

Informational Meeting
January 21, 2026

The Prudential Committee held an informational meeting at the Council on Aging, on the above date, with the following officers present: Chairman Thomas A. Satko, Vice-Chairman Richard G. Kleiner, Member Michael J. Lahey, and Chief Engineer John M. Pansecchi. Clerk and Acting Treasurer Allen J. Mendel was absent.

Also present: Bookkeeper Victoria A. Lassonde, Assistant Clerk & Treasurer Lynne E. Alexander, 23 residents, and Jane Kaufman, Berkshire Eagle reporter.

Purpose of Meeting

Chairman Satko called the Prudential Committee informational meeting to order on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. He stated the meeting was being recorded, adding that the Berkshire Eagle was also recording. He asked anyone else recording to identify themselves. All attendees were given copies of the presentation.

Discuss Recommendation for Elected to Appointed Position Clerk/Treasurer

Chairman Satko: Introduced the presentation noting the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the recommendation for Elected to Appointed Clerk/Treasurer and Full-time Chief Engineer, also known as the Fire Chief. He then presented the slideshow (presentation slides attached) detailing the Prudential Committee's support for and the reasons behind the suggested change to Appointed Clerk/Treasurer. After the slideshow, Chairman Satko asked the audience for questions.

Tom Robinson: Have you developed requirements for not only the Treasurer but also the Fire Chief? Can we see it?

Chairman Satko: Yes. We have a job description and pay scale. Copies are available at the District office.

Tom Robinson: Will you put those online?

Chairman Satko: Yes.

Craig Corrigan: Why is this being presented at a Special Meeting instead of a General Election?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: This is a two-part process. It must be voted on at a special meeting AND at a general election.

Craig Corrigan: How do you propose that a paid administrator is going to tell a lot of volunteers what to do?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: We have policies and procedures that all members must follow. There is a chain of command. Membership understands this. That's how a Fire Department works. It all follows state and federal regulations, as well as OSHA.

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Chairman Satko: Maybe give a little more insight to this when you do your (Chief Engineer Pansecchi) presentation.

Jim Jamros: Are the current Treasurer and current Fire Chief going to apply for the job or are they already grandfathered?

Chairman Satko: If it becomes appointed, they would have to apply.

Elaine Erdeski: If the Fire Chief position should become full-time, will he be paid a pension, what are the requirements? Do they have to work a certain amount of time, and how much is the pension amount?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Explained that he has been paying into the pension system for over 30 years, not as the Fire Chief, but as a dispatcher. Wherever he moves, that would go with him. Any money paid into the pension system up till now would be transferred to the Adams Retirement System.

Elaine Erdeski: Is there a length of time they must stay to receive a pension?

Chairman Satko: Yes. (Further explained by Bookkeeper Lassonde later in the presentation.)

Elaine Erdeski: You have all these specifics about the benefits of an appointed Clerk/Treasurer, do you have specifics for the Fire Chief?

Chairman Satko: Yes. The rest of the presentation will probably answer your questions.

Ed St. John: The two-step process necessary to decide the change of the Clerk/Treasurer position from elected to appointed; special meeting in February and annual meeting in May 2026, will this be the same for the Fire Chief position? Can the information be updated in the presentation for clarification?

Chairman Satko: The Fire Chief position going from part-time to full-time will require the same process. This gets confusing because of when their terms are up.

Ed St. John: What about from part-time to full-time? As it stands now the Chief is part-time. In February, if the majority votes for this to be a full-time position, is that the end of it or is it subject to the election in May?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: That will be subject to the election in 2027 because all the engineers are up for reelection this year. They will be on the ballot this year for election and the ballot would be too confusing if we also include the change from elected to appointed. The position will change to full-time IF voters approve it as appointed. It will have to go to an annual meeting to approve the appropriation in the budget for the salary. If it does pass, it would be in effect in July 2027.

Elaine Erdeski: What is the part-time pay now and what will the full-time pay be?

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Bookkeeper Lassonde: This is detailed on page 19. Currently, the part-time salary is \$30,435.00 (\$29,892.00 plus Medicare). The full-time salary would be \$75,000.00 plus benefits (an increase of \$88,565.00 from the current amount). The benefit amount could change depending on benefit cost at the time the change is made.

Elaine Erdeski: If full-time is approved, will he be paid in February?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: No. 2027.

Elaine Erdeski: Whoever gets voted in, will they be paid a pension?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: They have to be in the system for ten years before they can collect a pension. The amount is based on their years of service, age, and a percentage of the average of the last five years' salary. Someone who is here for less than ten years can take out what they have put in, but they don't collect a pension.

Elaine Erdeski: Are we paying them vacation time?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: Yes.

Elaine Erdeski: Who will oversee the full-time Chief?

