



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

DATE: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 @ 10:00 AM

ATTENDEES: Jerry Muench (Chairman)
Bruce Cochrane (Vice Chairman)
Richard McCurry (Secretary Treasurer)

Kevin Barbot (Fire Chief)
John DiMaria (Deputy Chief) - *excused*
Chris Jackson (Assistant Chief)
Larry Williams (Fire Marshal)
Greta Fulkerson (Administrative Assistant)

Rob Wilkins (Captain)
John Reitenbach (Lieutenant)
Bryan Clement (FF)
Allen Schelm (FF)
Adam Felix (FF)
Alma Angelus (FF)

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 October meeting were reviewed. **A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the 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 confirmed that all five buildings of Somerset at the Reef on West Gulf had been sealed for occupancy and were occupied, and Gulfside Place was also cleared for occupation. Nutmeg was stated to have a fire alarm test on Monday after which they would be completely open. All new construction plans were noted to have been done for Shalimar and Island Inn. Penetration and firewall inspections were still ongoing, and hoods for Hucksters and Gramma Dot's. Life safety plans for Station 172 were highlighted as complete following a few minor changes. Fire Marshal Williams stated that he had done 121 plans in October, 141 plans in the last 30 days, and 850 plans year-to-date. Fire Marshal Williams explained that a lot of resorts had done white lots with just drywall and were now submitting plan reviews for internal remodels of individual units.

3. Assistant Chief's Report

I) Equipment and Maintenance

Assistant Chief Jackson confirmed that work orders were still being cleared out, including repairs to a K-12 Saw with a non-functional safety trigger, and issues with the ladder truck generator.

II) Performance Review

Assistant Chief Jackson thanked everyone for their assistance in completing and submitting everything on the District's part. The information would now be put into spreadsheets and sent to the Auditor General, although there was no timeline or guarantee for when it would be reviewed at that level.

III) Brush Truck RFP

It was confirmed that the specs had been put together and sent to twenty different manufacturers as an RFP. Manufacturers could submit questions until November 14th, with sealed bids to be submitted by December 1st. All submissions would be opened together after the deadline. Assistant Chief Jackson explained that putting the spec together had started a year ago through conversations with other departments using brush trucks to understand the functions and their utility, as well as the most suitable water tank and truck sizes. The range of terrain from sandy beach to marshland mandated a reasonably light truck with larger tires, and a flatbed on a 1.5 ton chassis had been chosen, with a 300 gallon water tank, pump, hose reel, and minimal tool compartments. The chassis and wheelbase were noted to be shorter for better maneuverability, with an extended- rather than crew-cab, similar to the support truck that had been destroyed in the hurricane.

Commissioner Cochrane wondered what questions had been received in response to the RFP. Assistant Chief Jackson explained that a couple of agencies had questioned whether it was acceptable to overbuild, which it had been confirmed it was, and that they had been informed of a couple of demo trucks, either already built

or in production, which might significantly reduce the waiting time for the finished product. Chief Barbot explained that the committee would have criteria to check, which might not exclude a failure to exactly match the specification requirements, and that this had been a deliberate decision to keep the option for demo or pre-built units at a potentially cheaper price to be considered.

Chief Barbot highlighted inaccessibility to some areas with narrow fire lines as an issue with the current Brush LMTV, which the new truck would help with. Concerns regarding brush fires were reiterated from other meetings, with a meeting set up with the Dunes HOA around concerns for Apple Pond, and talks ongoing with the State, headed by the District, to get funding to go in and clear the dead vegetation. Continuous communication was confirmed to be ongoing, and the project was felt to be moving, albeit not quickly. Assistant Chief Jackson stated that the State Mitigation Specialist had reached out to confirm some funding, and was optimistic, but it was a matter of coordinating all the involved agencies.

IV) Station 172

Assistant Chief Jackson confirmed that Schenkel and Shultz had submitted the variance package on Monday for the building height, flagpole, and amount of permeable surface. A follow-up on Tuesday had been optimistic that things would progress quickly, with hopes that an approval would be in place and advertised for the December 12th planning meeting, although it was acknowledged that the achievement of this would be in great part to the support and efforts of the Public Works, Building Department, Planning, and Natural Resources in reviewing and approving their related parts.

It was identified that there was another meeting on Tuesday the 14th between the Building Committee and Schenkel and Shultz which should put the design and development at 90%, with only small changes remaining, enabling the approved plans to go out for construction estimates and permitting. Assistant Chief Jackson added that he was currently reviewing the design-build cost analysis for any areas where additional savings could be made prior to the invitation for bids. Chief Barbot's suggestion that the District act as the contractor for the demolition of Station 172 was raised, which Assistant Chief Jackson was now investigating, involving the direct hiring of a company to clear the construction service prior to permitting rather than hiring a general contractor to project manage, which would hopefully save both time and money in the overall process. Chief Barbot added that he had notified the City of the likely decision in this regard, and that the scope of work was expected to be below \$35,000, so a competitive bid process would not be required, although Board approval would still be needed.

Commissioner Muench wondered if FEMA could assist with the demolition project, which Chief Barbot agreed he would look into.

Action:

Chief Barbot to investigate the potential of assistance from FEMA for the demolition of Station 172.

4. Deputy Chief's Report

I) Call Volumes and Responses

Chief Barbot gave the report, identifying that call volume for the year was down 54%, although a rise had been seen over the past 14 days, and there had been 776 runs for the year compared to 1,406 at the same time last year. It was confirmed that there was a mix of calls being answered, from fire alarms and faulty systems,

vehicle accidents, and medical calls. There was also anecdotal evidence of residents starting to move back into their homes.

II) Causeway Update

The causeway was highlighted as work that was essential, with Chief Barbot assuring that great diligence was being taken, including meetings with Florida State DOT, State officials, Lee County EMS and other partnering agencies, and that there were plans for weekends and single-lane restrictions. It was confirmed that in the event of any priority needs for road transportation on or off the island, such as patients or emergency service vehicles, there were direct lines to construction supervisors and traffic would be shut off in both ways until the vehicles were clear. Chief Barbot added that Lee County EMS were aware that the helicopter was likely to be utilized more as a result.

Commissioner Muench wondered if the system had been tested. Chief Barbot explained that it had not, but that the main contact was the individual involved in the meetings, who was fully on board, but agreed that some testing could be carried out.

Action:

Chief Barbot to organize some tests of the planned road restriction system over the causeway and associated emergency contacts.

III) Public Relations

A fire safety presentation was given to CHR and the Community Church with Grace Towler of Sanibel PD, and fire extinguisher classes were held at the Sanibel School with Assistant Chief Jackson. The Pink Out event was highlighted for the number of people that had attended and the positive implications for the future. A separate Pink Out tea event had also been attended yesterday, with Chief Barbot speaking to a lot of residents. It was confirmed that the District would be at the Veterans Day Flag Ceremony on Saturday, and CPR classes would be continuing for various agencies and individuals. Chief Barbot reminded everyone that the Annual Banquet would be held at the Community House on December 2nd.

IV) Training

The first five-minute drill, with an emphasis on PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), was identified as due to take place this month, and medical training with Dr. Abo would be on pediatrics, as well as a presentation from Lee Health on the STARS Program, which was designed to accelerate emergency medical care for pediatric patients with complex medical patients. It was noted that a member of the community was in the STARS Program, so the presentation would help to familiarize staff. Lieutenant testing was stated to be ongoing and around 50% done, with the last part on November 17th, after which a new lieutenant would be selected for the crews. Chief Barbot added that Lieutenant Reitenbach had completed the captain evaluation and would be the next District Captain once the effective date was announced, with the final decision on which shift he would be joining awaiting the completion of the lieutenant testing and shift changes as a result.

