



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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**FIRE CHIEF
T. MICHAEL BURTON**

**MINUTES
JUNE 7, 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, Mr. John Yackowski, Ms. Brigett Cerce, Ms. Katrena Hale, Mr. Lynn Rives, and District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas. Ms. Kelly Cisarik arrived after roll call. Mr. Ray Piscitelli, Mr. Mike Murray, and Mr. Matt Loder, Sr. were absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. APPROVAL OF MAY 17, 2018 MINUTES

Discussion: Chief Mike Burton clarified a comment which was made at the last meeting regarding the location of Station 28. He stated that the existing station is currently located in the extreme southwest portion of the District, and there has been discussion about moving it to the north and west. The station currently sits the opposite of that direction – the south and the east. Therefore, the commentary about it being in the southeast is correct, as is the commentary that took place during the meeting about moving it to the north and the west is also correct.

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

MOTION: MS. BRIGETT CERCE SECOND: MS. KATRENA HALE

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. EMS CALL ACTIVITY BY MONTH

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that the purpose of this data is to identify if there has been a discernible pattern that would suggest different models for service delivery. He stated that there is slight variation by month, but nothing significant.

3. FIRE CALL ACTIVITY BY MONTH

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that there is slightly more variation in fire call activity by month than with EMS activity, but still not substantial enough to consider different delivery models. He added that the peak seen in September was due to Hurricane Irma. Ms. Cisarik stated that she would like to see peak activity by the time of day, because she knows other districts have been adding peak response vehicles to address increases in daytime activity. Chief Burton stated that he will gather that information, as well as data by the day of the week, because he believes the peak response vehicles are not being used every day.

4. COSTS TO OPERATE STATION #26

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that the cost estimate is offset by \$599,000 in EMS funding that comes from Pinellas County. He stated that, to the best of his ability, this data represents the actual cost to operate Station 26 as it exists today. He added that the apparatus that operates out of Station 26 is 17 years old and does not have fire suppression capabilities.

5. FUTURE PLANS FOR STATION #26

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that there are no current plans regarding Station 26 to build or acquire land. The current agreement is with the Town of Indian Shores, which provides for two small rooms, one of which is the town's concession stand, each of which estimated to be about 12' x 12'. There are no restrooms inside of the station and firefighters use the adjacent public restrooms, and the mechanic's shower. He added that there are a few days each year that the firefighters must vacate the premises so that the town can use their concession booth for events. The apparatus is parked outside at all times and staff parking is a challenge. The cost is minimal, and PSFRD pays a portion of the utility bills. Ms. Cisarik asked if there was an update on the new Redington Beach station at 174th Avenue. Chief Burton stated that he has seen the architectural plans but does not know of a timeline, other than the project could potentially be one and a half to two years until completion. He added that this project is funded by Penny for Pinellas 3 – some of which is from one of more of the Redingtons as a municipality and some is from Pinellas County for the lift station portion. Chief Burton added that he does not know who the provider will be in the station. Commissioner Bruni mentioned that the County cannot pay for fire service, so whoever occupies that station will have to pay for firefighting capability. Chief Burton stated that he will try to get more information on this project before the next meeting. Ms. Cisarik stated that she thinks the group should review the EMS settlement agreement. Chief Burton stated that he would ensure the agreement was distributed to all committee members. Additional discussion ensued regarding potential scenarios for Station 26 and how it relates to the agreement. Chief Burton stated that he is exploring possible rental scenarios for a more suitable location for the crews. He added that this has not yet been brought to the Board and there are no contracts or leases for any particular property at this time.

6. NUMBER OF PARCELS AND TAXABLE VALUES FOR EACH AREA/MUNICIPALITY

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that the attached document includes a breakdown of taxable properties within the District, noting that the mainland area has highest number of parcels but not the highest taxable value. He added that there are a very small number of exempt properties. District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas stated that he feels that a chart identifying the EMS funding broken down by area

would be beneficial. Chief Burton said he would work on getting that information.

7. DISTRICT-WIDE BREAKDOWN OF PARCELS

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that there are essentially the same number of single-family residences and condominiums; a low number of multi-family units; and all mobile homes are on the mainland. In response to members' questions, Chief Burton will get confirmation on how hotels are classified, as well as if any properties are classified as industrial.

8. LEGAL OPINION ON TAXATION QUESTIONS (TENTATIVE)

Discussion: Waiting on info from attorney.

9. REDINGTON BEACHES CONTRACTS FOR FIRE SERVICE

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that there are three separate Redington contracts with Seminole and Madeira Beach, with three separate expiration dates, and they are on the second ten-year contract. There is no cost to the Redingtons for capital outlay, equipment, or building maintenance. Both parties have the option to get out of the contract, and each of the contracting cities is responsible for their own insurance, worker's compensation, etc., and there is a provision in the contracts for an annual adjustment. The supporting documents identify the fees collected by Seminole and Madeira, neither of which has a physical presence in any of the Redingtons. All fire agencies are responsible for their own run cards – most of the time, it is the closest unit response for fires, and all EMS calls are always closest unit response. Discussion ensued regarding automatic aid and the general balance that generally takes place in the system so that no agency subsidizes another.

10. MODEL DEPICTING VALUES OF \$40 ANNUAL INCREASE TIMES FOUR YEARS

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that, at previous meetings, there had been discussion of proposing either a \$30 or \$40 increase each year over the next four years, which are each modeled out in the supporting documents. Ms. Cerce stated that the \$40 model meets the deficit by year two and that she feels, while it is an excellent short-term plan, it does not fix the overall problem. Chief Burton stated that this model generates some ability by year four to implement a capital improvement plan to set aside money for major apparatus and station replacements. He also mentioned that funds are not collected until the year following the referendum year. Ms. Hale asked if there are grant opportunities that PSFRD could apply for, to which Chief Burton confirmed that PSFRD does regularly pursue available grant opportunities, but sometimes the match or commitment is unsustainable for the District over time. Discussion ensued regarding various grant opportunities. District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas mentioned that he recently applied for the FEMA hazard mitigation grant. Mr. Lynn Rivers stated that he saw the funding list for that particular grant and believes PSFRD was approved for the purchase of a generator, to which District Chief Sidlauskas responded that he had not yet received that information. Ms. Hale also suggested having discussions with politicians to help the District. She stated that she feels it is unacceptable that PSFRD is in this situation. Chief Burton stated that he was waiting to go back and speak with the commissioners when he felt he had a tentative approach on which direction the District should go in. Chief Burton stated that the \$40 model, which is a total increase of \$160 over four years, and using today's property values and millage rates, PSFRD would be in the middle of the ranges of Seminole, East Lake, and Palm Harbor. He added that he believes there might be some resistance to this

model by the property owners on the mainland, and it would be the District's responsibility to educate them on the challenges the District is currently facing. He added that it may not be the best long-term solution, and eventually a charter change might be necessary so that the Board of Fire Commissioners are not so limited in their ability to make adjustments in a public budgeting process. He added that the \$40 model would provide relief for a considerable amount of time until the environment is right for a charter change.

11. MODEL DEPICTING VALUES OF \$30 ANNUAL INCREASE TIMES FOUR YEARS

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the \$30 model does still provide relief and may possibly be more sellable. He added that they could also look at a hybrid of both models. Ms. Cerce stated that she feels this model takes too long to meet the deficit. Ms. Cisarik stated that the last successful increase was \$70, so she feels that the voters would potentially be willing to pass an increase higher than \$30 or \$40. Ms. Hale asked if there was an available breakdown of how many properties in the fire district claim the homestead exemption, to which Chief Burton stated that he did not have that information currently. Ms. Hale stated that she would work on getting that information for the next meeting, to which Chief Burton requested she route the information through Kim Fugate. Chief Burton explained that soon he would like the group to be able to start closing in on some options, especially if they hope to get something on the November ballot, as the deadline is August, and it has to go before the Board of Fire Commissioners first. Mr. Rives said that he thinks the District should just ask for the amount needed up front as opposed to asking for smaller increases over several years. Ms. Cisarik agreed that it would make sense to ask for a higher increase and explain the operational shortfalls. District Chief Sidlauskas discussed that there is an educational component that needs to be talked about, as many residents still think the ad valorem is in place. He added that he walked door to door to speak to residents with many other firefighters during the last referendum, and many of those people are unaware that it was overturned. Discussion ensued regarding asking for the money up front versus spreading it out over several years. Discussion ensued also regarding encouraging politicians to look to county and city commissions for help. Chief Burton agreed and added that there is an educational element with city and county officials as well as residents, and the proposal must be reasonable for the average homeowner on the mainland. He added that he will put together a model showing a \$100 up-front increase. Ms. Cisarik suggested a referendum now with a flat increase, then a referendum again in a couple of years, reducing the flat fee and implementing an ad valorem component. She added that she feels the only problem with the last referendum was the language, and this would fix the immediate operational need and no charter change would ultimately be necessary. Ms. Cerce stated that she agrees with this idea; however, she feels that going to referendum twice that closely together might be a challenge. Discussion ensued regarding the effects of a possible recession and property values. Chief Burton stated most city and county operations have the ability to adjust the millage rate to meet its needs as property values go up and down. He agreed that having stability with flat fee, while also having the ability with ad valorem to make adjustments. Chief Burton stated that, if the group feels ready, he would like proposals to be brought forward at the next meeting. Mr. Rives requested that Chief Burton model out higher, up-front options, such as \$90 or \$100, over four years, so that the group can see what that would provide long-term.

12. DATA DRIVEN FOCUS GROUP 2015 – 2017

Discussion: Chief Burton explained that the attached charts were from years 2015 – 2017. Ms. Cisarik stated that the whole packet that the Data Driven Focus Group generates has a large amount of data. She added that the District's response times look good overall, but hot spots can be noted in individual grids.

She stated that the County uses those hot spots, in addition to call volume, to determine where they need to put new stations. Discussion ensued regarding response times, concurrent calls, and move-ups.

13. RESPONSE TIME COMPLIANCE IN GRID 370A

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the attached map shows where response time goals were not being met in grid 370A. He said that the main reason is just due to how far out the properties are located and the road system. He added that two of the calls were also due to a concurrency issue. Ms. Cisarik asked if a quick response vehicle (QRV) at Station 27 would help. Chief Burton stated that the District does not have the staffing for that, and that there are also practical challenges with staffing two units with the same crew. District Chief Sidlauskas added that traffic and pedestrians would still cause delays, but if the District could place a station in that area with a QRV, that would solve the problem. Discussion ensued regarding potential options with a QRV. Additional conversation took place regarding the challenges of on-street parking and speed bumps.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Nancy Obarski – 708 Beach Trail, Indian Rocks Beach – Ms. Obarski stated that she has the same issue with street parking by her house. She then thanked the committee members for their time and efforts with the group. Ms. Obarski stated that she feels a \$100 increase per year would be successful. She added that assessments are limited as to what they can be spent on, and they can only be used for “first responder EMS,” but ad valorem can fund either. She suggested that Attorney Jeff Albinson be consulted to clarify what can be funded out of assessments versus ad valorem.

A brief discussion ensued regarding options for timelines to go to referendum.

Ms. Cisarik stated that the next EMS Advisory Council Meeting is June 15, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. at the EMS and Fire Administration Building.

Mr. Rives stated that he just researched the Hazard Mitigation Grant list and it appears that a generator has been funded for PSFRD. He stated that he forwarded the email to Kim Fugate.

ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED:

Fire Chief Mike Burton, Chair
7-10-18
Date

ATTEST:

Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant