

SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT

911 North County Highway 393, Santa Rosa Beach, Florida 32459

"Prompt, Competent, Caring Response in Time of Need"



The Board of Fire Commissioners of the South Walton Fire District will hold a regular meeting on **January 12, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.** on the third floor of the South Walton Fire District Logistics Building.

The agenda will include, but not be limited to the following:

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Comment*
- III. Approval of Minutes
Regular Board Meeting: 12.08.2025
- IV. Secretary/Treasurer's Report
- V. Attorney's Report
Title Insurance Claim Update
- VI. Chief's Report
- VII. Committee Reports
- VIII. Unfinished/Old Business
- IX. New Business
Board Action: Resolution 2026-01 Local Mitigation Strategy
Ryan H. Crawford, Fire Chief
- X. Public Comment*
- XI. Adjournment

***Note:** Persons who wish to be placed on the agenda must contact the Administrative Assistant within five days of any meeting and provide the name of the person who will be speaking and the subject to be addressed. If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board of Fire Commissioners of the South Walton Fire District concerning any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings and that, for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes – January 12, 2026

*****PENDING APPROVAL*****

Commissioners Present: David Bailey, Brian Christenson, Brian Farmer, Charlotte Flynt, Maurice Gilbert, Mike Stange

Commissioners Absent: Mark Foley

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Bailey announced that a quorum was present.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Christenson and seconded by Commissioner Farmer, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the December 8, 2025, Board of Fire Commissioners' regular meeting.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report: Commissioner Farmer read the November 2025 cash report into the record.

Attorney's Report: Attorney Youell presented a brief of her services for the month of December 2025.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Gilbert and seconded by Commissioner Farmer, the Board unanimously approved Attorney Youell's December 2025 billing statement for payment.

Fire Chief's Report: Chief Crawford reviewed the Emergency Response Activity Report which included Beach Safety Responses. Chief Crawford also presented an overview of SWFD's major incidents since the regular meeting in December.

Chief Crawford and Fiscal Officer Martin attended a three-day Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) course specific to the 7(k) overtime exemption under the FLSA. This training provided critical guidance on the application of overtime calculation, incentive pay, compensatory time, and scheduling implications under various work cycles being implemented and will help ensure the District remains compliant.

SWFD hosted the 11th Annual Polar Bear Plunge on New Year's Day in partnership with Shunk Gulley Oyster Bar. Special recognition went to Commissioners Bailey and Stange, who participated alongside their families. The event drew approximately 1,100 registered participants and generated approximately \$9,000 in net proceeds. Funds will directly support community risk reduction initiatives, including free CPR training and fire-prevention education programs.

Chief Crawford and Fiscal Officer Martin met with County Administration on the renewal of the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN), authorizing South Walton Fire District as the designated EMS provider for South Walton. The District's current five-year agreement expires September 30, 2026. Chief Crawford anticipates presenting a draft agreement at the regular meeting in February.

Several members of the Fire District attended the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association Fire & EMS Conference on January 5-9, 2026. This event provided advanced hands-on training, workshops, committee meetings, and vendor engagement. Hands-On Training ("HOT") classes were conducted in partnership with Orange County Fire Rescue at its new \$54 million training facility. The ALS competition was hosted at Universal Studios, providing a unique and efficient competition format. PIO McClintock supported FFCA staff by photographing the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) competition. Chief LaTour toured a recently completed City of Orlando fire station to review design best practices. Division Chief of Training Stone served as a conference presenter with his course, The Grab Analysis. SWFD was well represented.

The Florida Special District Legislative Forum is scheduled January 13-15, 2026. The forum focuses on legislative engagement, governance, fiscal oversight, and compliance. Educational sessions include updates from the Department of Financial Services, Auditor General audit findings, and emerging cybersecurity risks. Chief Crawford is scheduled to attend a Southeastern Association of Fire Chief's Winter Business Meeting on January 16, 2026.

The Florida Fire Chiefs' Association (FFCA) is tracking 126 bills. Notable legislation includes the following:

HB 1427 / SB 1586 – 911 System Consolidation

These companion bills would mandate the consolidation of all Public Safety Answering Points within each county into a single countywide or regional 911 "unified 911 call center," with no parallel or secondary PSAPs permitted for routine operations by January 1, 2029.

SB 1286 / HB 1129 – Firefighter Recruitment and Mental Health

These bills address workforce shortages and first-responder mental health. They create a state-funded firefighter recruitment bonus program similar to law enforcement and establish a First Responder Institute focused on behavioral health, suicide prevention, and burnout mitigation.

HB 735 / SB 872 – Certification Reciprocity and Cancer Risk Reduction

This legislation removes barriers for out-of-state firefighters by requiring Florida to recognize substantially equivalent training and certifications. It essentially streamlines out-of-state certification reciprocity and strengthens cancer-prevention practices in the Florida fire service.

SB 984 / HB 813 – Firefighter Cancer Benefits

These bills amend and expand firefighter cancer benefit statutes by removing the requirement that retirees remain on their former employer's health plan to qualify for benefits and establish a one-year post-employment eligibility window for death benefits.

CS/CS/HJR 209 – Property Tax Reform and Public Safety Funding

Proposes expanded homestead exemptions while prohibiting reductions in public safety funding below FY 2025-26 or FY 2026-27 levels.

Chief Crawford is scheduled to meet with Senator Jim Boyd, Senate Majority Leader and incoming Senate President designee, on January 20, 2026, to discuss FFCA's legislative priorities and long-term public safety initiatives.

Chief Crawford and Chief LaTour are scheduled to meet with Florida Forestry representatives on February 21, 2026, to continue discussions toward potential partnerships which could support or offset future fire station locations.

Staff received the boundary survey for the Highway 393 South property currently in use by SWFD's Beach Safety Division. A Request for Proposal for architectural and engineering services was issued January 5, 2026, for a multi-use facility to serve the Fire & Life Safety and Beach Safety Divisions. Responses are due February 12, 2026, with selection committee evaluations scheduled for February 19, 2026. Staff anticipate presenting a recommendation at the Board's regular meeting in April.

With roof issues resolved at the Mack Bayou Fire Station, Staff is proceeding with corrective action to address HVAC condensation. This action will require the removal of existing roof batt insulation and will necessitate temporary relocation of fire station living quarters for 4–5 days. During this period, a fifth-wheel RV will be placed at the Fire Station to house on-duty fire crews to preserve optimal Zone 4 response coverage and continued use of apparatus bays, decontamination extractors, gear dryers, bunker gear storage, the station gym, and personnel lockers. These improvements align with the broader Mack Bayou Fire Station renovation plan scheduled for this year, which includes replacement of all ceiling tiles, new flooring in crew quarters, living room, offices, and kitchen, and the addition of doors to individual bunk rooms.

The advertising and hiring process for seasonal lifeguards for the upcoming Beach Safety Season has begun. The beach safety season officially kicks off March 1st.

Firefighter/Paramedic Jimmy Carter will retire on January 30, 2026, after nearly twenty years of service to SWFD. Jimmy also had prior service with Walton County EMS.

SWFD's Annual Awards Ceremony will be held February 21, 2026. Commissioners were encouraged to attend.

The SWFD Administrative Offices will be closed on January 19, 2026, in observation of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Committee Reports: None

Unfinished/Old Business: None

New Business:

Chief Crawford presented a Board Action whereas Staff recommended the Board approve and adopt the Walton County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) by Resolution 2026-01. Adoption by the Board is required to finalize eligibility for FEMA hazard mitigation grant funding. Walton County Emergency Management Director Jeff Goldberg explained further that the LMS establishes countywide priorities to reduce risk to life, property, infrastructure, and critical services from flooding, severe weather, coastal erosion, wildfire, and other identified hazards.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Christenson and seconded by Commissioner Gilbert, the Board unanimously adopted Resolution 2026-01: Walton County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) reflecting scrivener revisions.

Public Comment: Members of the public were invited to comment. There was no public comment.

Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.