



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

**304 FIRST STREET
INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FLORIDA 33785-2587**

**(727) 595-1117 FAX: (727) 595-5879
www.psfrd.org**

**FIRE CHIEF
T. MICHAEL BURTON**

**MINUTES
AUGUST 16, 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, Ms. Brigett Cerce, Ms. Katrena Hale, District Chief Jeremy Sidlauskas, and Mr. Lynn Rives. Commissioner Joe Bruni, Mr. John Yackowski, Mr. Mike Murray, Mr. Matt Loder, Sr., and Mr. Raymond Piscitelli were absent.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. APPROVAL OF JULY 19, 2018 MINUTES

Discussion: Chief Burton mentioned that there were a couple typographical errors in the draft minutes that were caught late yesterday, but those were corrected prior to the members receiving the copy.

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2018 Stakeholder Task Force Meeting.

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

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARIES AND PENSIONS

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the agenda packet includes a collection of data on the salaries and pensions of each city and district contiguous to PSFRD. Ms. Cisarik asked if commissioners' time in service in FRS increases their amount of credited years. Chief Burton stated that he presented a hypothetical situation to an FRS employee of a firefighter with 25 years of credited service who terminates their employment and, after a one year break, begins service as an elected official, and the answer received was, if their service as an elected official began prior to 2010, they would be eligible for a second and separate benefit as an elected official; however, if it was after 2010, and they were receiving their pension, they would not be eligible for a second benefit, as it is not permitted. Chief Burton did explain that, in this case, the District would still be required to pay the unfunded liability portion of

34.48% to the State, even though the employee is not eligible for the benefit. He added that, if the person began their time as an elected official after 2010 and was not receiving a pension, their years of service as an elected official could conceivably add to their years of service within FRS. Chief Burton mentioned that PSFRD does not have anyone currently in that position. Ms. Cisarik asked if the District can choose whether or not the elected officials go into the pension plan; Chief Burton responded that there have been very limited windows of opportunity over the years during which agencies could modify their grouping, and the last one was in the late 1990s. He explained that the decision was made when PSFRD originally entered into FRS, and the ability to amend that choice is limited. Ms. Cerce stated that she feels the data indicates that PSFRD is in line with the other surrounding agencies.

3. HOTELS/MOTELS IN DISTRICT

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that the Property Appraiser's system defines motels consisting of 49 units or less, and hotels as 50 units or greater. PSFRD's fee schedule assesses \$165 per room for a motel, and a hotel at a base fee of \$385, plus \$115 per room. He added that the two properties highlighted in the agenda packet document are actually mobile home parks with rental lots, but show up as hotels in the Property Appraiser's system. From his research, Chief Burton stated that it appeared there are 167 motel rooms in the District, and the only hotel being the Holiday Inn complex. Ms. Cisarik stated that the list is not all inclusive, as she knows of one property that is not listed. She added that the property she is referring to has a class code of 3913, hotels and motels, 49 units or less, as they have five units, but they are being assessed \$260 per unit. Chief Burton asked Ms. Cisarik to provide the information to him and he will look into it, and added that every agency collecting taxes is dependent upon the Property Appraiser's rolls being accurate. Ms. Hale agreed that there might be some glitches within the system, as her property is not included on the list. Ms. Cerce mentioned that the property code of 3913 may have accidentally not been included in the analysis. Chief Burton stated that he will run the data again. Mr. Martin added that the Holiday Inn is actually three different properties, with the rooms classified as condo units. Ms. Cerce stated that she just looked it up and there are 27 properties in the District with the 3913 code. Ms. Hale stated that she would be willing to work with the group to produce a more complete list.

Chief Burton stated that if the group agrees to a flat fee increase of \$100, it needs to be determined which occupancy types the increase would be applied to. Mr. Rives asked if any previous increases had applied to properties other than residential, to which Mr. Martin stated that he does not believe they have. Chief Burton reiterated that the challenge in trying to adjust commercial properties is formulating clear ballot language, and added that it would involve less than 200 properties. Ms. Cisarik asked if verification could be provided at the next meeting regarding when the last commercial increase was. Mr. Rives stated that, if it has obviously been 20 years since non-residential properties have had an increase, it is reasonable to expect one.

Ms. Cerce asked that, in an effort to expedite the process and get closer to end point, if it would be clear language to ask for a \$100 increase per residence, plus a \$100 increase to all non-residential properties. Chief Burton added that a clear way to do that is to apply the increase only to base commercial and not the square footage. Ms. Cerce added that she doesn't think when the last increase was matters, as we know it has been many years. Chief Burton explained that the language could read along the lines of a \$100 increase across all residential units, hotels, motels, and base commercial. He added that, in doing this, everyone carries part of the burden and the language is clear. Ms. Cisarik stated that she would not be comfortable with that until she can see how the small motels in the 3913 category are being assessed. She then asked if PSFRD sends a breakdown with the TRIM notice, to which Mr. Martin replied that is

only done the first time. Ms. Cerce stated that there is language included which explains that if any person has a question about their tax bill, they are able to go in front of the Commission individually and request a change. Chief Burton added that if someone feels their property is classified incorrectly, they will also need to contact the Property Appraiser's Office. Mr. Rives said that he agrees each category should be increased across the board. Ms. Cisarik stated that property owners get a TRIM notice from the County that explains their other taxes, but no explanation of their fire assessment. Ms. Cerce agreed that the District should provide that, but does not feel it is part of the purpose of this committee. Mr. Martin added that he has the ability to investigate every property and make adjustments, and requested Ms. Cisarik let him know the address she is referring to so that District personnel can perform a site visit and update the billing, if necessary. He added that the consulting firm sends the District new properties so they can be researched. Ms. Fugate added that the consulting firm also sends detailed letters to new property owners regarding their specific assessment, as well as when a property changes ownership.

Ms. Hale stated that she now feels this information is straightforward and is willing to educate property owners on the proposed changes. District Chief Sidlauskas added that if a hotel room increases from \$260 to \$360, and the rooms are rented 200 days per year, it would equate to \$1.80 per day; rooms assessed at \$165 increasing to \$265 would equate to \$1.33 per day, which, he stated, he assumes is ultimately passed down to the consumer.

Ms. Cerce stated that she has emailed a spreadsheet of the 27 missing properties to Ms. Fugate, and added that she has a program that could help research them further. Ms. Hale said that committee members must be confident about understanding the information, as two members cannot speak to property owners together to remain in compliance with the Sunshine Law. Ms. Cerce asked if the group will cease to exist once a decision is made, because, if it does, then multiple people speaking together would not be an issue. Chief Burton stated that he will request a legal opinion on that question. Mr. Martin told Ms. Hale that he would be willing to go with her, as he is not part of the committee.

Ms. Cerce asked if the group could move forward with their recommendation, with the commitment from the District that within the next year, they will revisit the commercial properties and do their best to assure they are classified correctly. Ms. Cisarik agreed to a \$100 increase for residential properties, but feels commercial properties should not be pursued at this time. Mr. Rives stated that he feels if the public knew that commercial properties were not paying their fair share, he feels the referendum would be a waste of time. Ms. Hale said she feels the language should be simple and read something along the lines of "everyone pays \$100 more." Chief Burton clarified by stating, "\$100 across all residential types, including single family residences, condos, timeshares, hotels, and motels, and base commercial." Ms. Cerce stated that she is in favor of that. Ms. Cisarik mentioned the single family residences and duplexes that are being rented out through online rental platforms, and Chief Burton stated that must be handled at the state level. Ms. Cerce added that it only matters how the Property Appraiser classifies the property. Chief Burton also confirmed that boat slips, vacant land, docks, etc. would not receive increases, as those owners will likely already be affected on their homes.

A motion to make a recommendation to the Board of Fire Commissioners to pursue an assessment increase of \$100 across the property types of single family residential, hotels/motels, and base commercial.

MOTION: MR. LYNN RIVES

SECOND: DISTRICT CHIEF JEREMY SIDLAUSKAS

YES – 4

NO – 1

Ms. Hale excused herself from voting.

Motion passed.

Ms. Cisarik stated that she does not agree until she can see further information on motels and hotels, to which Mr. Rives stated that he does not feel it matters in this decision. Ms. Cisarik stated that Colonial Court at 318 Gulf Boulevard is paying \$260 per room, and is classified as code 3913, 49 units or less. Chief Burton stated that he will presume the records are correct, and if not, they will be made right, for the basis of this discussion. Mr. Rives stated that he feels if a property owner thinks they are being overcharged, then it is their responsibility to ask that question. Ms. Cisarik stated that the District is not sending out an itemized notice. Mr. Rives said that it is public record. He added that every property owner gets a TRIM notice, and no information on the notice is itemized. Ms. Cerce added that the District does not send out the TRIM notices, and she feels again that this is outside of the scope of the committee.

4. IMPACTS OF A NEGATIVE REFERENDUM

Discussion: Chief Burton said that he could not yet distribute the budget as it has not been presented to the Commission, but it is projected to be a \$270,000 deficit for next fiscal year. In the event that the referendum is unsuccessful, he stated he will have no choice but to make service reductions. Mr. Martin added that the deficit is actually currently projected to be \$355,000. Chief Burton stated that the Board of Fire Commissioners cannot continue to approve deficit spending year after year.

Ms. Cisarik asked for an update on Station 26. Chief Burton stated that personnel are being moved to a more suitable accommodation on a month to month basis. Ms. Cisarik inquired as to the possibility of entering into a partnership with Madeira Beach or Seminole for the operation of Station 26 until the new station is functional in North Redington Beach. Chief Burton stated that he does not have an answer to that question.

Ms. Cerce asked what the committee members – as a committee or as individuals – can do to help. Chief Burton stated if the Commission agrees to move forward with this recommendation, there will be a considerable seven or eight month education effort, and committee members have the ability to educate as well as advocate. He added that whether the group sunsets or not, he would appreciate all members' help moving forward.

District Chief Sidlauskas stated the FEMA generator grant he has been working on since Hurricane Irma was approved; however, based on next year's budget, unless the District receives a private donation, the \$200,000 grant may have to be turned down due to the District not having the 25% match. Ms. Cisarik

asked what will be done with the old ladder truck. Chief Burton said he is not sure yet, but it does not have a high resale value. Going back to the grant, Mr. Martin confirmed the grant has been pulled from the budget. Chief Burton added that the generator was to provide power for an emergency operations center since the District is required to evacuate all stations during a storm threat and relocate to a facility that does not have generator capacity. District Chief Sidlauskas added that there might be a private donation that comes through. He also discussed that he feels it would be beneficial for the group to remain convened, at least on a monthly basis, to move forward and discuss educational opportunities. Ms. Cerce stated that she would be in favor of continuing to meet for that purpose; however, it might inhibit members' ability to help each other. Chief Burton stated that he will get a legal opinion on this. He also mentioned that if the business that the group set out to do is completed, then possibly they could hold informational meetings if they are not trying to recommend action to the Board. Ms. Cisarik added that it would also be beneficial to remain convened to help generate ballot language.

5. RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT CHANGE

Discussion: (A motion was passed earlier regarding a recommended assessment change.)

Ms. Cisarik stated that she had a concern regarding how the charter reads with regard to replacement vehicles. Chief Burton confirmed that he has a verbal legal opinion stating that it will not be an issue for the new ladder truck due to it having new and additional capabilities, but he has not yet inquired about future acquisitions.

Mr. Rives asked when the budget is going to the Commission. Chief Burton stated the first budget meeting will be August 21st, but with no action, and the tentative budget will be adopted at a hearing on September 6th. Ms. Cerce asked if it would be helpful to have committee members at any particular meeting. Ms. Fugate stated that August 21st is the next regular meeting, and the next regular meeting after that will be September 26th. Chief Burton stated that he will speak with the attorney on how to move forward with the group's recommendation. Ms. Cerce asked if the Stakeholder Task Force will still meet in two weeks, to which Chief Burton confirmed that it will for now. He added that he would like to take the time to go through the records of all of the meetings so that he is able to demonstrate to the Commission the due diligence this committee has taken and how many topics have been discussed.

A motion to adjourn.

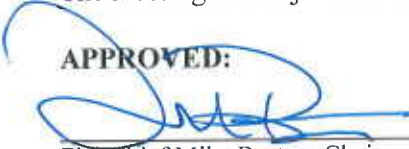
MOTION: DISTRICT CHIEF JEREMY SIDLAUSKAS SECOND: MR. BRIGETT CERCE

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

APPROVED:


Fire Chief Mike Burton, Chair

11-1-18
Date

ATTEST:


Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant