



MINUTES

FIRE SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION

March 19, 2026

Oconee County Administrative Offices, Council Chambers
415 S. Pine Street, Walhalla, SC 29691

MEMBERS

Commissioner Assistant Chief Tony McAlister, District I
Commissioner Assistant Chief Truman Nicholson, District II
Commissioner Chief Favion Skelton, District III
Commissioner Chief Travis Collins, District IV
Commissioner Chief Larry Wilkerson, District V
Commissioner Chief Chris Smith, At-Large
Commissioner Chief Steven Swafford, At-Large

The Oconee County Fire Service Advisory Commission met at 6:00 p.m. on February 19, 2026 in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, with 7 members present.

Press: Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeesc.com/council]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

No members of the media were present.

Call to Order:

- Commissioner Chair Collins called the meeting to order at 06:00 and made a motion to amend the agenda to add Public Comment to agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Skelton. Motion approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

- Commissioner Chair Collins opened the floor for public comment.
 - Rannie Bond expressed concerns about the executive session regarding contractual matters, including potential conflicts of interest. He encouraged the commission to maintain transparency and discuss matters publicly, when possible, to keep the community informed.
 - Commissioner McAlister voiced that he was unsure about the rules and regulations of executive sessions and Staff Liaison Addington ensured Commissioner McAlister that a copy of all rules and regulations of a Commission would be sent to him as well as other Commissioners.

Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes for the February 19th Commission meeting were emailed out.
 - Motion by Commissioner Wilkerson to approve the minutes, second by Commissioner McAlister.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

County Fire Chief Report:

- Commissioner Smith reported a mechanical issue with a freightliner unit causing a popping noise, which is being addressed as parts become available. Two units are currently in the shop, with additional units expected for delivery in the coming weeks. Commissioner Smith also noted that required letters from the County and dispatch regarding Holly Springs FDID number have been drafted and submitted.

A video recording of this meeting is available at www.oconeesc.com. Meetings have been live-streamed beginning January 17, 2017. Brought to you by Your Oconee.

Fire Commissioner's Updates:

- Region 1: Commissioner McAlister –
 - Nothing to report at this time.
- Region 2: Commissioner Nicholson –
 - Commissioner Nicholson thanked Chief Brock for the nozzle training demo. No updates were reported for Station 5. At Station 16, there was discussion about bringing back “Super Saturdays” for refresher and specialty training such as CPR, first aid, and rescue skills, potentially on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Region 3: Commissioner Skelton –
 - Commissioner Skelton raised questions regarding County policy for employees serving as volunteers, including how that status is applied and what vehicles they are permitted to operate. He also inquired about the number and locations of County boats. Additionally, he expressed concerns about vehicle decals on new trucks, noting that the current large County door stickers are unpopular with some volunteers and suggesting a return to previous station-style or individualized markings to help improve morale and foster volunteer station pride.
- Region 4: Commissioner Collins –
 - Chairman Collins reported discussions with fire chiefs in his district regarding the firefighter incentive fund. He emphasized that the fund should be used solely for volunteer firefighter incentive, as originally intended, to reimburse volunteers for time and expenses. He noted that other costs such as transportation insurance and award ceremonies should be budgeted separately and recommended keeping the incentive fund as a single allocation directed entirely towards volunteers.
- Region 5: Commissioner Wilkerson –
 - Commissioner Wilkerson asked how to address unresolved issues not listed on the agenda, including prior concerns and the vehicle assignment and labeling question brought forth by Commissioner Skelton. Chairman Collins advised that such items should be placed on the next meeting agenda for discussion and accompanied by supporting documentation.
- At-Large: Commissioner Smith –
 - Anything I had, I included in my previous report.
- At-Large: Commissioner Swafford –
 - Commissioner Swafford reminded the Commission of a Salem Rescue breakfast fundraiser on Saturday, March 21st, from 6:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the main station on Main Street.

Discussion Items:

- Discussion item one focused on Active911 responder usage and volunteer tracking for budgeting purposes. Concerns were raised about the accuracy of current volunteer numbers countywide and the use of outdated or fluctuating roster data. It was suggested that rosters be verified using current membership and physical to ensure accuracy. The item included discussion of Active911 systems costs, station-level versus countywide messaging capabilities, and access control managed by station chiefs. It was noted that the system should reflect current active members, with chiefs maintaining authority to update rosters as needed. A motion was made by Commissioner Swafford to include Active911 funding in the next budget with station chief input on membership management. Seconded by Commissioner Skelton. Motion approved unanimously.
- Discussion item two focused on proposed staffing plan to improve daytime response coverage and supporting volunteers, with staffing at volunteer stations Monday – Friday during daytime hours. The original start date of April 9th was recommended to be delayed at least one month to allow additional planning and coordination. Questions and concerns were raised regarding staffing needs, training requirements, and operational readiness. The intent of the proposal remains to improve response times and ensure effective emergency coverage while maintaining volunteer support. Commissioner Chair Collins made a motion to push the start date back at least a month. Commissioner Wilkerson seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

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- Discussion item three focused on creating a replacement schedule for fire and rescue vehicles and equipment. The Fire Chief will assist in developing a replacement list, with input from fire and rescue representative and committees to ensure all needs are included.
- Discussion item four was held on proposed budget priorities including transport insurance, supplemental insurance review, and adding a recruitment and retention line item. Concerns were raised about declining volunteer recruitment to support staffing and outreach efforts. Additional discussion included potential future apparatus leasing and funding allocations with possible stipulations for accountability. A motion was made and approved to increase the annual expense find from \$60,000 to \$80,000 (25%) for all volunteer emergency service departments for the 26-27 budget year, along with adding proposed line items.

Executive Session:

- Commissioner McAlister made a motion to go into executive session, seconded by Commissioner Swafford. Motion approved unanimously.
- Commissioner Chair Collins called the meeting back at 20:10.
 - No action was taken in executive session.

Next Meeting:

- The next Fire Service Advisory Commission Meeting will be held on April 16th, 2026, beginning at 6:00.

Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Skelton and seconded by Commissioner Nicholson and approved unanimously at 18:11

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Respectfully Submitted:

Madison Addington
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Staff Liaison

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