



# 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, November 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  
Jackie Stanley  
Brooks McGougan  
Bill Thomae  
Steve Rolando  
Terrilyn Durham

#### **Members Not Present**

Leroy Blake

#### **Others Present**

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief  
Kevin Henson, Deputy Fire Chief  
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief  
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief  
Shawn Flanagan, Battalion Chief  
Nate Adams, Battalion Chief  
Teresa Vaughn, Human Resource Manager  
Christie Palmer, Administrative Assistant  
Spencer Wetmore, 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 October 14, 2024
  - i. Commissioner Wright motioned, Commissioner White seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

## **III. Public Comments**

- a. N/A

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

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported that a week ago Orangeburg received about 18 inches of rain, Even more in some spots and had quite a bit of a significant flooding event that's now trickled down to the Edisto River. He stated our state mobilization asked for any high-water resources in the state to help assist and we were able to send out the call. He also stated he was appreciative of Captain Lomas and a couple others that stepped up to volunteer as they drove the high-water vehicle up there and when they went up there, they were able to rescue a physically disabled woman in her house. He stated our crew went with another volunteer crew in a John Boat and was able to rescue that person. He added that this was great work by them.
- b. Chief Kunitzer reported that last month we had department meetings where we met with every employee and talked about several different things. He stated we talked about some standard of conduct updates that we did. He added that in 2016 Chief Waltz developed a standard of conduct for our employees that set the expectations of their behavior and their conduct on duty and off duty. He stated that we made some revisions to that document as the meat and potatoes are kind of the same, but we just cleaned some things up, updated some things to 2024, lingo and language, and we met with all our employees for them to all re-sign that document so that we can reset the expectations.
- c. Chief Kunitzer reported that Chief Yuncker and his team led training on essential personnel. He stated that we use this as our performance development tool and it's already paid some dividends and it's going to be a helpful tool for our supervisors and all of our employees on feedback and tracking their professional development.

He added that our personnel spend a small percentage of their day on incident calls, and they are really at the station having peer-to-peer conversations, kind of 98% of the day. He stated that's where our department needs to focus on some of our training. He and Teresa met with a company that is going to do some work with us on having difficult conversations and confrontation and some leadership skills because he wants to continue to build these people, not just on the fire ground and medical skills, but as people and managers as well.

- d. Chief Kunitzer reported that part of Chief Yunckers job as our Assistant Chief of Professional Standards is to communicate to our employees that we are going to continue to keep raising the bar for them as far as performance and how they interact. He added the crews have been going through a "Fall Classic". He stated that he wanted to drive a little competition between crews. He added they are doing some different evolutions that are timed for proficiency and out of that they will get a custom designed logo for their shift or their engine or their crew. Whatever it is will be paid for by him. He stated we want to make sure that our people go to the training ground and they do kind of some of the same things over and over, be we want them to be proficient at that and good, but we also want them to invest and go that kind of that next level and that really helps us build up that competition and push our people to do better. He gave Chief Yuncker credit in the short time he's been in Professional Standards, overseeing that. He stated we've kind of reengineered our training and are really pushing our people to keep going to the next level, keep improving, that's our goal here is continuous improvement.
- e. Chief Kunitzer reported we have Engineer and Captain testing coming up in January. He stated we've got a few spots to fill, and we still have some recruits that are at the Mount Pleasant Recruit Academy. He added that they test for their Firefighter II on Friday and then they'll transition right to the EMT basic class, so we'll get them in a few months.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported we had an advanced EMT class that just started, and we've got five of our personnel in that. He stated we had our first paramedic specialist start. He added she ran her first call today. He also added that they have hosted interviews today for that position as well.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported we have a couple things we're selling on GovDeals. He stated that they are some old vehicles and next will be a couple of old apparatus that are out of out of service out of our reserve fleet.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported that in December we'll start to work on that mid-year budget that's usually due to Charleston County by mid-January.
- i. **Human Resources Report**
  - i. HR Manager, Teresa Vaughn, reported a new Paramedic Specialist has started and is doing great.
  - ii. She reported that they will continue to interview for the additional Paramedic Specialist positions.
  - iii. She reported she and Danielle are interviewing for the Staff Accountant position.

- iv. She reported we have a Diesel Mechanic opening. She added that she received the approved job description today and will get that posted tomorrow.

**j. Incident Report October 2024**

- i. Johns Island – 201 incidents
- ii. Kiawah Island – 73 incidents
- iii. Seabrook Island – 50 incidents
- iv. Wadmalaw Island – 29 incidents

**V. Financial Report**

**a. Monthly Financial Report**

- i. Controller Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 67%, the actual is 67.51%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 10/31/2024 is \$5.8M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$13K.
- iii. October revenue included retiree reimbursements.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$104,802 for September collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for October is \$70,524.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 10/31/2024.
  - 1. 2021 balance: \$83
  - 2. 2022 balance: \$25,735
  - 3. 2023 balance: \$434,423
  - 4. 2024 balance: 17,022,924
- vii. Dashboard Summary
  - 1. Operating expenditure is \$1.6M which includes encumbrances.
  - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$311K.  
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$2.5M.  
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$223K.
  - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

**VI. Attorney's Update**

- a. Attorney Spencer Wetmore advised we are finally moving forward on the lease with Charleston County for the station on Kiawah River. She stated we also have ongoing negotiations and a hopeful settlement on the state water disputes.

**VII. Unfinished/Old Business**

- a. N/A

## **VIII. New Business**

- a. Commissioner Thomae made a motion to approve the purchase of the high-water vehicle for \$357,698. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.
- b. Commissioner Thomae made a motion to approve the authorizing the Fire Chief to enter into the intergovernmental agreement with the town of Seabrook Island for receivable of ARPA Funds related to high water vehicle purchase. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.
- c. Chief Kunitzer stated we are making a change to our FTE (full-time employees) in our finance department. He added we had the Controller, an Accounting Manager and the Staff Accountant. He stated that they were going to hold off on hiring an Accounting Manager and look for a full-time Staff Accountant. He added that not hiring an Accounting Manager leaves an open full-time position in administration. He advised that he changed the full-time position to a full-time Accreditation Specialist that will get us ready for accreditation. He stated that he has identified somebody in administration he thinks would be strongly suited for that role.

## **IX. Committee Report**

### **a. Building Committee**

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported they did not have a building committee meeting this month, but there's been a lot of things going on in the background, one of which we had previously advertised for request for qualifications, for architects, for the building of the new Station 5 on River Road and we received 9 responses to that and those responses are currently being reviewed and scored by each of the Commissioners on the building committee right now. He also stated that in regards to Kiawah River, they are also in the process of reviewing the lease agreement from the county and we'll discuss that further in executive session.
- ii. Commissioner Thomae reported David Myers has also prepared the RFQ for the selection of an architect for that station, but we're going to hold off on sending that out until January.

### **b. Finance Committee**

- i. Commissioner Lehman reported they had an audit meeting on Wednesday, October 30th here at headquarters. She stated that the auditor went over the report with favorable opinion, no issues.

### **c. Human Resources Committee**

- i. Commissioner Rolando advised that they have a meeting scheduled for Thursday at 2:00pm.

### **d. Strategic Planning Committee**

- i. N/A

## **X. Firefighter Comments**

- a. N/A

## **XII. Commissioner Comments**

### **a. Commissioner White**

- i. Yes, I also like to talk about Orangeburg and I also like to say that we went up there, but we were effectively able to do something. You know, you can show up and help someone, but to come back and know that you're effectively help, and actually did the job that makes you feel really good. And again, I want to also thank HR for talking to each individual employee. That's a very good gesture. I really like that and thank you for that.

### **b. Commissioner McGougan**

- i. I concur with what Ike had to say. Also want to commend your staff. I see a lot of the youngsters, when I was on the truck moved up in the chief level positions and they're doing a great job. I appreciate that.

### **c. Commissioner Wright**

- i. Again, accommodate the people that went up to Orangeburg, helped out. I think the the leadership of the department in being able to reach out and help people across the state is important just to thank people, the verterans that we may have.

### **d. Commissioner Durham**

- i. Hi everyone, sorry not able to make it tonight. Not feeling well actually on my way back home from the emergency room, but I'm tuning in. See you all at the next meeting.

### **e. Commissioner Stanley**

- i. The guys who went up to Orangeburg, to the Fire Rescue, they did a great job, like I said, thanks to those guys and all the personnel of St Johns District.

### **f. Commissioner Rolando**

- i. Thank you to the crew that did the high-water rescue. I'm glad everyone came back safe. Also, there was a fire on Kiawah at the storage units and I happen to be there, you know, in observance and what a great job. I believe there was multiple engines dispatched to that. It was just a fantastic job. The professionalism was off the charts. Thank you.

### **g. Commissioner Lehman**

- i. N/A

### **h. Commissioner Thomae**

- i. Thanks to Deborah, if you could express the Commission's thanks to Seabrook for the 400 K, we do highly appreciate that.

*Commissioner Thomae requested a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss contractual matters. Commissioner Stanley made a motion, Commissioner Wright 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 6:14 pm.*