

MINUTES FOR THE BOARD MEETING OF FEBRUARY 25, 2026
FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE ENGLEWOOD AREA FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT

Wednesday, February 25, 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 Vice-Chairman, Eldon Loisell. Those present were, Mr. Maley, Mr. Benedetti, Mr. Knauf, Lori Wellbaum and Chief Easton. Mr. Kimberlin was absent.

CONSENT AGENDA FROM LAST MONTH'S MEETING

Mr. Loisell asked if there were any questions, corrections, or additions to the consent agenda from the 01/28/2026 Board Meeting. Mr. Knauf made a motion to accept the consent agenda and financial agenda from 01/28/2026, subject to audit. It was seconded by Mr. Maley and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comment

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chief Easton informed the Board that the recruitment for the mechanic position has concluded with the hiring of Jason Hogan. Mr. Hogan brings extensive experience to the team and will begin March 2, 2026.

Chief Easton updated the Board regarding the Station 72 easement lease has been finalized following the correction to the legal description and land dimensions. Lori Wellbaum has reviewed and approved the updated agreement. Chief is currently awaiting final notification with the closing date.

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 following the mandatory 15-day public notification period, no public inquiries or comments were received. Consequently, the project is now cleared to proceed to the next phase of the grant process.

Chief Easton confirmed with the Board that the Englewood Fire Training Center lease has been officially renewed with the Englewood Water District. The lease incorporates the minor term updates previously discussed and approved at the February Board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Chief Easton updated the Board on the proposed Impact Fee study, reporting the project quote of \$31k from Raftelis. He expressed concerns regarding the return on investment, noting it could take more than four years to recover the cost of the study. Following a brief discussion, it was determined that the department will seek additional quotes from alternative firms to ensure a competitive and cost-effective comparison.

Chief Easton presented the Board with a copy of the amended Fire Ordinance, highlighting several key updates. He noted the revisions included provisions for burn bans, clarification on open burning jurisdiction and expanded protocols for pre-fire planning and inspections. Chief Easton also spoke about the inclusion of a surcharge for electronic payments, ensuring the department can recover processing fees for credit card and EFT transactions. A brief discussion ensued. Mr. Knauf made a motion to approve the amended Ordinance. It was seconded by Mr. Benedetti and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton addressed the Board regarding the lack of mechanism to recoup costs for EMS calls and supplies. He explained that since the department is a non-transport agency, it is ineligible for direct insurance reimbursement. To address this, Chief is developing a proposal for EMS funding via county millage rates. Chief informed the Board that he has already consulted Sandi Neubarth of Accenture to calculate potential revenue based on the 2025 assessment rolls and estimated the taxable value. Following a brief discussion, the Board expressed interest in the financial projection, and the Chief will provide updates as the proposal develops.

Chief Easton presented the Board with Resolution 2026-1435 and explained that adopting the Sarasota County Unified Local Mitigation Strategy Plan will enable the department to request and secure local mitigation funding from Sarasota County. Mr. Benedetti made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-1435. It was seconded by Mr. Maley and passed unanimously.

Chief Easton presented the Board with Resolution 2026-1436 and explained that it authorizes the Fire Chief to finalize an interlocal agreement with Charlotte County to ensure consistent, efficient, and coordinated fire marshal services within the District boundaries. Mr. Knauf made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-1436. It was seconded by Mr. Benedetti and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton presented the Board with Resolution 2026-1437 and explained it authorizes the assessment of a credit card convenience fee for all electronic payment transactions. He indicated the necessity of the fees will allow the department to offset administrative costs associated with processing credit cards and electronic funds transfer (EFT). Mr. Knauf made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-1437. It was seconded by Mr. Maley and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton informed the Board that he will be attending the Charlotte County Board of Commissioners meeting today, advocating for the utilization of county surtax revenue to fund the replacement of Fire Station 72, highlighting the project's importance to the district's infrastructure.

CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Easton is pleased to announce that Lieutenant Lee Wiskowski, who retired from the department, has returned to the team as our new Fire Inspector. We are excited to welcome him back in this new capacity, with his official start date scheduled for Monday, March 2, 2026.

Chief Easton informed the Board that the department has received several applications for the receptionist position. He stated that interviews are currently underway and anticipates selecting a candidate by the end of the week.

Chief Easton also informed the Board that he hired five (5) new firefighters, and their official start is March 2, 2026.

Chief Easton addressed the Board to recognize that today marks Mr. Benedetti's final meeting. On behalf of absent Chairman, Mr. Kimberlin, the Chief read a formal letter expressing gratitude for Mr. Benedetti's dedication to the District, his contributions to the community and wished him the very best in his future endeavors. Chief Easton also presented Mr. Benedetti with a retirement plaque for his 12 years of service.

Chief Easton introduced Mr. Jeff Godluski to the Board, who has expressed interest in filling the vacancy on the Board. Chief Easton highlighted his background, noting his previous experience as a firefighter in Connecticut and his most recent 10-year tenure as a superintendent for a local contracting firm.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

No public comment.

DVP COMMENT :

No DVP comment.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Mr. Knauf thanked Mr. Benedetti for his service and said that he will be greatly missed.

Mr. Bendetti reflected his 12-year tenure with the District, noting how quickly the time has passed and expressing how much he has truly enjoyed his year of service with the department. He offered his sincere thanks to the Board and staff for their kind words and well wishes.

Mr. Maley commended the department's personnel for their recent outstanding performance, noting that he has seen it first-hand recently and was very impressed. He also formally thanked Mr. Benedetti for this service and shared his appreciation for the opportunity to have worked together on the Board.

Mr. Loisell shared the he and Mr. Benedetti joined the Board simultaneously. He reflected on how quickly the past 12 years have passed, sharing how much he has enjoyed their time working together. Mr. Loisell ended by saying Mr. Benedetti's presence and contributions to the Board will be greatly missed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45am.