

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

**Date & Time**

Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 10:00 AM

**Location**

Station 171 Conference Room - 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 / Tiffany Repecki (The Island Reporter)

**Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Muench at 10:00 AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the February meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to approve the previous meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. All were in favor. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**Fire Marshal Williams' Report**

- **Plan Reviews & Inspections:** February 2026 inspections totaled 101, and plan reviews totaled 17.
  - Numbers are slightly dropping off, but Fire Marshal Williams is actively working to catch up on and reorganize annual inspections that were canceled over the last three years since Ian.
- **Projects & Construction Activity:**
  - **Sanibel Inn:** Plans have been completed for their new four-story building and restaurant.
  - **Sanibel Arms:** The previous contractor closed the site and left; a new contractor is now in place. An engineering letter was provided and accepted by the City and

Fire Marshal Williams, allowing three buildings to be finalized after 3.5 years of delays.

- **Island Panda (next to Sanibel Cafe):** Rough inspections are complete; the site is awaiting a hood test.
- **LCEC:** The underground fire line is finished, the road tap with IWA is complete, and a new fire hydrant has been installed on-site.
- **Sanibel Island Golf Club (formerly Blue Giraffe):** The new restaurant is ready to open. The hood and all gas lines were redone, tested, and approved.
- **New Openings:** Salt Life opened its first physical clothing store in Periwinkle Place. Scooter's Pizza (next to Subway) has been issued a Certificate of Occupancy and is now open, owned by two island residents.
- **Song of the Sea / Blue Dolphin:** Flow tests were conducted. Regarding Song of the Sea, despite recently installing new windows and sliding doors, the owner (Sanibel Inn) has decided to demolish and rebuild the structure. The District will conduct training in the building before demolition, pending the removal of the newly installed materials to avoid creating a mess.
- **Former Dairy Queen Site:** Roof work is progressing. Due to an active eagle nest, heavy equipment is prohibited, so excavation was completed with hand tools. Approximately 3 to 4 feet of concrete was poured to secure the structure. The owner has shifted the cooking plans from solid fuels to electric-only appliances to simplify the setup.

#### **Assistant Chief Jackson's Report**

- **Apparatus Maintenance:**
  - **Engine 179:** Returned from annual maintenance and repairs. The invoice is approximately \$15,500, though the District is waiting on a finalized invoice due to a double-billing error. The 2013 engine is primarily used for training or as a backup when front-line trucks are out of service.
  - **Ladder 171:** Currently in for maintenance due to electrical issues; expected back next week. Engine 172 will rotate in for maintenance after the Station 172 grand re-opening / ribbon-cutting event.
  - **Brush 172 (LMTV at Station 172):** Back in service. A new fire pump from Warrior Brush Trucks was installed in Lake Wales. Brush 171 remains the primary truck and handles off-island strike team responses, while Brush 172 provides secondary on-island coverage. If the LMTV is ever replaced, the new pump can be transferred to the new asset.

- **Strike Team Operations:** The District is currently filling in for the airport's out-of-service brush truck on the South Strike Team, which is about a two-week rotation with neighboring mutual aid departments.
  - The District's Chief Officers are taking over the South Strike Team leader position for one week out of a five-week rotation, managing a task force of up to five brush trucks and engines. While one Chief Officer is on call for the county, the other two Chief Officers will handle island responsibilities to ensure 24/7 dedicated local coverage.
- **SCBA Bottles:** Completed mandatory 5-year hydrostatic testing on 33 fiberglass air pack bottles.
  - Six bottles failed visual inspection due to fiberglass wear-and-tear. Six replacements were ordered at \$1,500 each.
  - The bottles have a strict 15-year lifespan; this was their final hydro test before aging out. The new bottles will be interchangeable with the new SCBA packs the District plans to purchase in five years.
- **Station 172 Updates:**
  - **Punch List:** A third replacement window was installed to correct bubbling defects and looks great. The District is waiting on replacement exterior railings from a Midwest vendor, which will take 4 to 6 months; temporary railings are secure.
  - **Water Bill:** The station received a water bill of nearly \$4,000. This was due to the landscaping contractor programming the irrigation to run on City water seven days a week for extended hours. The schedule has been reduced to two days a week for 20 minutes per zone. The District is working with the City to switch to the reclaimed water system once salinity levels decrease, likely during the rainy season. The necessary plumbing infrastructure is already in place.

#### **Deputy Chief DiMaria's Report**

- **Call Volume:** Significant drop in call volume is expected next month as high season comes to an end.
  - Year-To-Date 2026: 355 calls, representing a 7.7% decrease compared to the same period in 2025 (385 calls).
  - February 2026: 152 calls, representing a 4% decrease compared to February 2025 (159 calls).
- **Fire Training & Operations:**
  - February training hours totaled 567.

- Crews are currently participating in Lee County Co-op RIT and Mayday skill training stations at City of Fort Myers Station 16.
  - The District is coordinating with Captiva Fire and CHR to design scenario training inside the old Fish House restaurant before it is demolished.
  - Elkhart standpipe kits were purchased for each truck to connect directly to resort standpipes, reducing the need to lay ground hose. Training on mid-rise operations utilizing these kits is occurring this month.
  - The truck committee met to outline specifications for a new engine. Site visits to various tri-county fire districts are scheduled, as well as meetings with Pierce and South Florida Emergency Vehicles (Sutphen).
  - Dry season remains active; recent minor rainfall has not provided sufficient relief.
  - A report was requested by Board members regarding average number of calls Station 172 is dispatched to cover or assist on Captiva; Deputy Chief DiMaria confirmed that he would pull this report.
- **Medical Training & Public Education:**
    - Following last month's successful OB training with a Golisano Children's Hospital nurse, the focus this month is on stroke assessments, treatments, and transport decisions.
    - CPR classes are in high demand (2-4 per month) and are booked out through May.
    - The District is highly recommending Avive AEDs to local resorts and businesses. These units feature Wi-Fi capabilities, send coordinates directly to 911 dispatch, and record event data accessible via a QR code for arriving first responders.
    - A fire extinguisher class was conducted for home economics students at the Sanibel School, planned as a quarterly event.
    - The District is participating in Read Across America (Deputy Chief DiMaria read Dr. Seuss to 1st graders), and Deputy Chief DiMaria was asked to be a judge at the Taste of the Islands event over the upcoming weekend.
  - **Staff Recognition:** Deputy Chief DiMaria commended the crews for their high level of care and performance during several recent incidents on the island.

### **Chief Barbot's Report**

- **District Financials:**
  - The District is operating well within the fiscal year budget; nothing concerning at this time.

- Received \$92,714.33 from the Florida Division of Emergency Management, representing a 50% reimbursement of all Hagerty Consulting fees related to Hurricane Ian. The District expects a total reimbursement of approximately \$185,000 once the State processes the second half of the invoices.
- **Station 172 & 171 Updates:**
  - **Station 172:** The grand re-opening is scheduled for Friday, March 27th. State and Federal dignitaries have RSVP'd; invites and RSVPs are ongoing. Due to limited parking at Bowman's Beach, the District secured a special use permit for overflow parking at Ding Darling (West side of San-Cap) and a shuttle service from Tarpon Bay Explorers. The City Manager, Rec Center, and Police Chief Dalton are assisting with logistics and traffic control for the estimated 200-300 attendees.
  - **Station 171:** Currently in permit review. A meeting is scheduled this afternoon with the building director to resolve reviewers' concerns. The District is awaiting County authorization for the Schenkel Schultz construction administration contract and finalizing gap funding. Chief Barbot will call a special meeting to execute both the administration and construction services contracts once the funding gets the green light.
  - Chief Barbot reminded the Board of the Firefighters' Benevolent Fund chili cook-off on Saturday, April 11th.
  - Chief Barbot acknowledged the request from Commissioner McCurry last month regarding the District's Personal Property Policy that was tabled; due to high priority of securing funding for Station 171 as well as completing the District's five-year strategic plan, Chief Barbot could not present a revised policy; however, committed to providing a revised policy at next month's meeting.
- **Five-Year Strategic Plan (FY26-FY31):**
  - Chief Barbot presented the new five-year strategic plan, fulfilling statutory and auditor requirements. As Chief Barbot took on his current role 10 days after Hurricane Ian hit, this five-year strategic plan was put on the back burner while in disaster recovery.
  - The plan highlights the \$18 million in grant funding secured since Hurricane Ian and details significant IT and equipment modernizations.
  - A major focus of the plan is an East End expansion. Current response times to the East End frequently exceed 10 minutes due to traffic volume, severely impacting survivability for incidents like cardiac arrests. The Chief's vision is a small, unobtrusive 1-2 bay satellite station in the residential area, which would also drastically cut Marine 171 response times. Community meetings and specific

response protocols (e.g., delaying lights/sirens until hitting main roads) will be used to address island resident and neighbor concerns.

- The plan outlines a future apparatus replacement schedule, including replacing Brush 172, SCBA packs/bottles (estimated \$250,000), advanced life support cardiac monitors (\$44,000-\$60,000 each), and repowering Marine 171.
  - The plan formally commits to increasing personnel staffing levels annually.
  - Regarding revenues, it was noted that administration is committed to continuing its efforts in securing as much local, state and federal funding and grants as possible to maintain fiscal responsibility and aim for minimal impact to island residents.
  - **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the five-year strategic plan as presented by Chief Barbot. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane, and all were in favor. The motion was approved unanimously.**
- **Years of Service Staff Anniversaries:** Captain Rob Wilkins (13 years), Firefighter Rob Bell (5 years), Administrative Assistant Greta Fulkerson (4 years), Firefighter Mike Tejeda (4 years), and Probationary Firefighter Austin Lambert (1 year), who is expected to come off probation this month.

#### **Commissioner Items**

- **9/11 Tunnel to Towers Climb:** Firefighter Rob Bell, Firefighter Arian Moore, and Chief Barbot will participate in the 120-floor stair climb in New York City this June as part of the 15-member "Team Sanibel". Commissioner McCurry asked for clarification as to how the trip is being paid for; the trip is being organized and funded through the Florida Trust Group organized by Jeff Medel and Councilman Henshaw; it was noted that Chief Barbot has chosen to pay his own way. Any donations are made through the Tunnel to Towers website and go directly to their foundation.
- **Chili Cook-Off:** The Firefighters Benevolent Fund, Local 1826 District 17, is hosting a chili cook-off on Saturday, April 11th. Commissioner McCurry asked about promotional posters available; Chief Barbot had spoken with DVP Zarick, and promotional posters highlighting participating restaurants will be released by the end of the week.

#### **Union Input**

- None.


#### **Public Input**

- None.

**Adjournment**

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:58 AM.

  
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Commissioner Jerry Muench

  
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Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

  
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Commissioner Richard McCurry