

SANIBEL FIRE & RESCUE DISTRICT
Minutes of the Fire Commission Meeting
November 9, 2022

Commissioners – Chairman Jerry Muench, Vice Chair Bruce Cochrane, Secretary Richard McCurry
Fire Chief Kevin Barbot
Division Chief Tim Barrett
Fire Marshal Larry Williams
Assistant Administrator Greta Fulkerson

In attendance were the following: Captain Jackson, Lieutenant Howell, FF Bell, FF Bledsoe, FF Moore, and the general public.

Commissioner Muench opened the meeting at 9:00 AM. Commissioner Muench led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1st Order of Business: **A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to allow the meeting to be recorded. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

2nd Order of Business: The minutes for the October 11, 2022, commission meeting as well as the final budget hearing were reviewed and accepted by the Board Members. **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

3rd Order of Business: Division Chief Barrett explained that while in the initial weeks post-Hurricane Ian the concentration was on search and rescue, over the past month the focus has shifted to tasks such as the electric vehicle mission and propane tank issues. General sit-down training has been put on hold temporarily due to the District being busier than normal with disaster-related operations. Each crew has been spending time out in the field and in the community, putting their medical, fire, special ops and public education skills and training to use. Commissioner Muench asked, is there specific training for handling lithium battery-operated electric vehicles? They are like time bombs, aren't they? Division Chief Barrett answered, although this hazard was not necessarily new information, what was new was the excessive number of electric vehicles on the island along with the impact of the storm surge. Chief Barbot then said that Fire Marshal Williams would cover this topic further in his report. Division Chief Barrett added that the District currently has a loaner brush truck supplied by US Fish and Wildlife given that brush fires are an upcoming concern. The District is staying busy, taking on tasks and handling operations day by day with a few specific training sessions lined up throughout the rest of the month.

4th Order of Business: No inspections to discuss. Fire Marshal Williams attended a Fire Marshal Association Conference in Sarasota the week prior, and one class specifically focused on the danger and risk factors of lithium batteries. Fire Marshal Williams stated that he has written 15 fire reports, including structures that burned down during the storm as well as car and golf cart fires in the aftermath. Fire Marshal Williams has been in contact and working with members from the State Fire Marshal's office given their interest in the District's effective handling of the electric vehicle mission. Fire Marshal Williams reiterated that the goal of this mission was to move these vehicles to the end of driveways or a safe distance from homes to prevent further structure fire in case of combustion. Commissioner Muench asked, how did we handle the liability aspect of moving these vehicles? Chief Barbot answered, we asked residents to request electric vehicle removal via email as well as grant the department permission to access their property in order to do so. Fire Marshal Williams added, we did not just go around pulling vehicles from properties, emails with requests, authorizations and property access instructions were sent to Assistant Administrator Fulkerson first and then relayed to the crews handling the mission. Regarding insurance-related matters

Chief Barbot then added, we received an email from a resident whose golf cart we had moved to the end of their driveway that was then taken away with the rest of their debris left for pick-up, asking for a statement for their insurance company simply confirming that the District had indeed gone to the resident's property and moved their golf cart for the purpose of the electric vehicle mission. The way that insurance companies are looking at this, we potentially saved them millions of dollars with this removal mission. In some instances we did, considering the 4 electric vehicle fires that occurred after the initial removal by the department and thus preventing further damage to those properties. Fire Marshal Williams has found that older golf carts with non-lithium batteries have not posed any issues, every corroded-battery issue thus far has been linked to lithium submerged in salt water. Commissioner Muench mentioned that the non-lithium batteries in his golf cart were certainly corroded, but it became one less concern when the golf cart was removed from his garage and taken away by his insurance company. Fire Marshal Williams confirmed, the safest option in any given situation is to move the vehicle in question away from everything else, that way if it does catch fire it will be self-contained. Fire Marshal Williams has also determined some instances during the hurricane in which a vehicle caught fire inside of a garage, but was able to put itself out as the storm surge rose. Division Chief Barrett gave an example of one of these instances, a Tesla catching fire while up on a lift. Fire Marshal Williams described this example, explaining that it was 6 feet off the ground and inside the garage when it caught fire and melted the light and the ceiling before putting itself out without causing further damage to the house. Fire Marshal Williams inquired about the instability of lithium batteries while at the conference, and even experts are unsure about the length of time that these batteries that have been submerged in saltwater pose a risk and are unstable for. But when it comes to their disposal, it is important to wrap them up and tape the ends to prevent any physical connection which is what completes the electrical circuit and leads to their combustion. Fire Marshal Williams gave an example, some electric bikes that had been submerged caught fire on West Gulf Drive when the residents came back to the island and tried to charge them. Commissioner McCurry mentioned that when first coming back to the island, he saw that many cars had their trunks popped open. Fire Marshal Williams confirmed that when some of these newer electric vehicles get submerged to a certain point, a safety feature is activated, causing the trunk and doors to pop open and the windows to roll down. Fire Marshal Williams' most recent task has been clearing the sand and mud out of residential Knox Boxes in hopes of relieving these residents of the expense to have to get them replaced.

5th Order of Business: Chief Barbot reported that the District should be expecting its first major tax distribution of the fiscal year around November 15th. This distribution along with the following one around December 15th will make up approximately 50 to 60 percent of the District's ad valorem revenue. The initial distribution, when compared to last year's, will give the District a better sense of the financial state of the island and whether residents will continue to pay their taxes given the circumstances, which is vital to the District's operations. Commissioner McCurry mentioned the possibility of a delay in initial tax collection. Chief Barbot agreed that is a concern of his, but the District will do what it can to sustain and continue operations as normal. A committee, including Property Appraiser Matt Caldwell and Lee County Fire Chiefs' Association President, is coming together to give foresight and inform local government agencies of what to expect come June, preparing estimates as early as January or February, which will help the District start planning for next fiscal year. Chief Barbot's presumption is that for the first time in over a decade, the roll-back millage rate will be higher than the current rate come June. Fortunately the District currently has a low millage rate, so it can be figured where the millage will be pushed up in order to be able to sustain the same budget as this year. Rumors have been circulating regarding possible forbearance of property taxes for homeowners as early as this year, as well as deferral on taxes, neither of which have been confirmed. The newly proposed budget and capital improvements are being placed on hold, and any non-essential purchases will not be made until the District can get a better grasp on how much funding will be received this fiscal year through the initial tax distributions. All expenditures at this time are complete necessities for the District's daily operations. Chief Barbot explained that at the following meeting he will be able to provide the Board Members with a full budget analysis. At this time, the District has already reached its overtime budget due to the storm, however those expenses will eventually be reimbursed through FEMA as long as the District continues to document in detail all disaster-related expenses. Commissioner Muench said, it's vital that we keep track of every dime, are we up to date? Chief Barbot

responded, we have me, FF Martin, Assistant Administrator Fulkerson, and Andre McIntosh from Hagerty Consulting all handling financials and documenting reimbursements related to Hurricane Ian. We will be having checks come in from the insurance company covering contents and structural damages, so we have separated out and itemized all expenses directly related to the storm to ensure that we are accurately tracking how much money is coming in from insurance and how much money is going out to repair damages and replace equipment. A separate Hurricane Ian file has been created to house all supporting documentation, including daily task reports and damage pictures as well as progress pictures. Having Andre's expertise through Hagerty Consulting has been pivotal in the ongoing FEMA process, ensuring that the District is proceeding in the right manner and covering all its bases along the way.

