

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

**Date & Time:** Wednesday, December 10, 2025, 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 / Assistant Chief Chris Jackson / Fire Marshal Larry Williams / Administrative Assistant Greta Fulkerson / DVP Ed Zarick (Local 1826 District 17) / Local 1826 Union President Henry Garcia / District Personnel / Members of the Public

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### **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.

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### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the November meeting were reviewed. A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

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### **Fire Marshal Williams' Report**

#### **Plan Reviews and Inspections**

- November inspections: 131
- November plan reviews: 38
- Year-to-date inspections exceeded 2,000 and are expected to continue trending upward through year end.

#### **Projects and Construction Activity**

- Riverview Apartments II: Flow testing completed; former Fish House area anticipated for demolition and redevelopment.

- **New restaurant project:** New York-style pizza restaurant planned adjacent to Subway.
  - **Beach View (West Gulf):** Ongoing sprinkler installation and departmental walkthroughs; projected completion March–April 2026.
  - **White Caps Modulares:** Elevated modular units approximately 15 feet above ground. Ongoing coordination with the City regarding sprinkler requirements (NFPA 13R), parking area fire protection, and ADA accessibility/elevator requirements.
  - **Beach Club on East Gulf** redevelopment confirmed.
  - **LCEC Substation** has broken ground.
  - **Rebuilding** continues at West Wind and Castaways.
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### **Assistant Chief Jackson's Report**

#### **Apparatus Maintenance**

- Annual preventive maintenance cycles will resume in January 2026 and will be outsourced to South Florida Emergency Vehicles.
- The reserve engine is scheduled first; all frontline apparatus are currently operational.

#### **Station 172**

- Station 172 has been fully operational since the second week of November.
- Punch-list items remain ongoing.

#### **Station 172 Punch List Highlights**

- Defective window awaiting manufacturer replacement (E-rated glass).
- Gear dryer ductwork increased from 6" to 12" due to extended exhaust routing.
- Temporary handrails installed on tower stairs; custom permanent rails pending.
- Landscaping is nearing completion.
- Color-changing LED tower lights malfunctioned and were returned to the manufacturer.

- Sidewalk cracking scheduled for replacement.
- Weekly updates continue; Manhattan Construction communication remains consistent despite scheduling impacts.

#### **Station 172 Murals / Artwork**

- Rachel Pierce began stairwell mural installation on December 8; progress shared on District social media.
  - Alex Bustamante scheduled to complete day room and dining room murals in January following completion of South Seas project.
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#### **Deputy Chief DiMaria's Report**

##### **Call Volume**

- November 2025: 108 calls (down from 113 in November 2024).
- Year-to-Date: 1,472 calls (up from 1,346 last year).

##### **Fire Training**

- EVOC completed; upcoming sessions will include trailer and truck operations (Can-Am and trailers).
- Air consumption drill scheduled for the following week.
- Rescue swimmer evaluations completed successfully; expanded open-water Gulf training planned for 2026.
- Rope technician course completed; additional high-angle drills planned district-wide.
- Joint training planned with Captiva Fire for vehicle extrication and combined operations.

##### **Medical Training**

- UE scope in-service scheduled for December 15, 2025, with Dr. Abo.
- OB/Neonatal training scheduled for January with a Golisano Children's Hospital OB nurse.

- Monthly EMS skills drills continue with EMTs and medics leading hands-on protocol training.

### **Community Outreach**

- Tree lighting, luminary and Santa events, and the “10,000 Cards for Troops” initiative were completed successfully.
  - Santa’s mailbox is installed at the station; children will receive response letters.
  - CPR classes remain in high demand and are conducted on- and off-site as needed.
  - Commissioner McCurry commented on district community involvement as a whole: “This District is more involved in the community now than I think it ever has been. I get a lot of feedback; you guys are showing up at events, you’re helping out, they’re getting to know each of you... you are part of the community and it’s really showing and people are loving it. You guys just did a community breakfast for the benevolent fund, it was a good turnout; the community involvement is fantastic, and I’d like to keep seeing that going forward.”
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### **Chief Barbot’s Report**

#### **District Financials / Administration**

- Financial reports reviewed with no anomalies noted.
- FY 2025 audit is underway and is the earliest audit start to date.

#### **Station 171 Redevelopment**

- ITB and contract package (approximately 218 pages) finalized following legal review.
- Awaiting Lee County authorization to advertise.
- Anticipated bid opening late January due to holidays, with contract award targeted for February.
- Building permit submission anticipated December 12, 2025.
- Federal posting requirements reviewed (minimum 28 days; minimum three bids).
- A pre-bid conference will be held at Station 171; advising everyone who has intent to bid on this project details regarding the project and giving everyone an opportunity to ask questions. Questions cannot be answered at the meeting but

will be made note of and answered on the website to ensure that information is relayed across the board.

- Most likely will need to hold a special meeting with the Board in order to engage in the contract when the time comes.
- Temporary manufactured housing is in place at Station 171.
- Contractor staging and helicopter landing zone impacts discussed; alternate locations identified as the Causeway and Mosquito Control.
- Request made to move the January board meeting from January 14 to January 21 due to conflict in Tallahassee that involves Fire Chief and two board members. Request approved.

#### **Labor Relations – Arbitration Update**

- RIB operator compensation and responsibilities discussed; Chief reiterated he had been advised by DVP Zarick that this is not about compensation, however contradictory to written statements received from Union regarding the matter.
- Union is of the stance that the District is forcing Union members to perform a task that they feel is voluntary and not part of their essential duties.
- Ultimately, the Union and Administration have different interpretations as to what the intent of the ARP and Boat Operator CBA language is.
- Administration had requested to go back to collective bargaining and re-open Article 11; this request was denied twice by the Union.
- Administration and Union agreed the issue must be addressed publicly under Sunshine Law requirements.
- A special public meeting is scheduled for **January 12, 2026, at 1:00 PM.**

#### **Milestones**

- Assistant Chief Chris Jackson – 22 years of service
  - Engineer Todd Walter – 10 years of service
  - Engineer Arian Moore – 9 years of service
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## **Business Agenda Items**

### **Florida Firefighter Cancer Grant**

- Chief reported the State corrected an eligibility issue, increasing the award to approximately \$32,000.
- Grant includes PPE extractor and air scrubber/vehicle exhaust capture equipment for Station 171.
- Funding is 75% State / 25% District.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the grant and authorize execution of the agreement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **Health Insurance Discussion**

- Chief summarized the year-long effort to evaluate alternatives following significant County premium increases.
- Current annual premium for Aetna (current District plan through the County): \$726,000/year
- Current annual premium for Cigna (potential alternative option): \$589,000/year; a savings to the District of \$137,000/year
- Minimal changes to coverage; however, some concerns expressed for specialist providers
- Chief read email statement sent to Board for the record: “Throughout this entire process, we intentionally involved our entire staff. They were given the chance to check provider coverages, meet with our broker, ask questions, and give feedback on what they want moving forward. From that input, the message was received. Our members feel strongly about staying with Aetna. Out of 26 members, only 14 participated in a one-question survey. 5 were indifferent to moving carriers, and 9 voiced concerns or opposition to changing carriers. The \$137,000 premium increase has been reflected in the current approved budget. While the finance side is important and must be fiscally responsible, we must evaluate the staff’s input. Their well-being and family security must be considered, that is why I am recommending that the Board postpone this decision until this summer. The County may bring another raise to Aetna, waiting will give us a clearer picture before making a long-term commitment with the inability to go back to the County plan after leaving (currently grandfathered in). I think it’s important we

show our staff that we're hearing them, we value their input, and we have their best interest and their families in mind.”

