



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 March 11, 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

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Kevin Henson, Deputy Fire Chief
Robert Whaley, Assistant Chief
Shawn Flanagan, Battalion Chief
Ramona Brown, Controller
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 February 12, 2024
 - i. Commissioner Blake motioned, Commissioner Durham seconded, no opposed, the motion was carried.
- b. Special Meeting of February 21, 2024
 - i. Commissioner Wright motioned, Commissioner White seconded, no opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. Mrs. Rolando extended thanks to the personnel who assisted her with her fall.

IV. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported there was a structure fire earlier today and we had to close down Betsy Kerrison. He stated every time we have a fire at Betsy Kerrison, we have to shut down the road completely, both directions because we have to lay a supply line across the road. He advised our personnel arrived quickly and were aggressive in putting that fire out, so we only had to close the road for about 1/2 hour or so. He added our personnel today, on that call, did an excellent job.
- b. Chief Kunitzer commended two of our St. John's personnel, Captain Sean Gray and Engineer James Rourke. Last week, they completed the State Firefighters Association Fire Officer Academy. About this Academy, it is a very rigorous selection process. About 75 people applied, including some other people from our department and we were the only department that had two people selected to be in that class of about 20 to 25 people. It is a very rigorous selection process. The program is one of the best classes for fire officers. They both have already reached out to me to have some discussions about what they have learned and how they can bring that back to improve St. John's. He stated that he is really proud of them for first applying, accepting, and then going through the program. He also stated they both did a great job.
- c. Chief Kunitzer reported we did move our plan in place, and we now have a Captain on every apparatus, excluding the tender. He advised, he spoke to some of our personnel that have mentioned how helpful that is.
- d. Chief Kunitzer reported last week 6 personnel were promoted, three to Engineer and three to Captain. He added he wanted to congratulate those people on their promotions.
- e. Chief Kunitzer reported he wants us to start thinking about a potential grand opening type of event where we can invite our stakeholders and elected officials and have a nice day to show off that building. He also suggested May would be a good time frame for that.

- f. Chief Kunitzer reported a couple months ago, we discussed a plan for a rescue unit next door at Station 7 as a conversion from the ladder apparatus and advised we are almost there. He stated he anticipates this happening by the end of the month.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported we did some third-party hose testing and advised it is the first time we have done that this year, which necessitated some hose to be replaced. He advised we worked on a plan this year to replace a lot of our hose and a lot of our nozzles as well.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported we are finishing work on our FY25 budget. He advised we sent an e-mail today about March 19th, 1:00 PM as kind of an initial time frame we talked about for that meeting as a joint finance and strategic plan meeting to cover some things in that meeting as the FY25 of your budget and then make some decisions on future strategic planning and projects and things like that. He advised we need to make sure that day works for everybody as well.
- i. Chief Kunitzer reported that we had two personnel attend the South Carolina EMS Symposium. He stated they learned a lot more about state regulations and training requirements and that will help us in our future of medical delivery as well. He advised we have EMT Basic and Advanced EMT still underway.
- j. Chief Kunitzer reported Chief McCullough is working on an MOU with MUSC for our Med Control. He also stated that the current MOU was signed in 2014 and times have changed a bit, so we are reorganizing that MOU to be in agreement with MUSC. He advised we have a Med Control doctor, Dr. Almehbash, that keeps an eye on us, and he has been very receptive and has spent a lot of time with Chief McCullough as he has also went on some ride-alongs with our battalion chiefs to see what it looks like when what we do what we do. He advised Dr. Almehbash is very interested in helping us more and it has been a good relationship so far.
- k. Chief Kunitzer reported personnel logged over 2200 of training in February.

l. Incident Breakdown for March 2024

- i. Johns Island – 172 incidents
- ii. Kiawah Island – 65 incidents
- iii. Seabrook Island – 40 incidents
- iv. Wadmalaw Island – 35 incidents

m. Human Resources Report

- i. Human Resource Manager, Teresa Vaughn, reported a total of 18 openings.
- ii. One of the 18 openings is for the Assistant Fire Chief position. Last week, 4 candidates were interviewed, and they are now in the review process to make a decision for that position.
- iii. 5 candidates for the Certified Firefighters positions completed the agility and written test today. Tomorrow they are scheduled to be interviewed by the panel.
- iv. No new workman’s comp claims; total of 3.

V. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Accounts Manager Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 33.34%, the actual is 34.88%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 02/29/2024 is \$17.6M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$12K.
- iii. February revenue included insurance benefits from retirees.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$10,002,276 for January collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for February is \$52,510.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 2/29/2024.
 1. 2021 balance: \$18,620
 2. 2022 balance: \$252,099
 3. 2023 balance: \$2,109,831
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 1. Operating expenditures are \$13M which includes encumbrances.
 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$704K.
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$4,936,000.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$373K.
The staff efficiency for February is 82%.
 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VI. Attorney's Update

- a. Attorney Donald Howe reported he and the Chief met with the lawyer and an engineer, from St. John's Water and they had a very good meeting. He advised they are making progress and he feels they are good steps in the right direction. He stated he thinks that there is a true willingness to try to find a common ground although they have a few little details to work out, they are getting there.

VII. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VIII. New Business

- a. N/A

IX. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported they had their regular monthly meeting with the contractor on Friday the 8th to discuss the progress of the maintenance building. He reported it is moving along superbly, still on schedule to be completed on or before April 26th and that is not a substantial completion, that is people in the building. He advised all the county special permits are complete, special inspections are complete and passed and they are putting the final finishing touches on the building. He stated the only thing that is going to remain in the next few weeks would be final inspection on the building and then the occupancy permit.
- ii. Commissioner Thomae reported there is no change with the Kiawah River building. He added we are still waiting for the county to give us a lease agreement that we can look at.

b. Finance Committee

- i. Commissioner Lehman reported they are going to talk about the 2025 budget. She stated the budget was technically due this Friday the 15th, but the county gave us an extension to the 22nd. They will discuss and finalize the budget in the combined Finance and Strategic Planning meeting scheduled for the 19th.

c. Human Resources Committee

- i. N/A

d. Strategic Planning Committee

- i. Commissioner White reported that he wanted to reiterate that they will be meeting along with our Finance meeting, and they are going to prioritize what they are going to do in the future to come, as building equipment and what have you. He advised once they get their meetings up and running, then they can bring back a better idea and let everyone know what we they are about to do.

X. Public/Firefighter Comments

- i. N/A

XII. Commissioner Comments

a. Commissioner White

- i. Ma'am, I would really thank you for coming in to express what the workers are doing here. It means a lot. You may not think, but it does. Also going, just personally thank you for taking your time to come down and express what they are doing out there for the public. It makes me feel good. Thank you so very much. Yes ma'am. And also, I would like to congratulate all the promotions that were done this week with the in the special class and everything, and as a whole and at the department on their continued hard work and I really appreciate them and we will back them as best we put anything they want to do in any endeavor. They're kind of fun. Thank you.

b. Commissioner McGougan

- i. I agree with everything that Ike said. That pretty much covered everything.

c. Commissioner Durham

- i. I guess I would third that. Thank you for coming in and giving us the positive feedback from the Community as well and congratulations to all those who worked so hard in those classes and was able to fulfill and pass it. So, we're truly grateful for that.

d. Commissioner Wright

- i. Welcome aboard Theresa. And I'll second, third and forth the previous comments.

e. Commissioner Blake

- i. I also congratulate everyone who got promoted and please watch the steps. Believe me, elevators work fine. One question, are we going back and looking at any of the retired firefighters now? The reason I'm asking that one, one of the guys who I talked to regularly on a hunting bases told me that one of our firefighters is doing pretty poorly and he has cancer. And we all know that cancer is one of the things that most firefighters end up with. So maybe, we can come up with some kind of program or something that we can just, you know reach out to them every now and then, bring them in and have hot dogs with them or something just to see how they're doing. That's it for me. Thank you. Thank you very much.
- ii. Chief Kunitzer responded with: It's a significant gap we have with the retiree base, not an excuse, but a reason is when we changed HRS systems back in the day, whatever that day was, there's been a lot of information lost and sometimes there was a significant gap in just even their right phone numbers and addresses. That's something down the road I will task Theresa with. Record keeping's been a little all over the place for a couple of decades here. So, it's been tough for us, but that is something that's very much on my mind.

f. Commissioner Stanley

- i. There's not a whole lot that could say. Everybody, I agree with everything on the board here when they say thank everybody. Welcome Teresa. You can go from that point. Thank you.

g. Commissioner Rolando

- i. Want to thank everyone in the district for everything that you do. Teresa, I would like to welcome you aboard. I look forward to working with you.

h. Commissioner Lehman

- i. I'm the 8th ditto, but I want to especially welcome you Teresa to this adventure.

i. Commissioner Thomae

- i. I will 9th like comments. Congrats to promotions and the training completions that the firefighters have all done here.

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 Lehman motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Rolando second. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.