



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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www.psfrd.org

FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON

**MINUTES
JUNE 21, 2022
WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS**

**BELLEAIR BEACH CITY HALL
444 Causeway Blvd.
Belleair Beach, FL 33786**

**WORKSHOP MEETING CALLED TO ORDER
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Chair Joseph Bruni, Vice Chair Louis Snelling, Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Shear, Commissioner Betsey McKenna, and Commissioner David Gardella (via telephone, approved unanimously by the Board). A quorum was present with Chair Joseph Bruni presiding. Attorney Jeff Albinson, Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson, and Finance Director Erin Brooks were also present.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

OATH OF OFFICE – Fire Chief Jeff Davidson administered the Oath of Office for Firefighter/Paramedic Shawn Clark.

AUDITOR PRESENTATION – Chuck Landers with Saltmarsh, Cleaveland & Gunn presented PSFRD’s draft annual audit report.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: May 17, 2022 Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

**A motion to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2022
Workshop and Regular Meetings.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SNELLING

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: May, 2022

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear stated balance sheet accounts have been reconciled as of May 31, 2022. Consolidated government funds, assets, and liabilities are \$4.2 million; the investment program in accordance with District policy is \$3.9 million; current liabilities are within normal end-of-month limits, at \$118,000; the capital projects fund revenues total \$24,000; the general fund is currently on track with the adopted budget. The projected FY2021-2022 Unassigned Fund Balance to Operating Expense ratio is 14.9%; FGFOA's recommended ratio is 17%.

A motion to approve the May, 2022 Treasurer's Report.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SNELLING SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** Commissioner Schear stated that the Indian Shores memorial dedication at the Mayor James J. Lawrence Veterans Memorial Park inside Tiki Gardens on June 16th was a success.

2. **ATTORNEY:** No report.

3. **CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Davidson said in the recent restructuring to increase efficiency, two promotions took place: Assistant Chief Doug Higley and Lieutenant Matt Tomilonus.

Chief Davidson recognized City Manager Gregg Mims and the City of Indian Rocks Beach for their generous donation of four sensory kits for when personnel encounter patients who are on the Autism spectrum. On a related note, he stated that PSFRD is planning a Paddling for Autism community event which will take place on July 16th.

Chair Bruni asked for clarification on the new Assistant Chief position and asked why it was not brought before the Commission. Chief Davidson explained that Chief Burton had an additional position in the budget and, in identifying internal deficiencies, the Chief decided to utilize that extra position as an Assistant Chief of Administration to help with fire prevention as well as other areas of administration. He added that there was no additional cost to the District and the position was within the budget.

ACTION ITEMS:

22-10 Subdistrict Verification per District Charter

Discussion: Attorney Jeff Albinson explained that it is a requirement of the Charter to periodically evaluate the and designate geographical boundaries of the District to determine the appropriate boundaries for each Commission seat. He confirmed that he does not see any reason for the current established boundaries to be changed.

A motion to keep the geographical boundaries of the District as they have already been established.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

22-11 Financial Recommendation

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks presented a recap of the budget presentation at last month's meeting. Chief Davidson discussed the problems that the District is facing due to its financial constraints. Ms. Brooks stated that the criteria for the solution needs to meet the District's operating expenses over the next 20 years, maintain its capital expenditure plan, include station replacements, and meet the FGFOA 17% minimum fund balance ratio. Ms. Brooks stated that the recommendation is to implement the addition of an ad valorem tax to the District's current funding formula, set at a .67 millage rate. She gave an overview of the plan for the new funding, if approved. Chief Davidson added how this millage rate was determined rate and reiterated that it is the lowest number that will fulfill the basic needs of the department.

In response to questions from Commissioner Snelling, Chief Davidson confirmed that the District has secured someone to write the ballot language and that language will be ready to present to the Commission at the July meeting.

Commissioner Gardella stated that he feels that if the District receives the funding owed from Pinellas County, it will be in a financially stable place until 2027. He stated that he believes this item should be tabled until next year and suggested doing a special assessment to build a fire station, then going back to the voters in another couple of years. Chief Davidson stated that a special assessment will not solve the District's problems and time is of the essence. He added that he has been informed that new legislation disallows special districts to hold special elections and can only add a question to the ballot during the general election. Attorney Albinson said that he

will research this. Further discussion ensued regarding the possibility of doing special assessments for projects, funding owed from the County, and implications if the fund balance were to be depleted.

