ma’am**

6. Is there anything else you wish to state today regarding why you believe you did not receive a fair opportunity, without going into the full details that would be addressed at a hearing? **He stated that those are the primary reasons through the investigation if other evidence appears he doesn’t have together. His primary contention was never given a chance to resolve through formal documentation.**

Ms. Osbon asked if he was denying that he had verbal notifications of deficiencies that he should approve upon? **He stated that he was never told that he was in jeopardy of failing his working test**

period. He was never told by Chief, if he had written or verbal documentation the behaviors would have been addressed immediately.

Ms. Osbon gave a copy of the refusal to confirm probational employee to Mr. Guillot to confirm that is the document that he received. **He confirmed.** She asked that based on what the Chief wrote, that there is documentation, it doesn't change his appeal? **He stated that he has not had any civil service documented verbal reprimand, written reprimand, PIP, negative performance review or any threat that he was failing the working test period by Chief.**

Ms. Osbon stated that the Board has reviewed the written petition for appeal. The Board is not making any findings of fact today; we are only determining whether the allegations, if true, meet the statutory threshold. She stated that she would not be talking to the Chief today or asking about the refusal to confirm because the burden of proof is on the employee. She stated at this stage today, the only responsibility is to determine whether the petition, along with the statements made here today by Mr. Guillot, alleges facts which, if true, could show that the employee was not given a fair opportunity to prove his ability during the working test period.

The petition states that Mr. Guillot received no notice of deficiencies, no counseling, no documentation, and no indication that he was failing the working test prior to the refusal to confirm. Mr. Guillot has confirmed those allegations in response to the Board's questions today.

Ms. Osbon stated that she would open the floor for any discussion from Board members regarding the petition and the statements made today. Are these allegations, if true, sufficient to establish just cause for a hearing and investigation?

Captain Stiehl stated that the Civil Service Board's sole responsibility in the matter was to determine if the employee was provided an opportunity to demonstrate the abilities and skills required for the position for which he was in the working/probation period for. This matter does not constitute a disciplinary or correction action as defined under State Law, OSE guidelines, and District 3 civil service board rules. He stated that as a board there is no mandate to formally investigate unless they conclude in today's special meeting that based on appointing authority's refusal letter and the employee's appeal request, the employee was denied a fair opportunity to demonstrate the skills and abilities during said probation. He stated in that specific instance, the Board would maintain its right to investigate further. Captain Stiehl stated that the law, OSE guidelines, and the board rules, state very specifically in the first six months of any probation or working test period, and the later six months what the powers the appointing authority is given. It states in the later six-month period that the appointing authority may reject the employee for any reason. Such employee may appeal to the Board but only on the grounds that they were not given a fair opportunity.

Ms. Osbon stated will she would entertain a motion regarding the appeal. (A proper motion would be either to grant the appeal and set the matter for hearing, or to deny the appeal for lack of just cause).

Captain Stiehl stated that based on everything from State, OSE's guidelines and the Board's civil service rules, reading what Guillot submitted as a request and reading the rules, he does not think it is written to further an investigation. He thinks that the Appointing Authority was in his right as the law says and the appeal request as written needs to be formally investigated. Captain Stiehl made a motion to deny the appeal for lack of just case. Ms. Osbon disagrees and based on the

appeal letter and the answers to the questions today there is just cause to grant the appeal and set the matter for hearing. At this point there is no motion to grant the appeal which puts the Board back where they were. Mr. Guillot stated that not being given the opportunity was why he asked for the appeal.

Mr. Danenhower stated that according to what Captain Stiehl read, the department has the right to demote on the working test period for any reason. The question then becomes what actually becomes necessary to establish that they weren't given the opportunity to perform. Typically, those things are you were not allowed to do your job, not that you weren't coached properly. Captain Stiehl stated that is the reason he voted the way he did.

Mr. Guillot stated that he served nearly 22 months in that position including substitute and his 360 days prior and never once received any disciplinary, any formal reprimand or any notice that his probation was in jeopardy that he did have a basis for an appeal. Captain Stiehl stated that he just said that he five hundred and some odd days, and as the rules and laws are written, to him that is a fair opportunity in the working test period.

Ms. Osbon stated that the purpose of meeting today was to determine if there was just cause to allow for a hearing and investigation in the matter. If these allegations were true would it mean that he wasn't given the fair opportunity, and she feels that it should be looked into.

Ms. Osbon stated that no decision as to if there is an appeal today and set another meeting with all three board members and have another meeting. Mr. Danenhower stated that the department would object to have this again. This was the opportunity to grant the appeal. If you did not grant the appeal at this meeting, you can't bring it up as many times to pass it. You should defer to your attorney.

Discussion of call the Board attorney took place as well as Mr. Guillot asking for private conversation with the Board.

Ms. Osbon wanted to recess to call Mr. Olinde. Time is 5:21.

Back out of recess 5:36

After speaking with the Board attorney, Captain Stiehl made a motion to grant a hearing. Ms. Osbon seconded. A vote was taken. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Osbon made a motion to adjourn. Captain Stiehl seconded. A vote was taken.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:39.

Minutes submitted by
Theresa McCarthy, Secretary

Approved by the board
August 18, 2026