5. Chief's Report

I) Financial Update

Chief Barbot explained that no additional Ad Valorem funding had been received since April, when the property tax rebate of \$720,000 had started to be removed from incoming funds, with 50% now paid and 50%

owing. He added that he had spoken to the DEO (Department of Economic Opportunity), who had advised that the \$35 million allocated from the State for the property tax rebate program had been fully funded, which meant every agency who had applied for the refund would receive 100% back, and funding agreements were due soon. Funding agreements are also awaited for the \$6 million towards the station replacement and for the \$2 million operating expenditure replacement funds. Chief Barbot confirmed that the final approval notification for the FEMA CDL (Community Disaster Loan) had been received, which he now needed to fill out, being a \$1.6 million line of credit at a very low-interest rate intended to act as a safety net, as there would be no fees or charges for its non-use.

II) Property Valuations

Final numbers were noted to have been received from the property appraisers in July showing a 38% deficit or \$3.2 billion loss to the District, with final numbers received in October showing an unprecedented adjustment of 9.1% or \$400 million. Chief Barbot expressed his disappointment with the property appraisers' office and their inability to communicate with taxing authorities regarding what was happening and what to expect, with no explanations received, although he conceded that it had ended up working in Sanibel's favor by increasing the property valuation on the island. Fort Myers Beach was confirmed to have seen less than a 1% difference between their July and October numbers, despite a comparable level of property damage, and it was suggested that Sanibel's properties had not been correctly or fully assessed in July.

III) FEMA

Chief Barbot explained that while there had been ups and downs, there had been a great outcome in a relatively short period of time, with all projects now obligated by FEMA and currently under state review, adding that the state reviewers had already been involved from the start and the approval process was likely to go very fast as a result. He noted that there was just under \$500,000 to be recouped on equipment and labor costs, as well as deductibles paid for Station 171 damage. The main work order still open was confirmed to be Station 172, valued at \$3.5 to \$3.8 million, although this money would stay with the State against the \$6 million rather than coming to the District.

IV) Purchases

Chief Barbot highlighted the purchase of two Dell laptops as new MDCs for the trucks to replace those from 2015, costing \$3,800 and therefore below the procurement policy's requirement for multiple quotes, using the same model and service agreement as previously.

V) Backup Communications

It was explained that cut fiber optic cables had interrupted a lot of AT&T, T-Mobile, and CenturyLink service, with recent issues leading to FirstNet being called out to the station after a couple of days of downtime, and authorization now received for one of their COLT first responder units, a heavy-duty truck with a generator and a large antenna, to stay on the island at the station and provide backup communications.

VI) Potential Special District Merger

Chief Barbot explained that there had been some talks about Fort Myers Beach and Bonita Springs merging, but the decision had been made at the delegation meeting on October 30th to table the bill, as there had not been enough information, the bill had not allowed for any public say, and there had been no study attached. He added that a delegation meeting had been set up for November 30th, the main topic of which was a merger, with possible talks about a greater merger than just two districts. Chief Barbot confirmed that he was meeting

with the Lee County Fire Chief's Association to try and see what the direction, intent, and language of the bill would be, with his focus now on ensuring staff and residents understood what the District's role was, and how bigger government wasn't necessarily better.

VII) Staffing Updates

Firefighter Zarick was noted for 8 years of service.

6. Business Agenda Items

I) RFP for Financial Auditor

Chief Barbot confirmed that a special meeting had been held to review the loan proposal for the financial auditing services, which the Board had motioned to accept and list.

A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to authorize Chief Barbot to engage in negotiations with Tuscan Company, and to finalize a contract once negotiations were complete. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Commissioner Items

There were no commissioner items to discuss.

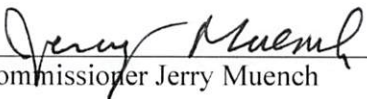
8. Union Items

There were no union items to discuss.


9. Public Input

There was no public input to discuss.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:48 AM.



Commissioner Jerry Muench



Commissioner Bruce Cochrane



Commissioner Richard McCurry