

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 12, 2021, at 4:00 p.m.** at the South Walton Fire District Administration building.

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

- Special Item: National Public Safety Telecommunications Week
April 11 – 17, 2021 Proclamation
Commissioner Maurice Gilbert**
- I. Call to Order
 - II. Approval of Minutes
Regular Board Meeting: 03.08.2021
 - III. Secretary/Treasurer's Report
 - IV. Attorney's Report
 - V. Chief's Report
 - VI. Committee Reports
 - VII. Unfinished/Old Business
 - VIII. New Business
**Board Action: Beach Safety Staffing Presentation
Beach Safety Director David Vaughan**
**Board Advisory: 393 South Property
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 with respect to 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 12, 2021

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

Commissioners Present: Tom Cooper, Mark B. Foley, Maurice Gilbert, Mike Stange, Rick Talbert

Commissioners Absent: Brian Christenson, Charlotte Flynt

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m.

Special Item:

Chairman Gilbert read into the record the National Public Telecommunications Week Proclamation, proclaiming April 11 – 17, 2021, as Public Telecommunications Week in South Walton in honor of the men and women whose diligence and professionalism keep the community, citizens, and visitors safe.

Chairman Gilbert announced that there was a quorum present.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Talbert, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the March 8, 2021, Board of Fire Commissioners regular meeting.

Secretary/Treasurer’s Report: In Commissioner Flynt’s absence, Fiscal Officer Martin read the February 2021 cash report into the record.

Attorney’s Report:

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Talbert and seconded by Commissioner Foley, the Board unanimously approved Attorney Youell’s March 2021 billing statement.

Fire Chief’s Report:

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

Chief Crawford reported the Interlocal Agreements with Walton County related to beach bonfire fee collection and EMS ambulance services have been executed by the Walton County Board of County Commissioners.

SWFD facilitated a promotional pinning ceremony for Assistant Chief Daniel LaTour.

On March 26, 2021, Chief Crawford and Fire Marshal Sanchez attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the pedestrian underpass at Inlet Beach.

Chief Crawford met with Ocean City-Wright Fire District leadership to discuss the planning and activation of the Regional Emergency Response Plan. SWFD will continue to explore opportunities with other agencies should they be mutually beneficial.

Chief Crawford announced that labor negotiations began April 5, 2021.

On April 7-8, 2021, Chief Crawford attended a Florida Association of Special Districts (FASD) quarterly membership meeting and a board of directors meeting. FASD's fall quarterly meeting will be held October 28-29 at Sandestin.

A retirement ceremony has been scheduled to honor Sergeant John Bunnicelli's twenty-three years of service to SWFD on April 23, 2021 at 3pm at the SWFD Logistics Building.

Assistant Chiefs Hughes and LaTour attended a Florida Fire Service / Chipola Forestry Cooperators meeting via the Zoom platform.

Staff attended a Walton County Communications Working Group meeting. These meetings are scheduled to be held quarterly to enhance radio communications between all Walton County public safety agencies.

Chiefs Crawford and LaTour met with Panama City Beach Fire Department leadership to tour their newest facility for consideration in future SWFD fire station designs. Updating the current mutual aid agreement between SWFD and PCBFD, joint training opportunities, and details related to FFCA Executive Development Conference plans were also discussed.

The written portion of the Lieutenant and District Chief promotional exams have been completed. The practical portion is scheduled for April 27, 2021.

Plans for SWFD to facilitate the NWFL Region Fire Chief's meeting in May 2021 are underway.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) for auditing services is currently being advertised. SWFD's Audit Committee has scheduled a meeting at 2:30pm on May 10, 2021, prior to the regular meeting of the Fire Board at 4pm, to evaluate all RFP responses.

Division Chief Tim Orenic is scheduled to speak at the Emerald Coast Emergency Care Symposium on June 3, 2021 at the Okaloosa Island Resort and Conference Center.

Staff continues to recruit a Division Chief of Training, Communications Director, and numerous Communications Operators as well as seasonal lifeguards.

At the request of State Fire Marshal Division Director Julius Halas and CFO Jimmy Patronis, Chief Crawford will be representing the NWFL Fire Service at a press conference on April 19, 2021.

On April 29, 2021, Staff will attend a ribbon cutting at the Walton Works Public Safety Complex.

Chief Crawford presented SWFD's 2020 Annual Report and thanked staff for their participation in reflecting SWFD activities from a challenging year.

The next regularly scheduled Board of Fire Commissioners meeting will be at 4pm on Monday, May 10, 2021.

Committee Reports: None

Unfinished/Old Business: None

New Business: Beach Safety Director Vaughan presented a proposal whereas staff requested board approval to proceed with Beach Safety Division full-time personnel enhancements. This recommendation consisted of hiring one additional supervisory Lieutenant and four additional Beach Safety Officer (BSO) positions. The new full-time positions will reduce the seasonal workforce demands to a more manageable number of seasonal lifeguards.

Director Vaughan stated there is pay competition with adjacent agencies that is making it difficult to hire seasonal employees. Commissioner Talbert stated the issue of pay is certainly important and needs to be addressed. Talbert further stated that there are components that need addressing in addition to personnel including the flag warning system message, expanding beach safety service and code enforcement. Prior to the meeting, Commissioner Talbert asked staff to provide data of the number of double red flag citations issued. Director Vaughan stated that Tony Cornman, Director of Code Enforcement, reported that there were nine citations issued in addition to numerous warnings. Mr. Cornman could not provide an exact number of warnings due to difficulty retrieving the data.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Talbert and seconded by Commissioner Foley, the Board unanimously approved to proceed with the requested personnel enhancements to the Beach Safety Division.

Commissioner Talbert stated the Beach Safety Division is doing a great job and thanked Director Vaughan for his leadership.

Commissioner Gilbert opened the floor to public comment. Suzanne Harris, Edgewater Beach Owners Association President, stated her concern over recent drownings under single and double red flag warnings. Ms. Harris stated that SWFD has done a wonderful job with what the Walton County Tourist Development Council (TDC) has given them. Ms. Harris further stated that the TDC should allocate significant additional funds for the expansion of the Beach Safety Program.

Charles Galloway agreed with Ms. Harris' concerns and added that during the recent incidents he saw no posts regarding single or double red flags on the Walton County Tourist Development Council's social media page informing their readers of the dangerous rip currents. Galloway also stated that in two weeks they are petitioning the TDC to switch their advertising to public safety while tourists are in the area. He stated the TDC's marketing funds should be redirected to assist in educating the public instead of trying to bring more people to the area. Mr. Galloway further stated that he is pushing for a special meeting of the TDC to discuss beach safety and would like the support of the SWFD.

Hollis Risley stated that action needs to be taken by a group of experts while the issue is fresh on everyone's mind. Mr. Risley also stated that, due to overcrowding, traffic congestion impairs the SWFD's staff and crew's response during an emergency.

Chief LaTour presented a Board Advisory whereas staff recommended a few options for consideration in anticipation of the South 393 property becoming vacant the end of July 2021. Staff presented 1) Lease the property 2) Retain property for Beach Safety Division operations and 3) Sale of the property as options for consideration.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Foley and seconded by Commissioner Cooper, the Board voted to retain the property for Beach Safety Division operations.

Public Comment: Suzanne Harris proposed that Edgewater could purchase a jet ski (to be stored at Edgewater) for SWFD use in case of an emergency.

Adjourned: The meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m.