



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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**FIRE CHIEF
T. MICHAEL BURTON**

**MINUTES
JULY 5, 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, Ms. Brigett Cerce, Ms. Katrena Hale, and Mr. Lynn Rives. Commissioner Joe Bruni, District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas, Mr. Mike Murray, Mr. Matt Loder, Sr., and Mr. Raymond Piscitelli were absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. APPROVAL OF JUNE 21, 2018 MINUTES

Discussion: Mr. Yackowski stated that he would like his comments regarding his support of increasing the flat fee to be included in the minutes.

**A motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2018 Stakeholder Task Force Meeting
with the amendment indicated.**

MOTION: MS. BRIGETT CERCE SECOND: MS. KELLY CISARIK

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. MOVE UP INFORMATION

Discussion: Chief Mike Burton stated that move up information has been included in the agenda packet. He explained that move ups do not occur for short-term events; rather, for long-term events that require a significant amount of resources. He added that units in the District would rarely be moved up, as it creates a service gap on the beach that is hard to cover. Ms. Cerce added that units at Station 27 are never moved, and the unit at Station 28 could potentially be moved, but she does not recall a time that has happened in 20 years. Chief Burton explained that the district chief monitors radio traffic and will move units as needed, or reach out to neighboring fire departments.

3. OPTIMA STUDY

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that this study was completed to determine where Station 26 should be located. He said that the research question was, “Which alternate location for temporary Station 26 should the County use to provide optimum coverage for the Redington Beaches emergency medical services district?” The Chief added that the question did not take all of the Gulf beaches into consideration, but this study is what drove the County’s decision process. Ms. Cisarik asked if the 2017 date on the study is correct, to which Chief Burton stated that it should be.

4. VOTER TURNOUT HISTORY

Discussion: Chief Burton reviewed data from the Supervisor of Elections, and commented that older elections include less detail than the current ones. He mentioned that precinct 321 is included with no votes, but he feels that it is an error and not within the fire district. He discussed some of the data presented, and mentioned that mail ballot vote participation was significantly higher than election day votes, which is an important finding to concentrate on. Ms. Cerce mentioned that more than half of the votes – around 5,000 – were from the mainland. She also asked where the data for Belleair Beach and Belleair Shore was, to which Chief Burton responded that he had not realized they were not included in the data. He stated that he was able to find data on a special election from 2008, and Ms. Cerce pointed out that only 2,000 people voted, which is a concern for future special elections.

Chief Burton asked the group if there was additional research that would be helpful to them. Ms. Cisarik stated that she has concerns about how the capital improvement funds are used, due to language in the Charter that restricts use of those funds for capital improvements that would have had to be done regardless of growth in the District. Chief Burton stated that has looked into it, and the auditor has informed him that replacing apparatus is allowed. Ms. Cerce said that wear and tear on the vehicle would be based at the growth of the District, and Ms. Cisarik stated that she did not see that, and that she feels this is for a lawyer to look at, as she is concerned it could be a potential lawsuit in the future. Chief Burton stated that he will have counsel review it. He added that he hopes to one day not have to assess any impact fees at all.

5. SPECIAL ELECTION COST

Discussion: This information is not yet available.

6. 2020 PENNY FUNDING

Discussion: Chief Burton read from an email sent by Jim Fogarty, Bureau Director of Pinellas County Safety and Emergency Services, regarding Penny funds. Chief Burton stated that, in PSFRD’s case, there have been three items submitted for consideration in Penny 4. The formal request for the ladder truck has been made, but requests for the marine unit and Station 28 have not. He added that there are dozens of fire-related items in the Penny 4 submission, as there are a lot of unmet needs in the various fire departments. He explained that between February and March next year, when budgets are being processed for the new fiscal year, a capital budget will be proposed and that will be the first pass at any available Penny 4 items. The County is creating a portfolio of capital projects and there will be a review and approval process for those projects, as well as public hearings so people can attend and speak on those issues. Chief Burton stated that he is hopeful the County negotiated the settlement agreement in good

faith and that those projects will be funded. He added that, in his email, Jim Fogarty stated that there are always more projects than there are available funds, and projects that are the most needed and most supported survive that process. He added that if there is controversy surrounding a particular project, it becomes more difficult for that group to move it forward.

