



# 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, April 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      Members Not 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  
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief  
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief  
Scott McCullough, Battalion Chief  
Ramona Brown, Controller  
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 April 8, 2024
  - i. Commissioner McGougan motioned, Commissioner Lehman seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

## **III. Public Comments**

- a. N/A

## **IV. Chief's Report**

- a. Chief Kunitzer advised due to technical issues we would be recording without video. He also asked the Commissioners if former Commissioner Sam Brownlee could speak prior to the Chief's Report. See "**Public Comments**".
- b. Chief Kunitzer reported he wanted to make us aware of one of our engineers' sons has been hospitalized for some time. He stated this child has been through a lot in his young life already with some open-heart surgeries and some other health issues going on and unfortunately, he's had some other significant health issues in the past couple of weeks that has required hospitalization and things like that. He stated we are trying to support that member in the best way possible. Some people have picked up some shifts for him to cover him so he can get some pay while he's out. He advised there are some approved station T-shirts that are being ordered. Also there has been some go fund me and some other raffles and some things as well to ease their financial burden so when you're keeping people in your thoughts and prayers, keep this members family and his son in your prayers as they've gone through a difficult time over the last really several years well.
- c. Chief Kunitzer congratulated Mr. Sam Brown on his promotion, that was effective this weekend, to Battalion Chief on C-Shift.
- d. Chief Kunitzer reported we added our new Assistant Chief position and have worked out our structure with the Assistant Chiefs. He stated a few weeks ago that Mr. Prouse started in his role as our new Assistant Chief of Operations.
- e. Chief Kunitzer reported we created a position for Mr. Brian Yuncker as new Assistant Chief of Professional Standards. He advised Chief Yuncker's vision will keep pushing us for training and professional standards and assist with what we want our department to be and look like and be the best that we can possibly be. He added, his work is going to help us get there.
- f. Chief Kunitzer thanked all of those that were in attendance for our awards and promotion ceremony a couple weeks ago. He thought it was a very nice day, and stated we had several of our crews there. He added it's always awesome when we can get some people that we've directly saved from our actions and hard work to be with us there as well. He stated he knows his eyes watered up a little bit, but he really thinks that's a testament to the job that our people do day in and day out in the field and we recognize them and get to put faces on. He stated it's not just an

incident number, but there's real people and real faces that are involved with these calls and it's good to have them there and good for our people to be there, to be recognized for that as well.

- g.** Chief Kunitzer reported he worked with the town of Seabrook Island through ARPA funding, which is part of President Biden's American rescue plan funds. The town of Seabrook Island will be allocating \$400,000 to us of their funding for a high-water vehicle specifically for Seabrook Island. As we know, the weather is rapidly bad all the time. Particularly our barrier islands flood quite a bit. He reported that when I met with the new Mayor discussed how we could further help each other, and he sold him on a little bit of a vision of this high-water vehicle. He advised Commissioner Lehman had discussions with him as well, so a big win in what you'll see later. We've got kind of a budget amendment to what you've already approved to account for that in the next fiscal year.
- h.** Chief Kunitzer reported last week or a couple weeks ago he went in front of the town of Kiawah Island for their state accommodations tax money, that's money that comes in through staying at the Hotel, Villas, going to restaurants, things like that, and trying to narrow in on what we could do for them to help us, particularly on the needs of Kiawah. He stated they are designating for the next fiscal year, \$146,000 to assist us in providing some advanced EMT's and paramedics.
- i.** Chief Kunitzer reported we were working with Charleston Fire Department and St. John's High School on a vocational firefighter program. He advised that this has come to life, so in this month of May, the St. John's High School, several students are working with our personnel from the City of Charleston and Saint Paul's. They are working on skills, and they are using our Fire Station 5 and are in our burn facility. We ironed through what that looks like and several of our personnel are helping. He stated we're hoping to have some Firefighter Ones in the next year as well as Firefighter Two's that we may potentially be able to offer a job to. He stated this year would be good for a pilot on that.
- j.** Chief Kunitzer reported we have new sets of turnout gear that are trickling in for our employees. He stated he had one of our employees who is a particularly tall person, wanted him to pass on his thanks to the Commissioners because some of his gear that he was wearing wasn't really adequately sized for him and now he's got gear that actually fits in that is comfortable as well. He added he is hoping in the next month or so, we will have our new SBA's in and approved.
- k.** Chief Kunitzer reported that with hurricane season near, we've got a couple of funds left there from this last year for disaster supplies, so we're going to gear up for this year. And if you've seen any of the weather reports, who knows it's going to be 50/50, but could be a busy season, but we're prepared.
- l.** Chief Kunitzer thanked Captain Mantie and Mr. Brownlee for the Berkley Trust Grant and requested to pass our thanks to the board as well. He advised this is a big part of what we do, smoke alarms, CO2 arms, things like that, so anything we can do to support our community, particularly in our underserved areas.
- m.** Chief Kunitzer asked Chief Prouse to provide the Incident Statistics and a general overview on the trench rescue incident we had a couple weeks ago.

- i. Chief Prouse reported about two weeks ago we responded to a call at Kiawah River Plantation in a new construction area where they were doing boring and trench work where one of the boring employees found himself in a sticky situation where, unintended, he got down in a trench hole that he was not supposed to. He was in that hole for three hours. It was about an hour and 45 or two hours of time once our aid partners arrived on scene with specialty equipment that we worked alongside of them. Our first arriving unit was Engine 705, supplemented with ladder 702 and both Battalion Chiefs. All crews did an amazing job. Coming from our previous life in Lexington County that was not anything new to us and I'm very proud of the work that the men and women from this area, and specifically St. John's Fire District, put in. That gentleman came out unscathed. A little dehydrated, a little mildly hypothermic, but he will live to see another day and it's due to the actions of our personnel to set the tone on that scene early on, so very proud of that.

**n. Human Resources Report**

- i. Chief Kunitzer reported we have a few more personnel on board over the next over the next month. We're also posting again for recruit firefighter. We have 6 spots in the September class which is going to be a joint class with Mount Pleasant. We had an engineer that put in his two weeks' notice. He added there were a couple more injuries and we've got some more people still out for injuries and we're working through that

**V. Financial Report**

**a. Monthly Financial Report**

- i. Controller Ramona Brown reported that the Remaining Goal is 16%, the actual is 21.63%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 04/30/2024 is \$15.6M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$12K.
- iii. April revenue included insurance benefits from retirees. A check was also received for \$10,371.42 from the Town of Seabrook Island to help fund an ATV.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$240,439.95 for March collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for April is \$106,065.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 4/30/2024.
  1. 2021 balance: \$13,230
  2. 2022 balance: \$70,810
  3. 2023 balance: \$1,317,599
- vii. Dashboard Summary
  1. Operating expenditures are \$15.6M which includes encumbrances.

2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$106K.  
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$6,116,000.  
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$467K.  
The staff efficiency for April is 82%.
3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.
4. Chief Kunitzer reported we received an insurance reimbursement check for \$100,000 for one of our reserve fire trucks that caught on fire back in February of 2021.
  - a. Controller Ramona Brown advised we will post this to insurance reimbursement.
5. Controller Ramona Brown added, within the update to the budget, they added in the Intergovernmental Revenue we expect from the town of Seabrook and the town of Kiawah. So what we're doing is adding \$546,000 to our budget. There's no match. That's just to account or when we have to actually spend and buy the high-water vehicle or however Chief decides to use the \$146,000, so it's accounted for in our budget. She added we have until tomorrow to let Charleston County know any changes and she just wanted to make us aware.

## **VI. Attorney's Update**

- a. N/A

## **VII. Unfinished/Old Business**

- a. N/A

## **VIII. New Business**

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported that because we are moving through the process with Charleston County we want to get the ball rolling on these projects. He stated we already have a construction management service for the Kiawah River Fire Station.
- b.

## **IX. Committee Report**

### **a. Building Committee**

- i.

### **b. Finance Committee**

- i. Commissioner Lehman reported on March 19th they had a combined finance and strategic planning meeting on the finance side, they approved the 2025 budget and then they did discuss some of the projects.

**c. Human Resources Committee**

- i. N/A

**d. Strategic Planning Committee**

- i. Commissioner White reported they were part of the meeting with finance. They covered a few things and will set up another meeting.

**X. Public/Firefighter Comments**

- i. Sam Brownlee from the Berkeley Electric Trust Board spoke to the Commissioners and

**XII. Commissioner Comments**

**a. Commissioner White**

- i. Yes, I just want to say, well, the new hires we just hired appreciate. All of these information. Number now. Also, I would like to let us take a moment of silence, to pray for Ramona. What she's going through just a brief second. Thank you. And for the crew, up there, excellent job on what they did, went inside and saved someone. Hey, that's what it's all about. Again, I really appreciate what they're doing and keep up. The good work.

**b. Commissioner McGougan**

- i. I'm excited that we got guys that are excited, you know, about stuff's coming up, training and new buildings and all that stuff and I'm glad we're able to fund it and keep moving forward.

**c. Commissioner Durham**

- i. Not Present

**d. Commissioner Wright**

- i. I just second Brooks's comment and that Ramona, we are all thinking about her and maybe we could, the Commission, could send her some flowers.

**e. Commissioner Blake**

- i. One thing, all the weather, please be safe. The warm weather is here. Traffic is increasing. I know everyone who was going to lunch today before they got stuck on John's Island trying to go either left or right. So please be safe and watch out for the other person.

**f. Commissioner Stanley**

- i. Thanks to everybody in district and also the crews. Like the chief said the fire we had, I had by me living on the island. I have seen the trucks up and down the road that you see a lot of calls. Great job and keep up the good work.

**g. Commissioner Rolando**

- i. Just thank you to everyone in the district. Stay safe.

**h. Commissioner Lehman**

- i. N/A
- i. Commissioner Thomae
  - i. N/A

*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.*