



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, July 11, 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
Kevin Henson, Deputy Fire Chief
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief
Nathan Prouse, Assistant Chief
Shawn Flanagan, Battalion Chief
Teresa Vaughn, Human Resource Manager
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 June 9, 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 reported that he regretfully didn't bring up a goal for this department that our command staff settled on earlier this year was specifically peer team training and peer team mental health training. He added, how do we bridge that gap when we have members that need help, that are struggling or have had critical incidents and things like that. So, several of our staff members in attendance tonight, even a couple of our paramedic specialists attended some training a couple months ago on those peer team training and developed our own team here. He stated the best thing is that the peer-to-peer network goes across jurisdictional boundaries and state lines so sometimes the department has a need because there's somebody that you know is having a hard time or maybe contemplating suicide or any of these different things and we can go and help out those people. He added obviously, we're not trained clinicians by any means, but that training is really important to get them that first ear that they can listen and that's the most important thing; listen to them and provide them help right away. He apologized for not having a full list of people but thanked them. He stated he knows that Chief Henson, Chief Yunker, a couple others went and he really wanted to thank them for spearheading that. He states that this has been a goal, particularly for this year.
- b. Chief Kunitzer reported we concluded Assistant Fire Chief interviews last week and that notification will go out tomorrow.
- c. Chief Kunitzer reported that one of the big things we've talked about with our staffing situation is the forced overtime, having openings at Captain and Engineer and what we're doing about those and hiring positions and also getting our people

ready for those positions. He added that they recognize that forced overtime is a big issue and we as a command staff have direction, we want to go with that but we also want to input from our members that are being affected by that, so this Thursday we're having a meeting with several of our employees. He stated that they're free to attend and that we need their help to address this problem and look at ways we can move forward together to address some of the vacancies we have and being understaffed.

- d. Chief Kunitzer reported that he has 2 incidents that he would like to highlight specifically. He stated he received a note from our congresswoman here that sent along her thank you for a recent water rescue we had. He stated just literally right before that water rescue, our personnel responded to a cardiac arrest on Seabrook Island and he wanted to thank the town of Seabrook and the Seabrook Mayor. He stated that the CVR is a witness CPR. He stated and the wife begins CPR on her husband and we arrive on scene with CPR/AED and we're able that person back on scene while he's there. He stated, while that's highly unusual, that traditionally it does not happen in a cardiac arrest, that is an on scene witness save. He added that this was great work by our people on both incidents.
- e. Chief Kunitzer reported that we recently had an Engineer retirement. Robert Danahy was with us for over 11 years and had his time and retired. He added Rob always had a good attitude and we appreciate his service.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported that led to another promotion. Brian Malar recently promoted to Engineer. He stated that Brian was a firefighter for us for the last few years and he was really impressed with Brian's work ethic and his attitude, and he think he's going to make a great engineer and a future leader for us.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported that back to Seabrook, we had a hurricane exercise down there and he wants to give credit to Seabrook because they do a really good job of preparing for what could possibly happen. He states some of our Command staff as well as Madame Chair was involved in those conversations had some good outcomes.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported that we have the engagement letter from our auditors. He stated we had a kickoff meeting on that last week and we are ready to go for our audit and we will start working through that in the next month or so.
- i. Chief Kunitzer reported we had a really good turnout for our firefighter recruitment drive. He stated we had a really good number of people that came and tested. He added we had 17 interviews last week and then they're doing more this week. He stated he wanted to thank Ms. Teresa and several staff members that have been helping us with those interviews.
- j. Human Resources Report
 - i. HR Manager Teresa Vaughn reported that she wanted to start with the recognition of those that served on the interview panels because it did take some time and energy. She stated that we had Captain Clark, Captain Rourk, Engineer Breeze new engineer Millar, and Firefighter Taylor.

- ii. She stated that for the recruits we had 10 spots at St. Paul's Academy. She advised that they extended offers to 9 and they all accepted. She stated they will start at HQ on the 4th and start with the Academy on the 11th.
- iii. She reported this week's interviews are for certified firefighters. She stated we can hire up to 4. She also stated we have 2 external Engineers. One to start on 7/28 and one to start on 8/04.
- iv. Separations, she stated we had 2 separations. One firefighter and one battalion chief level.

a. Incident Report July 2025

- v. Johns Island – 195 incidents
- vi. Kiawah Island – 110 incidents
- vii. Seabrook Island – 50 incidents
- viii. Wadmalaw Island – 43 incidents

V. Financial Report (Unaudited)

a. Monthly Financial Report

- i. Controller Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 0%, the actual is 4.56%.
- ii. The Operating balance as of 6/30/2025 is \$12M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$13K.
- iii. June revenue included retiree reimbursements and an Advanced EMT Program Reimbursement.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$200,874 for May collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for June is \$97,086.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 6/30/2025.
 - 1. 2022 balance: \$23,518
 - 2. 2023 balance: \$290,065
 - 3. 2024 balance: \$16,867,645
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 - 1. Operating expenditure is \$1.9M, which includes encumbrances.
 - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$1.0M.
YTD salaries including regular and standard overtime is \$9.1M.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$643K.
 - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VI. Attorney's Update

- a. Attorney Spencer Wetmore reported it has been a very busy month. She advised we've got two items on the executive session. She also stated we are working on the property sale that we talked about last time for the new station five and we have been working with the county on that. She added we may even have to talk to them about the zoning because it's zoned differently than the existing parcel so of course we're going to have the plat refiled because their property is going to get subdivided to accomplish the transfer. She also stated that we completed the sale contract with Chief Kunitzer last week and thanked him for really spearheading that and working so closely with the family. She lastly reported that she believes it would be appropriate to go into executive session tonight for two items on the agenda.

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 on June 18th we had our regular Liollo Architect meeting progress meeting on station five.
- ii. Commissioner Thomae reported that on June 26 we selected Edifice as a contractor for station five and they are in process of negotiating this fee right now.
- iii. Commissioner Thomae reported that on July 2nd we had another Liollo progress meeting, and they presented schematic design to us.
- iv. Commissioner Thomae reported that on July 8th we had a kickoff meeting with the architects for the Kiawah River Station, so now we have two stations in design at the same time. He states it's going to continue to be busy and we're anxiously awaiting the purchase of the land because the architect Liollo is proceeding on the premise that we're going to get that contract signed.

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 Thomae

- i. Congratulations to the engineer that was promoted. Thanks to all the firefighters for doing what you do.

b. Commissioner Rolondo

- i. Engineer Millar, Congratulations to you and thank you for everything the district does.

c. Commissioner Stanley

- i. I'd like to thank the personnel. Chief told us with the call on Seabrook Island, that was the first and that saved someone's life. I appreciate everything everybody's doing. Also, for the staff, you're doing with all this hiring that I used to do that, so it's a pain. So, I congratulate y'all doing that. And to the rest of the department, just be safe out there.

d. Commissioner Blake

- i. Thank you, Chief, and for the whole staff for the mental health issue. That's a great thing. So, you know it's good we be able to talk to someone and then show them where they can get some help. So, thank you guys for doing that.

e. Commissioner Durham

- i. Kudos to everything that has been said. To the staff, to everyone, continue to be safe out there.

f. Commissioner White

- i. I just want to say to everyone, continue to be safe. I really appreciate hearing the good work you're doing and just to take care of one another and just like Leroy said about the mental health, I feel as though that's a very important thing, so thank you.

g. Commissioner Brooks

- i. I agree with all of that. Mental health is what we've all seen, things that you can't unsee and it's excellent that we're taking the time and the money to address that.

h. Commissioner Wright

- i. Thank you. I just thank everyone for the job they're doing. You know, our experience and saving people is absolutely terrific. We just should make sure the community we serve understands what we're doing and the success rate we're having. Thank you.

i. Commissioner Lehman

- i. I was glad that the Mayor of Seabrook Island recognized the saving of a life and the gentleman that they saved actually attended the ceremony. So that was an even a bigger plus is that he was able to attend and thank the firefighters and everybody that was involved in person. So, I thought that was real good.

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

Meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.