

Greater Naples Fire Rescue District Board Candidates 2026

By Sandy Parker | Sparker's Soapbox | Published 2026-09-27

Four candidates are competing for two seats on the Greater Naples Fire Rescue District Board of Fire Commissioners in the Nov. 3, 2026, general election: two for Seat 3 and two for Seat 4. In each race, a sitting commissioner faces a challenger. The district's five commissioners serve staggered four-year terms. Seat 3 is elected by voters across the whole district, and Seat 4 is one of two seats elected for the district's Golden Gate Division. The race is nonpartisan. Mark Cherney, the only candidate to qualify for Seat 1, was unopposed and does not appear on the ballot. ([Greater Naples Fire Rescue District](#); [Collier County Supervisor of Elections](#)) Learn about fire and emergency medical services in Collier County in my [Sparker's Civics primer post](#).

In this post, I summarize the backgrounds and stated priorities of the four candidates, along with their endorsements, recent news coverage, and campaign finance data, to help Collier County voters prepare to cast their ballots. I also include links where you can research each candidate further and read the responses to my candidate questionnaire from the two candidates who returned it.

Seat 3

- [Brian Cross](#)
- [Connie Bettinger](#)

Seat 4

- [Patrick Dearborn](#)
- [Elizabeth Flores](#)

Seat 3

Brian Cross

Brian Cross is the Seat 3 incumbent. He was first elected to the East Naples Fire Commission in 2012, was re-elected in 2014, and won Seat 3 in 2022. He is currently the treasurer of the Greater Naples Fire Rescue District's board. He was born and raised in Naples. ([Sparker's Soapbox 2022](#); [candidate questionnaire](#); [Greater Naples Fire Rescue District](#))

Cross holds a B.S. from the University of Central Florida (2005, magna cum laude) and a J.D. from the University of Florida Levin College of Law (2008). He is managing partner at Goede, DeBoest &

Cross, PLLC, a Naples law firm, where he “oversees the Firm’s operations, stability, and continued growth.” He has been a member of The Florida Bar since 2008, belongs to the Collier County Bar Association, and serves as a judge for the Collier County Teen Court Program. His law practice includes commercial litigation, community association matters, real estate disputes, construction defect claims, and business conflicts. ([Goede, DeBoest & Cross](#); [campaign website](#); [candidate questionnaire](#))

Platform

Cross’s [campaign website](#) lists four priorities:

- Fire Safety First
- Firefighter Advocacy
- Community Service
- Fiscal Responsibility

On his website, he says, “Effective fire district leadership requires integrity, accountability, and strong fiscal stewardship. Having served as Fire Commissioner since 2012, I am committed to continuing to support our emergency crews and protecting our Greater Naples community.” ([campaign website](#))

According to his [candidate questionnaire](#), his priorities if elected would be to “Address and change funding, Consolidation and Manage Growth.”

A board decision he disagreed with: “I voted against increasing tax rate.” ([candidate questionnaire](#))

A board action he supported and would want to see continued: “I wholly support all the financial votes to put money into reserves.” ([candidate questionnaire](#))

Endorsements

According to his [candidate questionnaire](#), Cross has been endorsed by:

- John Goede, Esq., co-founder and shareholder, Goede, DeBoest & Cross

In the News

- Cross, Stedman choices for Greater Naples fire board. (Editorial via [Naples Daily News](#), 10/23/18)

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
- [Goede, DeBoest & Cross attorney profile](#)
- [Sparker’s Soapbox Candidate Questionnaire](#)

- Sparker's Soapbox prior year election posts: [Greater Naples Fire Rescue District \(2022\)](#)
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Connie Bettinger

Connie Bettinger is challenging Cross for Seat 3. In her candidate questionnaire, she writes, "I moved here in 1972. I lived here until 1982 and returned in 1989." Her father "served as a Captain with the Golden Gate Volunteer Fire Department," and her family helped raise funds for the newly formed department in its early years. ([candidate questionnaire](#); [campaign website](#))

Bettinger attended Quinnipiac College as a "Chemistry Math major." For more than 19 years, she has worked for the Collier County Sheriff's Office as a school crossing guard. ([candidate questionnaire](#))

She served 18 years on the Collier County Library Advisory Board, including five years as chair, and four years on the State Library Technology Grant Board. She currently serves on the Golden Gate Community Center MSTU Advisory Board, has volunteered at "the Receiving Board for the Elections office for 18 years," and says she has attended Greater Naples Fire Rescue District public meetings for more than two years. A Kiwanis member for more than 22 years, she is lieutenant governor-elect of Division 22 and president-elect of the Kiwanis Club of Naples, and she was named Kiwanian of the Year in 2000. She has also volunteered with SHARE Florida, local scouting programs, and other community organizations. ([candidate questionnaire](#); [Candidate's Statement](#); [campaign website](#))

Platform

According to her [candidate questionnaire](#), her priorities if elected would be:

- "continue to support the Mental Health programs that are now available to the Firefighters and staff."
- "support the capital projects to renovate the Fire Stations that are financed by the increase in the [millage] rate from 2024."
- "see a plan to protect the wildlife sanctuaries in the district."
- "encourage people to take an active interest in their fire department."

