

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

**Date & Time:** Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 9:00 AM

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

### **Attendance:**

Chairman Jerry Muench / Vice Chair Bruce Cochrane / Secretary Treasurer Richard McCurry

Fire Chief Kevin Barbot / Deputy Chief John DiMaria / Assistant Chief Chris Jackson / Fire Marshal Larry Williams / Captain Martin / Captain Wilkins / FF Clement / FF Suarez / FF Pujol

### **1. Meeting Initiation**

- Commissioner Muench called the meeting to order.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- Review of prior minutes: **Commissioner Cochrane made a motion to accept the October meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. With no discussion, the motion carried unanimously.**

### **2. Fire Marshal Williams' Report**

Fire Marshal Williams provided a comprehensive update on plan reviews, inspections, and ongoing construction activity on the island.

#### **Plan Reviews & Inspections**

- **36 plan reviews** were completed for October.
- **177 inspections** were completed, with activity beginning to slow in some areas as projects near completion.
- **Extensive unit-by-unit inspections** continue at condominium properties. Williams confirmed that every unit within multi-story buildings must be inspected individually, primarily for smoke detection compliance. Each unit is logged as a separate inspection.

#### **Current Projects**

- Ongoing inspections continue at **Beachview**, now progressing to drywall and penetration inspections.
- A multi-agency meeting was held with the City and FISH regarding redevelopment plans where **Gene's Books** and the existing FISH building currently stand. The project proposes

demolishing both structures and constructing a **combined facility**, pending further clarification on buffering and site requirements.

- **Song of the Sea**, located near Island Inn, is slated for **full demolition and rebuild** after previously investing in improvements. The project is now moving to an entirely new design. Williams is coordinating potential firefighter training opportunities inside the structure prior to demolition.
- **New resort signage** across the island was noted as a significant improvement for public safety and navigation.

### **Additional Notes**

- Fire Marshal Williams recently attended the **Florida Fire Marshals Association Conference** in Boca Raton and thanked the chiefs for covering inspections during his absence.
- Questions from the Board included the status of private hydrant inspections (confirmed completed, though paint responsibility remains with the property owners) and the construction status of Bailey's and Rabbit Road improvements. Williams reported that although plans exist for Bailey's, city review is still pending.
- Riverview Apartments behind 7-Eleven have begun vertical construction with masonry block in place.

### **3. Assistant Chief Jackson's Report**

Assistant Chief Jackson provided a detailed update on equipment, maintenance cycles, hydrant programs, and the substantial effort toward occupying Station 172.

#### **Apparatus Testing & Maintenance**

- **Annual hose testing, ground ladder testing, and SCBA mask maintenance/fit testing** were completed.
- Firefighters performed **annual public hydrant maintenance** including flushing, anti-seize application, bonnet lubrication, reflector replacement, and repainting.
- Private hydrants are also checked for operational readiness, though painting remains the responsibility of the property owner.

#### **Hydrant Appearance/Condition**

- Overall hydrant condition across the island has improved significantly due to recent repainting. Commissioners recognized the improved appearance and the benefit to community aesthetics and emergency readiness.

## **Equipment Status**

- The **John Deere Gator** is currently at Everglades Equipment undergoing diagnostic testing (suspected fuel issue).
- Beginning in January, the District will initiate **annual apparatus maintenance**, each vehicle typically requiring 45–60 days of service time.

## **Station 172 – Occupancy & Construction Status**

- **Move-in day** is officially today. Staff have been moving equipment, furnishings, and supplies over the last three days. Crews will sleep in the station beginning tonight.
- **Manhattan Construction** continues punch-list work.
- **Landscaping and irrigation installation** continue.
- The **fire pole** arrived last week; installation is in progress, including trapdoor assembly and ceiling modifications.
- The **trailer** is scheduled for removal on **Monday, November 17**, pending utility disconnects and contractor scheduling.
- Following removal, **final site work**—including parking lot and swales—will proceed.

Commissioners expressed appreciation for the significant workload managed by the command staff and crews during the transition, noting the team’s diligence throughout the project.

## **4. Deputy Chief DiMaria’s Report**

Deputy Chief DiMaria presented call volume statistics, training progress, and community outreach activities.

### **Call Volume**

- **2024 YTD: 1,286 calls vs. 2025 YTD: 1,410 calls**
- **October 2024: 159 calls vs. October 2025: 102 calls**

### **Training Activity**

- **Hydrant maintenance commitments** reduced the number of structured classes last month; however, firefighters still completed **673 training hours**.
- **Notable training and initiatives:**
  - **RIB Operator Training** led by Firefighter Clement, with exceptionally positive feedback.
  - **Continuation of probationary skills training.**

- **Current month focuses on hose management, engineer pump skills, standpipe operations, task assignments, and ground ladder operations.**
- **Upcoming: EVOC, air consumption drills, rope technician (Part 2), and additional in-house RIB sessions.**

### **Active Shooter Training**

- **Collaborative training with Sanibel Police Department included tabletop and physical movement drills.**
- **Next month, a full-scale school-based active shooter exercise will involve Fort Myers PD and Lee County Sheriff's Office.**
- **Commissioners sought clarification regarding firefighter exposure to danger during these scenarios. Deputy Chief DiMaria emphasized:**
  - **Firefighters will not enter until the threat is isolated or eliminated.**
  - **Fire rescue will operate under law enforcement protection to remove victims.**
  - **No firefighter will be deployed into an active threat zone.**

### **Community & Public Education**

- **Red Cross and FISH conducted smoke alarm installations at Periwinkle Park.**
- **Veterans Day Ceremony participation was noted.**
- **Upcoming community events include the November 29th Tree Lighting Ceremony.**
- **CPR classes continue to be heavily scheduled into early 2026.**

### **Brotherhood Ride Recognition**

**Deputy Chief DiMaria and Captain Martin presented the Board with a signed memorial poster from the 2025 Brotherhood Ride in appreciation for the District allowing a support vehicle to participate. The poster honors fallen first responders across Florida. A brief photo was taken with the Board.**

### **5. Fire Chief Barbot's Report**

**Chief Barbot delivered administrative and financial updates, followed by discussion regarding the ongoing RIB arbitration matter.**

### **Financial Report**

- FY26 has begun; audit preparations for FY25 are underway with a goal of early completion.
- Ad valorem revenues: first distribution received; first major distribution expected next month.
- Financial statements provided to the Board are accurate with no issues.

