



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 13, 2026, 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
Brooks McGougan
Jackie Stanley
Robert Wright
Larry Wolahan
Terrilyn Durham
Leroy Blake

Members Not Present

Others Present

Ryan Kunitzer, Fire Chief
Shawn Flanagan, Assistant Chief
Brian Yuncker, Assistant Chief
Tim Pristatskiy, Chief FM
Teresa Vaughn, HR Manager
Krista Brown, HR 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 June 8, 2026
 - i. Commissioner Lehman motioned, Commissioner White seconded, none opposed, the motion was carried.

III. Public Comments

- a. N/A

IV. New Business

- a. Recognition of Partners for Smoke Alarm Blitz
 - i. Chief Tim Pristatskiy recognized partners supporting smoke alarm blitz efforts after two fire-related fatalities. The blitz reached 140+ households, installed 195+ smoke alarms (worth \$1,700+), and delivered fire safety education.
 - ii. Recognized Partners: American Red Cross (Lowcountry Red Cross), Charleston County Sheriff's Office, South Carolina State Fire, Town of Kiawah Island, Walmart Supercenter #2348 (James Island), and Krispy Kreme #625 (James Island)

V. Chief's Report

- a. Chief Kunitzer reported that District crews were busy over the 4th of July weekend, responding to incidents and supporting professional fireworks displays through the Fire Marshal's Office. While several challenges were encountered, the events were safe and opportunities for improvement were identified.
- b. Chief Kunitzer recognized personnel from Station 4 for their thoughtful community outreach. He explained that the Bohn family, longtime residents of Kiawah Island, has generously provided meals for many years. In appreciation of their continued support, Station 4 personnel took the initiative to create and present the family with a Community Service Award at their home.
- c. Chief Kunitzer expressed his appreciation to Assistant Chief Yuncker, his team, the administrative staff, and all personnel who contributed to the success of Recruit

Class One. He reported that the graduation ceremony was held the previous Friday and thanked the Commissioners for attending. He also noted that a Family Night was held the evening before graduation, during which the recruits demonstrated their skills through live-fire training evolutions. He commended the training staff for successfully coordinating the 20-week recruit academy. He reported that the nine recruits completed training with certifications and skills that included EMT, Driver Operator – Pumper, and firefighter competencies. He added that the recruits had one remaining week of training before being assigned to shift operations.

- d. Chief Kunitzer recognized Chief Flanagan for his dedication during the holiday weekend. He reported that, in response to staffing shortages caused by employee sick leave, Chief Flanagan volunteered to work, helping to maintain staffing levels and avoid forced overtime for other personnel.
- e. Chief Kunitzer reported that the FEMA grant applications approved by the Commission at the previous meeting had been submitted. He also advised that Chief Henson was attending the National Fire Academy, where grant applications are reviewed and funding recommendations are made. Although Chief Henson is prohibited from participating in the review of the District's applications, Chief Kunitzer noted that the experience is providing valuable insight into the grant evaluation process and potential funding opportunities for future projects, including fire station improvements. Chief Henson is expected to provide additional information upon his return.
- f. Chief Kunitzer reported that the District will be implementing a new software platform, First Due, during the current year. He explained that the system will consolidate several existing fire service programs into a single platform, including asset management, work order and ticket tracking, scheduling software, and other operational modules. Chief Kunitzer noted that Chief Gamard will oversee the implementation of the new system.
- g. Chief Kunitzer reported that a portion of the District's new radio equipment had been received, representing an investment of approximately \$1.5 million. He thanked the Commissioners for including the funding in the current fiscal year's budget and advised that the new radios are expected to be deployed to personnel over the next several weeks.
- h. Chief Kunitzer reported that he recently provided a presentation regarding the District's request for funding from the Town of Kiawah Island's State Accommodations Tax revenue. He advised that the District had applied for approximately \$115,000 in funding and was awarded approximately \$90,000 to support the District's paramedic program on Kiawah Island. Chief Kunitzer noted that funding was more limited this year due to the number of projects requesting support, but expressed appreciation for the award and continued partnership.
- i. Chief Kunitzer reported that the District has hired additional Paramedic Specialists and that the second squad will be placed into service on Sunday, July 19th. He explained that one squad will be stationed on Johns Island to provide coverage for Johns Island and Wadmalaw Island, while the other squad will remain stationed on Kiawah Island to provide service in that area.
- j. Chief Kunitzer reported that the District has been having productive conversations

with Battalion Chiefs and Acting Battalion Chiefs with a focus on leadership development and succession planning. He noted that, despite recent departures and staffing challenges, the District is working to develop the next group of leaders and continue strengthening the organization.

k. Incident Report June 2026

- i. Johns Island – 229 incidents
- ii. Kiawah Island – 95 incidents
- iii. Seabrook Island – 43 incidents
- iv. Wadmalaw Island – 39 incidents

l. Human Resources Report

Teresa Vaughn, Human Resource Manager, reported the following:

- i. Hiring Activity:
 - Paramedic Specialist
 - 2 Part Time Paramedic Specialist going Full Time
- ii. Open/upcoming postings:
 - Deputy Fire Marshall, upcoming
 - Battalion Chief, upcoming
- iii. Separations:
 - 1 Engineer
 - 1 Firefighter
 - 1 Academy Recruit
- iv. Workers' Comp Time Off:
 - 1 Firefighter
 - 1 Paramedic Specialist
- v. Staffing Levels:
 - Ops BC – 5/6
 - Captain – 27/30
 - Engineer – 30/33
 - Firefighter – 53/54
 - Paramedic Specialist – 3/3 + 2 PT

VI. Financial Report

a. Monthly Financial Report (Unaudited)

- i. Danielle Chambers reported that the Remaining Goal is 0%, the actual is 7.01%.

- ii. The Operating balance as of 6/30/26 is \$13M. The Local Government Investment Pool balance is \$14K.
- iii. June revenue included retiree reimbursements.
- iv. The Charleston County wire transfer received was \$215,512 for May collections.
- v. Non-standard overtime for June is \$101K.
- vi. Capital Projects bank balances as of 6/30/26.
 - 2023 balance: \$61,782
 - 2024 balance: \$14,563,901
- vii. Dashboard Summary
 - 1. Operating expenditure YTD is \$22.4M, which includes encumbrances.
 - 2. YTD non-standard overtime is \$1.3M.
YTD salaries, including regular and standard overtime, is \$9.5M.
YTD vacation/sick pay is \$845K.
 - 3. No COVID-19 related personnel expenses YTD.

VII. Attorneys' Update

- a. Attorney Spencer Wetmore advised the Commission if it wishes to it would be appropriate to enter executive session for legal advice.

VII. Unfinished/Old Business

- a. N/A

VIII. Committee Report

a. Building Committee

- i. Commissioner White reported that the Building Committee met and advised that the project is progressing, although the process has been moving slowly. He stated that additional information will be provided to the Commission as it becomes available.

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 McGougan

- i. Commissioner McGougan expressed his sincere pride in the outstanding graduation ceremony held for Recruit Class One. He recognized Chief Kunitzer, his staff, and all personnel involved for their hard work and dedication in making the event a success. Commissioner McGougan commended the team for their continued commitment to excellence and wished everyone continued safety.

b. Commissioner Durham

- i. N/A

c. Commissioner Wright

- i. N/A

d. Commissioner Blake

- i. Commissioner Blake expressed his appreciation to the District for the successful recruit graduation program and the installation of the smoke detectors throughout the community. He commended the District's efforts in providing early detection measures that help save lives and thanked all St. John's Fire District employees for their continued dedication and service. Commissioner Blake encouraged everyone to remain safe, particularly while spending time in the sun, around the water, and while traveling.

e. Commissioner Wolohan

- i. Commissioner Wolohan shared his thoughts on the recent recruit graduation ceremony, stating that he felt it was an excellent event and commending the new recruits for their individuality, personalities, and enthusiasm. He noted that the class represented a diverse group of individuals and expressed his excitement about their future with the District. Commissioner Wolohan encouraged the recruits and all District personnel to take pride in their profession and enjoy the strong support of the community and the Commission. He also recognized the graduation speaker for delivering an impactful message emphasizing the importance of taking care of family, serving the citizens, and supporting one another within the organization.

f. Commissioner Rolando

- i. Commissioner Rolando congratulated the graduates of Recruit Class One and expressed regret that he was unable to attend the graduation ceremony. He thanked all personnel involved in supporting the Fourth of July fireworks operations and recognized Chief Pristatskiy and the team for their dedication and hard work during a challenging weekend. Commissioner Rolando also commended the District's social media efforts and noted the positive impact of keeping the community informed.

g. Commissioner Stanley

- i. Commissioner Stanley stated that he supported the comments made by the other Commissioners and did not wish to repeat their remarks. He expressed his appreciation for the recent recruit graduation ceremony and commented on the beauty of the church where the event was held. Commissioner Stanley thanked everyone involved and encouraged all personnel to remain safe.
- h. Commissioner White
 - i. Commissioner White expressed his appreciation to all personnel involved in the smoke detector initiative, noting the successful installation of 185 smoke detectors as an outstanding accomplishment. He also commended the District for the recent recruit graduation ceremony, recognizing the excellent planning and execution by Chief Kunitzer, staff, and all personnel involved. Commissioner White highlighted the sense of unity and camaraderie he observed among employees and their families during the event. He stated that the support of employees' families plays an important role and emphasized that the District operates as one team and one family. He thanked everyone involved, from the most senior to the newest members of the organization, for their dedication and commitment.
- i. Commissioner Lehman
 - i. Commissioner Lehman shared her appreciation for the recent recruit graduation ceremony, stating that she found the recruits and their accomplishments very impressive. She noted that the training video provided valuable insight into the recruits' preparation and allowed Commissioners and members of the public to better understand the dedication and effort involved in their training. Commissioner Lehman also expressed her appreciation for the District's smoke detector initiative and future community outreach efforts, noting the importance of early detection in preventing loss of life. She thanked Chief Flanagan for his dedication and willingness to assist with staffing needs during the holiday weekend, recognizing his efforts to support the District's operations.

Commissioner Lehman made a motion to go to executive session to discuss receipt of legal advice and personnel matters with the board. Commissioner White second. All in favor, none opposed, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:31 pm.