



**Sanibel Fire & Rescue District
Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes**

DATE: Wednesday, October 11, 2023 @ 9:00AM

ATTENDEES: Jerry Muench (Chairman)
Bruce Cochrane (Vice Chairman)
Richard McCurry (Secretary Treasurer)

Kevin Barbot (Fire Chief)
John DiMaria (Deputy Chief)
Chris Jackson (Assistant Chief)
Larry Williams (Fire Marshal)
Greta Fulkerson (Administrative Assistant)

Brian Howell (Lieutenant)
Rob Bell (Firefighter)
Craig Shelby (Firefighter)

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Muench. Commissioner Muench led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes of the September Meeting

The minutes of the September commission meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

2. Minutes of the Final Budget Hearing

The minutes of the final budget hearing were reviewed. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

3. Fire Marshal's Report

Fire Marshal Williams reported that he had undertaken rough inspections on tenant walls and penetrations. Sundial East had opened up all three buildings, 141 units, and allowed residents in. The Shell Island Beach Club rear building had been finalized. All buildings were open for residents, although Fire Marshal Williams is still working on the restaurant. All sixteen Shell Island Beach Club buildings were complete, all of Nutmeg's were done with rough inspections, and Sandpiper's five buildings had all passed. There were still inspections to be completed at the garage shop at the old gas station. 720 plan reviews have been completed year-to-date.

Commissioner Muench identified a couple of untouched buildings on the East End and wondered how much of a hazard they were. Fire Marshal Williams responded that they would need to be demolished. The City is aware of the issue.

Chief Barbot praised Fire Marshal Williams for his work and welcomed Chris Jackson as the new Assistant Chief, noting that he would be assisting Fire Marshal Williams in the future.

4. Assistant Chief's Report

I) Equipment and Maintenance Update

Assistant Chief Jackson confirmed that Ladder 171 had been paid off and that a very slight reduction had been secured in the invoice for the engine, turbine, and other repairs. Brush season was coming, with a few minor fixes to be carried out on the truck so that it was at 100% again. The roofing company that had provided free services during Hurricane Ian had been out to quote for a leak in the roof which pre-dated Hurricane Ian. Assistant Chief Jackson added that he had spoken to York Electric, who would be providing an estimate for a temporary generator for Station 172 until the new station was built.

II) Performance Review

Information was being requested as far back as 2018, including two different systems due to a change made in 2020, and Assistant Chief Jackson made a conservative estimate that 20% of the information had been gathered. Commissioner McCurry wondered what they were looking for and Assistant Chief Jackson

confirmed it was everything from the charter, to call and run information back to 2018, to audits, five-year plans, organizational charts, and strategic plans, and offered to share the printout. Commissioner McCurry asked to discuss it in more detail later.

III) Station 172 Reconstruction Update

Assistant Chief Jackson noted that a meeting had been held the previous day with Schenkel and Shultz including a virtual exploration of the planned building and a meeting with the horticultural designers, who were meeting with the City to make sure plans were in place for the planting and replacement of plants towards the end of the build. There had been a minor issue with the HVAC system that was being worked on, looking at design changes to enable the use of a more efficient and cost-effective system. Chief Barbot added that the 60% design and development package had been received on September 11th but that the land survey company had not provided the correct information to the civil engineer, which had delayed the process of going before the Planning Commission for variances to the height, the 70% pavement development area, and the flagpole within the setback area. The architects and engineers involved with the build would be presenting to the City at the end of October and the variances would be requested from the City of Sanibel Planning Commission at the second meeting in November, after which permitting could be initiated, with RFP for construction services proceeding once the City was happy with the proposals. Chief Barbot confirmed that things were still on the right timeline to have a crew on-site breaking ground in mid- to late-February, with RFP for construction and GC services to be initiated by early December, although it was acknowledged that holidays would provide a challenge to responses and that a close date of mid-January had been recommended as a result. Plans were being looked at carefully in relation to equipment and ensuring the building was fiscally responsible and future-proof against natural disasters or other circumstances. Lieutenant Howell was thanked for attending the meeting and working on the issues on his day off. Lieutenant Howell reported that it had been a very productive and worthwhile meeting.

Commissioner McCurry wondered how quickly the City would return an opinion. Chief Barbot understood that a decision could be made at the meeting, but there would be a fourteen-day waiting period in case of objections. Commissioner Muench identified that the change to the AC would save a lot of money in the long run due to reduced maintenance and other costs.

5. Deputy Chief's Report

I) Call Volume Review

Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that call volume was still down around 54% compared to the same time last year, being 715 calls compared to 1,336.

