



# MINUTES FIRE SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION

April 19, 2026

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

## MEMBERS

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

The Oconee County Fire Service Advisory Commission met at 6:00 p.m. on April 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](http://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

## Approval of Minutes:

- Minutes for the March 19<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting were emailed out.
  - Motion by Commissioner Nicholson to approve the minutes, second by Commissioner Chair Collins.
  - Motion approved unanimously.

## Public Comment:

- NO public comment for April meeting

## County Fire Chief Report:

- Commissioner Smith reported several firefighter physicals are scheduled in May through Fitness Forum and Upstate Medical. Due to limited remaining funding, no physicals will be scheduled in June, and any needed physicals will be deferred to July under the new fiscal year.
- Updates were also provided on tanker apparatus. Tanker 10 is now in service, and two additional tankers are currently being outfitted at Motor Pool. Friendship's tanker is expected back soon from Freightliner following repairs, Holly Springs' tanker is anticipated for delivery within the next few weeks pending repair of a power steering leak, and Keowee Ebenezer's tanker is expected to arrive sometime in May.

## Fire Commissioner's Updates:

- Region 1: Commissioner McAlister –
  - Nothing to report at this time.
- Region 2: Commissioner Nicholson –
  - Commissioner Nicholson stated he will cover his update in desired discussion item.
- Region 3: Commissioner Skelton –
  - Nothing to report at this time.

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- Region 4: Commissioner Collins –
  - Commissioner Collins reported that all paperwork for Station 24’s FDID number has been completed and submitted, but the request is currently pending while awaiting action from the State Fire Marshal’s Office. He also discussed concerns regarding inconsistent county emblems on apparatus doors and suggested standardizing emblems across all county fire department vehicles to promote unity. A third item will be addressed under discussion items.
- Region 5: Commissioner Wilkerson –
  - Commissioner Wilkerson stated that he had failed to get an updated from Chief Brock regarding the radio tower. Commissioner Smith added that he has not received any updates other than the matter currently being in the hands of the County Administrator and Dispatch. He also expressed concerns regarding radio communications, which will be discussed further under discussion items.
- At-Large: Commissioner Smith –
  - Includes his updated in the “County Fire Chief Report”
- At-Large: Commissioner Swafford –
  - Commissioner Swafford reported that the State has issued a Red Flag Alert and statewide burn ban effective tomorrow at 7:00 AM. Commissioner Collins added that the State is taking the burn ban seriously, noting that during a recent 3-acre fire, the landowner received a warning from the State and was advised it would be the only warning issued.

**Discussion Items:**

- Discussion item one- Ordinance Consideration: Sewage Spill Notification Thresholds Greater Than 5,000 Gallons: Commissioner Nicholson discussed the need for an ordinance requiring HazMat notification for significant sewage spills, noting that current State requirements only mandate State notification while local notification is merely recommended. He stated that earlier notification would allow HazMat to assist with protecting property and responding to incidents. Chief Smith suggested reviewing policies from neighboring counties to provide examples for County Council consideration. Discussion also referenced a recent spill on Martin Creek where local authorities were reportedly not notified, and concerns were raised regarding the current 24-hour notification allowance under State Code.
- Discussion item two- County Employee Volunteer Status and Department Resources: Commissioner Collins stated this item was carried over from the previous meeting. Chief Smith advised that previous concerns regarding paid staff volunteering were related to FLSA regulations and stated he would seek guidance from the new county attorney. Commissioner Skelton commented that other counties allow the practice and expressed support for employees volunteering within their local districts as long as their time is properly documented, while clarifying that personnel should not be paid for non-working or social time at stations.
- Discussion item three- Proposed Budget Update: Commissioner Smith stated that the upcoming budget presentation includes all items previously discussed by the Commission. Budget additions include funding for volunteer incentive compensation insurance, helicopter transport coverage, supplemental insurance coverage for rescue squads, the awards dinner and awards program, regional quarterly recruiting efforts, and retention uniforms/t-shirts. A requested increase for quarterly funding will also be presented to County Council. Commissioner Wilkerson requested that the budget information be shared with the Commission and asked for clarification regarding supplemental insurance coverage for rescue squads.
  - Commissioner Collins made a motion to amend the budget to include all members listed on quarterly rosters submitted to the County, as well as to include rescue squads under the County’s transport insurance coverage. Commissioner Skelton seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.
- Discussion item four- Update on Staffing Numbers with Assignments: Commissioner Smith reported that the department recently had eight full-time employees and four part-time employees leave. Five new personnel have since been hired, including three with no prior training who are currently enrolled in classes, while the remaining two are already working. He also noted that four additional interviews are scheduled for Monday.
  - Commissioner Collins made a motion to postpone station staffing discussions for at least one month. Commissioner McAlister seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

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- Discussion item four- Discussion of Training Topics and Related Questions: Commissioner Wilkerson raised concerns regarding training classes being canceled due to low enrollment and stated that he had discussed the matter with the Assistant Chief. Commissioner Smith explained that if Michael Hunnicutt is able to teach a class locally, the class will still be held; however, when an instructor must be requested through the State Fire Academy, minimum enrollment requirements must be met or the class will be canceled. He also noted that Michael Hunnicutt cannot teach driving classes within his own county due to DMV-related regulations.
- Discussion Item Five- Radio Communications: Commissioners discussed ongoing concerns regarding worsening radio communication issues throughout the County, including poor signal reliability and dispatcher communication concerns. Commissioner Collins referenced a recent emergency incident involving Cleveland where communication failures required personnel to leave the area to obtain service, raising safety and liability concerns for the County. Discussion also included concerns about the maintenance of the County's analog and digital radio systems and whether current vendors are adequately addressing issues. Commissioner Smith advised that Dispatch is investigating potential system problems and was tasked with coordinating with the Sheriff's Department and maintenance contractors to further evaluate the radio systems.
- Commissioners discussed adding an instructor position for firefighter and emergency services courses at the career center/vocational school. Discussion included potential funding through OCES or the school district, possible summer classes, and establishing a salary for the position based on state teacher salary guidelines. The primary goal is to reintroduce these courses into the school system. Chief Smith was asked to include the request in the proposed budget or present it to County Council for feedback and potential funding consideration. Commissioner Wilkerson made a motion to add a budget line item for the instructor position, seconded by Commissioner Nicholson. Motion approved unanimously.

**Next Meeting:**


- The next Fire Service Advisory Commission Meeting will be held on May 14, 2026, beginning at 6:00.

**Adjourn:**

- A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Skelton and seconded by Commissioner Nicholson and approved unanimously at 19:05.

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Respectfully Submitted:

  
Madison Addington  
Staff Liaison

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