



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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**FIRE CHIEF
T. MICHAEL BURTON**

**MINUTES
APRIL 17, 2018
STAKEHOLDER TASK FORCE MEETING**

**Held at the Indian Rocks Beach Auditorium
1507 Bay Palm Boulevard, Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785**

WORKSHOP MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL: Task Force members answering roll call were Fire Chief Mike Burton, Commissioner Joe Bruni, Ms. Kelly Cisarik, Mr. John Yackowski, Mr. Lynn Rives, Mr. Matt Loder, Sr., Ms. Katrena Hale, Mr. Raymond Piscitelli, and District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas. Ms. Brigett Cerce and Mr. Mike Murray were excused.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. INTRODUCTIONS – All members gave a brief self-introduction.

2. WORKING FRAMEWORK

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that the group will meet in a workshop-type setting and public participation is welcome. He discussed that the history of the District should be studied in order to learn from it, but not to dwell on it, and he briefly discussed the referendum which was recently overturned. He explained that the group is structured to represent different agendas from varying interest groups, and he is confident that everyone is working honorably and diligently to make the District's situation better and more stable. He added that everyone must make a commitment to critique ideas and not people, to stay on track when discussing a particular topic, and to be respectful of one another's time.

3. MISSION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS' GROUP

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the mission of the group is to generate ideas which will maintain a high level of service that is currently enjoyed by the community, as there are currently no service delivery or quality of care issues. He explained, from a mission perspective, all members of the group must become familiar with the District's revenue sources, expenses, and investments to gain a good understanding of the financial situation. He added that if untapped operational efficiencies are discovered, those must be identified, providing they are not a service reduction. He stated that the group's mission must include short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals, as well as identifying unmet needs of the

organization, and the group must try to determine the best methodology is to achieve those. Chief Burton explained that this group is an advisory group, and recommendations and actionable items will be presented to the Board of Fire Commissioners, as they are the ultimate decision makers for the organization.

Elements he does not see being within the mission of the group, Chief Burton explained, are response-type protocol issues, specific apparatus the District is purchasing, contract bargaining, or similar operational items. He also explained that it is not the group's collective role to conduct financial audits; audit information will be made readily available to group members. He asked if there were other elements related to the mission or framework that should be discussed.

Ms. Cisarik asked if station placement efficiency will be discussed, to which Chief Burton confirmed that it will be, as none of the District's facilities are currently meeting its needs. He explained that both funding and location are important elements that must be looked at.

Mr. Murray asked if there will be discussion on capital improvements, such as apparatus purchasing. Chief Burton confirmed that those items will be discussed, as the District does not currently have a vehicle replacement plan or that type of funding mechanism in place.

Chief Burton added that, in the future, staff from Pinellas County Emergency Services may attend a meeting, as well as a County Commissioner has expressed some interest in meeting the group.

4. WORKING WITH THE SUNSHINE LAW

Discussion: Attorney Jeff Albinson explained that, by "Sunshine Law," he is actually referring to three separate laws: the Sunshine Law, Florida's public records law, and Florida's Code of Ethics. In order for this group to give recommendations to elected District officials, he explained that all three of these laws apply. The first one, the Sunshine Law, states that any meeting of public officials in regard to making decisions must be "in the sunshine," or out in the open, which means three things: the meeting must be properly noticed to the public, a recording and/or minutes of the meeting must be kept and available to the public, and the public must be allowed to attend the meeting and they must be accessible. Attorney Albinson stated that a "meeting" can mean any situation, formal or informal, which involves any two or more members of the group. He explained that two members casually discussing items related to the group is considered an illegal meeting; text messages, e-mails, or discussions on social media between members about committee business are all considered to be illegal meetings. Attorney Albinson recommended that committee members create a separate, free, web-based e-mail account specific for committee business, so that the members' personal e-mail accounts do not become public record. He added that if a member wishes to put together a document together for the committee, that member should not show that document to any other member until the public meeting. He added that a violation of the Sunshine Law can be, in theory, a second degree misdemeanor.

Secondly, the Florida public records law, Attorney Albinson explained, means that any document could be a public record. He discussed that there are exceptions, but to be safe, a member should consider any document to be a public record until it is determined that it is not. He explained that a member cannot throw documents away or delete e-mails pertaining to the committee, as a member of the public is able to request those documents at any time.

Attorney Albinson stated that, in order to comply with the Florida Code of Ethics, committee members who have a personal stake in a particular issue of either a benefit to their person or to them financially, must disclose that and/or excuse them self from discussing the item. Attorney Albinson added that he is not able to give legal guidance to any person individually, except in their role on the committee.

Ms. Cisarik asked Attorney Albinson to discuss communication with District staff versus committee members. Mr. Albinson stated that communication with a PSFRD staff member is not a violation, as long as they are not also a committee member.

Ms. Cisarik asked how to fix an inadvertent violation of the Sunshine Law. Attorney Albinson explained that there are many different ways to cure an inadvertent violation. He stated that the first step would be to bring it to his attention, and then bring it to the attention of the public at the next meeting and explain what happened. He added that committee members are encouraged to review the Sunshine Manual on the Attorney General's website, myfloridalegal.com.