- After much discussion, the Board unanimously agreed to hold off until summer to reassess premiums and options.
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**Resolution 25-023: Authorizing the Sale and Disposal of Surplus District Property**

- The Board had been advised at the last meeting that a list would be compiled of items to be disposed of or sold; items that would either be replaced or obsolete to the District
  - The resolution was read by Administrative Assistant Fulkerson.
  - **A motion made by Commissioner Cochrane to adopt Resolution 25-023 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**
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**Resolution 25-024: Medical Director Contract**

- This contract has been brought back to the Board on an annual basis.
  - Previous cost for medical director dues was \$17,500/year, increasing to \$20,000/year.
  - Changes made include, as long as the District and Dr. Abo agree to the terms of the contract, the contract will auto-renew on an annual basis.
  - Term of current contract is October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026.
  - Dr. Abo has majorly shaped the direction of the District's medical program.
  - Commissioner McCurry remarked that although Dr. Abo was eligible for an increase in the past, he kept his rate at what it was when Hurricane Ian hit for financial purposes.
  - The resolution was read by Administrative Assistant Fulkerson.
  - **A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to adopt Resolution 25-024 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**
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**Resolution 25-025: Flood Insurance Coverage for Station 172**

- Because the District received FEMA federal and state funding for project Station 172 and based on those funding agreements, the District is required to have NFIP flood insurance. This covers the first \$500,000 worth of damage to any structure from any flooding event. The District has coverage for anything above \$500,000 through regular property insurance.
  - The lowest premium found for Station 172 is \$11,500. The District received 3 quotes, which meets the District's procurement policy. The second price was \$12,600, and the third price was \$25,640.
  - The resolution is for the lowest bid. The resolution was read by Administrative Assistant Fulkerson.
  - **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to adopt Resolution 25-025 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**
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#### **Commissioner Items**

None.

#### **Union Items**

DVP Zarick commented on the success of the pancake breakfast event put on by the firefighters in support of their benevolent fund. Great turnout and positive feedback from the public.

Union representatives DVP Zarick and President Garcia, addressed the Board regarding the RIB operator issue and responded to the discussion had the previous meeting in their absence.

DVP Zarick read his statement to the Board, explaining his absence and commenting on the communication he had with administration and union members regarding the RIB operator / ARP grievance. DVP Zarick closed his statement by reiterating that their goal was not about conflict or compensation, but about clarity, fairness, and safety for the firefighters and the community.

President Garcia expressed his concerns regarding communication with administration on the matter. He commented on the level of transparency between the Union and union members. He relayed to the Board that he was open to answering any questions they may have.

Commissioner Muench responded that all questions and concerns would be addressed at the special public meeting scheduled for **January 12, 2026, at 1:00 PM**. Commissioner

Muench cleared up assumptions made regarding DVP Zarick's absence at the previous meeting. Commissioner Muench thanked President Garcia for coming. Commissioner McCurry requested copies of statements from DVP Zarick and President Garcia. Commissioner McCurry backed Chief on operating with integrity and transparency.

Chief Barbot reiterated the reason why a special public meeting is being held is because the Union is attempting to negotiate wages that were never the intent of the collective bargaining agreement. The District's legal counsel has advised that when the Union is seeking additional compensation that was never intended or negotiated, changes in wages are being broached. Chief Barbot expressed concern regarding being able to have one on one conversations with DVP Zarick given the response provided by the Union to the Board.

DVP Zarick and President Garcia agreed to resolving the matter in a special public meeting.

#### **Public Input**

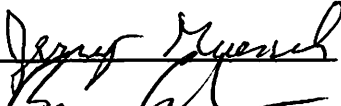

Richard Johnson, resident and business owner, commended the District for its community engagement, Fire Marshal Williams' inspection efforts, and pursuit of outside funding for station reconstruction. He encouraged continued collaboration between the District and Union to find a solution that works for everyone.

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#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:03 AM.

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Commissioner Jerry Muench   
Commissioner Bruce Cochrane   
Commissioner Richard McCurry 