



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, December 8, 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
Steve Rolando
Bill Thomae
Brooks McGougan
Jackie Stanley
Robert Wright
Leroy Blake
Terrilyn Durham

Members Not Present

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief
Teresa Vaughn, Human Resource Manager
Krista Brown, Human Resource Specialist
Danielle Chambers, Controller
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 November 10, 2025
 - i. Commissioner Lehman motioned, Commissioner Durham seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. N/A

IV. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer stated that he hoped everyone had a happy Thanksgiving and wanted to wish everyone a happy holiday coming up.
- b. Chief Kunitzer offered his condolences to the family of our community that lost a member of their family this weekend. He reported that our firefighters responded about 4:30 a.m. Sunday morning to a residence house fire on Wadmalaw and by the time they got there, the house was pretty well involved through the roof. He advised while they were searching the residence, they found a person in the back and unfortunately, the person was deceased. He stated that our thoughts and prayers are with that family and our community.
- c. Chief Kunitzer reported that we've had a couple of severe vehicle collisions we've responded to that resulted in fatality, so what we do now in the last year, we've really fully stood up our peer support program. He stated there are lots of resources available to our personnel that we reach out to them and make sure that they're okay and give them the resources to continue doing this job. He advised that, through a grant, we were able to get the peer connect app and website to where our people can go on the app on the phone and they have immediate resources at their disposal to go through anything that they might be going through and being able connect with the right resources. He added there is lots of work we are doing in that area to better support our members.
- a. Chief Kunitzer reported that today Engine 5 was responding to a call and had to turn around in the road and unfortunately backed into the ditch and we've got some damage to Engine 5. He stated accidents happen and it's those we can avoid, so

whether that's through training or reminders and how we move that forward, he stated that we'll do a review of that incident to ensure that hopefully it doesn't happen again. He added that he appreciates our community a lot and they are welcome to give us feedback, but we did have a community member that verbally abused one of our firefighters at the scene and that person said he's going to post it all over social media and if he does, that's fine. But also, he welcomes the community member to give him a call, as our number is on our website. He stated, unfortunately, those things happen, accidents happen. We've got some damage to that engine, but we will move forward to take the steps to make sure to prevent that from happening in the future.

- b.** Chief Kunitzer wanted to thank several of our commissioners who attended the Christmas party last night. He stated they had a really nice night and lots of raffles from a lot of local John's Island companies.
- c.** Chief Kunitzer reported that we hosted last week a course called "Our Community Listens". He stated that we had most of our admin and support services team and several of our operations members attended the class. He advised this is a foundational class that really focuses on reflective listening, how you build relationships, empathy, and building trust. He stated it's really been a foundation for his leadership journey, as well as received really good feedback from our employees on foundational leadership courses, not just at work, but at home as well.
- d.** Chief Kunitzer reported we received a South Carolina apprentice scholarship. He advised the apprentice scholarship is grant money at no cost to us that helps support our different training programs. He stated that our driver operator training in the past supported our EMT program and things like that help, so we received that grant again that can help us put on those classes. He thanked Chief Yuncker for doing that.
- e.** Chief Kunitzer advised there is the Professional Standards Report attached to your packet. He advised they can see some of those things that our people have been working on for the last month through training. He stated that we have had several more of our firefighters that have come off their probationary period and we look forward to their journey in the fire service.
- f.** Chief Kunitzer reported that Engine 2 is now in Summerville. He advised we don't have an in-service need for that yet, but we still have quite a bit of equipment mounted and everything like that but it's here and it's at Spartan in Summerville.
- g.** Chief Kunitzer reported that our heavy rescue is under construction. He stated we get weekly updates, but do not have a delivery date quite yet. He added later in January, we're doing pre-construction for the high-water vehicle that was donated to us last year.
- h.** Chief Kunitzer reported last month we approved of minor renovation of Station 7. He states, over there looks good and that it almost feels like a brand-new station, almost. He stated, all they're doing this week, they should be done. They're installing new cabinets in the kitchen, and they have got to do some final cleaning over there. He added that he welcomed them to stop over there if they wanted to see some of those updates.

i. Chief Kunitzer reported we've got some sensitivity inclusion training that will be the first week of January for all scheduled.

j. Human Resources Report

Human Resource Manager, Teresa Vaughn, reported the following:

i. Hiring Activity:

- Logistics Manager – Nicole Rechner started today
- Fire Marshal Position - Filled

ii. Open/upcoming postings:

- Certified Firefighters
- Engineers

iii. Separations:

- 1 separation - Battalion Chief of Training

iv. Workers' Comp Time Off:

- NA

v. Staffing Levels:

- Ops BC – 6/6
- Captain – 27/30 (3 floater open)
- Engineer – 32/33 (1 floater open)
- Firefighter – 40/54 (6 in EMT School)
- Paramedic Specialist – 3/3

a. Incident Report December 2025

- vi. Johns Island – 165 incidents
- vii. Kiawah Island – 54 incidents
- viii. Seabrook Island – 60 incidents
- ix. Wadmalaw Island – 39 incidents

V. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 58.34%, the actual is 58.35%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 11/30/2025 is \$6.3M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$13K.
- iii. November revenue included retiree reimbursements.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$1,907,686 October collections.

- v. Non-standard overtime for November is \$108K.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 11/30/2025.
 - 2022 balance: \$21,218
 - 2023 balance: \$172,971
 - 2024 balance: \$15,520,066
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 - 1. Operating expenditure is \$1.6M, which includes encumbrances.
 - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$615K.
YTD salaries, including regular and standard overtime, is \$3.5M.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$354K.
 - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VII. Attorneys Update

- a. Attorney Spencer Wetmore advised it would be appropriate to remain in executive session tonight if commission so chooses to make such a motion, just for an update on going to discuss comments back across the county on our subdivision and zoning applications that were submitted earlier this month minor. She stated we should be able to resolve all of that.
- b. She stated that it is time for the subdivision which is up for second reading next week. She advised that's all for now.

VI. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VII. New Business

- a. Consideration of an employee holiday bonus
 - i. Commissioner Wright motion to approve an employee holiday bonus net bonus of \$1000, Commissioner Blake seconded, all in favor, none opposed, the motion was carried.
- b. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
 - i. Commissioner Thomae nominated Commissioner Lehman for Chair. Attorney Wetmore confirmed by ballot votes, Commissioner Lehman for Chair.
 - ii. Commissioner Rolando nominated Commissioner White for Vice Chair. Attorney Wetmore confirmed by ballot votes, Commissioner White for Vice Chair.

VIII. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner Thomae reported last month they had 2 meetings with Building 5 one with Station 3. He stated Station 5 has progressed to the second stage of design and have finished the design development and moving on to the third stage. He stated Station 3 is catching up, so we may be building both at the same time.

b. Finance Committee

- i. N/A

c. Human Resources Committee

- i. N/A

d. Strategic Planning Committee

- i. N/A

IX. Firefighter Comments

- a. N/A

X. Commissioner Comments

a. Commissioner Thomae

- i. N/A

b. Commissioner Rolando

- i. I would like to thank everyone and I hope that you have a wonderful holiday season.

c. Commissioner Stanley

- i. I'd like to thank everybody, especially the personnel. Good job. I heard what you did with the structure fire on Wadmalaw. I know that's not easy. I appreciate everything you guys do and you guys have a Happy Christmas.

d. Commissioner McGougan

- i. Thank you. I hear good reports about what the guys did on that call. I appreciate the fact that we voted to increase mental health and things like that because not everybody can deal with the loss. Money well spent. I'm glad that we are fiscally responsible for where we can get the bonus out for our hardworking employees. Thanks, and Merry Christmas.

e. Commissioner White

- i. Thanks to all the Commissioners here this evening, our lawyer and all attendees. I want us to officially take the time to pray for one another. For each of our employees, let's have a joyous and safe holiday and good new year, in the name of Jesus.

f. Commissioner Durham

- i. First of all, I'd like to say thank you to Station 3 and the other station that answered the call on Wadmalaw on yesterday morning. I'm sure the family appreciate what has been done as well as the community. I want to say thank you and thanks to all the staff and happy holidays to all.

g. Commissioner Wright

- i. One, congratulations to the probationary fire personnel for going through that period. Thank you for the firefighters who responded to all the calls. Tough situations. We support you and wish everybody a Merry Christmas.

h. Commissioner Blake

- i. Well, this was supposed to be a meeting to tell you guys I'm leaving, but I guess I'm not going no place right now. When I came on the district the total number of individuals in the department were no more than 96, we have grown. The mission has changed and we have with changed it. Thank you, Chief, for having the vision to know that we need all the new equipment. Thank you guys for what you do. It makes a whole lot of difference. Drive safely, drive slower. Wherever you are going, it will be there when you get there. Thank you very much.

i. Commissioner Lehman

- i. I do appreciate this district. I appreciate all of you, the personnel and everything you do. I'm glad that we are able to give a bonus again this year and be generous with you all because you all deserve it. And I just want to wish everybody a Happy Holidays.

Commissioner Lehman made a motion to go to executive session to discuss personnel matters with the board. Commissioner Rolando seconded. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:44 pm.