

Sanibel Fire & Rescue District
Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 9:00 AM

Location: Station 171 – 2351 Palm Ridge Road, Sanibel, FL 33957

Attendance: Commissioner Jerry Muench, Commissioner Bruce Cochrane, Commissioner Richard McCurry, Fire Chief Kevin Barbot, Deputy Chief John DiMaria, Fire Marshal Larry Williams, Administrative Assistant Greta Fulkerson, Jeff Tuscan (HSC/Tuscan & Company, PA), Nathalie White (Schenkel Schultz), Tiffany Repecki (The Island Reporter)

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

- The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Muench at 9:00 AM.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.
- A roll call confirmed the presence of the Board and District Administration.

Approval of Minutes

- The meeting minutes from the previous month were reviewed.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the March meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.**

Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Audit Presentation

- The District's auditor, Jeff Tuscan of HSC/Tuscan & Company, PA, presented the fiscal year 2025 financial audit and advised that the District received an **unmodified opinion**, meaning a clean opinion across all required sections of the financial statements.
- Because the District expended more than \$750,000 in state funds - largely associated with Station 172 - a state single audit was required this year, resulting in additional reports related to compliance and internal controls.
- The auditor reported no significant deficiencies, no findings related to internal control or compliance, and no issues with the District's handling of state grant requirements or public depository requirements.
- One minor budget compliance comment was noted in the Impact Fee Fund because an expenditure exceeded the budget by \$86. The auditor described the issue as non-material

and noted that the Board had approved the expenditure. Prior comments from past years were reported as resolved.

- **The auditor reviewed the financial trend graphs with the Board and highlighted the following items:**
 - Cash decreased as prior-year grant proceeds were spent on Station 172 and related capital activity.
 - Investments and interest income increased, reflecting both stronger balances and improved interest rates.
 - Capital improvement spending was driven primarily by Station 172 construction, along with limited pre-construction activity for Station 171 and equipment expenditures.
 - Current payables and retainage balances were consistent with active construction billing and project closeout procedures.
 - The District continues to carry no debt while rebuilding its stations, which the auditor described as a significant accomplishment.
 - Year-end fund balance was approximately \$15.5 million, with reserves assigned for specific purposes.
 - Ad valorem revenue remains below pre-Ian levels even as property tax discussions at the state level continue to be monitored.
- The auditor also reviewed OPEB and pension liability entries, explaining that these are actuarially required accounting entries rather than liabilities the District can simply pay off directly.
- The Board thanked the auditor for the presentation and acknowledged the continued guidance provided to District staff throughout the year.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to accept the fiscal year 2025 financial audit as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry, and the motion carried unanimously.**
- Chief Barbot advised that a budget amendment will be brought back before year-end to align the fiscal year 2026 carry-forward to the audited fiscal year 2025 figures.

Fire Marshal Williams' Report

- **Inspections and Reviews:** For the month of March, there were 17 plan reviews completed along with 92 inspection / records activities. Fire Marshal Williams noted that development activity across the island continues to move forward.

- **Project Updates:**

- **Beachview:** Final fire alarm device testing and sprinkler testing were completed. The project is expected to open by the end of the month.
- **Riverview Apartments:** A walkthrough was completed with the new superintendent to review fire protection requirements and inspection expectations.
- **Cielo's:** Plans were received for an addition to the property.
- **Former Tipsy Turtle site:** The property has changed hands, and early remodel activity appears to be underway.
- **Former 7-Eleven retail office conversion:** Fire Marshal Williams completed a walkthrough and reported the renovated interior is nearly complete and laid out for four future units.
- **SCCF intern village:** Signage is now posted and the plans had previously been approved.
- **LCEC:** Underground fire line and hydrant work has been completed, allowing vertical construction to move forward.
- **Lighthouse Point:** A site visit was scheduled with gate contractors and City representatives to ensure proposed gate access does not restrict ladder truck operations.
- **F.I.S.H. site:** Design work is underway and demolition activity is expected soon.
- **Song of the Sea:** Demolition planning continues, though major work has not yet started.
- **Former Dairy Queen site:** Work remains limited because the eagles are still present, requiring portions of the project to continue by hand until nesting restrictions are lifted.

Assistant Chief Jackson's Report

- Assistant Chief Jackson was on vacation, and his report was read by Chief Barbot.
- **Apparatus Maintenance:**
 - **Ladder 171:** The unit returned from South Florida Emergency Vehicles with repairs completed and the annual NFPA fire pump test finished. The annual aerial inspection will be completed when the inspection vendor is in town.
 - **Engine 179:** Annual service has been completed.

- **Engine 172:** The unit is currently undergoing annual service, which will complete the service cycle for the District's three major apparatuses.
- **Station 172 Update:** The ribbon cutting was described as a major success, with crews, administration, and outside agencies recognized for helping make the event run smoothly.
 - Manhattan Construction continues working through punch list items.
 - Replacement tower handrails have a shipping date of May 8.
 - The training roof door lock hardware has been replaced.
 - A rust spot on the front tower tabby finish remains under review and correction.
 - York Electric is addressing several defective items within the station.
 - Firefighters are submitting work orders for issues so all repairs can be tracked through the District system.
 - Station 172 solar installation is approximately 75% complete, with panels already on the roof and electrical lines currently being run to the final connections.

Deputy Chief DiMaria's Report

- **Call Volume Statistics:** Year-to-date call volume was reported at approximately 430 calls compared with 526 calls at the same point last year, reflecting about a 12.5% decrease. For the month of March, the District handled 144 calls compared with 176 in March 2025, a decrease of roughly 18%.
- **Mutual Aid / Off-Island Responses:** In response to a prior Board request, Deputy Chief DiMaria provided packets summarizing responses to Captiva and Fort Myers. Over the last year, the District showed 121 dispatches toward Captiva and 71 off-island responses toward Fort Myers. He noted the totals include move-up / merc calls and incidents where units were dispatched or en route but may not have ultimately worked the scene.
- **Training:** District training hours increased to more than 746 hours, up significantly from the prior month. Deputy Chief DiMaria noted that while call volume is down, crews are using the available time to sharpen their skills on the training ground.
- **Out-of-Chute Times:** Out-of-station / chute-time performance improved from 89% to 91.4%, reflecting stronger turnout performance from crews.
- **Personnel:** Firefighter Austin Lambert successfully completed his probationary period and was recognized for doing a great job.
- **Co-Op Training:** The regional Mayday training hosted with mutual aid partners was described as a success. Crews attended all three days, and the District has purchased updated RIT / rescue bags to improve firefighter rescue operations if ever needed.

- **Wildland / Brush Response:** Brush truck training and wildland safety training remain ongoing. Despite recent rain, the District is still not out of brush fire season, and recent lightning strikes led to several brush fires across the county.
- **Truck Committee:** The committee has now met with Pierce / Ten-8 and Sutphen and is preparing to meet with E-ONE. The next step will include site visits to other departments before deciding whether to piggyback off another procurement or proceed with a separate bid process.
- **Medical Training:** Trauma assessments, treatment reviews, and scenario-based training continue each month. Officers are building scenarios around the monthly teaching points, and the District is coordinating with Dr. Abo on upcoming in-service training related to new medical equipment.
- **EMS Relocation During Construction:** Lee County EMS has secured temporary living quarters near the Casa Ybel / West Gulf-Middle Gulf area for ambulance operations during Station 171 construction following coordination with the City, County, and CHR.
- **Wellness / Injury Prevention:** Dr. Mark Hines of Stevens Chiropractic is scheduled to provide a back safety class for first responders the following week.
- **Community Involvement:** CPR classes are now being scheduled into June. The District also participated in Taste of the Islands, the Easter Egg Hunt, and will be sending a vehicle off-island for an upcoming Touch-a-Truck event. Staff also reminded the Board of the upcoming chili cook-off on April 11.

Chief Barbot's Report

- **District Financials:** District financials were reported as tracking on schedule and on budget. Chief Barbot advised that one or more budget amendments will likely be needed as capital improvement and construction items continue to move forward.
- **Temporary Office Relocation:** The Station 171 temporary mobile home was scheduled to be set up the following Monday. Electrical, plumbing, and A/C still need to be completed, and staff is working through challenges associated with bringing power in around the existing concrete pad. The unit will be elevated higher than its prior setup at Station 172, and related equipment will also be elevated in preparation for storm season.
- **Station 171 Rebuild:** Chief Barbot advised that the Lee County Board of County Commissioners directed staff to identify a source for the remaining funding deficit and report back within approximately two weeks. The District is roughly 95% complete on the construction services contract approval process and is awaiting County authorization to execute. He noted the requested contract changes are minor and do not materially affect the District's agreement with Manhattan Construction. A special meeting is still expected once the District receives final approval to execute.