Asked to name a board decision she disagreed with, she wrote that there are "some personnel issues that I do not completely understand that the Board has handled" and that "I truly do not have enough information on the specific cases to know." ([candidate questionnaire](#))

A board decision she agreed with: "The decision to support an enforceable collection policy.... If Amendment 3 passes and less money is available to budget for the Greater Naples Fire Rescue Department, more fines and fees could be assessed." ([candidate questionnaire](#))

Endorsements

According to her [candidate questionnaire](#), Bettinger has been endorsed by:

- Golden Gate Civic Association

In the News

No news coverage about Bettinger was found as of Sept. 25, 2026.

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
 - [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)
 - [Candidate's Statement](#)
 - [Sparker's Soapbox Candidate Questionnaire](#)
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Seat 3 Campaign Finances

Brian Cross raised no contributions from outside donors; his \$20,000 in total funds is entirely a direct contribution he made to his own campaign.

Connie Bettinger's \$1,848 total includes \$501 she contributed to her own campaign; the remaining \$1,347 came from nine outside donors, six of whom were from Collier County. The addresses of two of her donors are exempt from public disclosure.

Campaign finance data is from the Collier County Supervisor of Elections' [VoterFocus campaign finance system](#), downloaded Sept. 27, 2026.

Seat 4

Patrick Dearborn

Patrick Dearborn is the Seat 4 incumbent, representing the district's Golden Gate Division. He was first elected in 2022 and is seeking re-election. He is the board's current secretary. ([Greater Naples Fire Rescue District](#); [Sparker's Soapbox 2022](#))

Dearborn served as a paratrooper and communication specialist with the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division from 1986 to 1989, then studied business at Frostburg State University. He has been a realtor with John R. Wood Properties since 2004. From 2016 to 2020, he was a member of the Collier County Planning Board. ([Sparker's Soapbox 2022](#); [John R. Wood Properties](#))

Dearborn co-hosts The Next Question Podcast with Patrick Jira. In 2022, he co-hosted the weekly Patriot Talk Show at Seed-to-Table and was endorsed by Alfie Oakes, owner of the Seed-to-Table grocery store. ([The Next Question Podcast](#); [Sparker's Soapbox 2022](#))

Platform

Dearborn has not published a platform. On one of his campaign Facebook pages, he says, "God bless and protect our firefighters! Honored to run again as your Greater Naples Fire Commissioner 2026! Thank you for your support and vote! I stand and support all our local first responders!" ([Facebook 1](#))

Endorsements

Dearborn has been endorsed by:

- Collier County Commissioners Daniel Kowal, Chris Hall, Rick LoCastro and Bill McDaniel ([Facebook 1](#))
- Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk ([Facebook 1](#))
- IAFF Local 2396 ([Facebook 1](#))
- Southwest Florida Young Republicans (August primary endorsements via [Florida Voice News](#))

In the News

- Greater Naples Fire-Rescue commissioner joined Trump at Alabama football game amid hurricane cleanup efforts. ([Meidas News](#), 9/30/24)
- Affordability crisis in Collier County: first responders struggling to live where they work. ([WINK News](#), 5/31/26)

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
- [Facebook 1](#) | [Facebook 2](#) | [The Next Question Podcast](#)
- Podcast interviews: [239 Uncensored \(2024\)](#) | [Spotlight on Good People \(2025\)](#) | [The Determined Society \(2026\)](#)
- Sparker's Soapbox prior year election posts: [Greater Naples Fire Rescue District \(2022\)](#)
- Sparker's Soapbox Candidate Questionnaire: not received

Elizabeth Flores

Elizabeth Flores is challenging Dearborn for Seat 4. No campaign website, social media accounts, candidate statement, image, or other public information about her was found as of Sept. 25, 2026, and she did not return my candidate questionnaire.

Platform

No platform statements from Flores were found as of Sept. 25, 2026.

Endorsements

No endorsements for Flores were found as of Sept. 25, 2026.

In the News

No news coverage about Flores was found as of Sept. 25, 2026.

Further Research

- No campaign website or social media accounts found as of Sept. 25, 2026
- Sparker's Soapbox Candidate Questionnaire: not received

Seat 4 Campaign Finances

Patrick Dearborn's \$24,010 total includes a \$5,000 personal loan; the remaining \$19,010 came from 37 outside donors, 59 percent of whom were from Collier County. The addresses of two of his donors are exempt from public disclosure.

Elizabeth Flores had not filed a campaign finance report as of Sept. 27, 2026.

Campaign finance data is from the Collier County Supervisor of Elections' [VoterFocus campaign finance system](#), downloaded Sept. 27, 2026.

This post was researched and drafted with the assistance of Claude (Anthropic AI). The content was reviewed, edited, and fact-checked by the author. Both humans and AI can make mistakes. Please let us know if you spot one.