



ST. JOHN'S FIRE DISTRICT

FIRE CHIEF RYAN KUNITZER

COMMISSIONERS

CHAIR, WILLIAM THOMAE
VICE CHAIR, DEBRA LEHMAN
LEROY BLAKE
ISIAH WHITE
STEVE ROLANDO
MARY JONES
ROBERT WRIGHT
BROOKS MCGOUGAN
JACKIE STANLEY
TERRILYNN DURHAM



St. Johns Fire District Commission

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the St. Johns Fire District Commission was held on January 8, 2024, at Headquarters, 1148 Main Road, Johns Island. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Members Present

Isiah White
Debra Lehman
Robert Wright
Eric Britton
Bill Thomae
Leroy Blake
Steve Rolando
Brooks McGougan

Members Absent

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Kevin Henson, Deputy Fire Chief
Robert Whaley, Assistant Chief
Shawn Flanagan, Battalion Chief
Ramona Brown, Controller
Rhonda Graham, Human Resources Manager
Danielle Chambers, Accounting Manager
Christie Palmer, Administrative Assistant
Donald Howe, Attorney

The commission meeting was conducted in-person and virtually through Zoom; all members of the public may observe and participate in the meeting:

Via video conference at:
ZOOM Meeting ID: 630-661-0867
Passcode: 170170

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, notices and agendas were emailed/faxed to the Post & Courier and persons requesting notification in compliance with FOIA regulations.

I. Call to Order

- a. Pledge of Allegiance
- b. Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. Regular Meeting of December 11, 2023
 - i. Commissioner Thomae requested a motion to approve the minutes of December 11, 2023.
 - ii. Commissioner Lehman motioned, Commissioner Britton seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.
- b. Special Meeting of December 19, 2023.
 - i. Commissioner Thomae requested a motion to approve the minutes of December 11, 2023.
 - ii. Commissioner Rolando motioned, Commissioner White seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. NA

IV. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported just prior to the Christmas holiday we had a couple different things happen in the district. He stated we had a family that lost everything in a fire the week before Christmas. He was really proud how his staff and also the community itself rallied for that family after we put out the all-points bulletin on Facebook. He stated we had lots of donations coming in that included clothes, furniture, and gift cards.
- b. Chief Kunitzer reported a couple of Sundays ago we experienced pretty eventful weather with particularly high winds. Station 2 was flooded, but luckily, we were able to minimize the damage there by some quick thinking. He stated there is some kind of long-term discussion to be had about equipment, we need to be able to handle these because he doesn't believe that's a one-off. He reassured us that we do have a plan for tomorrow's storm.
- c. Chief Kunitzer recognized Ms. Durham, our newly elected Wadmalaw Commissioner, as well as Mr. Jackie Stanley, newly elected Commissioner representing Johns Island.
- d. Chief Kunitzer reported that he is meeting with all of the employees over the next month. He is meeting with all ranks and has started with Firefighters and Engineers. He stated this is kind of a town hall approach. He stated he gave them a questionnaire to fill out on all different aspects of the department to see how they felt about different things. He stated there's a lot of positive and there's some negative as well, but it's important for us to listen to them and then, as a Command Staff and as an Administration, listen to their feedback and make improvements for the future. He stated he added coaching on The Fair Labor Standards Act which is the law on how they get paid so that they better understand how they get paid.

They will also discuss future capital projects and enhancements. When all of these are done, he will share with the Commissioners some of the findings to see where they are at and where we are at as well.

- e. Chief Kunitzer reported that we do have a new logo. Something that's been talked about with our personnel to set us apart is to have a unique identity and something as kind of a refresh, something new, that we can look forward to. As Chief Henson mentioned in his last presentation, "we are rooted in tradition but driven by progress" and there's something new and new values and mission for us to hold on to as employees and keep us moving forward. It's going to take time but there's going to be a very slow integration on that new logo. We're going to make some changes as well to uniforms and things like that.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported we did not receive the SCBA grant. We are working on an RFP to get that completed. We need to have those delivered by June 30th. They have been wear-testing SCBA's already for the last couple of months and the personnel are pretty sure what they want, so we will do the RFP for that specific pack.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported some feedback we received was to upgrade our PPE as well. Several of our Firefighters have been wear testing some of that gear over the last couple of months. They have selected what they want, and we have worked on a plan to replace the entire cycle of gear within this budget year and next budget. Another key component of this is, with the new gear, the firefighters will have a backup set of gear which is an NFP standard to have two sets of gear.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported that we have a meeting on the 16th with David Myers from the construction estimation project that we hired to discuss the project. David has all of his information wrapped up and once we meet with him, he is going to come back to you as a commission and we can chart a path forward on some of these capital projects that we've been talking about in meetings.
- i. Chief Kunitzer reported that last month he talked about some issues we had with safety and roadways. We also just recently purchased traffic vests for every single member of the department, not just for each riding piece on the apparatus. The goal is that everybody gets a traffic vest that is assigned to you, it is part of your PPE. It has St. John's Fire District on it, and it is a very clear, top of line traffic vest.
- j. Chief Kunitzer reported that we have completed the Strategic Plan we talked a little bit about last month. We have a very rough draft of that Strategic Plan so over the next month or so we have got to kind of dig in, measure some outcomes. Do a few things and hope by the February meeting, although it might come into March, to have a final plan for approval as far as the Strategic plan goes. So, rough draft in there, we just have to make some edits and finalize and get with our team.
- k. Chief Kunitzer reported the new boat, we will have that likely in-service January 15th. He is also working on a proposal for a Marine Coordinator Position. He states we are finding with this new apparatus, there is a lot more training that goes into it. A lot more things to deal with equipment. This would not be a full-time position. This would be an incentivized position for one of our current Officers or personnel to take on. We would offer them a stipend for the year. Likely in a two-year kind of role increment and then keep kind of rotating people. That helps with the classes

and training side of it, which is a completely different thing. We are working on that position description so we can put somebody in there to help with the workload of the of the new boat.

- l.** Chief Kunitzer reported our Command Staff met last week with Charleston Fire Department to discuss deployment, resources, and the long-term future of John's Island. More to be discussed in New Business.
- m.** Chief Kunitzer reported we have finalized our numbers complete total for 2023. He would expect those to probably eclipse last year's numbers or be very close to that, but we're still working on this month. We're going to keep going again on our annual report, but we still have to finalize some incidents out of 2023 to make sure we've got good numbers for you on there.
- n. Incident Breakdown for January 2024**
 - i. Johns Island – 220 incidents
 - ii. Kiawah Island – 64 incidents
 - iii. Seabrook Island – 32 incidents
 - iv. Wadmalaw Island – 46 incidents
- o. Human Resources Report**
 - i. Rhonda Graham reported no new workman's comp claims; total of 2.
 - ii. No leave updates for December.
 - iii. 3 new Firefighter hires started today, 1/08/24.
 - iv. 4 potential Firefighter recruits schedule to start recruit school at the end of the month.
 - v. 15 open positions for Firefighters.

V. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Controller Ramona Brown reported that the Remaining Goal is 50%, the actual is 53.18%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 12/31/2023 is \$6.5M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$12K.
- iii. December revenue included GovDeals proceeds for 2002 Pierce Saber Pumper for \$2,029.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$2,088,837 for November collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for December is \$188,670

- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 11/30/2023.
 - 1. 2021 balance: \$98,170
 - 2. 2022 balance: \$1,843,843
 - 3. 2023 balance: \$2,187,289
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 - 1. Operating expenditures are \$9.3M which includes encumbrances.
 - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$617K.
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$3,665,000.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$288K.
The staff efficiency for December is 80%.
 - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.
- viii. Controller Ramona Brown reported that we have received the budget review from Charleston County. Mid-Year budget will be due on January 31st. The 2025 budget will be due on March 15th.

VI. Attorney's Update

- a. N/A

VII. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VIII. New Business

- a. Chief Kunitzer provided a presentation with his Discussion on Apparatus Deployment. The following link will showcase this presentation at the 17:05 mark: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eG0fTRftRo>

IX. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported they had a meeting on Friday January 5th regular monthly meeting on the progress of the maintenance building.
- ii. Commissioner Thomae provided an update on the maintenance and storage buildings. He stated the drivers' training pad is now poured and complete and the HVAC work starts next week.

b. Finance Committee

- i. Commissioner Lehman reported they did not have a meeting but would like to schedule a meeting for Monday the 29th or Tuesday the 30th. She also advised that they will wait until February to discuss bond issues.

c. Human Resources Committee

- i. N/A

d. Strategic Planning Committee

- i. N/A

X. Public/Firefighter Comments

- i. N/A

XII. Commissioner Comments

a. Commissioner White

- i. I want to welcome our new Commissioners on board. I would also like to thank our personnel on the great job they have done in the past year and hopefully they will be safe and have a good upcoming year. And everyone be safe.

b. Commissioner McGougan

- i. I concur with Ike. It's been a tough year; this year is going to be better.

c. Commissioner Wright White

- i. I second the comments from my two colleagues.

d. Commissioner Blake

- i. One question for the Chief, are you speaking Thursday night? Other than that, I wish everyone a Happy Bew Year. Please continue to pay attention to COVID. RSV is raising havoc. They might require us to wear a mask again. I don't like a mask, but I will definitely don a mask.

e. Commissioner Lehman

- i. On this Thursday at 2 o'clock, there's a meeting at Kiawah Town Hall with Jenny Honeycutt and Joe Boykin relating to issues in our area. I did copy most of you in on questions I submitted to both Jenny and Joe and Jenny's staff put together some links on some of the responses. If anyone is interested and didn't see my email, let me know.

f. Commissioner Rolando

- i. Ditto to everything that has been said. Thank you everyone for your service.

g. Commissioner Britton

- i. Same

h. Commissioner Thomae

- i. I can't add anything to that.

Commissioner Thomae requested a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss contractual matters. Commissioner Britton made a motion, Commissioner Blake seconded. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Commissioners reentered session.

Commission Thomae requested a motion to adjourn, Commissioner Wright motioned, Commissioner White second. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:19PM.