MINUTES
FIRE SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
September 23, 2026

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

MEMBERS

Commissioner Assist. Chief Tony McAlister, District I
Commissioner Assist. 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 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 August 13th Commission meeting were emailed out.
  - Motion by Commissioner Nicholson to approve the minutes, second by Commissioner Skelton.
  - Motion approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

- NO public comment for September meeting.

County Fire Chief Report:

- Commissioner Smith was absent for September meeting due to the Fire Conference.

Fire Commissioner's Updates:

- Region 1: Commissioner McAlister –
  - Nothing to report at this time.
- Region 2: Commissioner Nicholson –
  - Commissioner Nicholson reported that the West Union Fire Chief was appreciative for all that attended the "Danny Eller Benefit" and wanted to spread the word that they now have a cascade tank at their station. Commissioner Nicholson also stated that surly, Walhalla Fire Chief, Terry, was appreciative of all the support with the Main St. Walhalla Fires last Thursday.
- Region 3: Commissioner Skelton –
  - Commissioner Skelton requested that, when a "possible structure fire" is dispatched through Active911, a follow-up notification be sent confirming whether the incident is a working structure fire. He expressed concern that the current "possible" designation may result in unnecessary response or, conversely, responders not responding when a full response is needed. Commissioner Skelton also expressed additional concerns regarding tree-down calls. Other commissioner provided examples and discussed similar concerns regarding the dispatch and response process by the State.
- Region 4: Commissioner Collins –
  - Commissioner Collins reported that Station 9 (Long Creek) will host an open house on October 24 beginning at 11:00 a.m. in celebration of 62 years of service and encourages everyone to attend. He also

reported that Station 24 (Holly Springs) has completed all necessary steps to officially operate as a stand-alone fire department, with the exception of the updated lease agreement, which is currently being finalized by the attorney. Station 10 will conduct a district-wide smoke detector blitz on November 14, with additional information to be provided at a later date. Chair Collins also expressed ongoing concerns regarding communication and dispatch issues, including instances where fire or EMS resources were not dispatched to a motor vehicle collision.

- Region 5: Commissioner Wilkerson –
    - Commissioner Wilkerson followed up on the MVC dispatch concerns, noting that the dispatch box alarm protocol calls for fire resources to be dispatched to MVCs involving injury, no injury, or entrapment. He questioned whether the protocol should be reviewed with dispatch, as an MVC may constitute a mechanism of injury requiring further evaluation. The Commission also discussed whether the individuals involved in rollovers or traumatic collisions can accurately determine if medical attention is needed. Additional concerns regarding dispatch and State Highway response times were discussed, along with the possibility of holding quarterly or annual meetings between fire departments and dispatch. Commissioner Swafford stated that he would invite dispatch representatives to the Chiefs' Meeting on Monday.
- At-Large: Commissioner Smith –
    - Absent.
- At-Large: Commissioner Swafford –
    - Commissioner Swafford reported upcoming events, including Salem Fire and Rescue's BBQ fundraiser and raffle on October 10, 4:30 to 7:30. Corinth-Shiloh's Trunk-or-Treat on October 23, 5:00 to 8:30, with all departments invited to participate. Oconee Night Out will be held October 6, 5:00 to 7:00 at the Farm Center, with food provided by the Sheriff's Department. Corinth-Shiloh is also starting an Explore Post Program open to members outside the district, with more information to come. Augusta Burn Center classes will be held on October 6, with annual burns scheduled for November 16, 23, and 30. The 2027 training calendar has been released. Lieutenant Hunnicutt graduated from the South Carolina Chiefs Fire Officer Program, and seven county members passed the State EMT exam.

Committee Updates:

- Incentive: No meeting, no updates to provide. Commissioner Swafford stated that Incentive Checks should be sent out late October, early November.
- Communication: Commissioner Swafford reported that they are awaiting paperwork and labels from the vendor/Sheriff's Department for the radios that were mis programmed. The department is hopeful to receive six new radios- one mobile and five portable- and begin testing them as soon as possible. There was no update on the Cross Roads tower.
- School Training Program: Chair Collins reported that the committee met last week but he wasn't able to attend. He stated that there were no significant updates but believed an instructor is in place for the 2027 year. Mr. Shirley reported that he and Director Caudill met with school guidance counselors to coordinate dates in November for the fire service recruiters to visit the schools.
- Truck Apparatus: Commissioner Skelton and Wilkerson reported that they received and reviewed truck specifications, including options for different apparatus at Motor Pool. Commissioner Skelton emphasized that the department receiving the new truck should be involved in the specifications and decision-making process.
- Recruitment and Retention: Chair Collins reported that the committee met September 2 with four fire and four rescue representatives. After discussing several ideas, the committee agreed to begin attending community events with recruitment booths or tables for all departments. The committee has prepared professionally branded shirts and plans to attend Oconee Night Out and Shop with a Hero. Commissioner Wilkerson raised concerns about the volunteer application link on the County website, and Commissioner Swafford created a Gmail account and Google document to assist with tracking recruitment efforts.
- Awards: Elect of one Commissioner to be held in November 2026.

Discussion Items:

- Discussion Item One- Follow Up on SCDOT Bridge Weight Limits for Fire Trucks: Commissioner Wilkerson reported that he drafted an action item and sent it to Chair Collins and Commissioner Swafford due to meeting rules. Chair Collins stated that he was unable to open the document. Commissioner Wilkerson explained that it contains a clickable Google Map identifying bridges in Oconee County and notes that some are County-owned

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rather than SCDOT-owned and may not support the weight of fire and rescue apparatus. He stated that he would resend the information to Chair Collins or provide it to the staff liaison for distribution. Commissioner Swafford notes that the issue also affects ambulance response and should be communicated to EMS, providing a recent example of the potential impact.

- Discussion Item Two- Follow Up on Active911: Chair Collins reported that all but one or two departments are now back on Active911. He reiterated Commissioner Skelton's request for a confirmation alert when a "possible structure fire" is determined to be a working structure fire, noting that it may be a simple checkbox addition. Commissioner Swafford reminded the Commission that selecting the alert option could result in notifications for any additional updates to the call, which may become excessive. Commissioner Skelton clarified that his request is specifically for an alert confirming when a dispatched possible structure fire is confirmed as a working fire.

- Discussion Item Three- Emergency Services Communication: No update to report.

- Discussion Item Four – Follow Up on Paid County Employee Volunteer Status: Chair Collins asked Mr. Shirley for an update. Mr. Shirley reported that Administration and the County Attorney have developed a policy to be added to the Oconee County Emergency Services Personnel Handbook allowing county-paid employees to volunteer with another 501(c)(3) organization, provided they are not compensated for or performing the same duties for which they are paid by the County. Commissioner Nicholson asked whether employees would receive an incentive for volunteering; Mr. Shirley stated that he did not believe so. Chair Collins made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Wilkerson, and the Commission approved the motion unanimously.

- Chair Collins brought forward a request to consider moving Commission meetings to alternate locations, noting that the Commission is not required by ordinance to meet in Council Chambers. He suggested rotating meetings among local fire departments and stated that he had discussed the idea with several County Council members, who were supportive of the recommendation. Commissioner Skelton asked whether meetings would be required to be video recorded. Chair Collins stated that he believed an audio recording and proper public notice would be sufficient. Commissioner Swafford expressed concerns about potential noise and interruptions at fire stations due to apparatus, radios, emergency calls, and other activity. The Commission agreed to table the discussion until the next meeting.

Next Meeting:

- The next Fire Service Advisory Commission Meeting will be held on October 8, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Adjourn:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Chair Collins, seconded by Commissioner Skelton and approved unanimously at 19:04.

Respectfully Submitted:

Madison A. Porter

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Staff Liaison

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