

Sanibel Fire & Rescue District

Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: Wednesday, August 12, 2026, at 9:00 AM

Location: District Temporary Administrative Office – 1456 Periwinkle Way, Ste. A, Sanibel, FL

Attendance: Commissioner Jerry Muench attended electronically. Commissioners Bruce Cochrane and Richard McCurry were present in person. District staff present included Fire Chief Kevin Barbot, Deputy Chief John DiMaria, Assistant Chief Chris Jackson, Fire Marshal Larry Williams, and Administrative Assistant Greta Fulkerson. Members of the public and media were also present.

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.
- Roll call confirmed Commissioners Cochrane and McCurry were present in person, and Commissioner Muench attended electronically.

Approval of Minutes

- The Board reviewed the prior meeting minutes presented for approval.
- **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry and seconded by Commissioner Cochrane to approve the July meeting minutes as presented. With no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.**

Fire Marshal Williams' Report

- **Inspections and Reviews:** For the month of July, Fire Marshal Williams reported 12 plan reviews and 121 inspections. He noted that although plan review numbers were lower, the reviews involved larger and more complex projects, including multi-story condominium work rather than smaller remodels.
- **Current Construction Activity:** Fire Marshal Williams reported ongoing plan and inspection activity for several island projects, including Riverview 2, the Police Department, Gulf Beach, Song of the Sea, SCC Village on San-Cap Road, LCEC, Island Inn, and By the Sea.
- **Riverview 2:** Fire Marshal Williams advised that plans for Riverview 2 had been approved the morning of the meeting.
- **SCC Village / LCEC / By the Sea:** SCC Village and LCEC continue moving forward with piling work. By the Sea has not yet reached the stage for fire penetration and room-to-room penetration inspections, but staff expect significant inspection activity once that stage begins.
- **Gulf Beach / Song of the Sea:** Gulf Beach on East Gulf was beginning demolition activity, and Song of the Sea was discussed as awaiting permitting matters from the state.

- **West Wind / Rochester Resort Discussion:** In response to Commissioner Muench, Fire Marshal Williams advised that plans had been received for West Wind months earlier, but there had been no recent updates, and those plans had not been approved.

Assistant Chief Jackson's Report

- **Brush 172:** Assistant Chief Jackson reported that Brush 172, the District LMTV / military truck, was out of service for replacement of four batteries at an estimated cost of approximately \$851.
- **Engine 179:** Engine 179, currently serving as a reserve engine at Station 172, had a pump controller failure believed to be related in part to sun damage. The replacement part cost approximately \$3,500, was installed by staff, and still needed programming before returning to service.
- **Marine 171 Refurbishment:** Staff continue to seek quotes for a full refurbishment of Marine 171, the District fireboat. The first quote ranged from approximately \$16,000 to \$25,000 depending on selected options and would include teardown, repair, salt-corrosion work, electrical components, wiring, and harness work. Staff are seeking additional recommended vendors before proceeding.
- **Marine Coverage During Refurbishment:** The Board discussed that Marine 171 may be out of service for approximately one month or longer once the work begins. Staff noted that marine coverage would remain available through neighboring agencies and Marine Emergency Response Team resources, with the District able to use its RIBs for closer incidents when appropriate.
- **Marine 173 / New RIB:** Marine 173, the new RIB, is now in service. Firefighter Clement and his crew completed assembly and engine break-in, and Deputy Chief DiMaria secured life jackets and related accessories. Each station now has a RIB on a trailer with a Can-Am available for rapid beach deployment. Staff noted that the boat and motor were obtained through a donation connected with Bank of the Islands, with the District supporting the trailer and associated equipment needed to place the asset in service.
- **Station 172 Punch List / Warranty:** The tower handrail at Station 172 has been installed and looks good. Assistant Chief Jackson continues to track warranty items and report them to Manhattan Construction. Warranty coverage runs through December, and approximately \$260,000 in retainage remains outstanding while punch list and warranty items are addressed.
- **Station 171 Construction:** Station 171 demolition is complete, and visible construction work has begun. Approximately 80 yards of concrete were poured for 41 column foundations, and another 30-yard pour was expected for 21 additional foundations. The building will have approximately 66 columns underneath it, and rebar forms and column work are expected to continue over the next several weeks.

Deputy Chief DiMaria's Report

- **Call Volume Statistics:** Deputy Chief DiMaria reported that year-to-date call volume was approximately 1,035 calls compared to approximately 1,050 calls at the same time last year, reflecting an approximate 1.5% decrease. For July, the District handled 138 calls compared to 128 calls in July 2025, reflecting an approximate 7.8% increase for the month.

- **Training Hours:** District personnel completed approximately 591 aggregated training hours for the month. Deputy Chief DiMaria noted that the number remains strong given that crews have limited access to the training tower during the Station 171 construction period and are finding other locations in the community to train.
- **Marine Emergency Response Training:** The prior month's marine emergency response training was cancelled due to weather and Gulf conditions. Deputy Chief DiMaria is coordinating with Chief Kilgore of Captiva Fire to schedule a new date. With Marine 173 now in service, the next training will allow use of all current marine assets.
- **RIB Trailer / Response Time Improvement:** Staff reported that the new RIB trailer has made loading and unloading significantly easier, although surf conditions can still create challenges. Staff noted that the RIB program has reduced response times to people in the water by approximately 10 to 15 minutes.
- **Fire Training Focus:** This month's fire training focus includes hose management, deployment, and hose handling.
- **Swimmer Survival Evaluation:** Deputy Chief DiMaria reported that staff is working with Firefighter Clement to develop an annual swimmer survival evaluation using the District's water assets. All personnel are expected to be evaluated because any responding member may need to use the assets for life-safety purposes.
- **Aircraft Emergency Training:** Personnel attended aircraft emergency / Alert 3 training at the airport. The training included a presentation on expectations for surrounding districts during an aircraft emergency and a walk-through of an aircraft to review access, safety considerations, and operational concerns.
- **Medical Training:** Medical training for the month includes dementia and special-needs patient assessment and treatment. Staff are also completing pediatric protocol recertification through Handtevy, and Advanced Cardiac Life Support recertification for paramedics is planned for the following month.
- **Community Involvement:** The District participated in the FISH back-to-school event and completed a fire extinguisher safety class for the Children's Education Center of the Islands. CPR classes continue to be scheduled.
- **Captain Wilkins Recognition:** Deputy Chief DiMaria recognized Captain Wilkins for rendering care while off duty during travel to the Florida Keys. Captain Wilkins encountered a person who had accidentally discharged a firearm and shot himself, stopped with his family, rendered care with assistance from his son, and directed the incident until first responders arrived. Staff noted the incident received national media attention.

Chief Barbot's Report

- **District Financials:** Chief Barbot reported that there was nothing significant to report financially and that the District continues to track within the approved budget.
- **September Budget Amendment:** A final budget amendment will be brought to the Board in September. Chief Barbot explained that the District has not expensed the amount allocated for the fire engine because a final decision has not been made, and that amount will need to be carried forward into the next fiscal year and removed from the current budget.

- **Station 171 Capital Allocation:** Chief Barbot reported that the budget estimated approximately \$4 million in Station 171 capital spending for the year, but current spending was just over \$1 million with two months remaining in the fiscal year. The allocation will need adjustment for audit purposes, so the District remains within the required budget variance guidelines.
- **Grants:** The District received a \$5,000 TIP grant through Preferred Governmental Insurance Trust. Staff also submitted an Assistance to Firefighters Grant request of approximately \$300,000 for equipment such as turnout gear, air packs, and radios, and submitted a State of Florida cancer grant. Chief Barbot noted that grant funding reduces local dollars that would otherwise need to be spent.
- **District Update:** Chief Barbot advised that staff continue to monitor referendum matters and other district-level issues.
- **Staffing Recognitions:** Lieutenant Brian Howell was recognized for 25 years of service with the District. Firefighter / Paramedic Stephen Bledsoe was recognized for 4 years of service.
- **Station 171 Change Order / Substitution Review:** Chief Barbot provided an additional update on Station 171 reconstruction, including ongoing negotiations with Manhattan Construction regarding profit and overhead percentages on potential change orders. Staff are reviewing change orders and substitutions carefully to avoid duplicate payments, protect District funds, and ensure that products and materials meet the bid specifications and District needs.
- **Value Engineering and Product Substitutions:** Chief Barbot explained that, unlike Station 172, the Station 171 funding structure does not require the District to entertain value engineering that is not beneficial to the District. Staff discussed an elevator substitution as an example, noting that the fire station requires an elevator capable of fitting a stretcher due to walk-in medical emergencies and operational needs.

Business Agenda Items

- **Motion A - Fire Chief Approval of Change Orders for Fire Station 171 Reconstruction:** Chief Barbot explained that Station 171 is being procured and constructed using CDBG-DR / HUD funds. Under the funding requirements, change orders must be approved by Lee County and supported by an independent cost estimate and line-item detail before District approval.
- **Motion A - Requested Action:** Chief Barbot requested Board authorization to approve change orders up to a combined amount of \$250,000, contingent upon prior Lee County approval, to help prevent project delays. Chief Barbot stated that any change order approved under this authority would be emailed to the Board so the Commissioners remain aware of the changes.
- **Motion A - Board Action:** A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry and seconded by Commissioner Cochrane to authorize the Fire Chief to approve Station 171 reconstruction change orders up to a combined amount of \$250,000, contingent on prior Lee County approval. With no public comment and no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

- **Motion B - Waiver of Formal Competitive Bid Requirements for Fire Apparatus Procurement:** Chief Barbot explained that the District had been working through an apparatus committee process for a new fire engine and had planned to follow the formal low-bid sealed-bid process. After discussion with general counsel, staff were advised that similar formal apparatus bid efforts with other districts had failed because dealers and manufacturers could not comply with the requested bid information.
- **Motion B - Requested Action:** Staff recommended waiving the District's formal invitation-to-bid and sealed-bid requirements for this apparatus procurement so administrative staff can obtain pricing from manufacturers and dealers, compare proposals, negotiate pricing, and bring a recommendation back to the Board. Chief Barbot explained that this approach would allow the District to better compare apples-to-apples pricing and seek the best value rather than being locked into a lowest-bid process that may not serve the District well.
- **Motion B - Board Action:** A motion was made by Commissioner Cochrane and seconded by Commissioner McCurry to waive the formal competitive bidding requirements for fire apparatus procurement and authorize staff to obtain and negotiate pricing for presentation back to the Board. With no public comment and no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.
- **Discussion Item C – Adopt-A-Hydrant Art Program:** Chief Barbot opened discussion on the proposed Adopt-A-Hydrant Art Program and stated that administration was recommending public discussion only, with no vote planned at this meeting unless directed by the Board.
- **Public Comment - Steve Tummillo:** Steve Tummillo, a Sanibel resident, addressed the Board. He thanked the District for its service, referenced personal experiences with District staff following Hurricane Ian, and stated that he was not in favor of personalizing public safety equipment owned by the District. His concerns included public safety color recognition, coating compatibility and corrosion, artists working near the right-of-way, subjective or potentially offensive artwork, staff time, mission alignment, and potential liability or litigation concerns.
- **Alternative Suggested by Public Comment:** Mr. Tummillo suggested the District consider other public-safety-focused alternatives, such as improved reflective address identification, mailbox-related concepts, or an "Adopt-A-District" style program that could provide public recognition without painting hydrants.
- **Response to Public Comment:** Chief Barbot explained that the first painted hydrant came after Fire Marshal Williams was approached by a shopping plaza and the District initially approved the idea as a fun community concept. After the first hydrant was painted, staff paused the program to seek City input due to signage, advertising, and public-view considerations. A second hydrant was painted without District approval, and staff again directed that the program be paused pending further review.
- **City and Program Considerations:** Chief Barbot reported that the City liked the idea of a fun community program and noted that similar programs exist in other communities. Staff have worked on a permit application process requiring artwork review, use of appropriate metal paints, and restrictions on profanity or derogatory material. The District would retain full authority over all hydrants and could repaint, maintain, or remove artwork whenever operationally necessary.

- **Hydrant Maintenance and Operations:** Staff discussed the District's hydrant maintenance program, use of rust-resistant coatings, hydrant visibility checks, blue street reflectors indicating hydrant locations, and the First Due mapping system that identifies hydrant locations for District personnel and mutual aid agencies. Staff emphasized that hydrant location and operational readiness are managed through several layers beyond visual color alone.
- **Board Direction:** After discussion, the Board agreed to seek additional public input, have the Fire Chief report back with legal considerations from general counsel, and bring the item back to the September meeting for further discussion and possible action.
- **Motion D - Life and AD&D Insurance Coverage:** Chief Barbot presented a change in life and AD&D insurance coverage. This change would entail cancelling the District's current MetLife life and AD&D insurance policy effective September 30, 2026, and obtaining replacement coverage through United Badges Insurance Services, with coverage provided by Renaissance Benefits Insurance Carrier, effective October 1, 2026. The annual premium would decrease from \$12,484.41 to \$9,609.60, resulting in annual savings of \$2,874.81. The new policy would also increase coverage to as much as \$225,000 to meet statutory requirements.
- **Motion D - Board Action:** A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry and seconded by Commissioner Cochrane to approve this presented change in life and AD&D insurance coverage. The Board thanked staff for identifying the savings and alternative coverage. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner / New Business Items

- **Station 172 / School Traffic Visibility:** Commissioner McCurry thanked staff for placing the fire truck in front of Station 172 in a manner that helped slow traffic for school and noted it as another example of the District's involvement in the community.
- **Commissioner McCurry Retirement Announcement:** Commissioner McCurry announced his impending retirement / resignation from the Board and the Fire District effective by the end of the year, as he will be moving out of state.
- **Recognition of Commissioner McCurry:** Chief Barbot placed a statement on the record thanking Commissioner McCurry for his service since December 2018. Chief Barbot recognized Commissioner McCurry's leadership through COVID, three major hurricanes, two fire station rebuilds, the largest infrastructure undertaking in District history, and the continued strengthening of District operational readiness. Chief Barbot thanked him on behalf of District staff, residents, and visitors for his trust, leadership, and years of service.
- **Board Vacancy Process:** Chief Barbot reported that staff had consulted general counsel and the Lee County Elections Office regarding the upcoming vacancy. Because Commissioner McCurry was unopposed and slated to begin another four-year term, the Board may proceed through either a formal application/interview process or an informal nomination process. The appointed individual would serve for two years until the next election cycle, would be sworn in, and would complete the required financial disclosure forms.
- **Board Direction on Vacancy:** Commissioner Muench and Commissioner Cochrane indicated support for the informal process. Chief Barbot stated that any interest received by his office over the next 30 days would be forwarded to the Commissioners, and the item

would be placed on the September agenda for a potential vote on a replacement.
Commissioner McCurry will not vote on his own replacement.

Union Items

- No union items were presented.

Public Input

- No additional public input was presented at the end of the meeting.

Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:11 AM.



Commissioner Jerry Muench



Commissioner Bruce Cochrane



Commissioner Richard McCurry