6th Order of Business: Chief Barbot explained that the electric vehicle mission has gained major state-level attention, as well as recognition for the District's level of proactivity in completing the mission. If there were ever to be another incident as such, the mission would most likely become a part of disaster response plans. The lesson learned is that if ever faced with potential storm surge issues, make it a priority to remove vehicles beforehand if possible. Regarding the propane mission, the City provided the District with a list of 1,300 permits for propane tanks on island and the District managed to hit 100 percent of properties with those permits. Due to the District's Captains and Lieutenants correspondence and involvement with AmeriGas, the department has been able to more efficiently assist residents in the retrieval of their stray propane tanks. Fire Marshal Williams addressed the issue of not being able to accurately locate underground propane tanks, especially given the devastation the island has just undergone. Commissioner Muench responded with a solution of GPS and Chief Barbot responded with a solution of better markings if possible. The District currently has one additional engine at Station 171 from West Manatee, which will be there until November 15th. Once they demobilize, the District will return to normal operations with no outside assistance. A mobile clinic that is open to the public has been set up out front of Station 171 and has been staffed every day, handling sutures, flu shots, tetanus shots, etc. The District received a \$5,000 grant from Preferred Governmental Insurance Trust. Through their training incentive program, they will match 50 percent of the safety gear expense, in the District's case, bunker gear. Regarding financial recovery needs, Chief Barbot, FF Martin, Assistant Administrator Fulkerson, and Andre McIntosh all participated in a conference call with FEMA, Florida Department of Emergency Management, and state mitigation to discuss the areas in which the District should be expecting reimbursements, including the rebuild of Station 172. An in-person visit has been scheduled for next week with all these agencies. The District will also be working with a private contractor engineer because a damage description and dimension report is needed for Station 172 as a supporting document for FEMA purposes. This report will break down what it would cost to rebuild Station 172 to current codes and standards, and the goal is to justify the need to rebuild Station 172 in a manner of greater resiliency in which it will be able to better withstand any future disasters. Regarding a temporary structure for Station 172, FEMA supplied Chief Barbot with a list of approved contractors to get facility quotes from. However, the cost for setting up a temporary structure through one of these contractors was unreasonably high given the fact that the District would only be needing to house 3 personnel in this facility at any given time. Chief Barbot acquired various quotes from private contractors that he found and settled on one that was a fraction of the other price for a single wide with all the necessities for 3 personnel to live comfortably. Chief Barbot reiterated that these temporary structures are reimbursable through FEMA, however it takes time and would be an upfront cost to the District regardless. Chief Barbot emphasized the fact that the District has 24 months of coverage through VFIS for a temporary structure at Station 172, so if the District can get state mission approval on the rebuild of Station 172, the goal is to get as much time out of the state mission as possible so that the 24 months of coverage can be used, expanding the length of time for use of a temporary structure. Regarding Station 171, all personnel have contributed to compiling a parts and supplies list in order to personally fix damaged items and equipment if possible, saving the District the expense of having to fully replace these items and equipment. The District received a donation from City Mattress of approximately \$24,000 worth of 9 bed frames, box springs, and Prana mattresses for all personnel stationed at 171. The District's call volume has appeared to stabilize, and less propane emergencies have been called in. However, trauma calls have been elevated due to the excessive amount of construction that is taking place on the island, although not as many patients have had to be flown out as in previous weeks. Commissioner McCurry asked, what about the bacteria issue? Chief Barbot

responded, a press release will be coming out today explaining the concern and risk of infection with people with open cuts and wounds continuing to work in these bacteria-filled conditions. Max Miller with ----- has been in close contact with the District regarding auto and property claims and compensation through VFIS. The insurance adjusters have made their rounds to Stations 171 and 172 and have completed and submitted their reports however, receiving compensation through VFIS will be a lengthy process. Commissioner McCurry confirmed, Max Miller has been on top of everything on his end and has been a great asset for the District. Chief Barbot agreed, Max Miller has been very responsive and efficient in handling these insurance matters. The Ford F150 that the District purchased back in September is in service and in use by Fire Marshal Williams. All apparatuses at Station 171 are operational however, VFIS will be coming to do a secondary inspection on Engine 179 and 2 other vehicles that were submerged approximately 2 feet under water during the storm. Due to the District's current situation on the island and inability to fully operate out of the boat dock, the County understands that the District is unable to respond to marine calls at this time.

7th Order of Business: Chief Barbot gave an update on District personnel. The District has one extended and ongoing work comp claim, one new work comp claim due to a disaster-related incident, and one firefighter on an extended sick leave, bringing the District down a total of 3 personnel. Although it has taken a toll on the small department, everyone has stepped up and done their part to ensure the District remains fully staffed, especially under the current circumstances. Chief Barbot reiterated Commissioner Muench's comment from last meeting regarding the designation of a second in command. The plan discussed over the summer was to implement battalion chiefs in place of a deputy chief, promoting and designating the current captains as such. The captains have already begun to take on these responsibilities as both administrative and operational leaders. Chief Barbot expressed his confidence in his current administrative staff's capabilities and distribution of duties and said, there have been no issues thus far. Chief Barbot made a request to the Commissioners revisit this conversation when the District has a clearer sense of how the budget and finances are being handled. Chief Barbot added, if there was ever a time to implement the role of battalion chiefs, the time is now given the current state of the island and the increased call volume and overall operational activity. Commissioner Muench asked, these battalion chiefs would be on shift? Chief Barbot answered, yes they would be here 24/7, which would remove the initial delayed response to emergency calls from first and second command overnight and on weekends. Commissioner Muench then responded, give us Commissioners something concrete and detailed to look at in the meantime. Chief Barbot replied, absolutely, I want to ensure that we make the best decision possible for the District before we make any operational decisions that we are stuck with, so what I am asking you for is some time, both for financial reasons and to be able to provide you with more supportive information regarding this matter. Chief Barbot expressed his thanks to Assistant Administrator Fulkerson for her instrumental role in keeping his Chief administrative affairs in order. He shared a comment that she made that he thought was important for the Commissioners to hear, that her reason and appreciation for being a part of the District is because of who she gets to serve and support. She values her behind-the-scenes role because it allows the rest of the District personnel to do their jobs and handle their vital operations, and that gives her a sense of accomplishment. Chief Barbot mentioned that he will be going on a holiday vacation in a couple weeks and that Captain Tom Tracy will be acting Chief in his absence.

8th Order of Business: The first business agenda item was regarding the purchasing agreement with Motorola Solutions. This purchase of 3 additional hand-held radios was made under emergency measures due to the storm by former Chief Briscoe. Chief Barbot asked that a motion be made to approve the purchase of these radios. Commissioner Muench asked, was there difficulty with communication amongst everyone? Chief Barbot answered, former Chief Briscoe's reasoning for the purchase was due to the excessive manpower on the island in the initial weeks post-storm and not enough radios to supply everyone with. Commissioner Muench asked, where is the money for this purchase coming from? Chief Barbot answered, the general fund. Commissioner McCurry asked, can we return them if we no longer have a need for them? Chief Barbot answered, I tried and that is not an option. **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to approve the purchasing agreement with Motorola Solutions. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

9th Order of Business: The second business agenda item was regarding the purchasing agreement for flooring replacement for Station 171 with Boss Floors dba Floor Mart. Due to being under a state of emergency, the District technically does not have to go for bid on this matter. However, Chief Barbot requested one bid from the previous contractor who had installed the carpet flooring. When the bid came back high, Chief Barbot requested other bids and settled on one much more reasonable. Given emergency measures to bring the station back to normal, the tile flooring installation is already underway, but a motion is needed to approve this purchasing agreement. Commissioner McCurry asked, so this could potentially be reimbursed through insurance? Chief Barbot answered, this flooring replacement will be fully reimbursed through insurance. However, there is an additional cost for tile as opposed to carpet flooring, but this will ultimately save the District the expense of more frequent flooring replacement in the long run. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to approve the purchasing agreement for flooring replacement with Boss Floors dba Floor Mart. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

10th Order of Business: The third business agenda item was regarding an agreement with Deidra "Dee" Nelson through Constantino, Nelson, and Werline CPA Firm. Dee will be assisting the District on a PRN as-needed basis at an hourly rate. So far she has been instrumental in further educating Chief Barbot and Assistant Administrator Fulkerson on QuickBooks and ensuring that all accounting duties are being handled properly and accurately. Again due to being under a state of emergency, the District does not have to go for bid on this matter. Chief Barbot asked for a motion to approve this agreement. **A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to approve an agreement with Deidra Nelson through Constantino, Nelson, and Werline CPA Firm. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

11th Order of Business: The fourth business agenda item was regarding the motion made last meeting to enter into an agreement with Hagerty Consulting. Per the request of Attorney Terry Lewis of Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A., there must be verbal ratification of this motion from the previous meeting. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to ratify the motion from the October meeting to enter into an agreement with Hagerty Consulting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

12th Order of Business: The fifth business agenda item was regarding the Medical Director 2022-2023 contract with Dr. Benjamin Abo. There was a delay in the signing of this contract due to the storm. Although the District was supposed to gradually increase Dr. Abo's rate each fiscal year, Dr. Abo agreed to maintain his current rate until next fiscal year due to the current financial state of the District. The contract has not changed. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to continue the Medical Director 2022-2023 contract with Dr. Benjamin Abo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

13th Order of Business: The sixth business agenda item was regarding the District Chief contract and job description. The District has been lacking job descriptions for various positions, so Chief Barbot has spent the summer months working on the Chief contract and job description, as well as job descriptions for other administrative and operational roles. It is not possible to enter into a contract as Fire Chief without having a detailed description of what those roles and responsibilities are for the District. Chief Barbot presented his contract and job description to the Commissioners, both of which have been reviewed and approved by Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A., the District Attorney. Commissioner Muench asked, do you still have a 12-month probationary period? Chief Barbot replied, yes I do, before the twelfth month is up we will hold a public meeting to assess my progress and performance and a decision will be made by the Board Members from there. Commissioner McCurry mentioned, my only recommendation would have been to get them reviewed by the District Attorney which has already been done. **A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to approve the District Chief contract and job description. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry.** Commissioner McCurry then asked, does the Chief salary begin immediately

or backdate to last month? Chief Barbot responded, it will begin immediately, I am not requesting any backdate on pay. Commissioner McCurry replied, I feel that given your new position you should be compensated for such, so if we are agreeing to this contract we are agreeing in all aspects, including your compensation as Chief. What you have been doing for the District is greatly appreciated, so I do not want you to be underappreciated. Chief Barbot thanked the Commissioners for their recognition. The Chief salary will be executed immediately, beginning next pay period. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

14th Order of Business: Commissioner Items. Commissioner McCurry asked, are the policies still being worked on? Chief Barbot answered, we have put the policies on hold. Commissioner McCurry said, personally and from speaking with the community, I want to commend everyone in this District as well as the other agencies coming in to help for the great job they have done. I want to acknowledge and thank you all for what you have been able to accomplish from the beginning of this disaster. Commissioner Cochrane agreed with Commissioner McCurry's statement by adding, you have all done a phenomenal job and your morale was wonderful to witness, so thank you and I appreciate everything you have done here. Commissioner Muench asked, how do we officially recognize the other departments that have come in to assist the District with operations? Chief Barbot responded, as they have come here we have given them challenge coins and shirts, they have been brought in and treated as family and shown appreciation through the meals that have been cooked for them daily by our personnel. Chief Barbot added that he plans to make calls to each Fire Chief from the departments that were assigned to assist the island, extending thanks for the amount of support that their crews have brought to the District. Commissioner McCurry asked, how much longer does our state of emergency resolution last for? Chief Barbot answered, I believe we have until either December 2nd or 3rd. Commissioner McCurry then asked, given the expected impact of upcoming Tropical Storm Nicole and the amount of debris scattered on the island, what is the District planning to do to protect the residents that are here? Chief Barbot answered, Captain Jackson was on a conference call this morning regarding this matter, so we are going to discuss plans for this storm when this meeting is over and we will relay all updates and information to you.

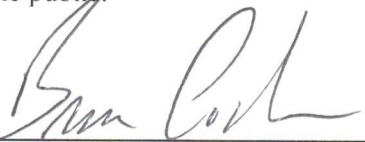
15th Order of Business: Union Items to discuss. No items from the union.

16th Order of Business: Public Input to discuss. No items from the public.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.



Commissioner Jerry Muench



Commissioner Bruce Cochrane



Commissioner Richard McCurry