II) Public Education

Deputy Chief DiMaria reported that CPR classes and public education were ongoing. There was an extinguisher class coming up for the Home Economics class of Sanibel School on the 19th with a truck on-site at the school due to the use of live fire. As part of Fire Safety Month there will be a fire safety class at the Children's Education Center. Monthly blood pressure (BP) checks were continuing at the Rec Center. Deputy Chief DiMaria expressed gratitude to the crews for their support with the CPR classes, highlighting some of the training that had taken place or was planned.

III) Community Involvement

Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that any opportunity to be involved with the community was being taken and highlighted the CROW ground-breaking ceremony, National Walk to School Day, the opening of 141 units at Sundial East, the Sanibel School basketball home game, and the Reading Books with Kindergarten Day. The Pink Out event would be held on the 26th.

IV) Personnel Training

Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that hydrant month meant that crews would be focused on servicing hydrants rather than training, but officers would be ensuring their crews were up to par with fire and medical training. Around fifteen hours of training had been carried out at the CHR rig review building from the 3rd to the 5th covering a variety of topics such as ventilation, search and rescue, and incident command. Some officers and crews were also noted to have undertaken additional voluntary training after hours. Crews had participated in a water-rescue co-op at Lakes Park with Iona at the end of last month, with the class providing beneficial insight into the processes of the first five minutes of a water rescue and crews had managed a high degree of accuracy. Another training session will take place later in the year.

Dr. Abo was coming on October 23rd, with the subject of the month being head and facial trauma. Firefighter Schelm was confirmed to have passed his evaluation, making him officially an engineer and one of the District's newest drivers. All new employees had been inducted on shifts and were doing well.

Chief Barbot added that hydrant maintenance was going to be a recurring issue due to expected rusting and other problems caused by their submersion during Hurricane Ian, with more hydrants replaced over the last twelve months than over the last six or seven years. It was also noted that there might be issues where some hydrants needed to be raised and extended, with IWA only responsible for maintaining the water system and not the hydrants. Data from recordings and maintenance would inform any considerations for the budget going forward. Commissioner McCurry suggested looking into hydrant-specific grants due to the anticipated spend on replacements.

Commissioner Muench wondered when the Sanibel Causeway repairs would be complete. Chief Barbot confirmed that there had been a meeting warning that October and November were due to be difficult in terms of stoppages, travel time, and blocked lanes, but that the road aspect was expected to be complete in December or January, although the park project was not due to complete until 2025. He added that he would email a copy of the presentation from the DOT which gave a full explanation.

Action:

Chief Barbot to email a copy of the DOT presentation regarding the Sanibel Causeway repairs to Commissioner Muench.

6. Chief's Report

Chief Barbot noted that it was his one-year anniversary, and thanked the Board for their leadership, guidance, and continued support. There had been a community event to stay in touch with elected officials, with the Lieutenant Governor, Jeanette Nunez, giving a press conference for cyber security at the community house. She had agreed to the setup of a round-table including the City of Sanibel Mayor, the City Manager, the Fort

Myers Beach Fire Chief, John Lai from the Chamber as a business representative, and Schenkel and Schultz architect Nathalie White.

I) District Financial Report

Chief Barbot explained that the fiscal year had been finished and that overall operating expenditures were down 27% for FY2023 compared to FY2022. Personnel services were up by 0.32%, but if the Hurricane Ian overtime was discounted, personnel services labor was actually down. Interest to date on reserve funding was highlighted as being up 1,000% thanks to the efforts of the Board and administrative team. Chief Barbot identified other key numbers as repair and maintenance being down \$90,000 once hurricane expenses were discounted, with \$1.2 million spent by the District on hurricane-induced fees and reimbursed by insurance companies. The goal of carrying over as much funding as possible has been achieved. The RFP for financial auditors had been submitted with a deadline of the 27th or 28th of October. There will be a special meeting to review the documents at 9:00am on November 8th, followed by the regular commission meeting. All TRIM paperwork was confirmed to have been completed with the State with no violations, meaning the District was ready to collect ad valorem revenue and property taxes.

II) State Funding and FEMA Update

Chief Barbot noted that the Department of Revenue was due to be in touch this month regarding the property tax rebate that the State had decided to refund, with all applications submitted for a total of \$671,000 of which \$250,000 was still owed to the Property Appraiser's office. The Property Appraiser's office would receive the remaining balance, and Sanibel Fire & Rescue would receive the remainder as a refund. A notification had been received for state funding of a \$2 million revenue loss grant from a \$350 million LAP legislative appropriations program that had been applied for on June 15th, which would go back into the operating fund and make the budget whole compared to 2022 in light of the millage set in the previous month. A second funding notification for a \$6 million 0% PW loan was also confirmed to have been received, although the financial agreements were yet to be received from the State, and Chief Barbot explained that his current understanding was that all the proceeds to be paid back for Station 172 from FEMA were actually to be reimbursed against this, with any remaining amount being set as a grant.

