

# **BERRIEN COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

Serving Berrien County Firefighters Since 1950

Berrien County Firefighters Information Website: [mi-bcfa.org](http://mi-bcfa.org)

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Galien Twp, Fire Department

Meeting called to order at 19:07 hours by President Gerry Kabelman.

Officers present: President Gerry Kabelman, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Craig Brent, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Donnie Johnson, and Secretary/Treasurer Dennis Graham.

Roll call of departments show 8 departments represented with 23 members present

Donations collected during the meal totaled \$95.

Due to low attendance for the March meeting only notes and passed on information were presented at meeting.

February minutes were presented to attendees and posted on the website. No motion.

A treasurer's report for February was presented to attendees. No motion.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Chief's Association:**

- Next Meeting March 18<sup>th</sup> New Host Check on new location TBA.

### **Training Committee:**

- FF I & II April 14<sup>th</sup> for review, April 30<sup>th</sup> written, and May 2<sup>nd</sup> practical.

### **MITRT5:**

- Applicants welcomed to join the team. Membership is low for the local team

### **Resource Directory/Website:**

- Make sure to check web site for Announcements and Training updates.

### **New Business:**

- 2026 Meeting calendar for Nov. and Dec. in preparation, host requests have been sent out and waiting for official confirmation. Calendar good through October
- Denny Sexton and Jeff Krolzick will serve as the 2025 audit committee.
- The By-Law committee members have a scheduled meeting to discuss changes. A copy of the By-Laws and Constitution are included with these meeting notes.

### **Announcements:**

- Moment of Silence for Jeff Gast/Lake Township Fire Dept. Passed Away Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Area fire apparatus photographer David White has been placed on hospice care.

Thank you to Galien Fire for hosting the March meeting and BCFA presented the \$95 meal donation towards the evening meal.

Program for the evening: BC 911/dispatch Caitlin

Sampsell on the Advanced SEND Protocol.

adjourned at 19.42

Respectfully submitted,

*Dennis Graham*

*Sec / Trea*

**The next meeting April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026**  
**Michiana Shores Fire Department**  
**18:30 meal**  
**19:00 meeting**

The Berrien County Firefighters Association (BCFA) is an association for ALL Berrien County **FIREFIGHTERS**, NOT the fire departments of Berrien County, as is stated in the BCFA Constitution and By-Laws.

The by laws committee met Sunday March 1st and came up the changes needed to the Constitution & By-Laws.

See below document with proposed changes **highlighted in yellow**.

Page 2 Article III

Section 1 - Membership

Part 1

Part 6

Page 6 Article VII - Elections

Section 1

Section Part 1

Page 7 Article VIII - Quorum

Section 1

**These changes were read at the March 4th meeting.**



# **Berrien County Firefighter's Association**

## **Constitution and By-Laws**

**Preamble: WE, THE FIREFIGHTERS OF BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO PROTECT THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF THOSE LIVING WITHIN AND TRAVELING THROUGH BERRIEN COUNTY AND THE NEIGHBORING COUNTIES. TO ASSIST IN SERVING THAT PURPOSE, WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS OF BERRIEN COUNTY, HEREBY UNITE TO FORM THE BERRIEN COUNTY FIREFIGHTER'S ASSOCIATION, GOVERNED BY THE HERE-IN-AFTER STATED CONSTITUTION:**

### **ARTICLE I**

#### Section 1 -Title

The name of this organization shall hereafter be known as the "Berrien County Firefighter's Association".

### **ARTICLE II**

#### Section 1 -Objectives

The objectives, business and pursuits for which this association is formed are as follows:

Part 1. To represent our departments and ourselves where our interests are best served by coordinated relationships.

Part 2. To hold regular monthly educational meetings, open to all members of the various fire departments located within Berrien and neighboring counties.

Part 3. To cooperate with other firefighting organizations, governmental bodies and other associations when and where it is found expedient.

Part 4. To improve and increase knowledge of firefighting. Also, to stress fire prevention through education, inspection and other methods which solicit a cooperative sentiment from the public at large.

Part 5. To improve feelings of loyalty, appreciation and understanding among the fire department members of this association.

## ARTICLE III

### Section 1 -Membership

The membership of this Association shall consist of ACTIVE, ASSOCIATE, COMMERCIAL, LIFE and HONORARY members.

Part 1. ACTIVE MEMBERS: Shall consist of a member belonging to any organized, volunteer, part paid or paid department and Fire Brigade within the County of Berrien and neighboring counties *that are in the current hosting rotation*.

Part 2. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: Shall consist of members from the State Fire Marshal's Staff and Michigan Fire Fighter's Training Council. Shall also consist of members of an organized Fire Advisory Board, a Sheriff or Police Department within the County of Berrien and neighboring counties.

Part 3. COMMERCIAL MEMBERS: Shall consist of persons who are engaged in the selling of fire apparatus, fire appliances, fire hose and other appurtenances of the fire service.

Part 4. LIFE MEMBERS: Shall consist of those past and present active members who have retired, and who have acquitted themselves in a credible manner during their years in the Fire Service.

Part 5. HONORARY MEMBERS: Shall consist of persons who may or may not be in the fire service and who are interested in the fire service and who endorse the aims of the Association.

*Part 6. Only active members may ENTERTAIN, SECOND or VOTE on a motion.*

### Section 2 -Expulsion

Any member may be expelled when a petition setting forth reasons for expulsion and signed by at least twenty (20) members is presented. A two-thirds (2/3) vote by secret ballot of members present at a regular meeting is required for expulsion. If a petition is received, the member being charged must be notified of receipt and given an opportunity to respond.

## **ARTICLE IV OFFICERS**

### **Section 1 -EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The Executive Board of this Association shall consist of a President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer and the Immediate Past President. (Hereafter, "he" will be used to denote the position rather than the gender of the person holding the position.)

### **Section 2 -TERM OF OFFICE**

The term of all offices, shall be two (2) year terms. There shall be no limit to the number of terms an individual can serve any one office.

### **Section 3 -QUALIFICATIONS OF OFFICERS**

The President, First Vice President and Second Vice President shall be chosen from the ranks of the active members. The Secretary/Treasurer shall be chosen from any of the five categories of membership.

### **Section 4 -REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

An officer may be removed from the Executive Board if he is absent from three (3) meetings in a fiscal year. This is without being excused and/or upon recommendation of a majority of the Executive Board and approval of the membership by vote at any regular or special meeting.

### **Section 5 -RESIGNATIONS**

Acceptance of any resignation will be by a majority vote of those present at any regular meeting.

# ARTICLE V

## DUTIES OF OFFICERS

### Section 1 -PRESIDENT

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association. He shall appoint members to all committees and create special committees, at his discretion. The President Shall be an ex-officio member of all committees with the power to vote only in case of a tie vote. He shall perform such other duties, as may be incidental to the office or which may be required of him by this Association. The President shall have the power to call special meetings.

### Section 2 -FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

The First Vice President shall perform the duties of the president during the absence of, or inability of, the President to act. He shall also assist the President in any way possible with the business of the Association.

### Section 3 -SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

The Second Vice President shall perform the duties of the duties of the First Vice President during the absence of, or inability of, the First Vice President to act. He shall also assist the First Vice President and the President in any way possible with the business of the Association.

### Section 4 -SECRETARY/TREASURER

The Secretary/Treasurer shall perform all duties which usually pertain to this office or as may be directed of him by the Association. He shall keep a record of the proceedings of the meetings of the Association and shall receive and answer all communications, as directed, pertaining to the business of the Association. He shall record all moneys collected and expended, and shall report such receipts and expenditures of moneys at each meeting. He shall deposit moneys received in a bank approved by the Association, and such funds shall be deposited in the name of the Berrien County Firefighter's Association. The secretary/treasurer shall be compensated \$400 per year. said compensation shall be dispersed upon completion of the annual audit.

## ARTICLE VI

### COMMITTEES

Section 1 -The five (5) standing committees of this Association shall be 911, ADVISORY, FUNERAL , PROTOCOL, NOMINATING, AND WEBSITE/RESOURCE DIRECTORY. The positions on these committees will be appointed by the President from the Active, Associate or Life categories of membership.

Part 1. 911 Committee: This committee shall consist of two (2) members, one (1) primary and one (1) alternate. They shall act as a liaison between the Berrien County Advisory Committee and the Association. They shall submit a verbal monthly report to the Association.

Part 2. Advisory Committee: This committee shall consist of three (3) members. They shall be appointed by the President at the January meeting. It will be their duty to audit books and records from the Treasurer. They shall report their findings from the audit at the next regular meeting.

Part 3. Nominating Committee: This committee shall consist of three (3) members. They shall be appointed two (2) months prior to elections. The three (3) members of this committee shall not, at the time of appointment, hold any elective office. Their main objective will be to solicit nominees for office and to have all nominations in order one (1) month prior to the December meeting.

Part 4. Funeral Protocol: This committee shall consist of four (4) members; two appointed by the association and two by the Berrien County Chiefs Association. Members are to be appointed at the January meeting.

Part 5. Website/Resource Directory: this committee may consist of up to three (3) members if necessary. this committee shall be responsible for maintaining and updating the association website and the resource directory as need arises. The association shall pay fees associated with maintaining the domain name [MI-BCFA.ORG](http://MI-BCFA.ORG).

# ARTICLE VII ELECTIONS

## Section 1 -NOMINATIONS

Nominations for officers shall be presented one (1) month prior to the ~~December~~ August meeting by the Nominating Committee. At the time of election, nominations may be offered from the floor in addition to the nominees as presented by the committee.

++++ *Part 1. To be eligible to hold an office of the BCFA you must have regular meeting attendance over the last 2 years of 50%, also your affiliated department must have hosted a meeting during the normal rotation.*

## Section 2 -ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Election of officers shall be at the August meeting. A list of nominees will be presented at the time, by the Nominating Committee.

## Section 3 -VOTING

Each member shall have one (1) vote. Voting for officers shall be by written ballot. In the event no other nominations are offered from the floor, the nominees may be elected unanimously by acclamation. A majority vote of the members present shall be required to elect a member to office, with no vote by proxy.

## Section 4 -TIE VOTE

In the event of a tie vote, another ballot shall be taken and this procedure followed until a majority is achieved.

## Section 5 -ELECTED OFFICERS

The newly elected officers shall officially take office at the next regular meeting after the election.

## Section 6 -OUTGOING OFFICERS

All records, moneys, reports and other pertinent data shall be turned over to their successors within one (1) week following the December meeting.

## Section 7 -VACANCY

In the event of vacancy in any office, the Executive Board shall meet and shall, at the next meeting, submit their candidate to fill the vacancy. At which it will be put to a vote of the members for confirmation.

Section 8 - Split the terms of the Officers, with two Officers being elected / voted on each year.

- President and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President on even years.
- Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer on odd years.
- Next proposed election will be held in August 2024,(an even year.)

(Note: This was proposed, to prevent all four (4) Officers being changed out during one Election cycle; this ensures consistency and mentoring time for newly elected Officers.)

## **ARTICLE VIII QUORUM**

Section 1 -At all meetings, other than the Executive Board meetings, in which Association business may be considered, a quorum shall consist of not less than one-third (1/3) of the number of departments ~~members of this Association~~ that have hosted a BCFA meeting in the current 36 month hosting rotation,

Section 2 -The December meeting shall be the Annual meeting.

## **ARTICLE IX ASSESSMENTS AND LIABILITY**

Section 1 -ASSESSMENTS

If, and as the situation requires, an assessment shall be necessary for the purpose of meeting some financial obligation (lawfully) incurred by the Association as an organization, such assessment can be established on a per capita basis or on a departmental basis, pro-rated as agreed upon by the members at a regular meeting.

Section 2 -LIABILITY

No officer, or member of the Association, shall render this organization liable for any debts not approved by the membership.

## ***ARTICLE X MONEYS, DONATIONS AND EXPENDITURES***

Section 1 -Moneys collected, shall be turned over to the Treasurer of the Association.

Section 2 -Expenditures: Any request for expenditures exceeding \$500.00 shall be placed on the agenda for discussion by the membership.

Part 1 - Expenditure exceeding \$500.00, but less than \$1000.00, shall be presented to the membership in the form of a motion and read in to the meeting minutes at two (2) consecutive regular monthly business meetings. Upon the second reading of the motion, said motion shall be presented to the membership for a vote.

Part 2 - Any expenditure exceeding \$1000.00, shall be presented to the membership in the form of a motion and read into the meeting minutes at three (3) consecutive regular monthly business meetings. Upon the third reading of the motion, said motion shall be presented to the membership for a vote.

## **ARTICLE XI MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

Section 1 -The Association may send a memorial, upon the death of any member in the five (5) categories. A maximum expenditure of One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) shall be allowed for this purpose. Memorials shall be the responsibility of the funeral protocol committee.

## **ARTICLE XII AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Section 1 -The Constitution and By-Laws may be amended or altered at a regular meeting by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the qualified voting members present. This is provided that previous notice of the proposed alterations or amendments have been e-mailed to the member departments at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting. Notice of amendments and/or alterations to the constitution shall also be posted to the association website.

## **ARTICLE XIII POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT**

Section 1 -The association shall take no official position regarding the endorsement or opposition of any candidate for elected office.

## **ARTICLE XIV NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Section 1 -The Berrien County Firefighters Association does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. we are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our organization, volunteers, and guests.

## **BY-LAWS**

### Section 1 -Meetings

Regular meetings shall be held the first (1<sup>st</sup>) Wednesday of every month at 1930 hours (7:30 PM) EST, in so far as necessity and convenience permit. Place of meeting shall follow a preconceived plan.

### Section 2 -Rules of Order

In the conduct and disposition of business in any regular or special meeting, as well as in deliberation of committees, Roberts Rules Of Order shall apply. Exception given when otherwise provided in this Constitution.

### Section 3 -Adjournment

Meetings shall not be adjourned until after the conclusion of all business.

### Section 4 -Special Meetings

A special meeting may be called by the President. Further, a signed petition of twenty (20) active members may make mandatory, the calling of a special meeting. At least seven (7) days notice shall be given for any special meeting and all members shall be notified. The time, place and purpose of the meeting shall be included in the notice of the meeting.

### Section 5 -General

Part 1. Each member, when speaking, shall confine themselves to the question of debate.

Part 2. No member shall speak more than five (5) minutes on the subject until all members desiring the floor have spoken.

Part 3. No alcoholic beverages will be served or consumed at the meeting.

### Section 6 – Virtual Meetings

Meetings may be held “Virtually” as needed; due to severe weather, major on – going emergency, health concerns, or any other reason that is deemed appropriate by the President and Officers.