

From August 13, 2026 Board of Director meeting read by President Fellis:

Good evening and thank you for attending our board of directors meeting. Unfortunately, it seems that most have not heard all the facts and I would like to remedy that now.

In 2019, the Aumsville Fire District prepared the 4th Street property for a burn-to-learn training. At that time, the current Fire Chief was informed by Mr. Wallace that the deteriorating fence surrounding the property belonged to the fire district. This understanding was formally documented in the November 2019 board meeting minutes.

The district originally purchased the 4th Street property with the goal of constructing a new administrative building. However, all bids exceeded \$12 million—an amount that would have placed an unreasonable burden on Aumsville taxpayers. As responsible stewards of public funds, we made the decision to continue operating out of our existing station. Although the building is older, our Chiefs and volunteers have worked diligently to maintain and improve it, ensuring a safe and functional environment while continuing to deliver high-quality emergency services.

Our mission is to provide reliable fire and life-safety protection to our community. Since 2020, the cost of essential, life-saving equipment has increased significantly. In response, we have carefully managed resources, pursued grants, and made strategic decisions to maintain service levels without placing additional strain on taxpayers.

With that responsibility in mind, the board has consistently held that it is not in the best interest of the public to allocate funds toward replacing a fence that, prior to the burn-to-learn training, was acknowledged by the neighboring property owner as belonging to the fire district.

When Mr. Wallace approached the district in 2024—nearly four years after the training—he stated that the Aumsville Fire district owed him a new fence. Having this brought to our attention, we made numerous efforts to be good neighbors and aid in a solution. Director Coleman personally purchased cedar fencing with the intention of members of the district installing it. Before installation could occur, we were informed that city ordinance now requires a black chain-link fence in the business district.

Despite our belief that the district was not at fault, we offered multiple times to share the cost of a compliant fence. We prepared payment for half of the quoted amount and even agreed to increase our contribution to \$1397.50 upon request when the estimate changed. However, Mr. Wallace declined these offers and instead, requested full payment, ultimately choosing to pursue legal action.

During mediation, we again offered to pay half of the proposed fence. That was declined by Mr. Wallace. We then expressed a willingness to increase our contribution, and offered \$1800.00, which was also declined by Mr. Wallace.

The case was ultimately brought before the Marion County Circuit Court. The judge encouraged compromise between parties and once again we offered to share the cost of the fence. These proposals were not accepted by Mr. Wallace and the judge dismissed the case entirely.

The Aumsville Fire Board stands by the Court's decision, and the Fire District stands by our decision to not use taxpayer funds for this matter.

We understand that disputes like this can be frustrating for everyone involved. For the sake of transparency, we have prepared a complete timeline of events that outlines the district's good-faith efforts to resolve this issue and is available for public review.

If anyone is interested in providing public comments, please do so now.