Sanibel Fire & Rescue District

Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: Wednesday, October 14th, 2026, at 9:00 AM

Location: Sanibel Fire & Rescue District Temporary Administrative Office - 1456 Periwinkle Way, Suite A, Sanibel, FL 33957

Attendance: Commissioner Jerry Muench, Commissioner Bruce Cochrane, Fire Chief Kevin Barbot, Fire Marshal Larry Williams, Assistant Chief Chris Jackson, Deputy Chief John DiMaria, Captain Mike Martin (remote), District staff and public

Absent and Excused: Commissioner Richard McCurry

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

- Chairman Jerry Muench called the regular Board of Fire Commissioners meeting to order at 9:00 AM.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.
- Roll call confirmed Commissioners Muench and Cochrane present. Commissioner McCurry was absent and excused. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

- The Board reviewed the minutes from the September regular BOFC meeting and the Final Budget Hearing.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane and seconded by Commissioner Muench to approve both sets of minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously, 2-0, among the commissioners present.**

Fire Marshal Williams' Report

- **Inspections and Plan Review:** For September, Fire Marshal Williams completed 164 fire inspections and 18 plan reviews. It was reported that island redevelopment continues to generate substantial inspection activity, including larger and more complex commercial and multi-unit projects.
- **SCCF Village:** Underground fire-line work was inspected at the SCCF Village project on Sanibel-Captiva Road. Fire Marshal Williams reported that the underground system work is substantially complete, with final testing and flushing activities being coordinated as construction progresses.
- **Riverview:** Underground fire protection work at Riverview was tested and flushed. An engine company assisted with the flush, including the lines serving the fire department connection and sprinkler system.

- **Tradewinds Redevelopment:** Plans were received for the return of Tradewinds near the end of Tahiti Drive. The project is expected to include a six-unit hotel that will be fully sprinklered, together with two separate residential buildings using residential sprinkler systems.
- **Major Island Reconstruction:** Fire Marshal Williams discussed the continued rebuilding of By the Sea, Island Inn, Gulf Beach, West Wind, Castaways and other properties. Several projects include substantial reinforced concrete construction, but fire sprinkler and other life-safety requirements remain applicable because of the combustible contents, finishes and occupancy conditions within the buildings.
- **Sanibel Siesta:** Three replacement LP gas tanks were inspected at Sanibel Siesta as part of ongoing post-storm rebuilding and equipment replacement.
- **The Sanctuary:** The Sanctuary remodel was nearing completion. A fire alarm final inspection and overall final inspection were scheduled for later that day, with the sprinkler final having already been completed.
- **Residential Jurisdiction:** Fire Marshal Williams clarified that the District fire prevention jurisdiction generally applies to occupancies of three units or more. Single-family homes and duplexes generally fall under City jurisdiction, although the District has provided courtesy assistance when requested, including post-Hurricane Ian firewall reviews and assistance at federal properties such as Ding Darling.
- The Board discussed the volume of redevelopment occurring across the island and the importance of sprinkler systems and fire separation requirements as projects are completed.

Assistant Chief Jackson's Report

- **Annual Hose Testing:** Annual NFPA fire hose testing was completed on October 2nd for all apparatus hose. No hose failures were reported, avoiding the need for unplanned hose replacement purchases.
- **Upcoming Ladder Testing:** Annual aerial and ground ladder testing is scheduled for November 12th. The testing will include the aerial ladder truck and the ground ladders carried on District apparatus.
- **Routine Apparatus Maintenance:** Other apparatus activity consisted primarily of normal wear-and-tear maintenance with no significant additional issues reported.

Station 172 Warranty and Facility Update

- **Warranty Items:** Staff continues to track and correct warranty items through the contractor. Current items include several apparatus bay ceiling lights that are intermittently changing color, a minor moisture issue affecting the fire alarm panel area, and replacement of LVT flooring in the lift/elevator landing and stairwell areas. Materials for the flooring repair were pending, with the work expected to take approximately two weeks once materials arrive.
- **Drainage and Water Intrusion:** A prior water intrusion issue at the lower stairwell has been corrected. The downspout discharge direction was modified, the door threshold was

replaced and resealed, and the area performed well during recent heavy rain. No significant erosion or other stormwater problems were observed.

- **Stormwater Mitigation Area:** The rear stormwater mitigation area has remained full during the wet season and is functioning as designed by retaining stormwater from the site.
- **Landscaping:** The Board noted the significant improvement in the Station 172 landscaping. Staff will ask the landscape contractor when the temporary tree supports/stakes can be removed.
- Assistant Chief Jackson emphasized that the remaining Station 172 items are being handled as warranty matters and are not expected to result in additional cost to the District.

Station 171 Reconstruction Update

- **Concrete Masonry and Structural Work:** Construction crews are filling CMU block walls for the lobby and storage areas beneath and adjacent to the apparatus bay.
- **First-Floor Deck/Formwork:** Decking, shoring and formwork for the elevated first-floor slab continue to advance. The work includes extensive temporary supports, specialty decking surfaces, reinforcing steel and preparation for a large concrete placement.
- **Tentative Concrete Pour:** The elevated first-floor slab pour was tentatively scheduled for approximately November 6th, subject to construction progress and readiness.
- **Electrical and Elevator Work:** Electrical contractors are performing underground work, while the elevator area is being formed and cast in place with reinforcing steel and concrete.
- Staff continues regular site visits and weekly documentation of progress.

Deputy Chief DiMaria's Report

- **Call Volume:** Year-to-date call volume increased slightly compared with the prior year. The District handled 1,281 calls year-to-date in 2026 compared with 1,263 calls during the same period in 2025, an increase of just over one percent.
- **September Activity:** The District handled 97 calls in September 2026 compared with 77 calls in September 2025. Deputy Chief DiMaria noted that traffic and seasonal activity are beginning to increase on the island, and call volume is expected to rise accordingly.
- **Recent Vehicle Fire:** Crews responded to a passenger-compartment vehicle fire on the east end of the island. The fire was contained to the vehicle and there were no reported human injuries. Two dogs were found deceased in the vehicle. The cause remained undetermined at the time of the meeting. A mutual-aid engine responding from off-island was canceled after the District crew determined the incident could be handled with the units on scene.
- **Training Hours:** Personnel completed approximately 521 aggregate training hours during September. Because of the temporary Station 171 configuration, crews continue to use available community locations and station training props creatively while avoiding interference with the active construction site.

- **Hydrant Maintenance:** This month, personnel are focused on servicing and checking hydrants throughout the island as part of the District hydrant maintenance program.
- **Training Locations and Construction Safety:** Hose and water-application training has been conducted at the trolley location on Sanibel-Captiva Road, while forcible-entry and victim-drag props remain available in the training tower. Personnel have been reminded that access to the Station 171 construction area must be coordinated through Assistant Chief Jackson for safety.
- **Rescue Swimmer Training:** District rescue swimmers are participating in advanced training with Captiva personnel using pool, Gulf and boat-based scenarios. The multi-day training focuses on rescue-swimming techniques beyond routine swim proficiency.
- **Water Survival Evaluation:** A department-wide water survival evaluation remains planned for the end of the month to confirm personnel can safely function and survive should an emergency occur while operating from the marine units or RIBs.
- **New Engine Specifications:** Deputy Chief DiMaria reported that the apparatus committee and chief officers have narrowed the proposed new engine configuration sufficiently to begin preparing and distributing a detailed specification sheet and advancing the procurement process.
- **Medical Training and Recertification:** ACLS recertification for District paramedics has been completed. EMT and paramedic recertifications are also complete ahead of the December expiration dates so renewal processing can be completed without delay.
- **Firefighter Concepcion - Paramedic Credentialing:** Firefighter Concepcion passed the national paramedic examination and is now working through the District credentialing process. He is completing study materials and scenario work with Deputy Chief DiMaria and, when ready, will complete the final credentialing process with Medical Director Dr. Abo before practicing as a District paramedic.
- **Medical Director In-Service:** The scheduled medical in-service will be rescheduled because Dr. Abo was affected by a recent hurricane response and related power/infrastructure issues in Escambia County. Deputy Chief DiMaria reported that Dr. Abo and retired District firefighter Joe Nygaard were both safe.
- **Community CPR and Education:** CPR classes continue to be scheduled regularly. The District also completed Fire Safety Week programs at the Children's Education Center and the Sanibel School.
- **Touch-A-Truck:** The District participated in the community Touch-A-Truck event with a strong public safety presence that included the helicopter, brush truck, an engine and participation from the Sanibel Fire Benevolent Fund group. The event was reported as well attended and successful.
- **Beyond the Firehouse:** Deputy Chief DiMaria coordinated with the Recreation Center to schedule a series of community education classes over approximately the next six months.

Topics are expected to include compression-only CPR, electric-vehicle awareness, first aid and environmental emergencies.

- **Brotherhood Ride:** Deputy Chief DiMaria and Captain Martin are scheduled to participate in the Brotherhood Ride beginning the following Saturday. The week-long ride is expected to cover approximately 600 miles.

Chief Barbot's Report

- **Fiscal Year-End Financial Position:** The District closed the fiscal year within budget. Personnel services finished under budget, and operating expenditures were significantly below the originally adopted budget by approximately $290,000. The favorable balance will carry forward into the new fiscal year.
- **Accounting and Bill Payment Systems:** The District has implemented the planned accounting changes and begun using the new Bill.com processing workflow. Staff is continuing to work through integration and synchronization between the systems.
- **Operational Resiliency:** Chief Barbot emphasized that the new cloud-based financial processes eliminate reliance on a single local server and allow payroll, accounts payable and other financial operations to continue remotely following a storm or other disruption. Written processes and backup options are also being established so that another qualified person or third party can maintain payroll and financial operations if primary staff are unavailable.
- **DR-422 / Final Taxable Value:** The final DR-422 valuation information reflected an approximate 0.36% decrease, representing about $27,000 less in anticipated ad valorem revenue. Chief Barbot noted that this was a much smaller change than the approximate 19% adjustment experienced the prior year, and the District's carryover is expected to offset the reduction.

Personnel, Succession Planning and Recognition

- **Fire Marshal Williams Retirement:** Chief Barbot announced that Fire Marshal Larry Williams submitted his retirement notice effective January 1st. Fire Marshal Williams will complete approximately 39 years in the fire service, including the last eight years with Sanibel Fire & Rescue District. The Board and administration thanked him for his service, expertise and leadership through the island's post-storm rebuilding period.
- **Captain Martin Transition:** As part of the succession plan, Captain Mike Martin will transition on January 1st into an administrative role that includes Fire Marshal responsibilities and Assistant Chief duties in Prevention and Logistics. Captain Martin is currently working alongside Fire Marshal Williams and will also shadow a high-volume prevention operation in Lehigh to broaden his exposure before the transition.
- **Organizational Planning:** Chief Barbot advised that a revised organizational chart will be presented at the November meeting. The planning is intended to address both the January prevention transition and future administrative succession needs, including Assistant Chief Jackson's eventual mandatory retirement timeline under DROP.

- **Promotional Process:** Moving Captain Martin from the line will create a series of internal promotional opportunities. The District expects to fill a Captain position, a Lieutenant position and one firefighter vacancy. Depending on the resulting promotions, an Engineer promotional process may also be required. Chief Barbot noted that this would be the first formal Engineer promotional test conducted by the Department.
- **Chief Fire Officer Recognition:** Deputy Chief DiMaria was recognized for earning a Chief Fire Officer professional credential/designation following a process that evaluates education, experience and professional qualifications.
- **Assistant Chief Jackson Recognition:** Assistant Chief Jackson was recognized for a second year of Firefighter of the Year recognition.
- **Administrative Staff Recognition:** Administrative Assistant Greta Fulkerson was recognized for the substantial workload associated with the accounting and financial system transition during the preceding 45 to 60 days. Chief Barbot commended the overall administrative team for continuing to meet operational and community responsibilities during multiple concurrent transitions.

Chaplain Program Expansion

- Chief Barbot advised that the District intends to make more meaningful and routine use of the chaplain program. Historically, the chaplain has primarily been present for dedications and ceremonial events.
- Recognizing the mental health challenges faced by first responders, Chaplain Mark Goodman will begin spending time with personnel on a recurring monthly basis to build relationships and provide an outside, trained resource for employees who may not feel comfortable immediately approaching coworkers, supervisors or administration.
- The expanded role is intended to give personnel another trusted path to support for job-related stress, PTSD, family issues or other concerns and to help connect members with appropriate assistance when needed.

Adopt-A-Hydrant Program Update

- Chief Barbot reported that the Adopt-A-Hydrant program is not yet live. Other priorities have delayed final implementation, and additional work is expected over the next 30 to 45 days. The program remains a lower priority than current operational and administrative demands.

October Staff Anniversaries

- Captain / Paramedic John Reitenbach - 23 years of service.
- Engineer / EMT Craig Shelby - 9 years of service.
- Engineer / EMT Adam Felix - 7 years of service.

Proposed One-Time Employee Year-End Bonus

- Chief Barbot presented a proposal to provide a one-time year-end payment to District employees in recognition of the cost-of-living pressures affecting employees and their families, including increased costs for groceries, housing, insurance and utilities.
- Chief Barbot stated that he is excluding himself from the proposed benefit because he initiated the request to the Board.
- The initial proposal discussed with the Board was $500 per employee. After further discussion, a Board member recommended increasing the amount to $750 so that the net payment after taxes would remain meaningful, particularly approaching the holiday season.
- Chief Barbot emphasized that the payment is intended as a one-time employee appreciation measure, not an attempt to offset inflation permanently, not an annual entitlement and not a precedent for future recurring bonuses. He also noted that the District has not routinely provided year-end bonuses during his 16 years with the Department; prior extraordinary payouts occurred during recession-era wage freezes and were not comparable to a traditional bonus.
- Because the total expenditure will exceed the Chief's administrative spending threshold, formal Board authorization is required before any payment can be made. Chief Barbot requested direction to place the item on the November agenda for a formal vote.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Muench and seconded by Commissioner Cochrane directing staff to place a one-time $750 employee payment on the November BOFC agenda for formal consideration, with Fire Chief Barbot excluded from the benefit. The motion carried unanimously, 2-0, among the commissioners present. No employee payment was authorized by this action; formal expenditure approval will be considered in November.**
- Chief Barbot stated for the record that Commissioner McCurry, although absent and excused from this meeting, had separately expressed support for the proposed $750 amount.

Business Agenda Items

A) Approval of Two Memoranda of Understanding with IAFF Local 1826 District 17

- Chief Barbot explained that District administration and the Union worked through two proposed MOUs to clarify language and reduce potential disputes created by gray areas identified during the prior year.
- **Shift Swap / Sick Leave Clarification:** The first MOU clarifies responsibility when an employee who is scheduled to work a shift swap calls in sick. If the employee fails to provide the required medical documentation, the employee will be responsible for costs incurred by the District as provided in the agreed language. Chief Barbot stated that both District administration and the Union agreed that the clarification is intended to make the process more predictable and reduce future disputes.

- **PEHP Provider / Administration Change:** The second MOU does not create an additional monetary benefit and does not change the dollar amount already established in the Collective Bargaining Agreement. It permits the District to change companies/providers. Chief Barbot advised that the proposed provider offers improved beneficiary options and permits members to self-fund additional amounts, providing greater flexibility than the Nationwide program the District has used for approximately 16 years.
- Chief Barbot reported that Union leadership had indicated no opposition to the proposed language and that the IAFF Local 1826 District 17 membership was scheduled to vote on the MOUs on October 19, 20 and 21.
- Board action was expressly conditioned on approval of both MOUs by the IAFF Local 1826 District 17 membership.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane and seconded by Commissioner Muench to approve both Memoranda of Understanding with IAFF Local 1826 District 17, contingent upon approval of both MOUs by the membership of IAFF Local 1826 District 17. The motion carried unanimously, 2-0, among the commissioners present.**

Commissioner / New Business Items

- No additional commissioner or new business items were brought forward.

Union Items

- No Union representative was present and no additional Union items were presented.

Public Input

- No public input was received.

Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:41 AM.

Commissioner Jerry Muench

Commissioner Bruce Cochrane

Commissioner Richard McCurry