III) Cancer Grant Award and PGIT Matching Grant

A \$7,700 cancer grant had been awarded for the purchase of a gear washer, with plans to apply again next year for another washer or dryer. Assistant Chief Jackson was in the process of doing the paperwork for the order, and Chief Barbot added that it was a 75%-25% cost share, with the cost to the District around \$1,200. The recently passed State Safety Inspection was highlighted as being key to eligibility for the grant.

PGIT was noted to be the Work Comp company, with a yearly matching grant up to \$10,000 leading to 50% match funding of \$5,000 for purchases involved with risk management and personnel safety. Chief Barbot stated that over \$10,000 had been spent between PPE, health and annual physicals etc., and that grant approval had been received.

IV) Events

Chief Barbot highlighted that the end-of-year banquet would take place on December 2nd at the community house, with invitations to be sent out.

V) New Staff and Years of Service Awards

Chief Barbot confirmed three personnel in new positions, including Chris Jackson as Assistant Chief, Captain Robert Wilkins of B Shift who was promoted from Lieutenant, and Captain Michael Martin of C Shift who was promoted from Lieutenant.

Firefighter Nygaard was noted for 22 years of service, Lieutenant Reitenbach for 20 years, Firefighter Shelby for 6 years, and Firefighter Felix for 4 years.

7. Business Agenda Items

I) Legislative Representation Selection

Chief Barbot reported that funding for the Station 172 rebuild was still short and conversations were being held with local officials. The cost estimation of the 60% design and development process being \$8.6 million, although attempts were being made to reduce that. The District had always been very fiscally responsible and solvent with local funds with no previous history of requesting funding from the State, and elected officials recognized Sanibel's contribution to bringing tourist dollars into both the State and area. Chief Barbot confirmed that an appropriations request would be made with the State, and sponsored by Senator Martin and Representative Botana. The appropriations request would fund the remaining balance for Station 172's reconstruction but it would need to go through several committees over the course of the year. Chief Barbot requested that legislative representatives be hired to assist with that process. Three quotes had been received, (1) from Lewis, Longman & Walker, currently Sanibel Fire & Rescue's general counsel, for \$45,000 for the full year, (2) from David Ramba, a legislative representative for municipalities, counties, and special districts, for \$25,000, and (3) from Laura Donaldson, who was highly involved in making fire districts and local governments better places, for \$20,000. He confirmed that documents had been emailed to the commissioners. Commissioner Muench suggested that Laura Donaldson was the best option and Chief Barbot agreed.

A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to enter into a legislative representation partnership with Mason, Bolves, Donaldson, Tanner, Attorneys at Law. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

II) General Counsel

Chief Barbot noted that Lewis, Longman & Walker had seen significant increases in fees and hourly rates, currently being \$375 per hour, emphasizing that help was needed in regard to Federal and FEMA procurements, and proposing that Laura Donaldson's firm also be engaged for legal and general counsel, at a rate of \$275 per hour, with her experience and involvement in special taxing districts and state legislators in Tallahassee of great benefit to the District. He added that the relationship with Lewis, Longman & Walker would not end, with both firms being on a PRN as-needed basis, so that either could be chosen for any legal matter at hand.

A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to enter into a general counsel agreement with Mason, Bolves, Donaldson, Tanner, Attorneys at Law. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

III) Discuss and Give the Fire Chief Authority to Issue an RFP for a Brush Truck

Chief Barbot explained that direction was needed from the Board to give him authority to issue an RFP for a brush truck, with complaints and concerns being received from citizens in regard to dead brush and trees. The current brush truck was noted to be aging, and not the best truck for the island, with a lead time of around a year before something could be built, barring finding a demo that was already built out, which was unlikely. A committee consisting of Assistant Chief Jackson, Acting Officer Clement, and Captain Wilkins had created the specs and the RFP was ready to be written and published, and any bids received to come back to the Board for a decision.

The Board gave Chief Barbot the authority to proceed with the RFP for a brush truck.

8. Commissioner Items

Commissioner Cochrane thanked the Fire Chief and administrative team for their work over the past year.


9. Union Items

There were no items to discuss.

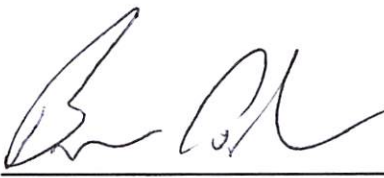
10. Public Input

There was no input to discuss.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:47AM.



Commissioner Jerry Muench



Commissioner Bruce Cochrane



Commissioner Richard McCurry