Chairman Satko and Vice-Chairman Kleiner: The Prudential Committee.

Tom Robinson: Have you calculated the overall benefits; vacation, holidays, sick time, healthcare? Would it be 30% of the total value of the \$75,000.00.

Bookkeeper Lassonde: The overall cost is detailed on page 19 of the presentation.

Chairman Satko: If there are no more questions about the Clerk/Treasurer position we'll move on to the Chief.

Discuss Recommendation for Full-time Chief Engineer

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Presented the Full-time Chief Engineer slide show.

Chairman Satko: Are there any questions.

Elaine Erdeski: Do you put things on Facebook?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Adams Fire District has a page. Adams Fire Department has a page.

Elaine Erdeski: All the meetings and everything are on there?

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Bookkeeper Lassonde: We don't post the meetings on Facebook, those are posted on the website. We can begin posting the meetings on Facebook. We have been posting more on Facebook, like the special informational meeting. The minutes are on the website so if you want to read any previous meeting minutes, they are available.

Sandra Moderski: Can you clarify "call volume" on chart 17. 433 calls. What do you mean by calls? Telephone calls? You said there were 35 fires. What are the other calls?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Those are paged out fire calls. 35 of the calls were actual fires. The rest are medical response, fire alarm activations, motor vehicle accidents, carbon monoxide alarms, water problems, and medical alerts.

Sandra Moderski: Do you automatically go out whenever there's an accident.

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Not automatically. It depends on what information is provided to dispatch and who they send. The dispatch center (located at the Berkshire County Jail) was taken over by the state and they are making a lot of changes that are affecting the Fire Department.

Sandra Moderski: With 33 current members, is that generally the average number of members?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: We're allowed 40 members, 5 engineers, and 5 apprentices for a total of 50 members. In my time we haven't had that many. Last time there were that many was in 1976. Normally, we run with about 30 members, 5 engineers and varying numbers of apprentices. Of the 23 members we currently have, about 15 are very active. A couple of apprentices are also active, and some we haven't seen in months.

Sandra Moderski: Who sets the 50-person maximum?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: That's what I was always told. I think it had to do with insurance. I don't think we have that maximum now. We need more members than ever. This is not unique to Adams, it's across the country.

Sandra Moderski: Under the cost of the full-time Fire Chief, there are two salaries; \$75,000.00 and \$100,000.00 but both show benefits of \$44,000.00. Wouldn't those change with an increase in salary?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: The \$44,000.00 includes health insurance, life insurance, and the retirement amount the District has to provide. Medicare is 1.45% of the salary so that will change a small amount, about \$100.00.

Craig Corrigan: What are the changes in costs down the road? Retirement would change every year.

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Bookkeeper Lassonde: There are changes every year to health insurance and retirement. This is based on a family plan, so insurance could be less for a different plan. With health insurance costs increasing it could be affected. That's the reason for the asterisk indicating that these amounts are based on current costs not future amounts.

Elaine Erdeski: Is the part-time firefighter in addition to you?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Yes. During the day there are very few members in town.

Elaine Erdeski: What does he do during his time?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: He works around the station, does checks on the trucks, cleans.

Elaine Erdeski: What do we pay him?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: He's paid \$23.00/hour.

Elaine Erdeski: How many hours? Does he get the benefit package also?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: We're trying to cover 8 hours a day; 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (most vulnerable time in town), 6 days a week, but we don't have coverage on all days.

Bookkeeper Lassonde: We only have one part-time firefighter. It's possible we could have more than one. They can't work more than 20 hours or else they get benefits. If we had a few part-time people we could have more coverage, but right now we just have one part-timer.

Elaine Erdeski: Who would allow you to get the second or third one?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: I'm trying to hire. It's been very hard.

Elaine Erdeski: Is there a limit to how many you would hire?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Only enough people to cover the hours.

Bookkeeper Lassonde: We have \$60,000.00 in the budget for part-time firefighters, so it's limited.

Elaine Erdeski: The fire house has issues. When are we going to deal with that cost?

Chief Pansecchi: Probably the next two years.

Elaine Erdeski: Did you get the new fire truck?

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Chief Pansecchi: Yes. It was delivered last week.

Elaine Erdeski: Is the building now stabilized?

Chief Pansecchi: Yes.

Elaine Erdeski: Is that a cost now to us, or something we've been paying for already?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: We've paid approximately \$70,000.00 to support and we'll continue to pay a monthly amount in the future because it's a temporary solution.

Elaine Erdeski: Are we getting an increase in our water? I'm not sure how we pay you. How are we paying the \$70,000.00?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: That's already been paid for. It was paid by taxes and water rates. We're not doing anything (with the building) too soon. We're just looking into what we would require in a new building. It is going to be a process.

