



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

DATE: April 12, 2023 @ 0900

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

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

Lieutenant Reitenbach
Lieutenant Wilkins
Firefighter Angelus
Firefighter Walter
Firefighter Felix
Firefighter Schelm
The Island Reporter
The General Public

Commissioner Muench opened the meeting at 9:00 AM. Commissioner Muench led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Minutes of the March 8, 2023, Commission Meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Muench. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Captain DiMaria's Report

It was noted that Captain DiMaria was at the City Council Meeting, his report was presented by Chief Barbot in his absence as follows:

I) Ventilation techniques training was in progress, medical training would include anaphylaxis management with a lecture from Dr. Abo to come on the 17th.

II) There would be a focus on brush truck operations with the impending prescribed burns.

III) There had been CPR classes scheduled, as well as an extinguisher class for kids at the school, which the teacher appreciated.

IV) Former UFC fighter, Tito Ortiz, came to visit Station 171 for 2-3 hours and donated a \$10,000 dumbbell rack to the District. Tito Ortiz is a new resident of Lee County.

V) Brush fire safety dissemination via social media sources was in place, with advice as to how people could keep their families and houses safe in the event of a brush fire.

VI) There had been testing on Level-A hazmat suits, which were now six years old. It was reported there were leaks in two of the three, which would need to be replaced at an expense of \$5,000 to \$6,000. Negotiations were in place with companies offering the suits.

VII) Commissioner McCurry wondered whether there was a schedule for replacement, which there was not. Commissioner McCurry thought this was an important factor and wished for it to be considered at budget time.

VIII) Regarding the District's response to an altercation on the Causeway, it was reported that there had been an individual with a self-inflicted knife wound.

3. Fire Marshal Williams' Report

Fire Marshal Williams presented his report, highlighting the following:

I) There had been sixty-eight fire plan reviews in March, with approximately 298 done this year.

II) Fire Marshal Williams noted that there were places that had never had firewalls in place, he was encouraging people to put in the firewalls. Commissioner Muench wondered how that was done, Fire Marshal Williams said there was compliance however a lot of the companies were from out of town and that he was having to go back.

III) Fire Marshal Williams reported that nobody was living in any of the resorts, and that every floor in the buildings and elevators had to be checked.

IV) West Wind had been demolished; Fire Marshal Williams was compiling a list of commercial properties that had been lost. There was the intention that West Wind would be rebuilt, as would the Island Inn.

V) Fire Marshal Williams reported that two of the Island Inn buildings were open.

VI) There was work being done where hydra flows and sprinkler systems were being put into buildings, with preliminary plans in place for the Island Cow and the Beachview Cottages.

4. Chief Barbot's Financial Update

The District Financial Report was presented by Chief Barbot, highlighted as follows:

I) Ad valorem revenue was at 91%, it should be at around 98-99%, there was an outstanding amount of around \$750,000. There should have been a distribution last week, however the tax collector's office had not been heard from.

II) The application period for the tax relief bill was closed, the property appraiser had submitted only 4,000 applications so there was no estimate available of the tax relief bill amount that would come out of next fiscal year's budget. There were still 15,000 applications to process from the property appraiser, altogether there were 19,000 applications submitted to the County for a tax relief bill.

III) Chief Barbot reported that he and Captiva Chief Pawul had found some discrepancies where the Lee County tax collector and property appraiser had approved refunds where certain individuals had not paid their taxes yet, which was a contradiction. The tax collector's office had been notified and he was hoping that by the first week of June, there would be a better understanding of the impact on the District.

IV) Regarding the financial audit, Chief Barbot reported that he and Administrative Assistant Fulkerson were at around 70% of the documents to be submitted, a couple of things had not been filed and the State had been understanding of the situation, they were now part of the mailing list to ensure further communication from the State CFO Office was going to the right place.

V) Turning to the Community Disaster Loan (CDL), Chief Barbot reported they were still working with FEMA on the third review, the approval amount was looking like \$1.6 million. Paperwork would be sent by FEMA for review and a decision would then be made as to whether they want to proceed with the loan.

VI) FEMA status, Chief Barbot and Lieutenant Martin had done the self-certification for the FEMA CAT-B's reimbursements, the amount was looking at \$570,000.

VII) Chief Barbot reported work being done on a 50/50 analysis to get funding for Station 172, there were meetings with FEMA happening every two weeks in that regard. Chief Barbot noted that if the damage analysis of Station 172 showed the cost of repair as being more than 50% of the cost of a new station, then FEMA should not have an issue funding the replacement value for that station. He did not know when there would be a decision.

VIII) Chief Barbot was concerned about the tax relief bill, and property reduction values, recommending setting aside a date in May for a budget-planning workshop with the Commissioners to review the budget and try to reduce expenses.

5. Chief Barbot's District Update

I) Chief Barbot presented a graphic to show 82% of reserves in a Government Income Trust Pool, Florida FIT and Florida Prime, both with high yielding interest rates.

II) Chief Barbot explained that the issue with the accounts was that they were not collateralized, meaning the income was not insured.

III) Chief Barbot reported that there had been discussions around the County and there was a 50/50 split on the public government entities that used Government Income Trust Pools, some having 100% of reserves in those accounts and others having zero. He recommended that there should be discussion as to whether funds should be in those accounts, outlining other options.

IV) Commissioner McCurry mentioned that there had been some back and forth regarding interest rates resulting in a counteroffer, which Chief Barbot confirmed as true.

V) The Government Income Trust Pools had averaged 4.7-4.8% annual yield, with earnings for the first six months being just under \$22,000, Chief Barbot reported there would be a \$2,000 reduction with a 4% CD yield, however there would be security of having monies in an account that is a qualified public depository.

VI) Commissioner Muench wondered what the worst-case scenario would be with the Government Trust Pool, Chief Barbot reported that in 2008, those accounts had been frozen. Chief Barbot was concerned that this was taxpayers' money and was wary about explaining to citizens why they could not access emergency funds if it was needed.

VII) Chief Barbot outlined that there were two options where both banks had agreed that there would be no pre-withdrawal penalties. His recommendation was that they pull out of Government Trust Pools.

VIII) Commissioner McCurry wondered what the plan for pulling out of the government funds would be, Chief Barbot reported that he had it confirmed that because the accounts were qualified under the state investment policy, they could piggy-back off that.

IX) Chief Barbot had been in communication with Bank of the Islands and Chase, who were both offering the same thing. His recommendation would be to split the reserves and go to both banks. Commissioner McCurry noted that both banks were authorized to accept government funds and guarantee 100% of the balance.

X) Chief Barbot would have discussions over the next month to make a resolution to outline which accounts were going where. It would be discussed at the budget meeting in May.

XI) Call volume was reported as heavily down, with seventy-seven calls in March compared to 162 in March of last year. January to date, in that period last year, there were 523 calls, this year there were 237, a drop of 55%.

XII) Chief Barbot highlighted that staff had been taking on extra activity, noting a hurricane proof deck that Firefighter Grant had built.

6. Chief Barbot's Equipment and Maintenance Update

I) Chief Barbot reported that annual physicals were underway, phase 1 having been completed. Truck maintenance was underway.

II) A bill had been received from South Florida Emergency Vehicles on the reserve engine of more than \$19,000 for repairs for the annuals which they had managed to reduce to around \$8,000.

III) Regarding the dry situation, Chief Barbot noted that this week they had been part of the strike team for Lee County where there had been major brush fire in Bonita last Friday. Chief Barbot reported that although he had concerns about taking apparatus off-island however he had agreed to give that support.

IV) Chief Barbot reported there had been a plan for a prescribed burn towards the end of April, however this was held off until June. They were playing it by ear and when the prescribed burn was timetabled, he would reach out to partners and other fire districts for additional assets.

V) Chief Barbot outlined that the current issue was dead vegetation sitting above wet grass, which would mean a surface burn would burn for a long time, they were trying to address that.

VI) With regard to the Islands Night on May 3rd, Chief Barbot revealed he had been asked to throw the first pitch. There was a plan to have the reserve truck as part of the parade for Islands Night.

VII) Chief Barbot was pleased to announce that Firefighter Clement was four years this year, Firefighter Grant was 13 years.

7. Business Agenda Item 1: Purchasing of Utility 171 – Beach Rescue Vehicle

Chief Barbot recalled that during budgeting last year, it had been agreed to replace one of the beach rescue vehicles and that the Board had advised him to proceed with obtaining quotes. Chief Barbot had obtained three quotes, and the staff's recommendation was to proceed with a unit for a total price of \$24,577, which was a negotiated price.

A motion was made by Commissioner McCurry to proceed to purchase the recommended truck at \$24,577.50. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cochrane. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Business Agenda Item 2: RFQ Station 172 - Contract Award for SFRD

Chief Barbot reported that a Notice of Intent to Award had been published and that the RFQ process had started. Invitations had been sent to twelve firms, which had been reduced to two firms, who would be satisfactory to meet needs and be able to work within the constraints of FEMA. Both firms, GMA and Schenkel Shultz, were experienced with requirements of public safety buildings, and service agreements were being executed today. Chief Barbot outlined that once the service agreements were agreed upon, a work order would be submitted with a detailed scope of service on the requirements of the fire station. A preliminary design for Station 172 with a rendering of the outside, and a rough draft of plans for the inside.

A motion was made by Commissioner Muench to execute service agreements with both firms. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McCurry. There was no discussion. The motion was approved unanimously.

9. Commissioner Items

There were no items to discuss.

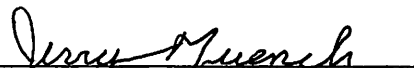
10. Union Items

There were no items to discuss.

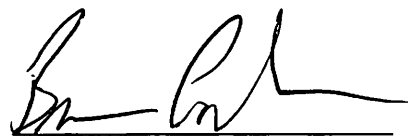
11. Public Input

There were no items to discuss.

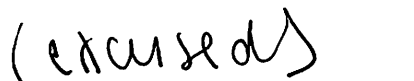
The meeting adjourned at 9:45 AM.



Commissioner Jerry Muench



Commissioner Bruce Cochrane



Commissioner Richard McCurry