

Sanibel Fire & Rescue District
Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at 9:00 AM

Location: Temporary Admin Office – 1456 Periwinkle Way, Unit A, 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, Tiffany Repecki (The Island Reporter), and members of the public

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

- The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.
- A roll call confirmed that all three Commissioners were present, along with District admin staff.

Approval of Minutes

- The Board reviewed the prior meetings minutes presented for approval.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept both the April regular meeting and special meeting minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. With no discussion, the motion carried unanimously.**

Fire Marshal Williams' Report

- **Inspections and Reviews:** For the month of April, Fire Marshal Williams reported 26 plan reviews and 109 inspections. He advised that inspection activity increased as annual inspections and final inspections continue to be caught up across the island.
- **Beachview (West Gulf) Update:** Fire Marshal Williams reported that the Beachview project on West Gulf was moving toward opening, with a soft opening expected before guests begin arriving around June 1.
- **SCCF Intern Housing Project:** Fire Marshal Williams advised that survey work has started for the dorm-style project intended to support SCCF, Ding Darling, CROW, and related intern housing needs. He noted the work is expected to progress in phases similar to the Castaways project.
- **Restaurant and Commercial Projects:** Fire Marshal Williams reported on continued restaurant and commercial activity, including a new restaurant near Sanibel Café called Island Panda and plans for a small fast-service restaurant across from the former Dairy Queen on Periwinkle Way.

- **White Caps / Riverview / By the Sea:** Fire Marshal Williams reported that underground fire protection work has been completed or is underway at several island projects. White Caps had underground piping installed from the backflow to the individual buildings, with fire alarm piping also in place. Riverview underground work was completed with stub-ups and standpipe components, and work at By the Sea is continuing as additional buildings move forward.
- **LCEC:** Fire Marshal Williams reported that LCEC has resumed work on its garage project, with pilings being driven after earlier delays were resolved.

Assistant Chief Jackson's Report

- **Apparatus Maintenance:** Assistant Chief Jackson reported that annual maintenance was completed on the District's two engines and ladder truck. The total cost was approximately \$48,000, which was slightly less than prior years, although still a significant annual expense.
- **Station 172 Punch List:** Station 172 punch list work remains ongoing. Items discussed included the tower handrail awaiting delivery, rust spots appearing in the tabby finish on the front tower / lighthouse feature, landing flooring that is peeling due to incorrect adhesive, and a small crack identified in the kitchen countertop that will need to be repaired or replaced.
- **Station 171 Relocation:** Assistant Chief Jackson thanked the Board for approving movers and reported that firefighters moved out of Station 171 on April 30. The crew has relocated into the manufactured home, and electric, sewer, plumbing, and related utilities have been completed. Tents for apparatus and outside storage were installed on May 8.
- **Construction Fence and DEP Hold:** Assistant Chief Jackson reported that surveyors were on site, and construction fencing was expected to mobilize soon. A Department of Environmental Protection permit includes a mandatory 10-business-day hold. The permit was submitted by Manhattan Construction on May 5, placing the expected start date around May 19. Staff advised that the delay was not expected to materially affect the final project schedule.
- **Temporary Storage:** The District purchased a 28-foot enclosed trailer for Rescue 171, the side-by-side / Can-Am, shelving, chemicals, and other items that should not be stored in the manufactured home or turnout gear trailer.
- **Temporary Apparatus Placement:** Until the construction fence is installed, several apparatuses remain in the existing bays with no power to the building and the rear bay doors open. Once construction begins, Ladder 171 will move to Station 172 and serve as the primary ladder from that location. Engine 179 will run out of Station 171, and Engine 172 will remain at Station 172 in reserve.

Deputy Chief DiMaria's Report

- **Call Volume Statistics:** Deputy Chief DiMaria reported that year-to-date call volume was 593 calls compared to 739 at the same point last year, reflecting an approximate 19.8%

decrease. For April, the District handled 144 calls compared to 176 calls in April 2025, an approximate 18% decrease.

