



**Sanibel Fire & Rescue District  
Commission Meeting Minutes**

**DATE:** Wednesday, February 12, 2025 @ 9:00 AM

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

Kevin Barbot (Fire Chief)  
John DiMaria (Deputy Chief)  
Chris Jackson (Assistant Chief) - *excused*  
Larry Williams (Fire Marshal)  
Greta Fulkerson (Administrative Assistant)  
John Reitenbach (Captain)

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

### **1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the January 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. Evaluation Committee Business - Professional Architectural Services for Station 171**

Commissioner Muench confirmed that each member of the committee (the Board members) had read the proposals and prepared a score for each, according to the criteria provided in the request. Commissioner Muench outlined the process for discussion and for identifying the ranking of the firms. It was suggested that each member should share some of their reasoning behind their rankings.

Commissioner Muench noted that the process of reviewing and ranking the submissions had been time-consuming, partially because the firms were well-qualified. The task and decision were not easy. The qualifications of the submissions were discussed. It was noted that one had less experience with public service buildings. Others had worked with the City and the County. Some details were confusing, such as where some submissions alternated between Station 171 and 172. This lack of attention to detail was highlighted as a concern. Some submissions have worked on several other fire stations which demonstrates good experience.

A brief recess was called while the scores were tallied.

The meeting was called back to order.

Commissioner Muench announced the rankings from the committee. GMA placed third, ADG was second, and Schenkel Shultz was first. It was confirmed that this information would be posted online after the meeting. The resolution regarding this will form part of the business agenda. Commissioner Muench noted that the rankings were very close. The committee thanked those who had submitted proposals. It was noted that the regular meeting would continue, and any architects in attendance were dismissed if they wished.

### **3. Fire Marshal's Report**

Fire Marshal Williams gave an update stating that 65 plan reviews were completed in January, as well as 334 inspections. This is the highest number ever completed in a single month. Sunward Condo has been finalized. Dante's should be opening in about a week. The pool bar at Sanibel Inn is open following a hood inspection. The hood inspections at Thistle Lodge have also been completed. Work is ongoing with the asphalt in the parking lot, but all fire inspections so far have been passed. Commissioner Muench asked if people regularly failed inspections, and Fire Marshal Williams confirmed that people failed every day. Every unit on the island is inspected, meaning there are at least fifteen inspections every day. Sometimes the failures are due to a lack of access or missing smoke detectors. Once a unit fails, a re-inspection is required. Commissioner Muench asked if there was a sheet that showed the units what was needed prior to inspection. Fire Marshal Williams recalled an inspection with lock boxes, which meant that he should have been provided with a key. The contractor was contacted but the units had to fail because of the lack of access. This means Fire Marshal

Williams will need to return again. The biggest problem currently is access. Fire Marshal Williams suggested that 80% of inspections for final paperwork are in locations which were already occupied. Commissioner Muench asked what Fire Marshal Williams did in that situation, and he noted that all he could do was to make sure it was compliant, for example by removing tape from smoke detectors. The problem is due to the owners renting out units without them being finalized. Fire Marshal Williams indicated that this is such a big problem that he now needs to knock on doors when arriving for an inspection in a supposedly vacant unit. Fire Marshal Williams discussed a recent inspection where a unit had been occupied by six people for four days with no working smoke detectors.

Fire Marshal Williams continued to describe the inspections he had completed, including sprinkler checks in every duplex. The American Legion hood checks should be completed soon following their propane tests. There are a lot of units being finalized. Fire Marshal Williams suggested that this could be as high as twelve per day. However, many units still have a lot of work to complete. Commissioner Muench asked Fire Marshal Williams about the entrance of Casa Ybel which is currently blocked by cars. Fire Marshal Williams noted that they are scraping up the asphalt and there is a second entrance to the property. It was confirmed that there is plenty of room for access. Commissioner Muench asked how the fire department would know about the access changes, and it was confirmed that this would be added to the mapping for the fire department. The entrance should be reopened when the asphalt has been completed.

#### **4. Assistant Chief's Report**

It was noted that Assistant Chief Jackson was absent. However, an update was provided in his absence by Chief Barbot. The training on the new brush truck is now nearly complete, with two people outstanding. The brush truck is in service although a couple more tools need to be mounted to it. The new brush truck responded to a small brush fire last week. The new Can-Am for 172 arrived last month and has now been wrapped. The warning lights have also been installed. It is now in service and will remain at 171 to break it in. The other Can-Am will be modified to include an ambulance service. Once this is complete, the crews will have two high-performance rescue vehicles available. There have been three calls already this week for the Can-Ams. The benefits of the Can-Ams were briefly discussed.

