

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 **April 13, 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:

**Special Item: Proclamation - National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week
April 12 – 18 , 2026
Chair David Bailey**

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Comment*
- III. Approval of Minutes
Regular Board Meeting: 03.09.2026
- IV. Secretary/Treasurer's Report
- V. Chief's Report
- VI. Committee Reports
- VII. Unfinished/Old Business
- VIII. New Business
**Board Action: Architectural and Design Services –
110 South County Highway 393
Assistant Chief Daniel LaTour**
- IX. Public Comment*
- X. 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 – April 13, 2026

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

Commissioners Present: David Bailey, Brian Christenson, Brian Farmer, Charlotte Flynt, Mark Foley (left at 4:24 pm), Maurice Gilbert, Mike Stange

Commissioners via Video Conference: Mark Foley (joined at 4:28 pm)

Commissioners Absent: None

Special Presentation: Chair Bailey read a proclamation into the record declaring the week of April 12-18, 2026, to be Public Safety Telecommunications Week in South Walton.

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m.

Public Comment: None

Chair 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 March 9, 2026, Board of Fire Commissioners' regular meeting.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report: Commissioner Farmer read the February 2026 cash report into the record.

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 March.

Chief Crawford announced the resignation of our General Counsel, Attorney Rene Youell. Attorney Youell's resignation letter was included in the Board packet.

The Walton Fire Council, in collaboration with County Emergency Management and the Florida Forest Service, continues weekly coordination calls to evaluate if conditions warrant recommending a countywide burn ban. Chief Crawford stated that citizens are urged to avoid open burning if possible and to exercise extreme caution if burning is necessary.

SWFD participated in a regional disaster tabletop exercise on March 12, 2026, at Resurrection Catholic Church. The multi-jurisdictional tested participating agencies abilities to manage a large-scale mass casualty event.

In March, Chief Crawford attended the Congressional Fire Services Institute's Annual National Fire and Emergency Services Symposium in Washington, D.C. alongside members of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association. Topics discussed included reopening the National Fire Academy while it remains shuttered during the Department of Homeland Security funding stalemate, reauthorization of the FirstNet first responder priority cellular and data network, seeking an exemption for fire apparatus from EPA-mandated diesel

exhaust regulations, and advocating for greater oversight of micromobility and lithium-ion powered consumer devices.

Chief Crawford introduced Assistant Chief Jason Fair. Chief Fair will oversee coordination among the Administrative Divisions, including Finance, Human Resources, Life Safety, Public Information, and Administrative Support Staff.

Staff began advertising internally for the Assistant Chief of Operations position. Assistant Chief Brian Hughes has held this role for the past seven years and plans to retire later this year. Administration's goal is to identify Chief Hughes' successor to provide for a transition period with overlap ensuring continuity of leadership and operations.

SWFD's bi-annual promotional assessment process for the rank of Sergeant is underway. The written examination is complete, and the practical assessment portion will occur in May. A total of nine candidates submitted qualified applications and are participating in the process. Chief Crawford wished best of luck to all candidates.

SWFD held a Promotional and Pinning Ceremony on March 24, 2026, swearing in nine firefighters and Assistant Communications Director Amanda Williamson. Following the pinning ceremony, the following were formally promoted: Lieutenant Jason Durko to Battalion Chief, Sergeant Josh Pitts to Lieutenant, Firefighter Adam Yohn to Sergeant. Chief Crawford congratulated each of member on their well-earned promotions and career milestones.

Chief Crawford announced that Battalion Chief Nate Brown retired at the end of March following more than twenty-seven years of service to the Fire District. A retirement celebration honoring Chief Brown is scheduled for May 12, 2026.

Chief Crawford and several SWFD members plan to attend National Fallen Firefighter Memorial Weekend in Emmitsburg, Maryland, on May 2-3, 2026. The annual candlelight vigil and memorial service will take place on the campus of the National Fire Academy to honor firefighters from across the nation who died in the line of duty. SWFD Firefighter Dan Corcoran's service will be permanently etched on the National Fallen Firefighter Memorial. As part of National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend, all SWFD fire stations will be illuminated in red beginning the evening of April 24 – May 3, 2026, in conjunction with this national tribute.

On April 6-9, 2026, Chief Crawford attended Florida Fire Chiefs' Association regional meetings in Bonita Springs, Plant City, and Orlando. These forums provided an opportunity to engage with fire service leadership statewide and deliver updates on behalf of FFCA leadership regarding legislative affairs, including property tax reform, anticipated special sessions on budget negotiations and tax reform, and updates from the Division Director at the State Fire Marshal's Office. Two additional regional meetings remain scheduled: Northeast Region in Starke on May 8, 2026, and Northwest Region at NWFSC on May 22, 2026.

On April 20-24, 2026, SWFD members will travel to Indianapolis to attend FDIC International. The conference provides educational sessions, workshops, hands-on training evolutions, and a tradeshow featuring more than 800 vendors. One of the most valuable aspects of attendance is the networking opportunity it provides with fire and EMS professionals from around the world.

Division Chief Stone will present "The Grab Analysis" as one of the conference breakout sessions. Additionally, as part of a longstanding tradition, SWFD is sponsoring travel and

attendance for SWFD's 2024 Fire Officer of the Year, Lieutenant Luke Lewis, and 2024 Firefighter of the Year, Sergeant John Bitler.

An Audit Committee meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to allow SWFD's auditing firm to present its draft report for 2025 and provide the audit committee with an opportunity to ask questions. The finalized audit report is tentatively scheduled to be presented at May's regular Board meeting.

Staff conducted twenty-four firefighter candidate interviews resulting in seven candidates being offered employment. Additionally, staff hired two emergency telecommunicators to fill critical vacancies within the 911 Communications Division. All new hires will begin on April 20, 2026.

SWFD's administrative building remodel is complete. Chief Crawford expressed appreciation of Assistant Chief LaTour, Facilities Maintenance Supervisor DeNardo, and Maintenance Technician Chilcutt for their efforts in moving this project forward. In addition, Chief Crawford acknowledged the patience of members who had to be temporarily relocated during the construction.

Chief Crawford reported the donation of a 2014 ambulance to the DeFuniak Springs Fire Department. Fire Chief Sheffield indicated that the ambulance would fill a critical support role for their department by enhancing emergency response capability, improving firefighter safety, and increasing capacity during extended or complex incidents. A letter from Chief Sheffield was included in the Board packet.

Chief Crawford reminded the Fire Board of the requirement for all elected officials to complete annual ethics training.

Chief Crawford informed the Board that Walton County intends to hold a tentative budget hearing on September 14, 2026, which conflicts with SWFD's regular Board meeting. Staff will present a Board Action at May's regular meeting to formally recommend moving SWFD's regular September Board meeting and tentative budget hearing to September 15, 2026. Additionally, Staff selected September 21, 2026, for SWFD's final budget hearing.

SWFD's PIO presented the Fire District's 2025 Annual Report and provided copies for the Fire Board.

SWFD Administrative Offices will be closed May 25, 2026, in observance of Memorial Day.

Committee Reports: None

Unfinished/Old Business: None

New Business: Assistant Chief Daniel LaTour presented a Board Action: Architectural and Design Services – 110 South County Highway 393, whereas Staff recommended the Board grant the Fire Chief authority to execute an Agreement for Professional Services with Short Elliot Hendrickson, Inc. to begin the schematic design of the building. After a lengthy discussion, a motion was duly made by Commissioner Gilbert and seconded by Commissioner Farmer, to grant the Fire Chief authority to execute an Agreement for Professional Services with Short Elliot Hendrickson, Inc. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Foley noted as absent for the vote.

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

Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.