



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

**DATE** Wednesday, January 15, 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)  
Larry Williams (Fire Marshal)  
Greta Fulkerson (Administrative Assistant)

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 December meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

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

Fire Marshal Williams provided an update. 211 inspections were carried out in December, along with 38 plan reviews. 1,034 reviews were carried out across 2024, as well as 2,634 inspections. This is probably the highest number that has ever been carried out, and hopefully ever will be. Everything has been built back stronger after the most recent natural disasters, meaning future years should not be as busy or difficult. A question was raised regarding the houses on the island which have not been repaired since Hurricane Ian, and if the District can do anything about this. It was noted that this has happened in multiple neighborhoods. It was noted that the City is starting to enforce issues around this, including one relating to brush fire concerns which the District has been asked to investigate. The need to work with the City to handle concerns was highlighted, although some homeowners and commercial properties are still awaiting insurance payouts which makes this a sensitive situation. Most properties have either been demolished or had some work completed. Penetration inspections are ongoing in some buildings, even as high as four floors up. The District has been asked if there is anything they can do to help with the issues discussed, and the main solution is to work with the City. The problems associated with some of the homes were flagged. The City is definitely aware of these issues and is trying to get on top of this.

Sanibel Surf Side is complete, and the fire alarm testing is done. They are now open completely. Work is ongoing with Sanibel Inn and Dante's. Dante's is having work done on its kitchen and should be open soon. Its new pool bar has also been completed. Sanibel Inn has been beautifully renovated and represents a major upgrade. Suppression tests for a kitchen refit at Thistle Lodge are planned for next week. A lot of Casa Ybel is open despite appearances and a lack of amenities. People are still visiting despite this and the high levels of construction. A meeting is planned for tomorrow with another local business to help support the re-opening. Fire notes are being completed every day all over the island. Four were completed this morning. Most are passing. An issue with a business applying for a fire note without smoke detectors was highlighted.

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

Assistant Chief Jackson provided an update. The new brush truck is now in Fort Myers, having been brought back from the show in Orlando on Friday. There was a lot of attention around the truck at the show. The graphics are now being approved, and the radio will be programmed as soon as this is completed. It will then be delivered to the island and training for the new truck will begin. The new Can-Am side-by-side is due to arrive very soon. The graphics and emergency lights will be installed before it is ready for use. It will be stationed at 171, with the older one at 172. The LMTV, formerly Brush 171, was in the shop for maintenance. It is now back in the station and ready for use. Work has started on the lift kits for staff vehicles, with Fire Marshal William's truck being the first to be worked on, followed by Chief Barbot's.

There are now concrete block walls and a floor on the second floor of Station 172. A build meeting is planned on-site. The next steps include the installation of the tie beams and CMU block. Trusses should be on site by the end of the month and installed by the first week of February. Progress is rapid. The dock repair, approved in December, will be completed in three or four weeks. The two-car garage at Station 172 is going to be demolished. The contractor is working with the City for permits and it should be completed by the end of the month. This demolition is necessary due to the flood damage from various hurricanes and potential future problems. This will also help with drainage for the new building. The footprint will be shelled or rocked for possible future use. It was confirmed that the permit for the original building to be demolished had expired, so new permits are now needed for the garage. The construction of Station 172 is progressing well and positive feedback was received.

Assistant Chief Jackson was thanked for connecting the District with a partner who had helped to get a good product for the truck. The price increase for the truck since the purchase was noted. An earlier discussion regarding diesel or gas engines was recounted, and it was noted that diesel engines are now no longer permitted.

Work is underway with LCEC, who is building a parking garage close to Station 172. It may be possible to park an engine on the second story of this building in the event of a hurricane. The facility is considered an emergency facility so needs to meet specific codes. The District is working with the City on the plan reviews. There is some difficulty with the standards for the generator. This will hopefully be completed soon. The benefits of storing vehicles in this structure were noted.

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

Deputy Chief DiMaria provided an update. In 2023, there were 91 calls in December. This has increased by 41% in 2024 to 128 calls. Out-of-chute times are down 2% since the new dispatching system has been utilized. The reasons for this were discussed. The timing lag between the call and the tones was flagged and is being investigated. Deputy Chief DiMaria explained how this is being tracked on the call sheet. It is hoped that a resolution will be found soon. It was confirmed that the call time starts when it is received on the phone, which is when 911 sends out a dispatch. The potential disparity between the call time and the tones was discussed, and the queue caused by the new dispatch system was explained. The delay could be up to 45 seconds. This needs to be resolved. The phones cannot be relied on for notifications. The current situation is not acceptable and needs to be resolved. It was noted that the issue does not impact all calls. Some delays may be caused by dispatches or delays from the firefighters.

613 hours of training were completed in December. In 2024 there were 8,153 hours of training. The January 2025 training will focus on engineer skill sets for the drivers. A new engineer's manual has been introduced. The information within this document was briefly shared. An acting officer task book is also in production and should be available for the next meeting. A presentation is booked for the end of the month relating to training gear. The owner of the gear is coming to the station to deliver this. Deputy Chief DiMaria has already listened to this presentation at a recent conference and it is very useful.

Deputy Chief DiMaria gave an update on community involvement. The team was at the health fair offering blood pressure testing. This was a successful event. Three CPR classes are planned for January 2025. Operation Hometown Heroes took place last Saturday. This was a camp for third to fifth graders and 22

children attended. The background to this event was shared. It was very successful. Fire recruitment cadets were also involved. A second event for older children is planned for January 25th. Dr. Abo is coming to the station on January 21st. The topic for this training is not yet confirmed.

A question was raised regarding the painting of the fire hydrants. Seventeen were painted on Monday, and a few more were completed on Tuesday. The list of the most damaged hydrants was shared and the team is working on completing the painting of these. Hydrant maintenance was carried out last October. Once the list is completed all other hydrants will be worked on. The locations of the newly painted hydrants were briefly shared. This will be positively received by the local community.

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

Chief Barbot provided an update. Chief Barbot was unable to attend the camp event on Saturday but shared positive feedback regarding this.

The District is now 84% funded, which is a high number for January. Apparatus repairs are putting the District over budget. \$3,000 was originally allocated for repairs. \$17,000 has already been spent on this. An amendment will be presented to the Board in the next meeting. Funding has been received from the AFG for workout equipment, which has now been ordered. This was not accounted for in federal revenues to the District, so this will be added to the amendment along with other allocation changes to bring the budget back on track. The repairs were unforeseen and directly correlated with hurricane damage. All apparatus is struggling due to salt-water intrusion. Upcoming fleet changes will require further discussions around waterproofing and resiliency of the new apparatus. The District plans to work with manufacturers on this. Lifted apparatus may be required. The City may be able to help by installing a car and truck wash for emergency vehicles. This would help prevent salt damage. Several local organizations would benefit from this. It may be possible to work with other organizations and the City to develop a 360-degree spray facility for salt intrusion. This has not yet been discussed more widely but will be picked up soon.

The State appropriation of \$2.1 million continues to be drawn down by the District. \$1 million has already been received toward the Station 172 rebuild. Two FEMA grants are being worked through. This may be completed within the next 30 days. Lessons learned from previous storms have helped this process go smoothly. The FEMA project linked to solar panels for the stations was discussed, including the rules relating to the process. However, previous grants and legislation mean that the District is not eligible for this. The District has worked with FEMA to overcome this and a new PA number has been issued. It was noted that only one other fire department has taken up this offer from FEMA. A meeting is planned for January 15th to create a net-zero energy model. If this is possible, FEMA will pay for 75% of the system cost. The system is likely to cost around \$200,000. The \$50,000 cost share is equivalent to around two years of electric bills, and the solar panels have a 25-30 year life expectancy. Back-up battery power systems are also available which would be used in emergencies. Sanibel will be one of the models for this FEMA program.

One employee has resigned for personal reasons after a year and a half of service. The administration will revise their hiring testing this week. A job advertisement should be available for applications on Friday.

Brush fire concerns remain extremely high due to current events in California. Calls are being received daily, including several for smoke investigation. There is a coalition meeting this week to discuss potential

prescribed burns. The conditions for these burns need to be perfect. A question was raised regarding the amount of water available if there was a brush fire and if IWA had been consulted. Positive feedback about IWA and its reserve tanks was shared. The issues in California should not be repeated on Sanibel. There are also further tankers available locally if needed. The strength of the District's partners was noted, including those who can help with brush fires.

Chief Barbot reported that work has been ongoing for the last several weeks regarding Station 171's plans and architectural services. Approval was gained yesterday. The RFP and contract have been published on the Sanibel Fire website and sent to multiple design firms. The City has also approved the funding agreement and has agreed to send their portion of the contract over immediately. This means everything related to Station 171's rebuild is green.

Questions have been received from local citizens regarding the status of the District, including whether it is a division, a district, or a department of the City. A presentation was given in December at the Sanibel Chamber to explain the situation, including the funding for the stations. A further presentation was given on Saturday to Sanibel Isles HOA to around 50 residents. Sanibel Fire is a special district, independent from the City.

Two staffing anniversaries were noted. Deputy Chief John DiMaria has achieved seventeen years in the service. Cliff Steele has reached thirteen years.

Beach campfire permits were discussed. Chief Barbot indicated that the decision to do this was positive. Outstanding feedback has been received from residents regarding this.

Regarding the new CBA, two subsections from Article 15 did not transfer over from the TA. Chief Barbot explained the process behind this and how the language in the subsection has been worked on. Two sentences were missed in the entire document and have now been updated. **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane to accept the amended contract with updated subsections 15.5 and 15.6. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. The motion was approved unanimously.**

## **6. Business Agenda Items**

### **A. Resolution 25-005 – Security and Access Control for Station 172**

The background to this resolution was briefly shared by Chief Barbot, who confirmed that the auditor agreed that the District could purchase the security system without three competitive bids. This is because the new system has to integrate with Station 171, which already had three competitive bids. The same contractor will therefore be needed, and this has been approved.

Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read Resolution 25-005. The cost of the project is \$16,476.01.

**A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept Resolution 25-005 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

## **B. Resolution 25-006 – Appliance Package Purchase for Station 172**

Chief Barbot provided a brief background to this resolution. Three quotes have been received for this purchase. Some companies did not carry the brands requested, so similar brands have been included in the quoting process. The process of negotiating the prices took over three weeks.

Administrative Assistant Fulkerson read Resolution 25-006. The cost of the project is \$30,260.40 and will be awarded to Fuse Specialty Appliances.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to accept Resolution 25-006 as read. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

## **C. District Policy Approvals**

Chief Barbot noted that the requested policy approvals had been shared both in the meeting packet and on the website. The ongoing work on policies was briefly discussed by Chief Barbot.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to accept the policies requested by Chief Barbot. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.**

## **7. Public Input**

No input to discuss.

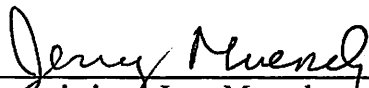
## **8. Union Items**

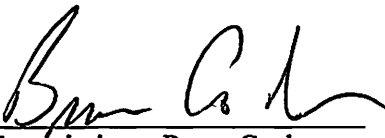
No items to discuss.

## **9. Commissioner Items**

It was suggested that a conversation about cleaning up the island before fireworks season in six months is needed. If the island is not cleaned up, Commissioner Muench suggested that the island should not have a fireworks display. The risks of citizens setting off fireworks in this period were noted. Chief Barbot indicated that a letter had been sent to the City last year about this, indicating that the District was against fireworks at that time. Chief Barbot agreed that a discussion is needed regarding this topic, but suggested holding this off for a few months to see if there would be a dry or wet season first. Potential business impacts were noted. The top layer of vegetation is largely brown and dead but much of the island remains saturated. Commissioner Muench noted that the Causeway will not be ready to receive people yet, and reiterated that he wanted to open the dialog on this topic. The situation will be monitored and discussed in April. Chief Barbot will also talk to the City Manager to see when agreements have to be signed regarding fireworks.

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

  
Commissioner Jerry Muench

  
Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

  
Commissioner Richard McCurry