Chief Burton mentioned that he and Chief Sidlauskas work together, so naturally they will have frequent contact about operations of the organization, but they must both be very aware that none of the work of the Stakeholder Task Force gets discussed. Attorney Albinson added that this is a very common setting; the prohibition is only talking about the business of the committee, not communication in general. Chief Burton stated that if any member has a question that requires a legal opinion, he asks that it get routed through Kim Fugate to facilitate rather than reaching out to Mr. Albinson directly.

5. DISTRICT CHARTER

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the District's charter is contained in the agenda packet. The most current version of the charter was approved in 2000, but the original charter was established in 1953. Chief Burton explained that, when the charter was revised, a decision was made by a fire commissioner to maintain the same funding strategies as had been in place the years prior, meaning there has never been a mechanism for adjustment without holding an election every time, which is not a normal restriction for government organizations. He continued to explain that if the committee determines that a charter change is needed, that will require a significant body of work outside of the Stakeholder Task Force, as it must take place at the state level.

To clarify why there was an update to the charter in 2000, Attorney Albinson discussed that in 1997 or 1998, the Florida Legislature reviewed all of the charters for special districts around the state and decided that uniformity was needed in how the charters were written. He explained that legislation was adopted that required every special district to readopt a charter that was more in the specified format, and each special district was given a particular year in which their new charter would be considered. Chief Burton added that this was when the name changed from the Indian Rocks Fire Control District to Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District. He also mentioned that one of the most important elements in the charter specifies that PSFRD is the sole provider of fire rescue and emergency medical services within the geographical boundaries of the District.

6. DISTRICT SERVICE AREA

Discussion: District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas gave a brief explanation of the District's service area. He explained that the District begins on the north end at the Belleair Beach city line and runs south down

Gulf Boulevard, stopping at the Indian Shores line. He continued to explain the general boundaries of the mainland Oakhurst area of the District. Chief Sidlauskas stated that there are automatic aid agreements in place, signed by every fire department in Pinellas County, which essentially provide a closest unit response on medical calls; fire calls are relatively similar. PSFRD provides the closest unit to every call, no matter where it is located.

Chief Sidlauskas explained that all three stations are staffed with both Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics; every station has at least one paramedic at all times. Station 26 is the most southern station in Indian Shores and is currently located in the Indian Shores Public Works Building. Station 26 has two employees working 24/7 who operate a heavy rescue specialty vehicle, which does not have any fire suppression capabilities. Station 27, located in Indian Rocks Beach, is the headquarters station which operates two units: Engine 27, which provides fire and EMS, as well as some light rescue, and a District Chief, who is the incident commander and on-call chief. The District Chief vehicle is also the tow vehicle for Marine 27, which is only staffed by the engine crew. There is also a special rescue vehicle, an ATV, which is also not staffed full-time, but is available for beach rescues. Station 28 is the mainland station on 94th Avenue at 135th Street. Station 28 is also the District's fleet maintenance station and vehicle repairs are done on-site. Station 28 is home to the District's only aerial ladder truck, which has a 75 foot ladder and has fire suppression capabilities, but also responds to EMS calls. Truck 28 has some light technical rope rescue capabilities as well as extrication equipment.

Ms. Cisarik stated that there is a small "dot" on the coverage map and asked if that is part of PSFRD's jurisdiction. Chief Sidlauskas stated that it is a small residential area and it is a part of the District that was not annexed by Largo several years ago.

Fire Chief Burton mentioned that Station 28 is well past its expected life, Station 26 is located inside of the concession booth at Indian Shores Town Hall, and Station 27 is past its expected life and has had many renovations and adaptations over the years. He stated that perhaps at some point in the future, Stakeholder Task Force members might be able to visit the stations, dependent upon accessibility.

7. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Discussion: District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas explained there's an elected Board of Fire Commissioners, five commissioners total, each based on their geographical location, and they serve a four year term. The Board of Fire Commissioners meets every third Tuesday of the month and is responsible for the oversight of the District and approval of the budget. He continued down the organizational chart and explained that next is Fire Chief Mike Burton, who is appointed by the Board of Fire Commissioners. The Fire Chief is responsible for the operations of Fire District as a whole. The Fire Chief directly supervises the Assistant Chief, two Life Safety Technicians, the Executive Assistant, and the Finance Director. He also acts as the Fire Marshal for the District and the plans examiner. The Fire Marshal, Public Information Officer, and Plans Examiner are not currently funded positions. The District's legal counsel, Jeff Albinson, supports the District's legal needs. Finance Director David Martin organizes and facilitates everything related to PSFRD's budget and finances. Executive Assistant Kim Fugate is the administrative gatekeeper. She is the assistant to the Fire Chief, as well as basically everyone else in the District, to include the public. The Assistant Fire Chief of Emergency Operations, John Mortellite, is the second in command to the Fire Chief. He is the direct supervisor of the District Chiefs. His responsibilities include overseeing EMS, firefighting operations, special operations, training, fleet maintenance, station maintenance, all of which runs through him for his approval. The EMS/Operations

and Training positions are both unfunded at this time. There are two Life Safety Technicians, Marshall Eiss and Bob Hill, and are more commonly referred to as Fire Inspectors, but Bob and Marshall perform so many other functions that the positions were renamed by Chief Polk. Their responsibilities are divided geographically and they perform fire inspections, plans review for Chief Burton's approval, fire investigations, and public education, as well as overseeing the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Next, Fleet Management is the responsibility of Tom Bruno, and Facilities Maintenance is the responsibility of Mark Wilder, both of whom create a tremendous savings to the organization, taking care of many things in-house as opposed to hiring outside. There are three District Chiefs: Jeremy Sidlauskas, Ray Norton, and Dennis Furnell, and they are the shift commanders for each shift. Each District Chief has three Lieutenants who report to them, with 12 personnel total on each shift. The District Chiefs are responsible for daily operations and scheduling, and they are the administrative liaisons for shift personnel. The District Chief serves as the incident commander for any major incidents in the District, and they work closely with the Assistant Chief. There are a total of 33 shift personnel to include Lieutenants, Firefighter/EMTs, and Firefighter/Paramedics, who operate the District's apparatus and are responsible for advanced life support (ALS), fire suppression, and rescue daily operations.

Fire Chief Burton explained that the unfunded positions create challenges for the organization, and he stated that he is not sure how much longer it will be sustainable for Assistant Chief Mortellite to cover three separate positions. He also mentioned that, per the charter, the Fire Chief is technically the Fire Marshal. He also stated that he is not trained as a plan reviewer. Ms. Cisarik inquired as to what the role of the Fire Marshal is. Chief Burton explained that the Fire Marshal would oversee the Life Safety Technicians, public education, plan review, and would serve as the code official for anyone with a code violation. The Fire Marshal would become a representative of the State Fire Marshal's Office, and there is a credentialing process which needs to be attained. The Fire Marshal would also be responsible for conducting fire cause investigations.

Mr. Rives inquired as to what the population is of the Fire District, to which Chief Burton explained that he is in the process of gathering data and getting a final number. He explained that determining population of the municipalities is simple from census data; however, the mainland/Oakhurst area is not a geographical subdivision that anyone who studies population has. He stated that they work with a current estimate of 27,800, but these numbers also do not reflect visitors. Ms. Hale suggested contacting the Tourist Tax Division as a resource which collects that information; Chief Burton confirmed that he would do that.

8. DURATION OF MEETINGS

Discussion: There was a general consensus that, in order to be respectful of everyone's time, the meeting length for future meetings will not exceed two hours.

9. ESTABLISHMENT OF FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that meetings must be properly noticed in the newspaper; therefore, this current meeting was noticed, as well as future meetings, set at a tentative schedule of the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 9:00 a.m. He inquired as to if that schedule works for most of the members, at least to start. He also added that twice a month might be too ambitious. Discussion ensued among members regarding scheduling preferences. Chief Burton stated that he would review this information and determine the best course of action.

Mr. Loder asked if the mission of the group was written somewhere. Chief Burton stated that he will make sure it gets distributed to all members. Mr. Loder then asked what the District's funding shortage amount is. Chief Burton stated that will be discussed at the next meeting.

10. AGENDA SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

Discussion: Chief Burton proposed that Finance Director David Martin provide an overview of the budget at the next meeting. He added that all members will be provided with the budget.

Chief Burton also suggested that another agenda item should be to start looking at the unmet needs of the District, both from a facility and apparatus perspective.

Chief Burton asked Finance Director David Martin when the audit would be completed. Mr. Martin stated that he should be receiving the draft this month, and the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) should be completed by the end of May. Chief Burton told the members that he will provide them with those documents as soon as they become available.

Commissioner Bruni suggested that there be an agenda item to give an explanation of how the system works between fire and EMS in Pinellas County.

Ms. Cisarik asked if there is any conflict if a Stakeholder Task Force member chooses to attend and speak at a Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting, to which Mr. Albinson responded that there would not be a conflict. Ms. Cisarik also asked how a member should send out a document to the entire group. Attorney Albinson agreed with Mr. Rives' suggestion of first sending the document to the Executive Assistant to incorporate into the agenda.

Chief Burton stated that Attorney Albinson will not be in attendance at all of the meetings; however, if there is an item that someone believes would be beneficial to have him attend for, that can be arranged.

Ms. Hale inquired as to if the e-mails that have already been sent are public record. Mr. Albinson explained the process by how someone could request all emails regarding a topic discussed by the committee. Ms. Cerce asked for further clarification on Ms. Hale's question. Mr. Albinson stated that yes, in theory; however, no real business of the committee has taken place, so it should not be an issue. Chief Sidlauskas asked if communication with Attorney Albinson is privileged. Mr. Albinson stated that it depends on the exact subject matter, but the Government in the Sunshine Law and how it relates to the rules regulating the Florida Bar are not always clear.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

APPROVED:


Fire Chief Mike Burton, Chair 4-30-18 Date

ATTEST:


Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant