

Upper Captiva Fire & Rescue District
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Serving the Community with Pride
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REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Friday, March 20, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Location: Fire Station

COMMISSIONERS & STAFF PRESENT: Duncan Rosen, Van Hammond,
MJ Yafchak, Steve Holt, Chief Jesse Cottrell
Via Zoom: Bill Fry

ISLANDERS/GUESTS PRESENT:

Laura Servidio-Hartle
Lisa Walker
Michael Filipczak
Andrew Anderson
Linda McPherson
Daniel Hyrcyk

1) Call to Order — Commissioner Rosen Meeting opened with roll call of commissioners present and those attending via Zoom, plus staff/attendees noted.

2) Additions/Changes/Deletions to Agenda An additional agenda discussion was inserted regarding a **budget amendment** documenting prior board decisions (referencing December and February meetings), positioned after the condo purchase discussion to keep the financial context clear

3) Public Comment on Agenda Items

- Public comments occurred throughout New Business items, including questions and perspectives on the condo purchase, reserves usage, alternatives (leasing), and special assessment timing/costs
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4) Review of Unapproved Minutes (None) Minutes were not available for review; they were deferred to the next meeting.

5) New Business

5A) SHC Condo purchase for Chief Residence — Fry Status update: purchase contract executed; process ongoing with HOA documentation and membership transfer application issues (incorrect contact info, delays in receiving bylaws/HOA docs).

- Major concern: Safety Harbor Club bylaws amendment indicating **government activities/entities are ineligible** to own property; board discussed next steps and potential remedies if disapproved.
 - Operational impact if purchase blocked: risk the Fire Chief cannot remain housed there, which could require staffing changes; estimate discussed of roughly **\$150,000/year** additional pay/benefits to cover shifts if the Chief cannot function as the fourth firefighter on-island.
 - Strategy discussion: multiple comments favor **direct dialogue** with the Safety Harbor Club board to avoid divisive legal conflict; others emphasized moving forward with submitting the corrected application to start the 30-day approval clock.
 - Alternatives discussed: possibility of leasing elsewhere, short-term rentals, and “Plan B” approaches if purchase/lease within Safety Harbor Club is not viable.
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5B) Chief short-term disability pay agreement — Fry/Jesse Issue: during recovery period, the Chief received **short-term disability payments** totaling **\$12,694.22** while also being kept whole on payroll due to timing/processing issues, creating an overpayment concern.

- Repayment proposal described: Chief offered repayment via bi-weekly withholdings and/or PTO value trade-off, plus additional on-island coverage shifts if needed to rebalance payroll/benefits costs.
 - Governance/compliance concern raised: the overpayment was characterized by one participant as potentially problematic for audit purposes; board agreed to consult counsel (“Maggie”) and proceed with a repayment approach that is legally acceptable.
 - Action taken: board passed a motion (5-0) to proceed with repayment beginning next payroll unless legal counsel advises against it.
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5C) Community safety follow-up items — Commissioner Hammond Community alerting system: update on an opt-in text/email alert prototype (developed by Andrew) intended to notify residents during significant events (especially fires) while avoiding alerts for medical calls; discussed need for designated admins (primary/backup) to trigger alerts so burden isn't on the Chief.

- **Fire-scene coordination:** discussion about creating a short “what residents can do to help (and not hinder)” checklist—traffic/crowd control, transport coordination for strike teams, door-to-door notifications for renters/visitors, and staging help
- **Equipment/skills lists:** proposal to identify residents with useful equipment (e.g., tractors, man-lifts) and medical training, and to incorporate optional self-identification into the alert system signup.
- **Safety education document:** conversation about a resident-created document (golf cart-related safety / homeowner safety suggestions) being edited to ensure factual sourcing and appropriate disclaimers, with intent to run it by legal counsel before publishing in any official capacity.
- **CERT/SER coordination:** discussion highlighted that CERT/SER group has not met recently; participants debated whether it should be Chief-directed vs independently convened, and noted desire for more structured leadership/cadence.

5D) Fun-Run Update — Commissioner Yafchak Fun Run planning status: low early registrations; outreach continuing via community channels; booth planned for sign-ups and volunteer recruiting; event-day logistics include a halfway water station, medals, and post-race food/drinks plus merch sales.

Suggestion raised to use the event as an opportunity for broader fire-safety awareness distribution (handouts / tent presence), even if materials are community-produced rather than “official” documents.

6) Recurring Business Updates

6A) Chief's Report — Chief Cottrell Department structure update: leadership roles were retitled/realigned (EMS, fire/training oversight) to strengthen training and readiness initiatives.

- Reimbursement note: Chief mentioned documenting purchases made for the condo move-in and the intent to pull supporting evidence (e.g., Venmo records) where receipts weren't available.

6B) Treasurer's Report — Commissioner Fry Discussed FEMA submissions for multiple hurricanes and an estimated recovery range (not yet budgeted), and confirmed the Treasurer's Report was accepted by motion and vote.

Budget amendment resolution (added earlier): described as documenting prior approvals (donation target, tractor, PTO pump, condo), but was **tabled** given the condo purchase uncertainty.

- Special assessment timing/costs were discussed in Q&A (mail ballot vs scheduled election cost differences were referenced)

6C) Accessway Maintenance — Commissioner Hammond

Update included discussion of the new tractor and road conditions; expectation that maintenance work would resume shortly based on staffing/availability.

7) Public Input on Non-Agenda Items

Public input included operational concerns and suggestions around fire preparedness, homeowner equipment readiness, and how to communicate safety practices without creating liability or implying residents should engage in unsafe firefighting activities.

8) Next Monthly Meeting Date April 17, 2026 at the fire station.