Ms. Cisarik asked if ongoing talks with County EMS officials are taking place regarding potential movement or land use for Station 28. Chief Burton confirmed there has been, and early data has been run to show where Station 28 could be most effective. He added that he has also done a search on County property in that area. Ms. Cisarik asked if County officials have addressed Station 27 placement and if they are interested in moving Station 28 in conjunction with Station 27. Chief Burton stated that they have not discussed Station 27; their interest is higher in the mainland area because it is unincorporated and they have some responsibility there, which is why the Penny money is able to come directly from the County. Ms. Cisarik stated that there is a new model for that, now, as the proposed station in the Redingtons is collaboration between County and City funds.

Chief Burton added that Jim Fogarty made it clear that projects funded by the County must have a regional benefit. Ms. Cerce discussed that if Station 26 is moved further south, she does not think there would be a benefit to moving Station 27 north, and there will be a service degradation in Indian Shores. Chief Burton stated that data has been run for Station 28 but not 27, but he believes there is consensus that Station 27 needs to be replaced. He added that a hardened facility to operate out of during a storm threat which is publicly accessible is necessary; however, there is not yet a plan yet for how to do that. Ms. Hale asked if Station 27 would need to be moved off the island due to storm threats, to which Chief Burton explained that it does not, it just has to be built in a different manner. He added that the beach would still be the ideal location, as that is where the majority of the District's workload is. Ms. Cerce said that bridge access would also be an issue if the station were moved off the beach.

7. TAKE HOME VEHICLES

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that there is a total of five staff members with take home vehicles, all of whom have after-hours responsibilities: Chief Burton, who lives within the District, the Assistant Chief, who lives just outside the District, two fire inspectors/investigators, one in the District and one in Lealman's district, and the mechanic, who has a mobile shop in his truck and responds from home to get units back in service. He added that if employees did not have take home vehicles, parking would also be an issue, as it is very limited.

8. FIRE COMMISSIONER PENSIONS

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that when an agency opts to be in FRS, they must be all in or all out, and those rates are set by the State, and explained the different rate classes. Finance Director David Martin added that the rate for elected officials is around 20%, most of which is unfunded liabilities. Chief Burton stated that the Commissioners' monthly salary is \$500, and Mr. Martin stated that the monthly cost to the District is approximately \$100 for all five commissioners. Ms. Cisarik asked when the Commission decided to start a pension program for themselves. Chief Burton said that he believes the whole workforce must be part of FRS. Mr. Rives stated that is not true, as some cities are in FRS, but not their elected officials. Mr. Martin stated that the Commissioners cannot be excluded, to which Mr. Rives stated that is just probably how it was set up at the time. Ms. Cisarik stated that she feels it would be a good idea to review nearby cities and independent special districts in the FRS system to find out if their

commissioners are subject to pensions, as it may be beneficial to them to opt out if it is inconsistent. Mr. Martin added that they are unable to opt out if they receive a salary. Ms. Cerce said that she was under the same impression that employees could not opt out of FRS. Chief Burton added that commissioners are only vested after eight years, and he will find out what the pension amounts to in real dollars.

9. COMMISSION / COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Discussion: Chief Burton asked if any members received any feedback from their constituents or communities. Mr. Rives said that he mentioned it to his city commission and explained the range the group was considering for an increase, and there was no negative feedback. He said that he will go back to them once there are more details. Ms. Cerce stated that she spoke with people on the mainland, and the general consensus was that they did not feel there would be a high voter turnout on the mainland during a March election. She added that most people felt a flat increase was acceptable, that \$100 was reasonable, and that underfunding the fire department is a liability. She added that some people felt it was “slimy” to hold an election in March, which is a perception issue that would need to be addressed. Chief Burton added that a lot would depend on mail ballots during a March election, as that would make it easier for voters. Mr. Rives suggested finding out how many people get mail ballots within the District and what the return rate has been on them for both special and general elections. Mr. Yackowski stated that he works as an election ambassador and poll worker, and the Supervisor of Elections encourages people to use mail ballots. He also suggested researching what the character limit is for the question on mail ballots, to which Chief Burton replied that he thought it has to be identical; Ms. Cisarik and Mr. Rives agreed.

10. FLAT FEE INCREASE / MARCH ELECTION

Discussion: Chief Burton asked the group if they would prefer to hold off on making a recommendation for the Fire Commission until there is a larger group present, which everyone agreed they would. Mr. Rives added that he feels it would behoove everyone, as a group, to attend the Fire Commission meeting when the recommendation is made. Chief Burton agreed with this, and let the group know that he appreciates them giving up their time.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

Ms. Hale asked if the group is leaning toward a flat fee increase as a recommendation, which Chief Burton stated that is the feeling that he has been getting. Ms. Cerce stated that she agrees, but with the concession that is a bandage and something else will have to be done in the future. Ms. Hale said that her concern is that a large percentage of properties on the beach are not homesteaded, so they are unable to vote. Chief Burton mentioned that he attended a meeting a couple weeks ago with a number of beach communities present, and the Property Appraiser was there to talk about the impacts of the third homestead exemption, and suggested that if she, or any member, could find one of those meetings, they would likely find it interesting, as the exemption is not as alarming as it appears on the surface, assuming an organization has the ability to adjust their ad valorem, which PSFRD does not.

Ms. Cerce inquired as to what the process is for changing the charter, as it has been done in the past. Chief Burton discussed that there was a statewide movement at that time for all special districts to make updates to their charters in an effort to make them more consistent across the board. There were a lot of

opportunities to make changes at that time, and the Commission made a clear choice to not allow that authority for themselves or future commissions. He continued to explain that a charter change requires a lot of leg work, as well as a lot of work with the County to gain approval and consensus among many entities, and there are costs involved. Chief Burton stated that one of the risks in taking a charter amendment to a legislative body that is not very pro-special district is that there could be very unintended consequences, as they have the ability to then make their own changes. He agreed that is what has to happen long-term, but everything must line up, and there must be good legislators in place. Ms. Cisarik added that there is a legislative delegation group of state officials that meets in spring and fall, and a local bill would have to be agreed upon by them, and they would take it to the full body of the legislature for ratification and it would be passed as a group of local bills.

Ms. Cerce mentioned that there was a request at the last meeting for current cost cutting measures. Chief Burton said that it had been discussed at a prior meeting as well, but the District's cost containment is typically deferral. He added that replacing the boat has been deferred, as have wage increases, the Fire Marshal position, and much-needed technology upgrades. He added that the District frequently uses State contracts to save money as well.

Ms. Cerce asked what cuts would have to take place if the referendum fails. Chief Burton explained that, as in any fire department, significant cuts must unfortunately always happen in the form of personnel. He added that the District does not have the ability to trim people without a service reduction; if the Indian Shores station must close, the District also loses six firefighters, as well as EMS revenue from the County.

Mr. Rives asked what the purpose of the Indian Shores station is when the new Redington facility is built, and if are the Redingtons going to absorb staffing. Ms. Cerce said they could potentially have different pay systems and retirements. Chief Burton stated that there are no fire-based resources currently in any of the Redingtons, and resources respond from either Madeira Beach or Seminole. He added that he does not know what the change in the service delivery model would be. Mr. Martin stated that half of the funding is being dropped in the next fiscal year, and he guarantees the other half will drop in the following fiscal year. He explained this puts the District in the position of still having to make this decision, because there will only be funding for two positions, which puts the District into a hole without an increase in revenue stream. Chief Burton said that there will be a problem if PSFRD is not the provider in the Redingtons.

Ms. Cisarik stated that she would be interested in hearing from the Madeira and Seminole fire chiefs, in conjunction with the mayors of the Redingtons, regarding their plans for fire equipment in that station. She said that she would like to know how PSFRD's run cards will also be affected. Ms. Cerce stated that the first due ALS unit is always the closest unit based on drive time, but they can write their run cards however they wish for fire. She added that they should cooperate with neighboring districts, but sometimes it does not work like that. Ms. Cerce stated that it also depends on how large the facility is – they will likely put an ALS engine there, based on the size. Chief Burton added that it is difficult because there are five elected bodies which all may have different views. Ms. Cisarik asked when the first contract for the Redingtons expires, and Chief Burton stated that the first one is in 2019, and they are spaced about six months apart. Ms. Cisarik stated that this new facility should then be negotiated this year. Chief Burton stated that he will see what additional information he can get.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

APPROVED:



Fire Chief Mike Burton, Chair

7-20-18

Date

ATTEST:



Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant