



ST. JOHN'S FIRE DISTRICT

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St. Johns Fire District Commission

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the St. John's Fire District Commission was held on, June 9, 2025, 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

Debra Lehman
Isiah White
Robert Wright
Steve Rolando
Bill Thomae
Brooks McGougan
Jackie Stanley
Leroy Blake
Terrilyn Durham

Members Not Present

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief
David Hardwick, Chief Fire Marshal
Michael Derderian, Battalion Chief
Nate Adams, Battalion Chief
Shawn Flanagan, Battalion Chief
Scott McCullough, Battalion Chief
Ed Singleton, Deputy Fire Marshal
Teresa Vaughn, Human Resource Manager
Danielle Chambers, Controller
Kristen Holden, Staff Accountant
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 May 12, 2025
 - i. Commissioner Lehman motioned, Commissioner Wright seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. Chief Kunitzer recognized one of our members for his faithful service with St. John's Fire District. He thanked Capt. Kevin Jenkins for 27 years with the St. John's Fire District and presented him with his retired Captains' plaque.
- b. Chief Kunitzer introduced introduce two new employees to St John's Fire District.
 - i. First, Ms. Kristen Holden, who has been with us for a couple of months. He stated she is working on Danielle's team and is a welcome addition to this team. He added they are working on a project right now to save some fuel costs where she did some analysis work and is looking into setting up a credit card that will help us track fuel and get better control on our fuel cost.
 - ii. Chief Kunitzer introduced our new Deputy Fire Marshal, Ed Singleton, over Community Risk Reduction. He stated that Ed's already been out and about in our communities and has done some events and things already. He added that he's a great guy and a wonderful individual and thanked him for being here.

IV. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported that we have engineer testing coming up in a couple weeks.
- b. Chief Kunitzer stated he also wanted to congratulate Sean Nolan who just promoted from Engineer to Captain. He also added that we had an external hire that started today at the captain position who's really excited to be here.

- c. Chief Kunitzer reported that Seabrook Kiawah Disaster Awareness Day and our team participated in it. Chief Kunitzer advised Chief Hardwick and Captain Singleton were there and added he did a little speech on some different topics. He stated what he really found enlightening was the presentation from the town manager of Sanibel Island. He stated the town of Sanibel Island got hit really hard with hurricane Ian in 2022 and they just opened their beaches up about three weeks ago as that's how much an impact it had. He stated that they lost about \$9 million in revenue last year after the hurricane, and so we think about that for us for this area and the possibility all over our district of impacts from a major hurricane, a category 4 or higher hurricane, and the discussions we've had at command staff level of how do we adequately prepare for that to respond in the time of need because the cause way to get on Sanibel broke in seven different areas and they were barging fire trucks back out of the island. He added since we are all connected here by bridges, those are issues we got to keep looking at. He stated the very next day we went to Kiawah Island and did a tabletop exercise which is actually based on a tornado and some of our battalion chiefs were there, and we completed that.
- d. Chief Kunitzer reported that he presented at Kiawah's State Accommodations Tax Committee. He states he requested about \$125,000 from the Tax Committee Town Council and they have funded us about \$88,000 of that for our paramedic program. He advised that funding would begin for the next fiscal year in July towards support that program.
- e. Chief Kunitzer reported that we are working with the City of Charleston. He states that DOT wants to replace the Burden Creek Bridge. He added that a neighborhood on the other side, which is actually in the city, approach us because they've got some concerns about their response times and traffic would be impacted. He added that he and Chief Curia have given some feedback to DOT on how they feel about it and working with the city on a response plan for what happens if DOT decides to take the bridge out.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported we are inputting our new budget year. He stated our final reading for our budget will be tomorrow night at Charleston County. He added that there were no questions on our first reading of it and do not expect any issues.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported that regarding the purchase of our property next to Station 5, we have the survey back. He stated that our consultant has already authorized him to purchase that property, so we're going to go back to the homeowners next week and discuss that and try to finalize that process.
- h. Human Resources Report
 - i. HR Manager Teresa Vaughn reported that we hired a new Captain, John Robert Madden, who started today.
 - ii. She stated that we are preparing for engineer promotions, the academy recruit testing and certified firefighting testing in June.
 - iii. Separations, she advised Capt. Kevin Jenkins retired, and one firefighter will have his exit interview tomorrow.

a. Incident Report June 2025

- iv. Johns Island – 218 incidents
- v. Kiawah Island – 90 incidents
- vi. Seabrook Island – 48 incidents
- vii. Wadmalaw Island – 38 incidents

V. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Controller Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 8%, the actual is 13.22%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 5/31/2025 is \$14M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$13K.
- iii. May revenue included retiree reimbursements.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$423,158 for April collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for May is \$146,269.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 5/31/2025.
 - 1. 2021 balance: \$0
 - 2. 2022 balance: \$23,518
 - 3. 2023 balance: \$305,253
 - 4. 2024 balance: \$16,912,740
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 - 1. Operating expenditure is \$1.8M, which includes encumbrances.
 - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$948K.
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$8.1M.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$603K.
 - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VI. Attorney's Update

- a. Attorney Spencer Wetmore reported that she is terrified to jinx it but, will say after a flurry of lawsuits and settlements and architect contracts and compliance issues, it has been fairly mundane. She states that if there are questions about policies or things like that, she is happy to take a look at those now that things have quieted a little bit but overall happy to report that things are mostly quiet on the Western Front.

VII. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VIII. New Business

- a.** Commissioner Lehman made a motion for a \$2000 net bonus for our employees at the total cost to the district of about \$332,000.
 - i. Commissioner McGougan seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.
- b.** Commissioner Lehman made a motion for approval to purchase two Battalion Chief vehicles before July 1, 2025, not to exceed \$110,000.
 - i. Commissioner Rolondo seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

IX. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported that they had a building committee meeting, Wednesday May 21st, with Liollio Architecture to discuss the progress on the design of Station 5. Building style and colors were addressed as well as possible purchase of an additional acre of land directly adjacent to the current property.
- ii. Commissioner Thomae reported that tomorrow at 1:30 here at headquarters we will hold the usual interim bi-weekly meeting with the architects to further design considerations.
- iii. Commissioner Thomae reported that they have received six responses to the RFQ the request for qualifications for CMR contract management at risk contract to construct Station 5 and the building committee is currently in the process of reviewing each of the responses and on this Wednesday day after tomorrow June 11th we will hold a Zoom meeting to select the top three candidates to advance forward to the interview process. He stated that the meeting time has not been set yet as that will be coordinated with the chief and with David Meyers.
- iv. Commissioner Thomae reported that the next regular building committee meeting with Liollio will be on Wednesday, June the 18th at 1:30 here at the headquarters.

b. Finance Committee

- i. N/A

c. Human Resources Committee

- i. N/A

d. Strategic Planning Committee

- i. N/A

X. Firefighter Comments

- a.** N/A

XI. Commissioner Comments

a. Commissioner Rolondo

- i. Chief, I want to thank you and your team for looking out with firefighters and coming forth with requests, and anytime we have the funds, that's where we should be spending our money. I want to congratulate those new employees coming on board. I want to congratulate Captain Jenkins for his service.

b. Commissioner Stanley

- i. I want to thank all the personnel for the job they've been doing. Also, I know the bonus, may how little it may be or what it is, it is appreciated. Talking to some of the personnel, this definitely helps ease the burden for some of them. I see a lot of training going on in the field because I live on the island, you guys are doing an excellent job. I see Jenkins already left; I wanted to congratulate him on his retirement.

c. Commissioner McGougan

- i. I too would like to congratulate Kevin. I had the pleasure of working with him for a number of years and we always had a good time and I knew that Kevin was on the job we could get it done. Once again, we recognize our employees that they're the real backbone of the fire department and glad that we were able to thank them in the manner with votes.

d. Commissioner White

- i. I'd like to say congratulations to Captain Jenkins in his absence. To all the new employees, welcome. I'd like to say to the chief, I appreciate what you're doing, how you're doing, in treating the personnel, because it's very important how you make our personnel feel needed and wanted along with their families. I appreciate all the staff that take the time to help save the budget money as we come along the way because that's very important to keep things balanced as we go along and basically, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you and be safe.

e. Commissioner Durham

- i. I would like to kudo to all that has been said before. Congratulations to Kristen and Ed. Welcome to St John's District. So happy to see you. Glad you on board. Thank you for your service. To all of the firefighters, I'm sure that bonuses would help out in whatever way it can so, we are glad to be an assistance in that matter. Thank you Chief and your staff. As stated before, good looking out for all the employees and the staff here at the St John's District. Keep doing what you're doing. Everyone be safe.

f. Commissioner Wright

- i. I will second comments that have already been made and most importantly stay safe.

g. Commissioner Blake

- i. I will second, second all. It is wonderful to know that we are trying our best for the recruits and keep the individuals we get here. Thank you, persons or people, for doing the great job that you are doing.

h. Commissioner Thomae

- i. Congratulations to Captain Jenkins on your retirement and welcome to Kristen and Ed. I'd also like to express kudos to the town of Kiawah Island for the \$88,000 donation for EMS support.

i. Commissioner Lehman

- i. Welcome Kristen to the adventure, it's a great place to work. Welcome Ed, I did meet you at Disaster Planning Day and welcome. We do appreciate new people coming on board and helping us out. I know Captain Jenkins left but I wish him happy retirement.

Commissioner Lehman made a motion adjourn. Commissioner Wright seconded. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm.