



ST. JOHN'S FIRE DISTRICT

FIRE CHIEF RYAN KUNITZER

COMMISSIONERS

CHAIR, WILLIAM THOMAE
VICE CHAIR, DEBRA LEHMAN
LEROY BLAKE
ISIAH WHITE
STEVE ROLANDO
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, June 10, 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
Leroy Blake
Jackie Stanley
Brooks McGougan
Bill Thomae
Steve Rolando
Terrilynn Durham

Members Not Present

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Kevin Henson, Deputy Fire Chief
Robert Whaley, Assistant Chief
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief
Scott McCullough, Battalion Chief
Teresa Vaughn, Human Resource Manager
Danielle Chambers, Accounts 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 May 13, 2024
 - i. Commissioner Wright motioned, Commissioner Lehman seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. N/A

IV. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported he attended the funeral of Joe Coates, who was the Emergency Manager for Charleston County. He stated Joe was very passionate about Emergency Management and a lot of resources are coordinated through his department. He stated he just wanted to wish his family well wishes on his passing.
- b. Chief Kunitzer reported it was a busy month. There were several incidents. We've had several structure fires, vehicle collisions, lots of different things. He states it's getting busy out here as the summer progresses and it's getting hotter as well too. But our personnel are operating at a high level and they're doing some great work.
- c. Chief Kunitzer reported, our budget for fiscal year 25, which starts July 1, has passed 2 readings of County Council. The last reading is the 18th of June. The county has also fully passed our 24 and a half million-dollar project proposal, so we'll have a motion on that later for bond resolution.
- d. Chief Kunitzer reported, we've been talking about Kiawah River for a long time and has a slight update on that. There is a new development manager out there and he has worked with this person on some other projects before with the district as well. So, they have spoken, they're working with Thomas and Hutton to get that site fully surveyed and platted. It's just been a longer process than what they wanted. He also stated that he is trying to get an update on lease agreement.

- e. Chief Kunitzer reported last month he mentioned that we were trying to secure some ARPA money. We were hoping they would give us \$400,000 for a high-water vehicle. He advised that's fully passed through their town council. There was some good government happening. There was some opposition from some of the citizens. He stated that is a lot of money and for The Town of Seabrook and the town council to support us on, that was awesome.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported last week, we hosted the South Carolina heart training with the heart team, the helicopter aquatic rescue team. He stated it's a joint project between the South Carolina National Guard, the specialized task forms members and local agencies. He added we were the host agency as well as this is the second year we did this. He stated, great work by Captain Chris Mitchell, who is our captain at our station on Seabrook Island. He stated Captain Mitchell was one of the league coordinators for this event for several hundred people that are involved. He also stated it's great training to bring agencies together, whether it's state and local agencies together, so great work by him.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported Captain Chris Mitchell was also selected to lead our Marine Division as our first Marine Coordinator. He advised this was an additional, not a full time, position. It's just additional duties that he'll have stipend for in the Marine division and that includes things related to training, maintenance, particularly of our new vessel and operational readiness of our marine division and he'll report to Chief Prouse as part of that.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported they had a meeting on May 22nd to discuss EMS coverage, specifically on Kiawah. Chairman Thomae, Commissioner Wright and Commissioner Rolando attended that meeting. He stated we're consistently working on our plan to advance to a higher level of EMS care district wide. He said last meeting he reported that Kiawah was actually giving us some money to help supplement this, but it's not just a Kiawah issue, it's a district wide issue that we're focusing on and we're putting our plan together to up our level there.
- i. Chief Kunitzer reported he wanted to give a special thank you to our training division, specifically Chief Flanagan. He stated over the last few weeks, he talked about working on this program with St. John's High School and some of their students get them certified as firefighters. Several of them passed live burns and actually passed their Firefighter I skills, and next year they will work on their Firefighter II. He added Chief Flanagan has gone above and beyond, even on some Saturdays, to work with them.
- j. Chief Kunitzer reported we've been working with St Paul's on some of their recruit classes and they've been using some of our facilities and Chief Flanagan has helped with that as well. In turn St Paul's going to give us some spots in the future recruit class this summer.
- k. Chief Kunitzer reported we have some testing planned this month for certified firefighters. We have 4 already. We've got several certified firefighters coming on board and then we've got spots and two recruit classes, one in August and one in September at St Paul's and in Mount Pleasant that we've got spots to fill, so we'll be testing for that in July.

- l. Chief Kunitzer reported there's that giant digital billboard on Main Road where you will see ads for St. Johns Fire District for recruit firefighters in order to kind of reach a larger audience. He also stated we're also doing some ads on Facebook and some different local ads as well. He added some of that is a push to recruit, so all that being said, he feels we're going to be in a good position towards the end of the summer as it relates to staffing and we're making a hard push on that.
- m. Chief Kunitzer reported we're trying to get a few major repairs done in the budget year. We do have, probably for the building committees' interest, a large HVAC issue at Station 6. He added that we have septic issues at Station 1. He added, we do preventive maintenance, but every year something pops up with the generators, so we are getting our generators in shape here before storm season.
- n. Chief Kunitzer reported Captain Doug Ramsey is retiring. He started with St. John's Fire District in September of 1984, just short of 40 years. He added, Captain Ramsey has been a long service member. He said we'll have a little party for him and to make sure he's thanked for long years of service to our community.
- o. Chief Kunitzer stated he wanted to congratulate Deputy Chief Henson as he finished The National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. He stated it's a competitive class to get into. He added it's an excellent program and congratulations.
- p. **Human Resources Report**
 - i. HR Manager Teresa Vaughn reported we had one Firefighter start and we have 2 Firefighters starting on July 29th.
 - ii. She reported we are trying to do one orientation a month, which will now be two weeks.
 - iii. She reported we had one engineer leave.
 - iv. She reported that with recruitment activity, as the Chief mentioned, certified firefighters. Right now, we have 12 have been invited, 4 have said yes to the testing and 13 are new in the portal to be vetted out and maybe, hopefully all of them will work for inviting them also for the June 26th agility and written test and the 27th interviews and recruits. We've got those scheduled for July 11th and 12th. There are two academies that they'll be split into St Paul's in August, starting August 5th and Mt Pleasant starting September 3rd.
- q. **Incident Breakdown for June 2024**
 - i. Johns Island – 204 incidents
 - ii. Kiawah Island – 90 incidents
 - iii. Seabrook Island – 41 incidents
 - iv. Wadmalaw Island – 51 incidents

V. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Accounts Manager Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 8%, the actual is 12.26%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 05/31/2024 is \$14.3M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$12K.
- iii. May revenue included insurance benefits from retirees. A check was also received for \$100,375.60 from VFIS for an insurance reimbursement. We also received a \$5,000 check from Berkley Electric for smoke alarms.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$422,590.90 for April collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for May is \$104,480.11.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 5/31/2024.
 1. 2021 balance: \$1,346
 2. 2022 balance: \$55,935
 3. 2023 balance: \$819,654
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 1. Operating expenditures are \$17.5M which includes encumbrances.
 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$104K.
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$8,000,000.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$541K.
The staff efficiency for May is 84%.
 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VI. Attorney's Update

- a. N/A

VII. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VIII. New Business

- a. Sarah Weathers with Pop Flynn Law Firm spoke to the Commissioners about the Bond Issuance. Details can be viewed on our YouTube St Johns Fire District Channel at the 24:04 mark: [STJFD Commission Meeting June 10, 2024 \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STJFDCommissionMeetingJune10,2024)

- b. Commissioner Thomae made a motion to consider a resolution to provide for the issuance and sale of not exceeding \$24,500,000 aggregate principal amount of general obligation bonds of St. Johns Fire District, South Carolina to prescribe the purposes for which the proceeds shall be expended to provide for the payment thereof and to provide for other matters relating thereto. Commissioner Rolando seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.
- c. Commissioner Thomae reported they have a proposal for construction services from LCK company to provide construction services for new Station 5 and training facility on River Rd. and that proposal is for 4% of the total construction and design cost architectural fee and that sort of thing. Commissioner McGougan motioned, Commissioner Lehman seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.
- d. Commissioner Lehman made a motion to give a net amount of \$3000 bonus for fiscal year end. Commissioner Durham seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

IX. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported that they did not have a meeting last month and Chief Kunitzer has already provided the update on the Kiawah River Project that is still in progress. He reported the maintenance building is finished sitting and we are waiting for the occupancy permit.

b. Finance Committee

- i. Commissioner Lehman reported on June 5th we had a combined meeting of both finance and strategic planning and the three motions that we just went over the GO bonds, the constructive construction services and the employee bank bonuses for three of the discussions, but they also discussed the EMS and where they can get advanced EMS training.

c. Human Resources Committee

- i. Commissioner Rolando reported on May 29th they had a good discussion and asked the Chief to elaborate on long term planning for pay and benefits such as training leave and sick leave.
 - 1. Chief Kunitzer reported on their discussions of their step program which has the ability to get some raises for people as long as they took some classes. He also discussed a prior policy for donation of sick leave that they are looking into updating into a new policy that's more of a sick leave bank of hours that you can roll time into. He stated they are developing a policy that would have some sort of an upfront leave bank particularly for sick leave. Details can be viewed on our YouTube St Johns Fire District Channel at the 32:26 mark: [STJFD Commission Meeting June 10, 2024 \(youtube.com\)](#)

d. Strategic Planning Committee

- i. Commissioner White reported they were part of the meeting with finance. He confirmed he will meet with the Chief for the update and discuss it with us on our next meeting.

X. Public/Firefighter Comments

- i. N/A

XII. Commissioner Comments

a. Commissioner White

- i. Yes, I would like to give thanks to Chief Henson and everybody involved. Our marine team that's a real big issue because we are basically surrounded by water. It makes me feel very well because there's a whole lot of family members out there crabbing, shrimping, pleasuring and lot of visitors in the area. It is very important that we have a strong structured marine team. That brings a lot of joy to me. to all other Personnel, we really appreciate what you're doing. Be careful in heat and be careful and take care of one another. Thank you.

b. Commissioner McGougan

- i. I concur with what Ike said (Commissioner White). He pretty well covered everything. Thank you.

c. Commissioner Durham

- i. I third that as well. Thank you and stay safe.

d. Commissioner Wright

- i. Chief Hanson, congratulations. Captain Mitchell for his appointment as the Marine Division leader. Good move. The Marine division had a lot of activity. We are blessed to have them and congratulations on their accomplishments. As a resident of Kiawah, St Johns provided significant support for the fire at the beach club. Without the fire department, that structure would have been gone. So, thanks.

e. Commissioner Blake

- i. No Comment.

f. Commissioner Stanley

- i. I echo everything everyone said and also like to give thanks to Captain Ramsey for his years in service. Kevin, (Henson, Deputy Fire Chief) great job.

g. Commissioner Rolando

- i. Thank you and please stay safe.,

h. Commissioner Lehman

- i. As far as Marine division is concerned, we had a boat for a while and I don't think people realize how dangerous the waterways are around here, and especially when we have visitors that don't realize some of the traps. So, it's really good we have the Marine division to help rescue people.

- i. Commissioner Thomae
 - i. Congratulations to Chief Henson for completing the Executive Fire Officer Course. I know that's a very tough course.

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

Commissioners reentered session.

Commissioner McGougan motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Durham second. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.