



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, August 12, 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
Terrilyn Durham

Members Not Present

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Kevin Henson, Deputy Fire Chief
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief
Chris Whaley, Assistant Chief
David Hardwick,
Scott McCullough, Battalion Chief
Shawn Flanagan, Battalion Chief
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 July 8th, 2024
 - i. Commissioner Stanley motioned, Commissioner White seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. N/A

IV. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported we've spent \$1,893 342 on two engines. He stated we had to sign that contract to get those engines done and before the rates went up August 1st. He added we've got that money coming in the bond proceeds that close on September 17th.
- b. Chief Kunitzer reported tropical storm Debby wasn't quite the storm that the weather predicted although we did get quite a bit of rain out here particularly Monday night into Tuesday morning, we had quite a bit of flooding particularly on our Barrier Islands and parts of Wadmalaw and then also some small spin-up tornadoes that came off that storm on Kiawah and Seabrook. He added he wanted to give his team Kudos as they did great work, and this was great preparation. He stated he had asked for some additional resources including two Swift water boat teams and a high extra high water vehicle. He stated we got the Swift water teams from Greenville County. He added we had 64 total responses directly related to the storm. He also stated we up staffed a lot of our equipment and we had our high water vehicle staffed, some chainsaw teams ready as well as a forward team that we had went in and requested Road Close signs, something we commonly see out here in these is areas of the islands that flood and then there's nobody really out there to do that so, we took that upon ourselves to do that this time and we only had to set up one area and that was Liberia Road near our fire station Wadmalaw, so luckily we were spared on that, but as you know the season is young.

- c. Chief Kunitzer reported our Command Staff has been talking about the need for us to train our own personnel and have the correct equipment for a swift water team. Swift water rescue is a very specialized type of rescue with very specialized type of classes. He stated we've had to rely on Greenville County to come with their inflatable boats and their Zodiacs and their equipment and dry suits. He added he think that time is now that we start moving forward to get our select Personnel trained in the Swift water and start getting that equipment too because there will be more of these storms and there's going to be a time we're going to need to float a boat to get somebody out of the house. He also stated the cost associated for all the equipment we really would need is about \$30,000 which includes different inflatable zodiac boats and then to send the people to get specialized training is about \$1,000 per person.
- d. Chief Kunitzer reported that they have finally finished the strategic plan and acknowledged they had a couple delays. He advised two documents are included in the Commissioner Packet, one is the overview of the Strategic Plan with the goals and our new Mission Vision Values. The second document was that management guide and that includes all the goals along with all the objectives and time frames associated with them. He added a big part of our strategic plan was our community stakeholders, and they were all sent that plan today to review. He stated our personnel were the ones that did the plan, not him, so kudos to all of those people associated with that- they did a great job!
- e. Chief Kunitzer pointed out the display of the brand new SCBA, MSAG G1. He advised the SCBA's came in and within a month we had everybody trained, inventoried and then out on our apparatus and in service right now. He added they're pretty impressive and have some really cool new features. He stated the communication with the radios and stuff is what sold him. He said you can hear crystal clear in fires where they used to get on the radio and all you'd hear was a muffled noise. He added these are pretty slick because they actually go through the face piece as well. He wanted to give kudos to Chief Whaley and his team and a bunch of people in here as they did a great job to get those in service.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported that last month he talked about Marine 701 being out of service and needing a significant repair, good news is the technicians came on site and were able to repair it. He added it is back running up in service. He added the part was in such bad shape they couldn't really determine a warranty on it but, Metal Shark, our vendor is going to cover the cost of the repair because it's so new. He stated it's got a couple other little issues right now but it's in service and they're working through just some known small mechanical issues that they're working through, but it is back in service.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported that last month, at Station 6, we were able to get some temporary units in there that made a difference and then as soon as they came in, our vendor made that change and it should be nice and cold down there now as they got that done pretty quickly.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported we have our physicals underway and it's a very important piece for our firefighters and staff we do some very in-depth firefighter physicals. He added it is super important we do these physicals and that they'll be going on all of this month.

i. Human Resources Report

- i. Chief Kunitzer reported we had 4 certified Firefighters start last week. 5 recruits that started for St Paul's and they started last week and then we have 5 starting for that Mt Pleasant Academy which is around the 1st of September.
- ii. He reported that we have some personnel that are on leave whether that's paid parental leave or FMLA.
- iii. He reported we are working on our plan to hire some single role paramedics. We'll be hiring 3 single role paramedics. He stated we received some money from the town of Kiawah Island from Accommodations Tax to help support this, so our plan is to hire these paramedics and they're going to assist us, not just running calls, but they're going to be doing some quality control and also training for us. The paramedics will start on Kiawah with the hopes of expanding that program over the next couple years. He stated there'll be some incident response, but also they'll have some other duties to kind of help us get to that next level. He added to look for those jobs postings to go up probably next week and we'll start targeting to go to an intermediate level of service from a basic level of surface on October 1st.

V. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Accounting Manger Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 92%, the actual is 91.74%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 7/31/2024 is \$10.1M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$12K.
- iii. July revenue included insurance benefits from retirees, donations and interest income.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$129,973.99 for June collections. Accrued to FY24.
- v. Non-standard overtime for July is \$52,636.51.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 7/31/2024.
 1. 2021 balance: \$453
 2. 2022 balance: \$26,185
 3. 2023 balance: \$497,719

- vii. Dashboard Summary
 - 1. Operating expenditures are \$1.3M which includes encumbrances.
 - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$53K.
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$450,000.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$61K.
The staff efficiency for June is 80%.
 - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VI. Attorney's Update

- a. Attorney Donald Howe reported this is probably his last meeting officially and he has enjoyed it and it's been a very interesting thing to watch the district grow from when he started tiny office over on Maybank and he just wanted to say thanks and to congratulate everybody with the district that the level of service and professionalism that's grown over the years is just stunning to have watched and he is very proud to have been associated with it.

VII. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VIII. New Business

- a. Consideration of proposed contract between STJFD and Attorney Spencer Wetmore for District Attorney Services. Commissioner Thomes requested a motion to accept the contract with Spencer Wetmore. Commissioner Rolondo motioned. Commissioner Lehman seconded. All in favor. Motion carried.
- b. Overview of Essential Personnel Software presentation by Chief Kunitzer. Video available on STJFD YouTube channel at the 22:46 mark: [STJFD Commission Meeting 8/12/24 \(youtube.com\)](#)

IX. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported we have rescheduled that building committee meeting for next Wednesday week from this Wednesday the 21st at 2:00 in the afternoon at that time they will have the construction management firm on board with and he will be here to begin the process of building or starting to design buildings for Station 5 and for the new Kiawah River Station sign process will take some time.

b. Finance Committee

- i. Commissioner Lehman reported didn't have a finance meeting but wanted to talk about the bonds, they're on schedule for finalizing the wording right now. She state post notice of sale will be August 17th. The sale of the bonds will take place on August 27th and closing should be on September 17th. She stated we maintained our credit rating that we've had doubled by S&P so we had a credit rating meeting a couple weeks ago and we were able to maintain

the rating we done good.

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. First, I would like to say thank you and welcome to Attorney Wetmore. I also want to say I liked that we talked about training and being proactive with the water vessels. Also, thanks to the employees. Continue doing an excellent job

b. Commissioner McGougan

- i. Thank you for your service, Don. Good job to Company 7 for getting the limbs off Chisolm Road.

c. Commissioner Durham

- i. I would like to congratulate and say happy retirement to Attorney Donald and welcome Attorney Wetmore to the team looking forward working with her. Thank you.

d. Commissioner Wright

- i. Thank you. I'd just like to add my congratulations to Donald. You've been a good counselor to the commission and to the department and I wish you the best of luck in the future and also, I would like to thank all of the everyone at the fire department for the preparation you went through anticipate, in anticipation of Debby hitting. I thought it was pretty extensive and thanks again.

e. Commissioner Blake

- i. Attorney Wetmore, congratulations for coming aboard and Donald, congratulations on your retirement. Thank you for all you guys here. Thank you for what you guys do. Chief, great program you are looking into.

f. Commissioner Stanley

- i. Donald, congratulations. Very happy for you. Ms. Wetmore, glad to have you aboard. To the personnel, the job you're doing is outstanding. Kudos to you guys and girls.

g. Commissioner Rolando

- i. Attorney Wetmore, welcome. Look forward to working with you. Donald, I really appreciate your service and sometimes going above and beyond. Thank you so much. And thank you to the district for everything that you do.

h. Commissioner Lehman

- i. Donald, you have been extremely helpful and given us some good advice. I'm sorry that the last adventure you had was the fire hydrants but we're almost there. but thank you. Attorney Wetmore, I am really looking forward to working with you. I would also like to thank the personnel and thank not only for Debby and everything... I think you know it was a good exercise because it wasn't as bad as we thought it was going to be, but I also like to thank some of the representatives from St John's that participated in the disaster planning with Seabrook Island and I wholeheartedly support the water rescue getting the zodiacs and getting a team trained.

i. Commissioner Thomae

- i. Thanks to all the department for all you for Hurricane Debby. It was well appreciated by all. We had a little tornado action on Kiawah that didn't do a lot of building damage but took some trees out and dumped a bunch of trees on the roads. You guys took care of them, so I appreciate that. Spencer welcome aboard. Donald, what can I say? You've been an inspiration to me for the years that I've been on the commission and one of my favorite memories with you is the time we spent eight hours in mediation with a contractor and at the end of that session you said to me, I want you in another mediation because you like the way I did my thing. I want you to know I don't want to do any more mediations, they are a pain

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

Commissioners reentered session.

Commissioner Wright motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Roland second. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.