Elaine Erdeski: Is there enough room for the new fire truck?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Originally there was an issue with the weight of the truck, so the floor needed to be shored up.

Chairman Satko: The new fire truck has a shorter wheelbase, concentrating more pressure on the firehouse floor. The Water Department lost a lot of space, but the floor is now able to support the truck.

Elaine Erdeski: Are we renting the shoring? The building will be a future issue?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: Yes. \$2,000.00 per month. This is a temporary solution. A permanent solution would be much more expensive.

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Even with the floor fixed, the Fire Department and the Water Department have outgrown the space we have. We still need to pursue a new station.

Elaine Erdeski: Will you be looking for a new station? Will we be asked to vote on money to build a new station?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: A study will be done to assess the building and the needs of the Fire Department and Water Department. Recommendations will be made regarding sites. Voters will be involved. This will be a 5-to-10-year process.

Elaine Erdeski: Do people know jobs are available?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Yes. We've advertised on iBerkshires, Berkshire Jobs, Facebook, and our website.

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Craig Corrigan: What has changed since we voted in 2021 when we voted this down the last time?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: More code regulations and requirements, more reviews and inspections (solar system plan reviews and inspections, 50-60/yr), and manpower has decreased.

Craig Corrigan: I'm still confused. How could so much have changed in five years that we have to vote on this again?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: The issues are the same. The board supports the change from part-time to full-time.

Elaine Erdeski: Are people outside the District paying for this as well?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Residents within the District pay a water bill and pay for fire protection. Residents outside the District do not. We have an agreement with the Town to provide fire protection for them.

Elaine Erdeski: But we don't get any money from them. Wouldn't it make sense to have them pay as well?

Chairman Satko: The District boundaries were set by the elevation of the houses and the reservoir. There are approximately 150 houses outside the District that don't pay for fire protection and they don't get water. They could donate.

Garrett Erwin: Good job on the presentation. The costs and the needs seem reasonable. Did you ever have a full-time fire department? With the rising cost of living, do you think we would be able to afford a full-time fire department?

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: No, we never had a full-time fire department. The reality is, you'll probably see two-to-three-man departments in most fire departments across the country. In small communities like this, it's time to transition because call volumes are increasing, membership is decreasing, and we have to protect ourselves.

Tom Robinson: I have a question about the Treasurer's position and oversight of the monies, procedures, and policies. An elected Treasurer has independence and is not beholden to anyone. An appointed Treasurer is beholden to whomever hires them.

Chairman Satko: What if the person is not qualified? Anyone can run for the position, qualified or not.

Tom Robinson: Don't you think that people are smart enough to know whether the person is qualified? My point is that an appointed Treasurer is no longer independent, they are beholden to the board.

Vice-Chairman Kleiner: That's true.

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Sandra Moderski: The special meeting is going to be February 19th at 6:00 p.m.?

Chairman Satko: We have a meeting Monday night (January 26, 2026) and we'll be voting on that.

Sandra Moderski: There will be two questions on the ballot?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: It's a warrant, not a ballot. There are a few more questions for appropriations as well.

Sandra Moderski: If they both pass, then the Clerk/Treasurer goes to the annual election, on the ballot, in May 2026?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: Yes. The Fire Chief, next year (2027), will have to be voted on either at a special meeting or the annual meeting. It will have to go on the warrant and will have to be on the ballot at the annual election. It's a two-step process to change from elected to appointed. It has to go to a District meeting, where all the voters come and vote, and an annual election.

Jane Kaufman: Will the Fire Chief be voted on in February as well or just the Clerk/Treasurer?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: Not from elected to appointed, it's only for the full-time position UPON the change to an appointed position.

Jane Kaufman: The question on the warrant for the Fire Chief will be to change to a full-time position?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: Full-time after it has been changed from elected to appointed and funds have been appropriated at an annual meeting.

Jane Kaufman: It will be voted on in February and then again in May of 2027, but the Clerk/Treasurer will just be this year?

Bookkeeper Lassonde: Yes.

Chief Engineer Pansecchi: Last year, the question of elected to appointed passed at the District meeting but failed on the ballot the same night. We've separated the questions to avoid similar confusion.

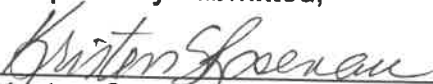
Chairman Satko: Are there any more questions?

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With no further business to come before the meeting Chairman Satko asked for a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chairman Kleiner made a motion, Member Lahey seconded, Unanimous - Passed.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



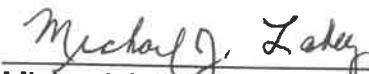
Kristen G. Rosenau – Administrative Assistant



Thomas A. Satko – Chairman



Richard G. Kleiner – Vice-Chairman



Michael J. Lahey – Member

PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE