



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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**FIRE CHIEF
T. MICHAEL BURTON**

**MINUTES
MAY 3, 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, Ms. Kelly Cisarik, Mr. John Yackowski, Mr. Lynn Rives, Mr. Raymond Piscitelli, Mr. Matt Loder, Sr., Ms. Brigett Cerce, Mr. Mike Murray, and District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas. Ms. Katrena Hale was in attendance but arrived after roll call. Commissioner Joe Bruni was absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. APPROVAL OF APRIL 17, 2018 MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2018 Stakeholder Task Force Meeting.

MOTION: MS. BRIGETT CERCE SECOND: MR. RAYMOND PISCITELLI

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. GUEST SPEAKER: JIM FOGARTY

- a. DATA-DRIVEN FOCUS GROUP**
- b. EMS ADVISORY COUNCIL**
- c. DETERMINANTS USED TO ESTABLISH FUNDING LEVELS**

Discussion: Jim Fogarty, Director of Pinellas County Safety and Emergency Services, introduced himself and discussed his background.

Mr. Fogarty prepared a PowerPoint presentation. The first slide listed the entities involved in Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services (EMS), EMS revenue (fee for service and taxes), EMS expenses (contracts with fire departments, ambulance company, and medical director; EMS division expenses such as employees and capital items), and fund balance/reserves (about 25% of operating expenses).

Ms. Cisarik asked, from a legal perspective, if the EMS Authority (EMSA) is a dependent or independent special district. Mr. Fogarty explained that it is dependent, and the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) is the EMS Authority.

Mr. Fogarty explained that the EMS Advisory Council is a stakeholder group with defined representatives that meets quarterly and acts as an advisory group to the BCC acting as the EMSA. He explained that its objectives are to study and analyze the procedures and protocols of emergency medical services throughout Pinellas County.

With regard to the determinants of funding ALS units, Mr. Fogarty explained that the number of units funded is dependent upon call volume criteria and response time criteria. The response time criteria states that an advanced life support (ALS) unit should arrive within 7 minutes and 30 seconds of being dispatched, 90% of the time. He added that there are areas of the community in which that is impossible, or nearly impossible, to meet, and those are considered exceptions in the resolution which dictates the funding of units. Mr. Fogarty distributed several different maps of the county which show response time compliance by geographically defined areas. He mentioned that Station 27's area was in compliance with response time objectives. The Data Driven Focus Group uses this data in their work. He added that if an area that is difficult to serve has a high call volume, that area may require an ALS unit. Ms. Cisarik asked if the maps indicated response times with any district responding, to which Mr. Fogarty confirmed that they do, but there is a separate map which shows how often a first-due unit handles calls in their area. Ms. Cerce asked what the average response time for the District is. Mr. Fogarty stated that he did not have that information with him, but he would get it. He added that fractile response times are a more proper metric to use than averages.

Mr. Fogarty explained that the call volume criteria help identify how many units each area needs. He distributed a document which indicates how many units are funded based on the number of calls. Ms. Cisarik asked if seasonal population is taken into consideration, to which Mr. Fogarty confirmed that it is. He discussed how certain departments deal with even daily spikes and put special units into service when they are needed. Mr. Fogarty also explained the difference between "seats" and "units" – each unit has multiple seats, and EMSA will fund one or more seats in each apparatus based on this call volume.

With regard to the cost of those specific seats, he explained that the standard template lists actual salaries and benefits of the firefighters on each apparatus. He also added that there is a constant staffing multiplier that is measured as a way of accounting for personnel days off. Lastly, he discussed that the document encompasses the associated costs of supervision and overhead. He explained that they use a reasonable and customary costs concept, and turnover plays a big role in this.

Mr. Fogarty stated that the Data Driven Focus Group, comprised of fire chiefs and other stakeholders, was formed in fiscal year 2015/2016 to bring objectivity to the process. The group meets quarterly and focuses on data for decision making purposes. He added that the group helps with transparency and setting priorities in resources.

Mr. Piscitelli asked why fire funding is used to subsidize EMS in PSFRD's area. He added that this area pays higher taxes than many areas of Pinellas County. Mr. Fogarty explained that the District has most of its EMS needs met according to the resolution, as there is not a high call volume and response time criteria is being met. Mr. Piscitelli stated that there is not enough money for EMS to pay for services in the District and suggested raising the EMS millage rate. Discussion ensued regarding the cost of EMS and

the need for 24/7 service. Mr. Rives asked what percentage of the EMS millage collected in the District is returned to the District, and Chief Burton explained this is a common concern for those in the beach communities. Mr. Fogarty discussed that the system as a whole is designed as a county-based regional system and also pays for the standard operations across the county and the 911 center. He also added that residents receive the same service no matter where they travel within Pinellas County. Chief Burton stated that he will get those numbers for the next meeting. Further discussion ensued regarding the number of calls versus funded seats. Chief Burton stated that he will try to get the seasonal call volume for the next meeting, as well as try to put something together regarding average response times versus fractile response times. Ms. Hale stated that she understands the funds from the EMS millage rate are to help the entire county run smoothly, but she feels if the District is currently in a deficit, it should be receiving more of those funds to help. Ms. Cerce asked if the tourist bed tax could be used to fund fire, to which Mr. Craig Hare (in audience) stated that it is not allowed per Florida Statute. Mr. Hare then introduced himself as the Director of EMS and Fire for Pinellas County. He added that, with EMS funds, the County is also providing other items back to the districts – dispatch center, radios, medical director oversight, medical supplies, and medical equipment, for example – and he stated that he will work with the Chief to put something together that shows a snapshot of those amounts.

Ms. Cisarik asked if it was correct that, with regard to the settlement agreement, the County expressed a preference to move Station 28 north and west, and that additional funding would be granted if it wasn't at the extreme southeast corner of the District. Mr. Fogarty stated that the County generally tries to partner with fire jurisdictions regarding station replacement when it comes time to rebuild; however, fire departments typically pay for their own capital infrastructure. He added that the County would be able to work with PSFRD to make decisions when it comes time to rebuild Station 28 by intuitively looking at the data. Ms. Cerce stated that earlier in the meeting, it was discussed that there were response time issues in the Bay Pines area and made the suggestion of potentially moving Station 31 to that area.

Ms. Cisarik inquired as to if the EMS Authority plays a role in the County's awarding of Penny for Pinellas funds. Mr. Fogarty stated that, from a legal perspective, the EMS Authority and the Board of County Commissioners are virtually the same entity. He explained that when they approve budgets, they sit as the BCC. Ms. Cisarik asked if they ask for input from the EMS Advisory Council, which Mr. Fogarty confirmed that do.

District Chief Sidlauskas stated that some of the data on the different maps were conflicting. Mr. Fogarty stated that he will look into it.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

At this point, Chief Burton asked for remarks from the audience.

Jim Palamara – Mr. Palamara stated that he feels the firefighters do a good job and the EMS Authority is a “bad investment” for the District, and he feels that there is a double taxation.

John Pfanstiehl – Mr. Pfanstiehl said that his calculations estimate that what the District pays into EMS versus what it gets back “is in the 20s.” He stated that he would like the County Commission to set an amount that must stay in the District. He also stated that he would like the Task Force to discuss more things than funding, and that he would like the matrix study to be reviewed again. Mr. Pfanstiehl also stated that he wants the County's cost per seat analysis to be discussed before funding.

Chief Burton introduced Madeira Beach Fire Chief Derryl O'Neal who was in the audience.

3. COMPENSATION LEVELS AND PER-SEAT COSTS

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that there were two papers in the agenda packet which break down the cost per seat and compensation levels for the District. He stated that the Florida Retirement System (FRS) cost is 24% of the base salary amount, which the District has no control over. The Chief discussed that the documents give a glimpse into what the benefits are and more accurately portray the earnings of employees. He added that he is still working on a comparison with other agencies' compensation packages and labor agreements

4. NUMBER OF UNITS IN THE DISTRICT

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that there are approximately 11,300 residential properties and 700 commercial properties in the District. The non-ad valorem assessment for residential properties is \$260, but businesses vary depending on occupancy and square footage. Ms. Cerce requested a breakdown of where the 11,300 properties are located. Ms. Cisarik asked if the data was collected from Pinellas County. Chief Burton stated that the data is from the Property Appraiser.

5. REFERENDUM HISTORY

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the referendum history is included in the agenda packet. He said he included everything he was able to find from the department's files, and collected the additional information through the Supervisor of Elections website. He added that the limitation of the District Charter is that any change is required to go back to referendum, and the history has not been particularly successful. He also discussed that there are costs to conduct a referendum, which vary depending on a few factors.

6. REFERENDUM AND BALLOT TIMELINE

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that, for example, to go to referendum at the November 6, 2018 general election, the ballot language must be submitted 60 days prior – August 21, 2018. At that point, a contract would be signed, and the Supervisor of Elections would inform the District what the cost will be.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

Chief Burton requested input from members for the next meeting's agenda. He stated that he would like to bring forward funding models used in other fire districts, with some pros and cons, and examples of how they could work here.

Mr. Piscitelli stated that he is interested in hearing the cost-saving measures PSFRD has already taken, as he has heard that the District is currently operating at the "bare bones," but he said he feels that the public is generally unaware of this.

Ms. Hale asked how long the assessment has been \$260, to which Mr. Piscitelli and Chief Burton responded it has been since the 2009 tax year. Mr. Piscitelli also added that there should be a four-year plan of raising the assessment. He stated that informations should be shared regarding what the cost would

be for residents if the County took over and what other towns are paying, to help people understand that if this happened, the residents would end up paying more.

Ms. Cerce stated that the only thing that has been successful is the flat rate increase. She added, though, that a millage coincides with a cost of living increase.

Chief Burton stated that he could pick random properties in the District and calculate what they would potentially pay.

Mr. Rives asked if there is a copy of the matrix review, to which Chief Burton confirmed there is, and it will be included with the next agenda. Mr. Rives stated that he was on that committee and both good and bad came from it, and added that it was after that committee when the assessment was raised to \$260. He also stated that people on the beach would be happier to see the flat fee raised accordingly, but he feels there needs to be more communication and visibility to accomplish this.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

APPROVED:  5/17/18

Fire Chief Mike Burton, Chair Date

ATTEST: 

Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant