

# 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 **March 14, 2022, at 4:00 p.m.** at the South Walton Fire District Administration building.

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

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Minutes  
**Regular Board Meeting: 02.14.2022**
- III. Secretary/Treasurer's Report
- IV. Attorney's Report
- V. Chief's Report
- VI. Committee Reports  
**Pension Board Quarterly Report**  
Charlotte Flynt, Commissioner
- VII. Unfinished/Old Business
- VIII. New Business  
**Request to Execute Architectural Engineering and Schematic Design Contract for the Construction of New Miramar Beach Fire Station**  
Daniel LaTour, Assistant Chief
- 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 – March 14, 2022**

**\*\*\*PENDING APPROVAL\*\*\***

**Commissioners Present:** David A.C. Bailey (arrived 4:04 pm), Brian Christenson, Tom Cooper, Charlotte Flynt, Mark B. Foley, Maurice Gilbert, Mike Stange (arrived 4:04 pm)

**Commissioners Absent:** None

**Call to Order:** 4:00 p.m.

Chairman Gilbert announced that there was a quorum present.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Christenson, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of February 14, 2022, Board of Fire Commissioners' regular meeting.

**Secretary/Treasurer's Report:** Commissioner Flynt read the January 2022 cash report into the record.

### **Attorney's Report:**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Foley and seconded by Commissioner Flynt, the Board unanimously approved Attorney Youell's February 2022 billing statement.

### **Fire Chief's Report:**

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

Chief Crawford reported a total of 591 incidents representing an increase of 19% in total responses when comparing February 2022 to February 2021. YTD Responses have increased by nearly 17% in total response activity.

Chief Crawford reported the following significant events:

On the evening of February 23, 2022, crews responded to 83 Compass Point Way in the Watersound community to find a large three-story 6,200 square foot single-family structure heavily involved with fire extension to a second adjacent structure. The incident was elevated to a second alarm requiring all SWFD resources and mutual aid from both Walton County Fire Rescue and Panama City Beach Fire Rescue. The fire was extinguished following an aggressive fire attack. There was significant fire and water damage throughout the home as well as moderate damage to the exterior of an adjacent home. An electrical outlet located on the front porch could not be ruled out as the likely point of origin based on observable burn patterns. Additionally, the investigation found that construction workers had been on the property earlier in the day and numerous cigarette butts were found in proximity to this same porch area.

On March 2, 2022, crews were dispatched to 50 Big Oak Lane to find a residential structure with heavy smoke coming from the eaves, ridges, and front door. The occupant was home at the time of the fire and was showering when she was alerted to the smell of smoke. A cause and origin investigation was

conducted and we were unable to rule out a food dehydrator appliance or the kitchen stove as the most likely ignition source.

On Friday, March 4, 2022, SWFD sent resources under local mutual aid to assist Bay County with a very intense wildfire that eventually would grow to more than 33,000 acres. SWFD crews spent the evening providing structural protection assistance on the fire line. Additionally, on March 5, 2022, SWFD sent an engine back to assist with structure protection as well as on March 6, 2022, SWFD sent an ambulance to assist with facilitating a short notice evacuation of a nursing home. The state deployed four (4) Engine Strike Teams (20 engines) and 3 Structural Task Forces (6 Engines, 6 Brush Trucks, and 3 Tankers) along with more than 70 Forestry tractors and 10 air assets to get this fire under control. Resources were demobilized after more than a week on the line.

SWFD's Beach Safety season kicked off on March 1, 2022. Chief Crawford stated that SWFD is in a better position concerning the number of lifeguards than in recent years. Chief Crawford believes this is attributed to the restructuring of the county contract to provide for more competitive wages as well as a career path for those interested in becoming full-time lifeguards.

SWFD hosted a two-day leadership development course on February 15-16, 2022, with fire district supervisory personnel. This training was facilitated by retired Fire Chiefs Kingman Schuldt and Dave Downey. Based on post-course evaluation feedback the training was well received.

SWFD's 911 Communications Center remodel project which included new dispatch consoles, carpeting, and an overhaul to the center is complete. The old consoles were repurposed for the Beach Safety Division where they will be utilized as desktop workstations. Chief Crawford acknowledged the efforts of Assistant Chief LaTour, Communications Director Perez, and IT Manager Kotowske for completing this project with minimal interruptions in service. Chief Crawford also thanked the board for supporting the much-needed enhancements.

Chief Crawford thanked Facilities Maintenance Technician Rodgers, Beach Safety Director Vaughan, and the entire Beach Safety team for their efforts to complete the required building improvements to SWFD's 393 South property which is the current location of SWFD's Beach Safety Division.

On March 4-5, 2022, SWFD hosted the Northwest Florida Fire Expo which consisted of two days of Hands-on Training evolutions for attendees of the conference. This expo was supervised by SWFD's Division Chief of Training Jones and included building search evolutions under heavy smoke conditions, live fire training scenarios, forcible entry, and various technics for stretching handlines. Firefighters from all across the country coming from as far away as Ohio, Pennsylvania and the New England states were in attendance.

Chief Crawford announced that SWFD hired Troy Sjostrom as an additional fire inspector to assist with the ever-increasing life safety and inspection needs of SWFD's community.

Twenty-two candidates that passed Phase I Firefighter testing last month are scheduled for interviews later this month. SWFD intends to hire four firefighters from this selection process to fill immediate vacancies and create a hiring eligibility list for future needs.

From February 28, 2022, through March 3, 2022, Assistant Chiefs Hughes and LaTour attended a UAV / Drone training session hosted by Panama City Beach Fire Department. The course emphasized best practices in drone technology being utilized for search and rescue operations as well as using thermal imaging technology.

Chief Crawford reported that staff conducted a pre-construction meeting for the purchase of a new ambulance. The vendor stated that supply shortages are having significant impacts on the production timelines to build both ambulances and fire apparatus which may take as long as two years from the time of order placement to delivery. Supply shortages and manufacturing delays will likely require that staff proceed with placing apparatus replacement orders sooner than traditionally planned. Chief Crawford recommended that SWFD proceed with ordering two ambulances for estimated delivery in FY24. This commitment will ensure that SWFD's fleet replacement plan remains on schedule.

Staff continues to participate in quarterly countywide communications roundtable meetings initiated by County Commissioner Mike Barker. It appears that there is growing interest from system stakeholders toward seeking funding to build out a proprietary countywide radio system to include towers and infrastructure and eventually move away from the SLERS subscription system currently utilized by SWFD. Chief Crawford will continue to keep the fire Board apprised of the status of these discussions.

On March 31, 2022, Chief Crawford is scheduled to attend a Leadership Summit hosted by the State Fire Marshal's Office. This summit will include discussions on resource management planning, and processes for the activation and deployment of firefighting and urban search and rescue resources.

Chief Crawford shared that he has been appointed to serve as the Florida delegate and State Director on the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs Board. This two-year term appointment begins in June 2022. A copy of the appointment letter was included in the board packet.

Chief Crawford made the board aware that Healthmark Hospital in DeFuniak Springs will be closing its Emergency Department for construction for approximately 45 - 90 days. This hospital serves as the only critical access facility in the north end of Walton County. Therefore, SWFD anticipates an additional 80-100 patients per month to be transported by WCFR to Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast which will impact their capacity. Adding to the surge concerns is that Healthmark typically has about 800 "walk-in" patients each month at their facility. Many of these walk-ins may potentially begin to utilize 911 and ambulance infrastructure in the north end as there will no longer be a critical access facility locally.

The trickle-down effect of this facility closure will result in increases in the frequency of interfacility transfers tasked to SWFD, where patients originating at Sacred Heart Hospital require treatment and transport to other facilities for definitive care which will likely create additional impacts on SWFD's capacity to maintain the availability of ambulance units in South Walton. Longer 911 transport times for WCFR are anticipated as well as additional mutual aid requests for coverage from SWFD to the north end to cover WCFR response gaps.

Staff has been reviewing alternative staffing models that may likely be required to address the ever-increasing ambulance and interfacility transport needs of our community. Chief Crawford believes that abolishing SWFD's BLS non-emergency transport program, which is staffed with part-time employees, and investing in an advanced life support paramedic capable ambulance with full-time nonfirefighting employees will help significantly. Chief Crawford further stated that under this model SWFD would staff an additional ambulance six days a week for 13-14 hours daily. Staffing would be accomplished with EMTs and Paramedics. This resource could then be used to take interfacility transport pressure off SWFD's fire-based ambulances and would achieve greater system efficiency.

Chief Crawford stated, that as a result of vacancies and timing, SWFD has unexpended payroll dollars within the current FY budget. Chief Crawford asked for board approval to proceed with amending SWFD's current BLS program staffing model and proceed with hiring four full-time personnel to address the impacts of interfacility transfer demands. Due to the closing of Healthmark Hospital's Emergency Department, an emergency motion was added to the agenda to address the additional impacts on SWFD's capacity to maintain the availability of ambulance units in South Walton.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Christenson and seconded by Commissioner Bailey, the Board unanimously approved and authorized staff to amend SWFD's current BLS program staffing model and proceed with hiring four full-time personnel to address the impacts of interfacility transfer demands.

The next regularly scheduled Board of Fire Commissioners meeting will be on Monday, April 11, 2022, at 4 p.m.

**Committee Reports:** Commissioner Flynt provided a Pension Board Quarterly Report stating that the pension fund earned 5.11% for the quarter ended 12/31/2021.

**Unfinished/Old Business:** None

**New Business:** Assistant Chief LaTour presented a Board Action: Request to Execute Architectural Engineering and Schematic Design Contract for the Construction of New Miramar Beach Fire Station whereas staff recommended that the board approve and authorize staff to proceed with the execution of AIA B101-2017 Standard Form of Agreement between DAG Architects, Inc. and South Walton Fire District dated February 22, 2022, in the amount of \$316,482 and DAG's New Fire Station No. 5 Proposal (Miramar Beach). Copies of both were included in the board packet.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Christenson and seconded by Commissioner Bailey, the Board unanimously approved and authorized staff to proceed with the execution of AIA B101-2017 Standard Form of Agreement between DAG Architects, Inc. and South Walton Fire District dated February 22, 2022, in the amount of \$316,482 and DAG's New Fire Station No. 5 Proposal (Miramar Beach).

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.