

**BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AGENDA**

Monday, October 20, 2025

**City Hall Conference Room  
317 4th Street NW  
5:00 PM**



**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

**BUSINESS**

- a) Elect Chair
- b) Volunteer Firefighters Relief Association

**ADJOURN**

Bemidji Pioneer Firefighter Relief Association  
Meeting request with City of Bemidji Public Affairs Committee  
Prepared - 10/15/2025

Meeting Date: 10/20/2025  
5:00 p.m. @ City Hall.

#### Meeting Agenda item

Request for the City Council to consider increasing the guaranteed defined benefit level of City of Bemidji paid-on-call firefighters from \$9,900 to \$11,025 per year of service at 15 years of vesting effective 1/1/2026.

#### ***Proposed Bylaw amendments listed below also need municipal approval:***

1. Changing the vesting schedule for active members
  1. Currently starts at 48% at 7 years and adds 4% per year until you reach 20 years.
  2. Proposed starting at 40% at 5 years and adding 6% per year until you reach 15 years.
2. Changing so newly deferred members earn interest if they have 10 years of active service instead of 12 years (not retro to already deferred members).

#### Additional Background

The Relief Association manages the pension benefit for POC firefighters but needs municipal approval to increase the guaranteed defined benefit level. Based on our December 31, 2024 opinion from Miller McDonald, the fund is estimated to be 137% overfunded vs liabilities on the current non-guaranteed \$11,000 benefit level and 148% overfunded at the current municipally guaranteed benefit level of \$9,900.

Local Bemidji POC firefighters are offered a non-guaranteed benefit level of \$11,000. The membership of the Relief Association will be meeting on November 11, 2025 to potentially ratify several motions that have so far been approved by the trustees of the Association:

1. An increase of the non-guaranteed benefit level from \$11,000 to \$12,250 per year of service, effective 12/31/25
2. An increase of the municipally guaranteed benefit level from \$9,900 to \$11,025 per year of service, effective 1/1/2026; this is 90% of the non-guaranteed rate. (Requires municipal approval)
3. Changing the vesting schedule from starting at 48% at 7 years to 40% at 5 years and then increasing at 6% per year until a firefighter reaches 15 years of active service, effective 1/1/2026. (requires municipal approval)
4. Changing so that newly deferred members will receive interest on their funds if they have 10 years of service instead of 12 years of service, effective 1/1/2026. (requires municipal approval)
5. Changing the start time of our trustee meetings as defined in our bylaws.

The Association does not need municipal approval to increase this non-guaranteed level as long as we follow certain statutory standards, auditory standards and the MN Office of State Auditor standards, which we have done since 2017. MN OSA monitors this compliance annually. Prior to 2017 there was only the guaranteed benefit level.

Over the last 6 years the municipality has increased our guaranteed benefit level by 7,7,3,3,3 and 15% percentage points. State law does describe that in most situations any increase approved by the Council

is permanent if also ratified by the Relief Association. Last year, the Relief Association proposed an understanding to set the municipally guaranteed benefit level at 90% of the non-guaranteed benefit level starting in 2025 and beyond. We feel this will reduce stress and add some predictability for POC firefighters and City Council as well as provide reasonable protection to the municipality. Currently state law prescribes that the Council and Relief Association would still need to act on this item each year, making it non-binding from year to year.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Trustees of the Relief Association,

Bemidji Pioneer Firefighter Relief Association  
Board of Trustees