



MINUTES FIRE SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION May 16, 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]. 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 April 19th Commission meeting were emailed out.
 - Motion by Commissioner Wilkerson to approve the minutes, second by Commissioner Smith.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

- NO public comment for May meeting.

County Fire Chief Report:

- Commissioner Smith reported that the sixth tanker has been received and is being equipped for service, with deployment anticipated within the next one to two weeks. He noted that stations currently using the new tankers have reported positive results. Chief Smith also provided an update on rescue communications, stating that rescue personnel are considering the use of Digital 1 for routine communication while continuing to use the rescue channel for landing zone operations, though no final decision has been made.

Fire Commissioner's Updates:

- Region 1: Commissioner McAlister –
 - Commissioner McAlister inquired about the specifications of the new trucks, including the engine and transmission. Commissioner Smith advised that those decisions are part of the standard purchasing process and that Jeremy Foster, Director of Vehicle Maintenance, advises on what the truck should be equipped with. Commissioner McAlister also noted that the next meeting will be during the Fire Conference at Myrtle Beach. Commissioner Chair Collins stated that they would be discussing that later in the meeting.
- Region 2: Commissioner Nicholson –
 - Nothing to report at this time.
- Region 3: Commissioner Skelton –
 - ABSENT
- Region 4: Commissioner Collins –

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- Commissioner Collins reported that Holly Springs Fire Department has received its FDID number and is awaiting final approval at the upcoming Fire Conference and provided an update on the building lease agreement, which has completed final reading but is still awaiting administrative follow up at for Holly Springs. The department's tanker is now in service and has received positive feedback. He also noted ongoing discussion regarding station staffing.
- Region 5: Commissioner Wilkerson –
 - Commissioner Wilkerson indicated there were no additional items to report, noting that his item is addressed under the discussion items and will elaborate then.
- At-Large: Commissioner Smith –
 - Includes his updated in the "County Fire Chief Report"
- At-Large: Commissioner Swafford –
 - Commissioner Swafford reported that committees are being established with member assignments underway and updates to follow. He also noted plans to develop a training calendar for the remainder of the year in coordination with Lieutenant Hunnicutt, including "Training Super Saturday." Training will focus on ensuring all personnel, including volunteers and paid staff, are familiar with the newly placed-in-service tankers.

Discussion Items:

- Discussion Item One- Follow-up on Ordinance Consideration: Sewage Spill Notification Thresholds Greater Than 5,000 Gallons: The Commission discussed potential coordination and notification requirements for sewage spills. Commission reported no comparable ordinances were found in surrounding counties and noted uncertainty about whether the goal is increased notification or emergency response involvement. The item was tabled, and Commission will consult with Chief Ashton to clarify the intended direction and return with recommendations at the next meeting.
- Discussion Item Two- Committee Updates/Confirmation of Committee Member Assignments: The Commission confirmed standing committee members, including Incentive, Communication, School Training Program, and Truck Apparatus committees, with the Awards Committee to be determined. Updates were provided on ongoing communication system testing and school firefighter program planning, including funding and program structure discussions. The Commission agreed to refer the school program position to the Public Safety Committee for further review and recommendation.
- Discussion Item Three- Emergency Service Communications/Radio Contracts with Dispatch and Vendor: The Commission discussed ongoing radio and dispatch communication issues, including poor coverage in several areas of the County and inconsistent transmission between field units and dispatch. While some site-specific issues have been identified and addressed, overall reliability remains a concern. The item was referred to the Public Safety Committee for further evaluation and recommendations, with staff directed to continue working with vendors and dispatch on potential short-term fixes and long-term solutions.
- Discussion Item Four - Request for OCES Organizational Chart of Paid Staff with Assignments: The Commission discussed the status of the organizational chart for paid staff., noting it has been provided by administration but not yet returned with revisions. Concerns were raised about the lack of a finalized structure for review. The item was tabled for one month pending further response and updates from administration.
- Discussion Item Five – Follow up on County Employee Volunteer Status and Departmental Resources: The Commission was updated that one firefighter position remained open, with additional personnel currently in training and one interview scheduled. Some staff are still completing required certifications. The Commission agreed to table station staffing decision for one month to allow training and certification progress and revisit.

Next Meeting:

- Due to scheduling conflicts with the Fire Rescue Conference and other Commission meetings, the Commission agreed to tentatively reschedule the June 11th meeting to June 25th, with the time to be determined. Or, if no business is needing to be brought forth, the June meeting will be canceled.

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Director Caudill Introduction

- Director Caudill introduced himself and reported he has already begun working with staff on priorities including communications, training, staffing, and personnel safety. He noted ongoing discussions regarding radio system issues and potential improvements, and emphasized a focus on ensuring staff readiness and improving long-term employee retention. He requested time to continue evaluating operations and committed to keeping the Commission updated.

Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Swafford and seconded by Commissioner Smith and approved unanimously at 18:50.

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Respectfully Submitted:


Madison Addington
Staff Liaison

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