### **Cancer Grant Update**

- The State of Florida acknowledged an **error in its original award**, incorrectly listing a dryer as an eligible purchase.
- Upon correction, the District requested **air scrubbers** needed for Station 171's apparatus bay due to insufficient exhaust fan space.
- The state confirmed funding and will update the agreement—raising the value of the grant from a \$15,000 item to an item costing **\$30,000–\$40,000**, representing a substantial gain for the District.

### **Health Insurance Review**

- As directed by the Board, the District is evaluating alternate insurance plans, including CIGNA.
- Broker Max Miller is providing presentations to all shifts and retirees over a three-day period.
- Findings will be presented at the December board meeting.

### **CDBG-DR Funding / Station 171 Construction**

- The City of Sanibel, serving as the District's pass-through agency, continues to provide **exceptional support**.
- Payment requests submitted to the City are reimbursed to the District within 48–72 hours; however, the City is experiencing slower reimbursement from the County.
- **100% design plans** for Station 171 are complete (noting that minor modifications will continue through the process).
- The District is awaiting the **final cost estimator's report**, required before issuing the Invitation to Bid (ITB) for construction.
- Legal review of the ITB is underway. Once legal and county approvals are complete, the District seeks authorization to immediately advertise the ITB to avoid delays.

**Commissioner Cochrane made a motion to authorize the Fire Chief to advertise the Invitation to Bid for Station 171 construction once legal counsel and the County approve the document. Commissioner McCurry seconded the motion. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.**

**Employee Anniversary: Edward Zarick – 10 years of service.**

### **Arbitration Update – RIB Operations Grievance**

Chief Barbot provided a detailed update regarding the ongoing grievance and pending arbitration initiated by the Union concerning operation of the District's new RIB (rigid inflatable boat).

### **District Position**

- The RIB is a **standard operating tool**, not a specialty position, intended for near-shore rescues and inland waterways.
- All personnel are expected to be capable of operating the RIB, but deployment remains **officer discretion based on competency and capability**—not rank or assignment.
- The District has delivered **two separate MOUs** to the Union proposing operational and safety clarifications and resolutions; both were denied.
- The Union maintains that RIB operation should require **Boat Operator ARP (Additional Responsibility Pay)** compensation.

### **Board Discussion**

It was acknowledged that the Union DVP was not present at the meeting to answer questions, but Commissioners expressed confusion and concern regarding:

- Why the Union insists on ARP compensation for RIB operation when the same Union (Local 1826) does not require it in other coastal agencies with identical boats and identical ARP language (e.g., Estero).
  - Whether firefighter safety concerns were legitimate or whether the issue is **solely compensation-driven**. It was reiterated that the purchase of the RIB was intended to make water rescues safer and more efficient for everyone involved.
  - Why bargaining-unit members appeared unaware that MOUs had been offered, raising questions about internal communication.
  
  - Captain Wilkins voiced that some staff members indicated discomfort with operating the RIB; the Board reiterated the messaging from the Chief no employee will be forced to operate the vessel before achieving comfort and competency.
  - Chief Barbot reviewed the **history and intent of ARPs over the last 13 years**, noting that most existing ARPs have no attached tasks and were traditionally intended as **educational incentives**, not exclusive job duties.
  - The firefighter job description explicitly includes **water rescue operations**.
  - The Board expressed disappointment with the Union's approach, as well as lack of representation at the current meeting to discuss further and get questions answered.
- Commissioner Muench expressed that the last thing the Board wants to do is upset the shifts,

which would potentially have to happen as an alternative in order to ensure a boat operator on each shift.

**6. New Business Item – Resolution 25-022 (Station 172 Solar System)**

Chief Barbot presented Resolution 25-022 authorizing the District to enter into an agreement with Ameresco, Inc. for the design and installation of a 25.3 kW solar photovoltaic system at Station 172:

- Total cost: **\$110,061.61**
- System will offset electrical consumption during normal utility operation.
- System will not function during generator use (no battery storage).
- Estimated return period: **4.5 years** through power-bill savings.
- District qualifies for a **30% IRS green-energy credit** available through 12/31/2025.
- This is a **sole-source procurement** utilizing a previously competitively bid national contract.
- Funds will come from **insurance proceeds** allocated to Station 172.

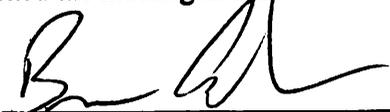
**A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to accept Resolution 25-022 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. With no public comment, the motion was approved unanimously.**

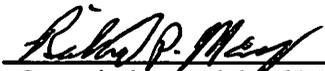
**7. Union Input - none**

**8. Public Comment - none**

There being no further business, Commissioner Muench adjourned the meeting at **9:52 AM**.

  
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Commissioner Jerry Muench

  
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Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

  
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Commissioner Richard McCurry