

SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes – June 8, 2020

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

Commissioners Present (via video conference): Brian Christenson, Tom Cooper, Charlotte Flynt, Mark B. Foley, Maurice Gilbert, Mike Stange, Rick Talbert

Commissioners Absent: None

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m.

Commissioner Gilbert announced a quorum was present.

Chairman Gilbert read a proclamation into the record whereas the South Walton Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners declared the week of June 7-13, 2020, to be South Walton Fire District Beach Safety/Rip Current Awareness Week in South Walton.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Flynt and seconded by Commissioner Talbert, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the May 11, 2020, Board of Fire Commissioners meeting to include a revision to address that all votes were taken by roll call.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report: Commissioner Flynt read the April 2020 cash report into the record.

Attorney's Report:

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Christenson, the Board unanimously approved Attorney Youell's May 2020 billing statement.

Fire Chief's Report:

Chief Crawford reviewed the Emergency Response Activity Report which included Beach Safety Responses.

On May 24, 2020, SWFD crews responded to a reported structure fire where structural damage was limited due to the quick and aggressive actions of SWFD firefighters. The State Fire Marshal's investigation determined this fire to likely have been set intentionally. The subject was placed in custody of law enforcement and transported to a local facility for medical evaluation. Property damage was estimated to be \$100K.

On June 7, 2020, SWFD crews responded to a two-story residential structure fire and arrived to find an unoccupied attached carriage house with heavy smoke showing from the second floor. Crews took an aggressive fire attack and were able to prevent the fire from spreading into the main home. The cause of the fire was determined to be accidental. Property damage was estimated to be \$50K - \$70K.

Due to red flag surf conditions throughout the Memorial Day weekend and it being the first weekend of Florida's reopening short-term rentals, the weekend resulted in significant response activity for SWFD's Beach Safety Division. SWFD's Beach Safety Division recorded attendance of approximately 45K with twelve water rescues occurring within 48 hours. Tragically, SWFD crews experienced a drowning on May 24, 2020, approximately 3.5 miles from an SWFD lifeguard tower. On Memorial Day, SWFD lifeguards responded to a possible drowning near Seacrest Beach where the victim was

found in the surf in cardiac arrest. The patient was successfully resuscitated by lifeguards and paramedics then transported to a hospital.

Much of May 2020 activity continued with heavy focus on Covid-19, recovery from recent wildfires, a busy Memorial Day weekend, as well as preparations for impacts from Tropical Storm Cristobal.

Walton County received significant beach erosion associated with Tropical Storm Cristobal making water rescue responses and lifeguard roving to secondary and tertiary zones challenging as they had to respond on foot to these impacted areas of our beaches.

On May 26, 2020, SWFD administrative offices reopened for services to the public through appointment only. On June 8, 2020, SWFD began accepting all in person services. SWFD continues to employ social distancing strategies and require any individual entering its facilities beyond the lobby areas to participate in thermoscans and health surveillance questioning.

SWFD received the official estimate of property valuation for FY21 from Walton County's Property Appraiser. Valuation is 8.1% higher than the figure used in the current budget.

Chief Crawford announced that Sergeant testing previously postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions has been rescheduled for late July 2020.

On May 14, 2020, SWFD personnel supported Walton County Department of Health and Walton County Emergency Management with drive thru Covid-19 collection testing at Butler Elementary School.

SWFD's EMS Division personnel are working with state and local partners on protocol development and MOU's to position SWFD as a stakeholder in any mass community vaccination efforts for Covid-19. As a stakeholder, SWFD will not only assure its first responders are able to access the vaccine once it becomes available but will position SWFD to assist with providing mass vaccinations through the state. Chief Crawford will advise the Fire Board of details as a vaccine becomes available.

Chief Crawford updated the Fire Board regarding individuals climbing on SWFD lifeguard towers and specifically an instance where an individual was using them as a prop for political purposes. A letter was mailed to the individual affirming that lifeguard towers are for the protection of beach patrons while emphasizing those type activities are prohibited. In addition, "no trespassing" / "stay off tower" signage has been placed on all lifeguard towers.

Chief Anderson worked with Attorney Youell to draft a Request for Proposal for interested architectural firms to provide conceptual designs for future fire station projects. This project was funded within the current budget. Chief Crawford anticipates having conceptual designs for consideration by September.

Firefighter Dawson Beale was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in a private promotional pinning ceremony held on May 22, 2020. SWFD has extended conditional offers of employment to two new firefighters scheduled to begin new hire orientation the week of June 22, 2020.

A swearing in and pinning ceremony has been scheduled for June 10, 2020 at 2pm for Firefighter Richie Frank and Communications Operators Angela Gilluly and Lonnie Gower.

Chief Crawford reminded the Fire Commissioners to submit the "Form 1" Statement of Financial Interests to the Supervisor of Elections no later than July 1, 2020.

SWFD's Administrative Office will be closed on Friday, July 3, 2020, in observation of Independence Day.

The next regularly scheduled Board of Fire Commissioners meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 13, 2020 at 4pm.

Committee Reports: Commissioner Flynt informed the Fire Board that the Pension Board met via Zoom on June 1, 2020. As of March 31, 2020, the Pension Plan had suffered a loss of 4.11% for the fiscal year to date which had been gained back as of the June 1, 2020 meeting.

Unfinished/Old Business: Attorney Youell presented a Board Action Item for Wildfire Mitigation / Land Development Code Modification Recommendations whereas the Fire Board directed Attorney Youell to draft two (2) separate letters recommending changes to the Walton County Land Development Code to allow alternative fire-resistant landscape coverings and to encourage underbrush maintenance as a wildfire mitigation strategy. Attorney Youell read both letters in their entirety.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Talbert and seconded by Commissioner Foley, the Board unanimously approved the action as presented and directed Staff to present the recommended revisions to the Walton County Board of County Commissioners as soon as possible.

New Business: Fiscal Officer Carole Martin presented a Board Action Item whereas recent changes to the Internal Revenue Code have created a need to amend the South Walton Fire District Firefighters' Retirement System to remain in compliance. The minimum required distribution age has changed from 70 ½ to 72.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Flynt and seconded by Commissioner Cooper, the Board unanimously approved Resolution 20-01 Pension Amendment as presented.

Public Comment: None

Roll call votes were practiced during this meeting.

Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.