



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

DATE: Wednesday, March 12, 2025 @ 9:00AM

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

Kevin Barbot (Fire Chief)
John DiMaria (Deputy Chief)
Chris Jackson (Assistant Chief)
Larry Williams (Fire Marshal)
Greta Fulkerson (Administrative Assistant)

Ed Zarick (DVP)
Mike Martin (Captain)

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Muench. Commissioner Muench led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Muench noted that Commissioner Cochrane would be joining online as he was recovering from surgery.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the February meeting were reviewed. A clarification was made that the calls attended by the Can-Am on the beach included cardiac arrest and paddle board incidents because of windy weather and riptides, as it allowed the rescue team to get much closer to where they were needed.

A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Fire Marshal's Report

Fire Marshal Williams reported that in February he had reviewed 58 fire plans and carried out 187 fire inspections and that Dante's, the Blue Giraffe, and all the Spanish Cay condos are now open, with underground flushes for sprinklers at Shalimar ongoing but all their penetration tests complete, noting that they were likely to be the first place rebuilt since Ian. He added that the fire alarm at Colony Inn had been completed, highlighting their installation of additional measures to prevent any flooding on the first floor in future. Fire Marshal Williams explained that he, Chief Barbot, the City Manager, and the Building Official, had met to discuss people moving into units and buildings that had not yet been finalized, citing incidents where he had visited an occupied building with all the fire alarms still taped up, as well as instances where he had been denied or felt uncomfortable accessing required areas until the occupants had been removed. He confirmed that the City of Sanibel had emailed all contractors with a reminder that occupation was not permitted until finals were completed, and that he was avoiding uncomfortable situations and communicating with contractors to resolve situations as necessary. Chief Barbot advised that emails regarding the occupation of non-finalized properties had also been sent to the island's organization for community association managers, and to relevant real estate and condo association attorneys, to ensure the District and the City were aligned in their response if such issues kept arising.

Commissioner Muench wondered what the situation was with the 7/11. Fire Marshal Williams clarified that they had started remodeling, although he had not received the plans yet, also noting that Beach View had started putting pilings in, that Bailey's was almost ready to open on Rabbit Road and should be putting their plans through for Tarpon Bay, and that White Caps was still having problems with their plan review.

3. Assistant Chief's Report

A. Maintenance

Assistant Chief Jackson reported that everyone had been trained on the new brush truck, that the ladder truck had been returned after emergency repairs, and that Engine 179 was expected to go for its annual maintenance and repairs soon. He advised that the boat dock company was almost done with repairs on the pier, including stringers and deck boards, so the boat should be back on the lift soon. Chief Barbot added that, while repair costs were supposed to be shared with the City, they had agreed that the City would finance all the electrical-related replacements, including the mainboard for the lift, which would cost around \$2,000, and all its wiring and conduit, and that the District would cover the other repairs to the dock.

Commissioner McCurry asked whether the electrical repairs had been completed. Chief Barbot confirmed that they had.

B. Station 172

Assistant Chief Jackson advised that all the spray foam insulation had been completed in the annex and underneath the apparatus bay floor, with all required inspections complete, and that sanitary plumbing for the second floor had begun, after which other plumbing such as water lines would be put in place. He noted that LCEC had installed the new power pole with three transformers, which meant there would be no delays once the building was ready to be hooked up, and that the bi-fold front garage doors had been delivered to Manhattan's warehouse in South Fort Myers. Assistant Chief Jackson confirmed that, while the metal roof was not on yet, all the plywood sheeting and peel-and-stick were in place and dried in as of last week, with window frames in place but waiting for some concrete grinding and the HVAC before the windows were put in. He clarified that they were still working on the AC unit, that there was a build meeting scheduled and it was hoped the schematics would be completed and resubmitted soon so that they could be signed off by the HVAC engineers. He concluded that while the outside would be stucco, it would look like horizontal wood paneling.

4. Deputy Chief's Report

A. Call Volume

Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted that, year-to-date, their call volume had increased by 33%, with 397 calls from January to date compared to 266 calls in the same period in 2024. He noted that they were starting to see an improvement in out-of-chute call times now that the issue causing the increase in times had been isolated and that they remained within the 94th percentile with further improvements expected. Deputy Chief DiMaria added that Station 172 didn't yet have the same system in place, but it would be purchased at a later date.

B. Training

Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that they had met their newest employee, ordered his SCBA mask, and would be putting him through a three-day onboarding period before he started on C-Shift. He advised that this month's training would include search and rescue operations, victim removals, victim retrievals, and firefighter retrievals and that medical training would cover bradycardia and tachycardia, including recognizing signs and symptoms, pharmacology associated with cardiac arrest emergencies, and using the expired medications on-hand to run scenarios and get practice on their use.

C. Community Involvement

Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted that the Taste of the Islands event had been successful and well-attended, that CPR classes were still being scheduled, and that there had been a luncheon at the Community House with the Sanibel-Captiva Women's Business Association including a cardiac arrest survivor who had been resuscitated by one of their crews. He concluded that the Sanibel Island Fire Task Force would be meeting at the Rec Center for a community meeting on March 27th to go over what to expect with prescribed burns, details of upcoming prescribed burns if known, how to keep property safe in the case of an uncontrolled fire, etc.

5. Chief's Report

A. Financial Audit

Chief Barbot advised that their audit was 99% complete. He stated that there would be two single audits this year, as mandated by the State of Florida for any incoming grant over \$750,000, so the final audit update had been deferred to April, at which time there would also be a budget amendment to approve with carry-forward balance numbers from the audit. Administrative Assistant Fulkerson confirmed that the auditors were being very helpful in terms of suggestions around how to do and evidence things, had been very responsive to questions, and seemed keen to ensure the process behind everything was understood, adding that she had attended a conference at their suggestion and had found it beneficial.

Chief Barbot highlighted that they had spoken to the Realtors' Association to help clarify misinformation and misunderstanding around whether Sanibel Fire was under the direction of the City which, they are two separate entities, and where funding for Station 172 was coming from, and that he had also participated in the Sanibel School Career Day.

B. Alerting System

Chief Barbot confirmed that the alerting system now had no delays, with calls coming straight to Station 171 as soon as they were dropped by dispatch, and a redundancy system using radio in place in case the internet dropped out and IP was not working. He acknowledged that the radio system might have delays, but officers had been asked to document these as they occurred. Chief Barbot added that they were the first fire unit to get the system live, with seven EMS units live in the County out of around 30 to 35, and that the equipment purchased for Station 172 was compatible with it.

C. Station 171

Chief Barbot explained that they had been working on getting approval for a micro-purchase to get a land survey done, which was required for the architects to start designing the station but had been delayed by back-and-forth over the need for a contract. He advised that he had reached out to the County and had managed to secure an agreement to get the land survey without a lengthy contract and that they were also expecting approval to go under contract with Schenkel Shultz for the design of Station 171, with the price negotiated down by \$31,000 or around 5.2% compared to their proposal. Chief Barbot referred to money-saving measures they had been using for Station 172, such as direct purchase orders, procuring certain aspects of the station themselves, and the performance bond and related insurances, emphasizing that they would be stretching the \$9.1 million as far as they could.

D. Solar Panel Project

Chief Barbot stated that the solar panel project at Station 172 had been halted due to the current administration removing any funding for the Inflationary Reduction Act, so it would not be funded by FEMA, but could be revisited depending on the budget.

E. Staffing Update

Chief Barbot advised that Firefighter Joseph Nygaard had submitted a retirement notice for April 28th, having been employed for over twenty years, but that they had someone on standby who could be ready to go and would be onboarded closer to that date. Regarding years of service, he recognized Captain Robert Wilkins for twelve years, Firefighter Robert Bell for four years, Firefighter Michael Tejada for three years, and Administrative Assistant Greta Fulkerson for three years.

F. Financial Update

Chief Barbot noted that to keep the millage rate down for the current fiscal year they had gone into reserves and that at the time of the report created they had received ad valorem revenue totaling \$5,815,775 of the budgeted \$6,160,860, or 94.4%, and had received \$94,000 since then, so were now only around \$250,000 owed from taxes. He identified personnel services as the biggest expense, with a total of \$2.2 million of the \$5.3 million budgeted spent after six months, against a benchmark of \$2.6 million, putting them under budget at 41.9%, with \$3.1 million remaining. Chief Barbot highlighted that operating expenditures currently totaled \$453,000 of \$1.2 million budgeted, against a benchmark of \$632,000, putting them under budget at 35.9% with \$811,000 remaining. Interest year-to-date was stated to be \$291,000 and on track for around \$550,000 to \$600,000 for the full year.

