

MINUTES FOR THE BOARD MEETING OF JANUARY 28, 2026
FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE ENGLEWOOD AREA FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT

Wednesday, January 28, 2026, 9:00 A.M.
Meeting held at
Englewood Fire Administration Office
516 Paul Morris Drive, Englewood, FL 34223

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by Chairman, William Kimberlin. Those present were Mr. Loisell, Mr. Maley, Mr. Benedetti, Mr. Knauf, Lori Wellbaum and Chief Easton.

CONSENT AGENDA FROM LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Mr. Kimberlin asked if there were any questions, corrections, or additions to the consent agenda from the 12/17/2025 Board Meeting. Mr. Benedetti made a motion to accept the consent agenda and financial agenda from 12/30/2025, subject to audit. It was seconded by Mr. Maley and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comment

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chief Easton updated the Board on the mechanic position. He explained that the initial candidate is no longer able to accept the position due to unforeseen relocation challenges therefore, the department will move forward to reposting the job listing as soon as possible.

Chief Easton updated the Board on the Station 72 easement lease. He explained that progress on the lease renewal was slowed due to a required correction regarding the legal description of the land size. A revised version is currently being drafted and will be reviewed by Ms. Wellbaum. Chief Easton hopes to have the matter resolved soon.

Chief Easton updated the Board about the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to replace generators at the new Headquarters and Station 72. He explained that current progress is contingent upon a 15-day public notification period on the department website, as required by FEMA and FDEM. Following this duration, the project should resume to the next phase of the grant process.

Chief Easton informed the Board that the open Maintenance Technician position has been successfully filled and spoke about the new staff member. Chief Easton highlighted their background and their extensive experience but also noted that the position has been reclassified as a part-time position which will be paid hourly without benefits.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Kimberlin addressed the Board to elect and approve Board officers for 2026. Mr. Knauf nominated Mr. Kimberlin for Chairperson. There were no further nominations. Mr. Kimberlin was unanimously elected as Chairperson of the 2026 Fire Commission Board. Mr. Benedetti nominated Mr. Loisell for Vice Chairperson. There were no further nominations. Mr. Loisell was unanimously elected as Vice Chairperson. Mr. Maley nominated Mr. Knauf for Treasurer. There were no further nominations. Mr. Knauf was unanimously elected as Treasurer.

Chief Easton presented Resolution 2026-1434 to the Board, confirming its compliance with Florida State Statute 112.061 for Governmental Per Diem and Travel Expenses, as previously discussed. He also reviewed the meal and fuel rates outlined in the resolution. Mr. Knauf moved to approve the resolution, Mr. Loisell seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton presented to the Board with the department Standards of Cover and Strategic Plan Report. He explained that the Standards of Cover is essentially a strategic blueprint for how the fire department intends to protect the community based on local risks and available resources. Whereas the Strategic Plan is the department's identity, goals and actions over the next 3-5 years.

Chief Easton spoke to the Board regarding the land lease renewal for the Englewood Fire Training Center with the Englewood Water District which is set to expire in March. He explained that the proposed 20-year agreement with the Englewood Water District includes a three-year cancellation clause and has received approval from Ms. Wellbaum. Chief highlighted that only minor changes were made to the previous terms. Mr. Knauf made a motion to approve the lease renewal. It was seconded by Mr. Benedetti and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief informed the Board that bank interest rates with Crews Bank have declined and advised this may be an opportune time to explore moving reserve accounts to an institution offering more competitive rates. A small discussion ensued. Mr. Knauf offered to research alternative options for comparison.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief provided an update to the Board regarding several open positions within the department; five (5) Firefighters, one (1) Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT), one (1) Fire Inspector and one (1) Receptionist. He confirmed that recruitment efforts are actively underway and that all vacancies are currently being advertised to the public.

The Chief provided an update on the recently completed four-year impact fee adjustment. He reminded the Board that the department successfully implemented the maximum allowable increase of 50% over the four-year term, structured as incremental 12.5% annual increases. Despite the successful execution of the previous phase, the Chief noted that the original study predicted the department would remain behind the necessary funding levels to keep pace with growth. To address this shortfall and legally justify a subsequent increase, a new Impact Fee Study must be completed. Chief will obtain a quote from Raftelus to determine the feasibility of moving forward with the assessment.

Chief updated the Board about the status of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) funds. He confirmed that the procurement process is moving forward as planned and he verified the Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA/Air Packs) have been officially placed. The delivery window is estimated for 1-2 weeks.

The Chief briefed the Board on the extensive list of necessary repairs required across the department's stations. Chief proposed utilizing the Construction Reserve Funds to finance the upcoming phase of improvements. Chief highlighted Station 72 specifically needed additional sleeping quarters therefore, his plan is to renovate the existing bay building into a living space. A small discussion ensued.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

No public comment.

DVP COMMENT :

No DVP comment.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Mr. Kimberlin had a question regarding the Placida property. After a small discussion, Chief Easton confirmed that the new Station 73 construction project is slated to be funded through County 1% Sales Tax (Surtax) revenue. The allocation is approximately \$4 million dollars, however, vacant property to serve the future site would need to be acquired by the department.

Mr. Benedetti asked Chief if he could elaborate on the legislative session HB 123. Chief Easton explained that it abolishes certain soil and water conversation districts. Mr. Benedetti also asked about the Winchester Ranch annexation. Chief Easton confirmed that at the recent Sarasota County Commissioners meeting it ended with a non-decision.

Mr. Benedetti also spoke to the Board that he will be resigning as Commissioner on February 28, 2026.

Mr. Kimberlin expressed how pleased he is with the new Headquarters building and Board room. He also thanked Chief and his staff for all their hard work and ensuring it looks so nice.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02am.