Kelly Cisarik – Ms. Cisarik stated that she served on the PSFRD Stakeholder Task Force four years ago which recommended the \$100 increase in the non-ad valorem assessment rate for the time being but confirmed that the consensus was that a combination of non-ad valorem assessments and an ad valorem tax was the preferred method of structuring the District's revenue long-term. She added that the language should clearly state that voters can control future tax increases, otherwise it will likely be rejected. She stated that she feels the most important project is to storm harden the fire stations and thinks it should even be on the ballot language. Ms. Cisarik added that PSFRD needs an EOC on the mainland. She stated that she feels it is imperative that the referendum be placed on the ballot this year.

David Gattis – Belleair Beach Mayor Gattis stated that he serves on the EMS Advisory Council and confirmed that the truck reimbursement and additional half seat of funding are being sent to the County Commission; however, this does not mean it will pass. He added that he had actually voted against it because he felt that it was not enough and did not like the way it was presented. He added that, even if it does pass, it only helps the District for five years. He said he appreciates the plan presented and agrees this is a tax increase the District needs; otherwise, he believes the County will take over and the millage rate will be much higher.

Cookie Kennedy – Indian Rocks Beach Mayor Cookie Kennedy said that the Indian Rocks fire station is over 50 years old and is unable to sustain the people who live there. She feels that the state of all of the District's fire stations is embarrassing. She explained that the fire district has had financial problems for as long she has been an elected official. She invited the Chief to attend the City Commission meetings to help educate the citizens, so everyone understands what is going on and to show that this is a healthy solution.

Matt Loder – Mr. Loder, as owner of Crabby Bill's, stated that he has been a long supporter of the fire district and the work it does. He explained that, as a business owner, his team needs to have a clear vision and he must provide consistency, safety, etc. He added that he was on the Stakeholder Task Force as well and reiterated that the 2019 increase was only done as a bandage. Mr. Loder stated that he feels this plan is the ideal way to solve the problem and provide for long-term hardened facilities. He also said he does not want the District's firefighters to leave to go somewhere else – the community likes having firefighters familiar with their buildings. He said his family will pay more but it is a value for the service provided that the community depends on.

Commissioner Schear stated that he has been listening to promises from Pinellas County as long as he has been on the Board. He added that he fully supports the goals and activities presented, and a consistent funding source is what the District has needed for many years.

Vice Chair Snelling stated that he agrees with what has been said. He explained that he worked in the fire service in Pinellas County for 44 years and volunteered with Indian Rocks; the department has a great history which needs to continue, and this is the only way for it to sustain.

Chair Bruni said he is in favor of the referendum, and believes it is what the District needs. He added that he does fear that because of current inflation and fuel costs, some voters may want to vote it down; however, if that happens, the department will dissolve. He explained that .67 is a low millage rate and should not scare people away. The Chair asked Chief Davidson how he would plan for an educational campaign. Chief Davidson said that, once the ballot language is approved, he will work on educating the public through the relationships that have been being built. He added that the Union has a plan for education as well. He added how important it is for the District to be completely transparent with the voters and for them to understand that they are in control of the rate. He said the voters passed it in 2016 for a reason and it was overturned simply due to the challenge on wording. Further discussion took place on the history of the 2016 referendum.

Commissioner Gardella said he feels this should be tabled and brought forward in 2023. Attorney Albinson said this vote is only to retain an expert to draft the ballot language; the Commission will vote on whether to approve that in July.

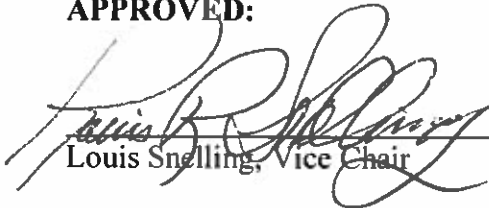
A motion to move forward with the Fire Chief's recommendation to develop ballot language for the addition of a .67 ad valorem.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

Four Commissioners in favor; Commissioner Gardella not in favor.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 8:04 p.m.

APPROVED:


Louis Snelling, Vice Chair

ATTEST:


Kimberly G. Fugate, District Administrator

July 19 2022
Date Approved