G. Construction Budget Update

Chief Barbot confirmed that the guaranteed maximum price was \$7.4 million plus \$500,000 in contingencies to cover change orders, delays, or any other unforeseen costs, of which they had currently spent \$3.8 million on GMP, and \$580,000 on Schenkel Schultz for design development and construction administration. He added that, of the \$6 million FEMA/State LAP grant, they had used \$2.1 million with \$3.8 million remaining, but had currently stopped withdrawing from the account to draw from the \$2.1 million received in State Appropriation money, of which they had used \$1.3 million with \$700,000 remaining, and had submitted a \$700,000 request yesterday, which would deplete that money in the next month. Chief Barbot clarified that the total allocated budget for Station 172, including FEMA and insurance funding, was \$9.2 million, and acknowledged that it was going to be very tight, with all of the contingencies expected to be used. He identified that the interest earned to date on allocated funds was \$37,000 and that they were currently in talks with the State regarding rolling that money back into the construction of the station, with plans to move funds into a high-yielding interest account if they were successful. Chief Barbot reiterated that they had spent a total of \$3.8 million so far, with \$5.3 million remaining in the established budget, and had managed to save \$38,000 through direct purchase orders. While this had added administrative work, it did not generate state sales tax.

Commissioner McCurry wondered when the final decision regarding interest from allocated funds was expected. Chief Barbot stated that he was expecting an update on Monday and felt it would be a reasonably quick decision, as the reimbursements had been taking place within a couple of weeks of submission.

6. Business Agenda Items

A. Resolution 25-008 - USDD Fire Alerting System for Station 171

Chief Barbot highlighted that the equipment for Station 172, which was from US Digital Designs/Honeywell and included one G2 ATX station controller, one ATX UPS, and one UPS wall mount, had been installed in Station 171, so the resolution was to replace this in advance of Station 172 being ready to install it. Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read the resolution, requesting approval to purchase the equipment for a total amount not to exceed \$22,269.55, funded through the District's FY2025 communications capital budget.

A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to accept Resolution 25-008 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

B. District Policies – Board Approval Required

Chief Barbot explained that, following review by the Chiefs and the Union, there were now a number of policies requiring Board approval. He confirmed that all policies were available through the website and an app, for personnel use, so that individuals could quickly check specific details as required.

- 306 – Performance of Duties
- 316 – Carbon Monoxide Detector Activation
- 320 – Scene Preservation
- 321 – Child Abuse
- 324 – Adult Abuse
- 325 – Traffic Accident
- 327 – National Incident Reporting System
- 334 – All Terrain Vehicle Response
- 335 – Boat Operations
- 704 – Information Technology Use
- 705 – Mobile Data Terminal Use
- 709 – Photography and Electronic Imaging
- 711 – District Use of Social Media

A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to approve the policies listed above. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Commissioner Items

Commissioner McCurry highlighted that he had spoken with the mayor and that the plan was to have fireworks this year, with the Causeway islands opened and a lot of people invited. He expressed his opposition, stating that it was very dry, and suggesting that the fire department might need to staff more personnel for added precautions. Chief Barbot confirmed that last year they had sent a letter in opposition, but that this year the District had not been consulted before approval for the fireworks had gone through, and assured Commissioner McCurry that they would be fully staffed with all Chief Officers on the island and ready to go. He added that they also now had two brush trucks available. Fire Marshal Williams noted that if it was done the same as the last time, in 2021 or 2022, fireworks would be aimed over the bay, and agreed private fireworks were the bigger danger. Commissioner Cochrane identified that proscribed burns would help to reduce some of the risk, with Chief Barbot acknowledging this could take place in late May, early June, before July 4th.

8. Union Items


There were no official business items, however, DVP Zarick thanked Commissioner McCurry and Commissioner Cochrane separately for meeting with him that month. He extended an invitation to Commissioner Muench to meet over breakfast within the next month. Commissioner Muench responded that he was comfortable with discussing whatever needed to be addressed at the monthly Board meetings, so he was welcome to bring up any items then. DVP Zarick acknowledged that and thanked Commissioner Muench.

9. Public Input

There was no input to discuss.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00AM.


Commissioner Jerry Muench


Commissioner Bruce Cochrane


Commissioner Richard McCurdy