An update was provided on the dock repairs, which were approved in December. The approved company for the repair should begin in around two weeks.

All of the fitness equipment, ordered using the AFG grant through FEMA, has now arrived, minus one Runner. The older equipment will be transitioned out and new equipment will be installed. Items for Station 172 will stay shrink-wrapped and on the pallet and should be moved into the new station in the next three or four months. It was clarified that the AFG grant paid for new equipment for both fire stations. All of the FEMA funding has already been received.

An update on Station 172 was provided. The two-car garage has been demolished, and a fence and gate will be installed. The trusses have been installed on the roof and sheeting will begin this week. The window frames are in place but glass installation is being delayed due to metal and concrete grinding on the site. The ceilings are being framed out and the tower stairs have been installed. The final concrete pour should take place soon. The structure should be dry within two to two and a half weeks. Commissioner Muench asked for more details regarding the bay doors. It was noted that the front three doors are bifold, which are \$75,000 each. This allows

for quick emergency response when leaving for a call. Regular roll-up doors are installed on the rear of the station, costing around \$15,000 each. Bifold doors are a new technology and becoming standard across the country. They can open in four to five seconds and can be opened manually if power is lost. The doors are rated as Category E wind resistance. It was confirmed that work is ongoing with the IRA through FEMA to get solar installed on the Station 172 site. Energy modeling for the site needs to be completed. The calculations for Net Zero for the build were briefly discussed, including some issues with early calculations. There is a need for around 3,000 sq. ft. of solar panels. Once FEMA accepts the energy modeling the project can proceed. It was noted that the department is only the second agency in the country to take advantage of the program. It could be worth \$200,000, with a 95-5 cost share. If there are not enough optimal-facing areas on the roof, a carport could be installed and paid for by FEMA, which would be covered in solar panels.

## **5. Deputy Chief's Report**

Deputy Chief DiMaria provided an update. There were 103 calls in January 2024, compared to 183 in January 2025, a 44% increase. This is due to an increase in visitors and construction workers. Work is still ongoing with dispatching times and officers have been instructed to record any causes for delays on a new sheet. A meeting is planned with the Sanibel PD Chief to help mitigate this issue, although he has been absent for a week and the issue is also being reported across the County. However, when the twenty-second delay is factored into the numbers, the department is performing at the 94th percentile. Dispatch to arrival time remains at under ten minutes for the majority of calls, with an average of seven minutes and five seconds. Deputy Chief DiMaria thanked the officers who are working hard to make this happen.

A training update was provided. 603 hours of training were completed last month, including engineer skill sets. This will continue over the next few months with staff completing 14-10 NFPA drills. The theme for this month is forcible entry. The basic concepts for this will be taught to the new employees using the forcible entry door. It also offers an opportunity for more experienced staff to refresh their knowledge. Work is ongoing with Fire Marshal Williams and the staff to visit various locations on the island to ensure that plans are updated. A schedule has been completed for the year's medical training with a new focus each month. This month's focus is cardiac, including coronary syndromes and chest pain. The purpose behind this training was discussed, including enabling staff to understand the reasons why specific medications work in certain circumstances.

Deputy Chief DiMaria discussed community involvement, noting that the second part of Operation Hometown Heroes was held on January 11th. Thanks were given for the work to organize and support this, particularly to Caitlin, local businesses, and staff. Young people from grades six to eight were in attendance. Positive feedback was received. The background to this project was briefly discussed. Commissioner Muench noted that the feedback online was phenomenal. Deputy Chief DiMaria suggested that this event could continue in the future. Deputy Chief DiMaria also thanked Sanibel PD, Sanibel Deli, Magic School Bus, and Sanibel Glass. There was also a health fair on January 4th, which also received positive feedback. A new project with the Sanibel-Captiva Businesswomen Association was highlighted. There is a luncheon planned for January 25th at which a member will discuss her experience with a cardiac arrest at which the fire department supported. This will provide an opportunity for the firefighters who attended to meet the patient for the first time since the incident. CPR classes continue to roll on, with two scheduled for January.

Commissioner McCurry asked a question about the timing issue and if Deputy Chief DiMaria had contacted the dispatch company immediately. Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that discussions have been ongoing with colleagues across the County, including one of the Chiefs, to come to a resolution. The Sanibel PD Chief's absence has delayed this response. Deputy Chief DiMaria indicated that he had been working on this issue between the two meetings, not just in the last week. Commissioner McCurry reiterated the need to resolve the problem. Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted the difficulties of the issue and resolving this, but noted the excellent performance of the department if the twenty-second delay is factored in. Commissioner McCurry asked if the expectation therefore needed to be changed. Deputy Chief DiMaria noted that this was not needed as the target is two minutes and thirty seconds. If this target is exceeded, the call is investigated. It was confirmed that two minutes and twenty seconds is an acceptable dispatch time, given the current issues. Once the dispatch issues are resolved this will return to two minutes. Commissioner McCurry clarified the position of the department, noting that the numbers do not look good if the twenty-second delay is not factored in. The need to continue to work on this was reiterated by the Commissioner. Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted that he is still working hard on this, but that no answers have been received from dispatch and that he hopes for a resolution in the next few months. The issue is at the County level, so there is only a limited amount that can be done locally. The dispatch to arrival time remains under ten minutes on average. Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted some of the factors that could cause delays outside of the dispatch issue, such as firefighters in the shower. The causes of the delays with dispatch were again discussed. Any other delays will be documented and dealt with, and work will continue with the County to resolve the dispatch issue.

Commissioner Cochrane noted that Station 172 has doubled its call volume compared to the same time last year, while Station 171 still has a higher number of total calls. This demonstrates that the west end of the island is getting busier, and the new Station 172 will help alleviate some of the load. Deputy Chief DiMaria flagged that Station 172 is automatically dispatched if Station 171 is on call.

## **6. Chief's Report**

It was noted that other nearby fire departments are struggling to find interested architects for their projects. The most recent project for the department received seven proposals, up from two last time.

Chief Barbot noted that the financial auditors will be on-site next week. This is usually completed later in the year so it will be positive to get this finished earlier. Station 172 funding was discussed, and \$3.2 million will be recouped from the State. In turn, the District is receiving \$6 million, turning the loan into a grant which does not need to be paid back. Chief Barbot indicated that FEMA's payments from Hurricane Helene are also obligated, and they should receive \$26,833. A further \$30,207 will be received from Hurricane Milton. Work is ongoing with the State for other reimbursements, and between \$70,000 and \$80,000 are still owed. All documentation has been provided to the State for this.

There is currently a Prescribed Fire Task Force underway with several partners including Lee County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and the City of Sanibel. This has been added to the website. A prescribed burn plan will be presented to the Sanibel City Council which should help to put the minds of residents at rest, particularly in light of recent fires in California. The date for the presentation will be confirmed. A public meeting is scheduled for March 17th at the Rec Center. Work is also underway with Lee County EMS regarding housing for Medic 5. The concern with the current plan to move is that there would not be medical transport on the east end of the island. However, the fire crews are trained paramedics and can handle issues until the Medic

unit arrives. Hopefully, an agreement will be made in the near future. It could possibly be kept in different locations during the day and the evening, although this may have an impact on the employees.

The Chili Cook-Off took place recently. The Sanibel Fire crew that was in attendance had a great time and shared positive feedback.

A new hire process is currently underway for one vacancy. A list will be built of candidates, and someone should be appointed within the next three to four weeks. Chief Barbot also highlighted that Firefighter Pujol is coming up on his one-year anniversary.

## **7. Business Agenda Items**

### **A. Resolution 25-007 - Delegate authority to the Fire Chief to negotiate and execute the contract with the top-ranked professional architectural firm**

Chief Barbot gave some background to the Resolution. Due to the monthly nature of the meetings, there is a need to get ahead with paperwork and contracts to ensure the smooth running of the Station 171 project. The contract has already been written as part of the RFP. Terms and rates still need to be negotiated. If an agreement cannot be made with the top-ranked architect from the process, the second-placed firm will be approached, as outlined in State legislation. Chief Barbot noted that the funding is for \$9.2 million, and this has to be taken through both the City and the County. All procurement and paperwork have to be 2 CFR 200 compliant. The County needs to review the contract before it is signed, including granting procurement approval.

Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read Resolution 25-007. Commissioner Muench raised a question regarding point three, noting that the resolution removed the committee from the process. Chief Barbot confirmed that this was the case, outside of him discussing the contract and terms with the committee privately. Commissioner Muench requested that this happen, including the sharing of the pricing of similar projects in the area. Chief Barbot agreed. Commissioner Muench confirmed he was comfortable with this.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to accept Resolution 25-007 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. The motion passed unanimously. The resolution was adopted.**

## **8. Commissioner Items**

No items to discuss.

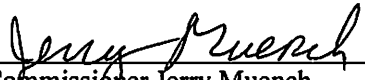
## **9. Union Items**

No items to discuss.

## **10. Public Input**

No input to discuss.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.

  
Commissioner Jerry Muench

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Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

  
Commissioner Richard McCurry