



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

**DATE:** Wednesday, September 18, 2024 @ 3:00 PM

**ATTENDEES:** Jerry Muench (Chairman) – *present via Microsoft Teams*  
Bruce Cochrane (Vice Chairman)  
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 (Firefighter/DVP)  
Tiffany Repecki (The Island Reporter) – *present via Microsoft Teams*

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Cochrane. Commissioner Cochrane led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Cochrane noted that Commissioner Muench was excused, but present online.

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

The minutes of the July meeting and the tentative budget hearing were reviewed. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept both minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

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

Fire Marshal Williams highlighted that in July he had completed 152 plan reviews and 176 inspections, and in August he had completed 107 plan reviews and 177 inspections. All buildings in Sanibel Cottages, Sandalfoot Beachfront, Pointe Santo, and Lighthouse Point were confirmed to be final, with Sundial having two buildings to go, Casa Ybel working on the restaurant, and Lighthouse Resort having completed all their penetrations. Fire Marshal Williams noted that Shima at Sundial had passed its grill test and was open, as were the Sanibel-Captiva Community Bank as of this week, CVS, all the Blind Pass condos, and Tarpon Beach, which was going to have people moving in soon, but had some fire alarms and recalls to be done, with a November estimate for elevators. He added that a lot of places, such as Periwinkle Place, were not opening until November. Lazy Flamingo had been permitted to decrease to three exit doors to add more tables. The new owners were working on the old Dairy Queen. Norris Furniture was not coming back, and it was all sealed up. Fire Marshal Williams concluded that they were over the hump regarding penetration inspections for every unit, but still providing code requirements for smoke detectors to help preparations for testing and were also seeing a lot of older 1970s detectors being replaced with newer lithium battery models.

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

Assistant Chief Jackson reported that in the last week, the A/C on the ladder truck was intermittently not working. Two of Iona's ladder trucks are in the shop, making Sanibel's the only aerial on this end of the zone at the moment, so holding off on bringing it in to get repaired. Assistant Chief Jackson has reached out to local fire departments in case more than a ladder truck is needed. It has only been three weeks since it was serviced, and South Florida Emergency Vehicles will start working on it as soon as it is with them. A mechanic is due before next week to investigate and resolve why the brush truck and high-water vehicle are not starting. Assistant Chief Jackson highlighted the arrival of the train with the chassis for the new brush truck in Orlando and confirmed that the body is ready. Assistant Chief Jackson expressed his hope that the work would be completed well within the 90 days of chassis receipt specified in the contract. He also noted that preparations were underway for work due to start in October to add reflectors to fire hydrants and determine which ones need repainting.

Assistant Chief Jackson concluded by announcing that the first floor of Station 172 had been poured, with drone footage on Facebook and to be circulated, and that the bay floors were due to be poured on Friday, weather permitting, following which, once cured and tested, wall building would commence.

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

Regarding call volumes, Deputy Chief DiMaria advised that there had been 125 calls in July and 99 calls in August this year, compared to 87 and 90 last year, an overall increase of around 27% from 2023. The crews are maintaining a 98% out-of-chute time, and he noted that an uptick might occur in the next couple of months. Regarding community involvement, Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted a fire safety demonstration for the summer camp at Sanibel Library, CPR classes that had taken place for the teachers at Sanibel School and for Sundial staff, and upcoming classes at St. Michael's Church, Ding Darling, and for the Sanctuary. Crews were identified as having welcomed students back to school at the start of the term, and Deputy Chief DiMaria noted that he was taking part in Clips for Cancer on Saturday the 21st along with Firefighters Pujol and Basora. In terms of upcoming events, Deputy Chief DiMaria explained that Sanibel School had scheduled an extinguisher class, and he would also be doing a class on October 1st. October 2nd was National Walk and Bike to School Day, starting around 7:00-7:30 AM at Rosalita's, with the utility vehicle helping to ensure safe road crossing. There would be a fire safety and truck presentation at the Children's Education Center on October 11th as part of Fire Safety Month. Deputy Chief DiMaria and Captain Martin would be taking place in the Brotherhood Ride, starting on October 22nd in Naples and traveling 600 miles over 8 days to Live Oak, stopping at stations and honoring members that have passed.

Regarding training, Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that everyone had passed the rescue swimmer evaluations, including being able to swim 100 yards, swim 35 feet underwater, tread water for five minutes, carry out recovery with mask and snorkel on, carry out recovery from the bottom, fend off a panicked swimmer, and carry out victim recoveries with rescue tubes and other objects. The first part of the training had taken place in the pool before moving to the ocean for part two. Firefighter Clement was identified to be working on a new course with the national rescue company for which Dr. Abo is the Medical Director, which is expected by spring. Hazmat training was noted to have taken place in Fort Myers, covering decontamination, earth equipment, and precautions to use when faced with a hazmat incident. Training with Marine 171 was continuing and Deputy Chief DiMaria praised the rescue of three individuals from two overturned jet skis by Captain Reitenbach and Firefighters Felix and Bell on the boat, with Lieutenant Howell and Firefighters Clement and Concepcion receiving the patients onshore. Deputy Chief DiMaria explained that he and Fire Marshal Williams were working closely to keep crews up to date with newer constructions and features, and noted that props were being prepared for Firefighter Survival Month in November, which would include exercises such as bailing out of windows, bailing out of ladders, rappelling, wall breaches, wire entanglements, maydays etc. In terms of medical training, all certifications were confirmed to be complete. All medics have been re-certified with advanced cardiac life support certification, with this month's focus on adult cardiac arrest and cardiac emergencies. Deputy Chief DiMaria added that Firefighter Bledsoe had also recently flown up to North Carolina and taken the Wilderness EMS class.

Deputy Chief DiMaria highlighted that a new fire station alerting system was due to go live on October 8th, with the whole County dispatched on the same channel using an AI-generated message, then switching to a live dispatcher, the same system now used in a number of big cities, including LA County who has been very positive about it. He also noted that the fire on the East End had been mitigated pretty quickly, with assistance provided by the arson task force and fire marshals, and the damage now completely restored, and that there had been no serious calls as a result of Tropical Storm Debbie, other than some trees down and some electrical issues.

Finally, Deputy Chief DiMaria announced that Firefighter Petito was officially off probation, and Firefighter Concepcion would be off probation as of September 25th.

## 5. Chief's Report

Chief Barbot explained that fiscal year 2023-2024 had been very good budget-wise, with personnel services coming in \$500,000 under budget, and the operational expenses expected to be around \$200,000 under budget, which would be carried into the next fiscal year and, coupled with the reserves, would make the next year's budget whole, as the ad valorem income was much less. Insurance coverage had been offered by PGIT, the longstanding workers comp insurer, and was the only quote received due to their location on a barrier island. The cost was increasing from \$92,000 to \$112,000 with the benefits no longer including flood insurance or member deductible reimbursement, requiring portable equipment to be individually itemized and requiring payment of the greater of a 5% deductible or \$35,000 for claims during a named storm. Chief Barbot added that Station 172 was also not covered by this insurance and the cost to insure it wouldn't be known until the certificate of occupancy was received. NFIP flood insurance for Station 171 was identified as costing \$23,000, and Station 172 as currently \$2,700 but only covering the detached garage and mobile, so the latter would increase once the building was complete. Current VFIS cover would run until the end of September.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to engage in a contract with PGIT regarding insurance coverage. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Chief Barbot highlighted that \$6 million had been received from the legislative appropriation program, with \$1,870,103.73 so far transferred out of this into the operating account for expenditures on Station 172. He noted that work was being done on securing funding for \$2.1 million as part of the appropriations request approved by Governor DeSantis, and that this would be touched on later in the meeting as part of a resolution. Chief Barbot identified the FEMA AFG grant for around \$250,000 of goods including new bunker gear and firefighting tools which had received approval for \$34,322.76 to purchase new workout equipment for both stations.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to accept the FEMA funding for AFG grant and authorize the Fire Chief to engage in that agreement. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to allow the administration to utilize existing GSA contracts for purchasing equipment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Chief Barbot announced that \$9.2 million had been received from CDBG-DR grant funding to rebuild and elevate Station 171, expressing his gratitude to the City of Sanibel, who is a sub-grantee due to the station's location, and noting that a site visit from HUD and their contractor was taking place on September 19th, with a funding agreement expected to be in place by December and an anticipated time-frame of two years to get the work done. He added that the number of tax collector refund requests through the value adjustment boards were particularly high as a result of Hurricane Ian, with individual residents petitioning against the valuations by the property appraiser, leading to \$14,832 being paid back to the County so far, with another month still to come in.

Regarding District updates, Chief Barbot explained that CBA discussions had been taking place, but despite good progress it had been voted down this week, so further discussions were being scheduled to work through

the remaining issues, and the hope was to present an agreed contract to the Board at the next meeting, as the current CBA would expire at the end of the month. He noted that work was ongoing to finalize an MOU between the District, the City of Sanibel, SCCF, the US Department of Interior, and the US Fish and Wildlife, regarding land management and fire protection of wild land, replacing the current outdated agreement, with plans to present this to the Board in the next 30 to 60 days. Chief Barbot added that a mutual benefit agreement had been signed with the City of Sanibel to provide the District with access to the Rec Center for individuals on duty with a reduced membership fee when off duty, in return for which they will assist with blood pressure checks and with community events held at the Rec Center, and if they have repairs that need the ladder to reach etc. It was also highlighted that medic school sponsorship had been taken up by a District employee, with a number of newer employees also expressing interest.

Chief Barbot commended Lieutenant Howell for 23 years of service, thanked Fire Marshal Williams for his education efforts around electric vehicles with Fort Myers' fire crews, which had received very positive feedback, identified that Administrative Assistant Fulkerson had attended an accounting conference recommended by the auditor, and highlighted that next month there were several conferences, including one on health and safety that Deputy Chief DiMaria would be attending, and a battalion chief bootcamp that Deputy Chief DiMaria and Captain Martin would be attending.

## **6. Business Agenda Items**

### **1. Resolution 24-022 - Can AM utility vehicle purchase to replace U172**

Chief Barbot explained that the replacement was intended to improve the speed of response and was a budgeted item. Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read the resolution, and the Board was requested to approve the sale of the current vehicle and the purchase of its replacement for \$33,735.24.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to adopt Resolution 24-022. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **2. Resolution 24-023 - Board authorization needed to give the Fire Chief permission to sign the State appropriation funding agreement for Station 172 in the amount of \$2,100,000.00**

Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read the resolution, and the Board was requested to approve the authorization.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to adopt Resolution 24-023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **3. Resolution 24-024 - Interlocal agreement with City of Sanibel**

Chief Barbot explained that this agreement waived all construction and permitting fees for both buildings, as well as any fire fees in relation to the police station or other City of Sanibel constructions. Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read the resolution, and the Board was requested to approve the agreement.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to adopt Resolution 24-024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

## 7. Commissioner / New Business Items

There were no items to discuss.

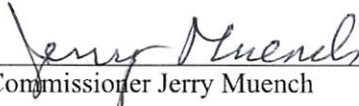
## 8. Union Items - DVP Zarick Introduction

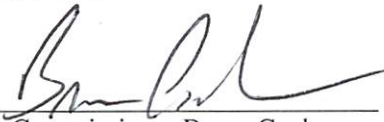
Firefighter Ed Zarick introduced himself as the new union representative. He explained that the contract had been voted down by members, but he was hopeful it would be resolved by another round of discussions in time for the next meeting.

## 9. Public Input

There was no input to discuss.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 PM.

  
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Commissioner Jerry Muench

  
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Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

  
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Commissioner Richard McCurry