- **Fire Training:** District personnel completed approximately 570 hours of fire training. Deputy Chief DiMaria noted that the number remains strong given the amount of work required for the Station 171 move and temporary relocation.
- **Driver Operations / Aerial Placement:** Crews will focus on driver operations and aerial placement, including positioning the ladder at different locations in Station 171's response area while the ladder remains there. Once moved to Station 172, similar placement training will continue in that district.
- **High-Angle Rescue Training:** Deputy Chief DiMaria advised that he met with the Compass Point HOA president to explore high-angle rescue training from their rooftops. The training is expected to be coordinated over the next month or two.
- **Marine Rescue and Rescue Swimmer Training:** RIB and marine rescue training remain a priority. Rescue swimmer training has moved from the pool into the Gulf, with deployment from the RIB and fireboat. Staff plans to add live victims to future scenarios so crews can practice bringing victims up and over the side of the vessel.
- **Boat Operator Search and Rescue Training:** Firefighter Bell and Firefighter Pujol completed the Boat Operator Search and Rescue course. Deputy Chief DiMaria noted the class is detailed and valuable for marine operations, especially for chart plotter use and larger boat operations.
- **Brush Truck / Wildland Readiness:** In response to Board questions, Deputy Chief DiMaria explained that brush truck training and wildland familiarization remain ongoing. Crews recently focused on foam operations, brush truck familiarization, fire line use, and laminated fire line maps received from the City / SCCF. The Board emphasized that personnel assigned to the brush truck should be able to operate it without hesitation.
- **New Truck Committee:** The truck committee continues to review options, conduct site visits, and evaluate apparatus storage, size, turn radius, island maneuverability, and cost. A Fort Myers Shores apparatus was scheduled to be brought to the District for review, and additional visits, including to the E-ONE facility in Ocala, are planned before a recommendation is made.
- **Medical Training:** Medical training for the next month will focus on hands-on EMT and paramedic scenarios at both stations to confirm that personnel are maintaining core medical skills.
- **Community Involvement:** Assistant Chief Jackson and Chief Barbot participated in a school ride program for children who won a special award. The District will participate in the Recreation Center bike safety day on May 26 with the City and rangers. Trailways Camp is scheduled for May 18 through May 21, and the District is coordinating with the Police Department and other involved agencies to support a safe visit.
- **Island Nights:** The District participated in Island Nights on Friday. Staff reported a strong turnout and a positive community event.

- **Purses for Pooches:** Assistant Chief Jackson and Captain Reitenbach participated in the Purses for Pooches fundraiser benefiting the Animal Rescue Center. Staff advised the event raised approximately \$45,000 to \$46,000, and the District was invited back for next year.
- **Resiliency Day / Station 172 Tour:** The District hosted a Lee County resiliency / Charitable Foundation of the Islands leadership group at Station 172 for lunch, a building tour, and discussion of the station's resilient design and long-term purpose. Approximately 25 participants attended, and the group was reported to be very impressed with the facility.
- **Personnel:** Firefighter Suarez was scheduled to complete the final portion of his probationary testing the morning of the meeting, and staff expected him to successfully come off probation that day.

Chief Barbot's Report

- **District Financials:** Chief Barbot reported that personnel services and all other major financial categories are tracking within the approved budget. A budget amendment and carry-forward balance update from the auditors will be brought to the Board at the June meeting.
- **Accounting System Update:** Chief Barbot advised that QuickBooks Desktop, which the District has used for many years, will no longer be supported. Staff plans to transition to QuickBooks Online effective October 1, using the new fiscal year as an opportunity to clean up the chart of accounts with auditor guidance.
- **Bill.com / Digital Approval Workflow:** Chief Barbot reported that staff met with Bill.com and intends to implement the system with the QuickBooks Online transition. The system will allow invoices to be approved digitally, preserve the required Chief and Board approval workflow, and provide auditors with direct access to supporting documentation. The change is expected to improve efficiency, reduce paper storage, and provide better continuity during emergencies or remote operations.
- **Operational Resiliency:** Chief Barbot explained that moving accounting functions to cloud-based systems will help avoid the issues experienced after Hurricane Ian, when access to the server and financial software was difficult. With cloud access and emergency internet options such as Starlink, payroll, payables, and other financial functions can continue from almost any location.
- **Bank Account Cleanup:** Chief Barbot reported that the District currently maintains multiple accounts at Bank of the Islands and multiple Florida Prime local government investment pool accounts. He explained that District reserves are established by the Board-approved budget and amendments, not by individual bank account titles or balances.
- **Proposed Consolidation:** Chief Barbot requested direction to consolidate the Bank of the Islands accounts into one general account while keeping the impact fee account separate, and to merge the four Florida Prime accounts into one account. This would reduce monthly reconciliation work from 11 accounts to 4 accounts while preserving the District's financial controls and reserve tracking.

- **Interest Rates:** Chief Barbot reported that the proposed consolidation would not affect Bank of the Islands interest treatment. Florida Prime was reported at approximately 3.84% and Florida FIT at approximately 4%. Commissioners suggested staff may want to review whether better rates are available.
- **Board Direction:** The Board gave Chief Barbot direction to proceed with the account cleanup and consolidation process, with the understanding that Board signatures and coordination with the financial institutions will most likely be required.
- **Station 172 Drone Program:** Chief Barbot reported that the drone dock at Station 172 is installed and operational. The drone range includes portions of Captiva, Blind Pass, Bowmans Beach, Ding Darling, the school area, and areas toward Rabbit Road, depending on direction and conditions.
- **Drone Operations:** Chief Barbot explained that the drone is operated by County personnel with FAA Part 107 certification. The District may request a drone launch, and a live video link can be viewed through call notes / TC Mobile when available. The drone can travel approximately 45 mph during daytime operations and has safety features including a parachute system.
- **Operational Value:** Chief Barbot described the drone as a potential game changer for water rescues, structure fires, brush fires, and other incidents by placing eyes on the scene before or as crews arrive. Staff discussed using the drone during future rescue swimmer training and evaluating whether a similar drone dock should be considered for Station 171 after reconstruction is complete.
- **Station 171 Move Acknowledgement:** Chief Barbot thanked District staff and firefighters for the substantial work required to move out of Station 171 and sort through decades of records and equipment. He noted that firefighters were tasked heavily during the prior three to four weeks and completed the work without opposition or issues.
- **Station 171 Construction:** A construction kickoff meeting was scheduled for the day of the Board meeting. Chief Barbot reported that Red Line Demolition is expected to handle demolition work, construction fencing was expected by the end of the week, and a banner will be placed on the fencing to show the temporary trailer location and advise the public that crews remain available on site for walk-ins and response.
- **Temporary Location Response Data:** Chief Barbot advised that the temporary admin office location may provide useful data during season on response times to the east end of the island. Commissioners noted that members of the public continue to ask about east-end coverage, and staff reiterated that a suitable and affordable property would be needed for any long-term location discussion.
- **Recognition:** Firefighter Michael Basora was recognized for two years of service with the District.

Business Agenda Items

- **Easement Agreement - Station 171 Retention Area:** Chief Barbot explained that when Station 171 was originally built / rebuilt in 2004, the District and City had an

understanding that the District could use City property for the existing stormwater retention area. An easement agreement was supposed to be completed at that time but was overlooked by both the City and District. During the current Station 171 design process, staff and engineers could not locate an executed easement agreement, and the item is now being corrected.

- **Requested Authorization:** Chief Barbot requested authorization to negotiate and approve the terms and conditions of the easement agreement, contingent on review and approval by both the Fire District Attorney and the City of Sanibel Attorney.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to approve and authorize the Fire Chief to negotiate and approve the terms and conditions of the easement agreement, contingent on review and approval by the Fire District Attorney and the City of Sanibel Attorney. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.**
- **Resolution 26-004 - Firefighter Cancer Decontamination Grant Equipment:** Chief Barbot presented Resolution 26-004, authorizing the Fire Chief to purchase a personal protective equipment extractor and air scrubber / exhaust capture system for Fire Station 171 using Florida Firefighter Cancer Decontamination Equipment Grant funds and District funds. He advised that the State fiscal year ends June 30 and that the District needs to complete the purchase to capitalize on the grant funding.
- **Funding:** The total purchase amount presented was \$46,372.33. The grant award is an amount not to exceed \$32,171.36, with the remaining estimated balance of \$14,200.97 to be funded by District funds.
- **Grant Purpose:** The resolution stated that the purchase supports firefighter health and safety by reducing exposure to hazardous and cancer-causing contaminants and improving Fire Station 171 operations.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to adopt Resolution 26-004 as read by Administrative Assistant Fulkerson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. The motion carried unanimously.**
- **Equipment Storage / Grant Documentation:** The Board discussed where the equipment will be stored before installation. Staff advised that the District has storage capacity and may need to receive the equipment, document serial numbers, and comply with grant requirements showing the equipment on site.

Commissioner Items

- **Fourth of July Parade Water Mist Request:** A Commissioner reported being approached by a Council member about whether the Fire District could provide water mist along the Fourth of July parade route for participants or spectators. The request was referred to Assistant Chief Jackson for review.
- **Board Discussion:** Commissioners and staff discussed concerns related to liability, unintended contact with spectators, potential damage to phones or personal property, and

whether any misting should be voluntary and very light. Staff advised that the request would be reviewed and options considered before any commitment is made.

- **Station 171 Move:** Commissioners thanked staff and firefighters for the work completed during the Station 171 move. The Board noted that firefighters were engaged and helpful throughout the relocation process.

Union Items

- No union items were presented.

Public Input

- No public input was presented.

Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 AM.

Commissioner Jerry Muench

Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

Commissioner Richard McCurry