- **Board Acknowledgement:** Commissioners publicly thanked Commissioner Kevin Ruane and the resiliency task force for their continued support and emphasis on keeping first responder reconstruction projects moving forward.
- **Drone Program:** Installation was reported at roughly 70% to 75% complete, with operations expected in approximately 14 to 21 days. Chief Barbot explained that Sanibel is one of four County-selected locations for the program, and the drone will be available for medium to large incidents or on request through Lee Control. The system will provide live video, thermal imaging, and improved situational awareness for both land and water incidents, with an estimated three-mile operating radius and a 20-to-30-minute flight time.
- **Lee County Fire Task Force:** The recent task force meeting had the largest attendance to date. Agencies discussed the possibility of prescribed burns in June, along with mechanical vegetation removal and potential state funding for overgrown problem areas that have worsened since Hurricane Ian.
- **Community Partnership / Rescue Inflatable Boat:** Chief Barbot announced that On Island Apparel is selling a Sanibel marine-themed shirt and donating a portion of the proceeds back to the District to help fund a second rescue inflatable boat. The business also intends to assist with a broader community donation effort so the District can eventually station one asset at each fire station. Chief Barbot emphasized how quickly the RIB can be deployed and how valuable it is for beach and water rescue incidents.
- **Recognition:**
 - **Lieutenant Shane Grant:** 16 years of service.
 - **Acting Officer Bryan Clement:** 7 years of service.
 - **Firefighter Mike Suarez:** Expected to complete probation later this month.
- **Union Notice:** Chief Barbot advised that while DVP Ed Zarick was not present, a union representative was in attendance and would provide input later in the agenda.

Business Agenda Items

- **Resolution 26-001 - Station 171 Construction Administration Services:** Chief Barbot presented the proposed amendment to the professional architectural services agreement with Schenkel Schultz for phase two construction administration services associated with Fire Station 171. He advised that the amendment had been reviewed with the District Attorney and vetted through the required County and HUD compliance processes. The proposed amount was a lump sum not to exceed \$203,377. Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read the resolution.

- **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to adopt Resolution 26-001 approving Amendment No. 1 with Schenkel Schultz. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane, and the resolution was adopted unanimously.**
- **Resolution 26-002 - Temporary Administrative Staff Overtime for Relocation: Chief Barbot presented a resolution authorizing administrative staff overtime for the next 60 days to assist with the Station 171 move and temporary office transition. He explained that the volume of records, employee files, scanning, packing, and coordination work tied to the move may require work outside of normal hours.**
- **Board Discussion: Commissioner McCurry asked how overtime accountability would be maintained. Chief Barbot advised that he would be responsible for oversight and that any overtime worked would be documented with direct communication and written narrative support describing the tasks completed.**
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to adopt Resolution 26-002 approving temporary administrative staff overtime for relocation purposes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench, and the resolution was adopted unanimously.**
- **Policy 322 - Disposition of Valuables and Personal Belongings: Chief Barbot brought the revised policy back to the Board after incorporating the changes previously requested. The Board found the revisions acceptable.**
- **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to approve the revised Policy 322 as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench, and the motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Items

- Commissioners praised the Station 172 ribbon cutting and open house, describing it as a tremendous success. Special thanks were extended to District staff, administration, law enforcement, transportation partners, and everyone else who helped make the event run smoothly. Commissioners also complimented the appearance and professionalism of the crews during the event.

Union Items

- The representative, Captain Wilkins, advised that DVP Ed Zarick was unable to attend. No formal union business was presented other than continued excitement and promotion for the upcoming chili cook-off.

Public Input

- Nathalie White of Schenkel Schultz thanked the Board for allowing the firm to be part of the Station 172 project and stated that the grand opening was one of the best and most

meaningful project openings she had attended. She also thanked the Board for approving the construction administration item for Station 171.


- Additional comments emphasized that the Board's willingness to communicate, ask questions, and work collaboratively has played an important role in the District's progress.

Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 AM.



Commissioner Jerry Muench



Commissioner Bruce Cochrane



Commissioner Richard McCurry