

**IONA MCGREGOR FIRE PROTECTION AND RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES**

DATE: January 21, 2026

6:00 P.M.

6061 SOUTH POINTE BOULEVARD

FORT MYERS, FL 33919

NOTE: THE BOARD MEETING IS BEING RECORDED AND ALL STATEMENTS MADE DURING THE BOARD MEETING ARE SUBJECT TO BEING MADE AVAILABLE TO OTHERS AS A PART OF THE BOARD MEETING PUBLIC RECORD.

NOTE: ALL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES MUST BE PUT ON THE SILENT MODE PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE BOARD MEETING AND REMAIN ON SILENT MODE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE BOARD MEETING UNTIL ADJOURNMENT.

Meeting Called to Order

Roll Call of Commissioners: Chair James Andersen (Present), Vice Chair Steve Barbosa (Present), Treasurer Paul Louwers (Present), Secretary Jason McCoy (Present), Commissioner Stephen Allen Sr. (Present)

Opening Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

Recognitions: None

Adoption of Meeting Agenda, Including Amendment: A motion to ‘Adopt Meeting Agenda, Including Amendments’ was made by Commissioner Louwers, seconded by Commissioner Barbosa...Motion carried. Call and question, all in favor aye.

[Approval of Previous November Board Meeting Minutes](#) (Scan signed document, upload, add link): A motion to approve ‘November Board Meeting Minutes’ as listed was made by Commissioner Louwers, seconded by Commissioner McCoy...Motion carried. Call and question, all in favor aye.

Commissioner Allen requests that meeting minutes in future depict minutes as part of the introductory title; this will be enforced on future meeting minute documents.

[Approval of Previous December Board Meeting Minutes](#) (Scan signed document, upload, add link): A motion to approve ‘December Board Meeting Minutes’ as listed was made by Commissioner Allen, clarified by Attorney Pringle, ‘December Board Meeting Minutes from the

Public Hearing, that was noticed and held December 10th, at 5:00pm’, seconded by Commissioner Barbosa...Motion carried. Call and question, all in favor aye.

Approval of [Financial Report November 2025](#) and Approval of [Financial Report December 2025](#) (Scan signed document, upload, add link): Chief Financial Officer Winzenread opens the floor to questions and discussion ensues.

Commissioner Allen requests that financial reports in future depict the month of the report as part of the introductory title; this will be enforced on future meeting financial report documents.

A motion to approve the ‘November Financial and December Financial Reports’ was made by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Barbosa...Motion carried. Call and question, all in favor aye.

[Chief’s Report](#): Fire Chief Comer opens the floor to questions and discussion ensues.

A motion to approve the ‘Chief’s Report’ was made by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Louwers...Motion carried. Call and question, all in favor aye.

Attorney’s Report: Attorney Pringle shares that there is a lot to discuss regarding the merger feasibility study agenda item and he will speak further then.

DVP’s Reports: None

Public Input on Business Agenda Items [Note: Prior to Board action being taken on each of the Business Agenda Items below, members of the public will have up to three (3) minutes per person to make public comment on each of the Business Agenda Items after the Commissioners have had their discussion.]

Business Agenda Items:

1. [Iona Topic of Possible Merger between Iona-McGregor Fire District \(Iona\) and Fort Myers Beach Fire District \(Fort Myers Beach\)](#)

a. Discussion of Agenda Item:

Attorney Pringle discusses the opportunities to consider regarding the merger topic, and the significance of tonight, and the board’s decisions on how to proceed with the merger. Attorney Pringle made the merger feasibility study from J. Angle Group (JAG) part of the meeting record.

Attorney Pringle requests capturing of certain items and conclusions on the merger feasibility study, on the meeting record, as follows:

‘The **executive summary** of the feasibility study statements, made by J. Angle Group, to include quote: “From an operational perspective, the J. Angle Group LLC found no compelling reasons to merge the two districts into a single new

independent fire district. Statement number two: “JAG did not find that a merger would provide any operational benefits.” Quote number three: “Two operational concerns mentioned in the feedback across both internal and external were the loss of the CFAI fire accreditation that Iona McGregor Fire District holds and the potential loss of EMS transport by Fort Myers Beach Fire District.” Another one: “It was found that the merged district would experience additional costs and therefore not be beneficial.” Last one: “Iona McGregor Fire District taxpayers would likely see increases in millage of up to 0.5 mills over five years compared to the status quo model.” In the executive summary, these are found on **page five**.

Attorney Pringle also wants to mention that the Iona McGregor population is significantly higher than the Fort Myers Beach population. Any impact on the Iona District residents, especially regarding higher taxes, will affect many more than the population of Fort Myers Beach, approximately 7,500, as compared to Iona McGregor Fire District’s approximately 63,300.

A few additional quotes to reference are on **page 11** of the report. It has reference to the tax impact and projections of what will happen in a legal merger. The quote is: “The tax rate is projected to increase annually throughout the forecast period compared to the current status quo.” In other words, the merger will result in higher taxes on Iona McGregor when compared to the current situation.

The conclusion statements of the actual report itself around **page 273** summarize major considerations for the board in considering whether a merger should occur. As indicated earlier, the study indicates that a tax increase will occur for Iona McGregor Fire District residents in a merger situation. Around **page 273**, there is discussion regarding the anticipated tax rates that will have to be charged in a consolidated or single district scenario. On **page 273**, there is **figure 199** and it references the consolidated single district five-year financial forecast. In the very beginning, the calculated millage rate of the combined or consolidated single district is in the first year (FY 2026) forecast to be 2.6156 mills, which is higher than Iona’s millage rate cap. In year FY 2027 through FY 2029 it is calculated to be 3 mills, again, higher than Iona’s 2.5 mill cap. And, for FY 2030, it is calculated to be 2.7422 mills, again, higher than Iona’s 2.5 mill rate cap.

For the record, **page 274** at the very end, the report indicates that Iona McGregor will see a higher tax rate each year of the five-year forecast that they reviewed from 2025 to 2030. And then, on **page 275** at **figure 201**, it includes projected consolidated millage rates. Those consolidated millage rates are again projected or described in **figure 201** and it shows the millage rate cap in that situation for Iona McGregor at 2.5 mils. It also shows the millage rate difference. In each year Iona

McGregor's millage rate in a consolidated single fire district scenario is higher than Iona McGregor's millage rate as an independent separate district.

There are a few conclusion statements to put in the record. In the conclusion statement at **page 276**, again, J. Angle Group says from an operational perspective, J. Angle Group found no compelling reasons to merge the two districts into a single new independent fire district. Later, it mentions again two operational concerns of a merger, including Fort Myers Beach's loss of its EMS transport authority from Lee County. And then again, the report says from a financial perspective, there were no compelling reasons to recommend a merger. Finally, the report says it found that the merged district would experience additional costs and therefore would not be beneficial.

Those are all the statements of importance in the report to include in the record.

Attorney Pringle also references the management response, prepared by Fire Chief Comer, in response to the report, that is part of the agenda item summary. All board members were provided with copies of the management response. Attorney Pringle requested to make this part of the record as well. The management report indicates that the Fire Chief agrees with the J. Angle Group's findings and analysis verifying there are some collaboration opportunities, but that a merger of the two districts is not in the best interest of the taxpayers and residents of Iona McGregor.

Attorney Pringle describes both voluntary and involuntary mergers, referenced to statute, section 189.074 and 189.075 F.S. Due to the JAG study's completion, and management's response both received by the board, action can be taken now on the merger topic. Processes are described for pursuing a voluntary merger in the statute if it is decided to move forward with a voluntary merger. Another option is to stop the voluntary merger process.

Attorney Pringle goes on to refer to the public's comment, referring to some statements of opposition to the merger that have been received, so they are made a part of the record as well.

Based upon all the information, the board can either move forward to proceed with a voluntary merger process or take action to stop the voluntary merger process.

Attorney Pringle also discusses involuntary mergers, governed by a separate statute, section 189.075 F.S. As well as questions left undefined by an involuntary merger process regarding Representative Botana's bill that is in the legislative committee review process. Attorney Pringle advises that the decisions made by the board will be conveyed to Tallahassee.

Attorney Pringle shares some examples of options regarding involuntary mergers that are ultimately up to the board's desires. Either requesting Representative Botana to withdraw House Bill 4013 based upon all the information or continue moving forward with the passage of the bill. Discussion ensues.

Commissioner Allen thanks the Fire Chief for the management responses and shared that he is in wholehearted agreement with it, and his desire to make the management response official.

Attorney Pringle discusses the potential outlines of the board's decisions concerning voluntary merger, involuntary merger topics and their desire of management's response to be incorporated.

Commissioner Allen shares that after reading the entirety of the study there was no apparent positive outcomes related to a voluntary merger, rather, some considerations could be negative to the service.

b. Public Input:

Attorney Pringle presents a Statement of Opposition provided to him from the public and goes on to read it into the meeting records: "I oppose the Iona McGregor and Fort Myers Beach Fire District Merger. I am aware that a feasibility study conducted concluded that there is no compelling reason to support the bill. In fact, the over 300-page report demonstrated that both Iona and Fort Myers Beach Fire Districts operate at exceptionally high service levels for their respective communities independently. The study also shows that there will be an increase in taxes to support the merger." Attorney Pringle advises the board that there are (36) thirty-six signatures on the Statement of Opposition. Commissioner Andersen calls for public input and there is no additional public comment. Attorney Pringle requests the meeting record to be clear that (36) thirty-six are opposed to a merger and zero are in favor.

c. Board Action:

A motion is made 'Based upon the findings and statements made by the J. Angle Group in the feasibility merger study and other information presented today at the board meeting with the letters of opposition by the residents of Iona McGregor and the taxpayers, I find that it's not in the best interest of the Iona McGregor residents and taxpayers of our district to move forward and pursue a voluntary merger of the Iona McGregor Fire District with Fort Myers Beach Fire District. Therefore, I move that the district stops the pursuit of any additional voluntary merger activities at this time.', by Commissioner Andersen, seconded by Commissioner Allen...Call and question, Commissioner Andersen calls for public input a second time, and there is

no additional public comment, all in favor aye...Motion carried 5-0. Commissioner Andersen requests that for the record, 'Please make it noted that the vote was unanimous by all commissioners.'

A motion is made 'That we oppose an involuntary merger based on the bill that delegate Botana has presented', by Commissioner Allen. Attorney Pringle is granted permission by the board to elaborate on the position, and clarifies that, A motion is made to oppose the bill and to ask Representative Botana to withdraw the bill as being in the best interests of the taxpayers and residents of the District. So moved by Commissioner Allen. The motion is seconded by Commissioner Andersen...Call and question, Commissioner Andersen calls for public input another time, and there is no additional public comment, all in favor aye...Motion carried 5-0. Commissioner Andersen requests that again, for the record, 'Please make it noted that the vote was unanimous by all commissioners.'

Commissioner Andersen makes a motion, '...requesting from Attorney Pringle, with the board's approval, from the board, a strongly worded letter opposing an involuntary merger to be sent to Representative Botana and/or any additional committees, local delegation members, to include details as described and discussed between the board and the attorney. The letter would include authorization from the Chairman of the board', seconded by Commissioner Barbosa...Call and question, Commissioner Andersen calls for public input another time, and there is no public comment from present company, all in favor aye...Motion carried 5-0. Commissioner Andersen requests that again, for the record, 'Please let the record show that it was a unanimous vote by all commissioners.'

A motion is made 'With the Chief's management letter, that we could reflect what decisions were made here tonight at this board meeting in that letter', by Commissioner Barbosa, seconded by Commissioner Allen...Call and question, Commissioner Andersen calls for public input, and there is no additional public comment, all in favor aye...Motion carried 5-0. Commissioner Andersen requests that for the record, 'Let the record reflect that the vote was unanimous by all commissioners.'

Commissioner Allen and the board discuss the serious considerations involved in the decisions made by the board tonight. Commissioner Allen shares his desires for the District to conduct research regarding potentially installing a Training facility, as mentioned in the merger feasibility study. The board discusses this topic and mentions the opportunity for multiple districts to collaborate on such a facility. Attorney Pringle reiterates, 'A motion to accept the report and to direct the Chief to proceed with the pursuit of the collaboration elements within it', so moved by

Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner Barbosa... Call and question, Commissioner Andersen calls for public input, and there is no public comment, all in favor aye...Motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Allen goes on to discuss the merger report’s descriptions of areas in the district that could benefit from greater coverage. In addition, the desire for the District’s administration to begin researching the feasibility of adding another station. Commissioner Andersen discusses the data provided in the Community Risk Assessment Standard of Cover, Strategic Plan, and other accreditation documents. The Fire Chief elaborates on further metrics regarding coverage and solutions to plan for potential future growth.

Public Comments on Non-Business Agenda Items [Note: Any member of the public will have up to three (3) minutes to make public comments on any non-business agenda item topics.] No public comment.

Commissioner Comments on Non-Business Agenda Items: Commissioner Andersen extends gratitude to the District for the exemplary services provided to the residents.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Allen, seconded by Commissioner McCoy...Motion carried. Call and question, all in favor aye. 7:15PM

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____