



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

304 FIRST STREET
INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FLORIDA 33785-2587

(727) 595-1117 FAX: (727) 250-0111
www.psfrd.org

FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON

MINUTES NOVEMBER 15, 2022 WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS

Belleair Beach City Hall
444 Causeway Boulevard
Belleair Beach, FL 33786

WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Vice Chair Louis Snelling, Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear, Commissioner David Gardella, and Commissioner Betsey McKenna. A quorum was present with Vice Chair Louis Snelling presiding. Attorney Jeff Albinson, Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson, and Finance Director Erin Brooks were also present.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

22-29 Revised Format of Monthly Commission Report

Finance Director

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks explained that this is the first time she has not had the monthly report ready. She stated that she has revised the format of the monthly financial report presented to the Commissioners to only include relevant information and stated that Commissioners are welcome to suggest anything specific they would like to see in the report.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

22-21 Commission Seat 4

Attorney/Chair

Heather Koskinas – Oath of Office

Discussion: This item was moved to the beginning of the meeting. Heather Koskinas was administered her Oath of Office by Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson and joined the Commission.

ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS:

Commissioners placed their ballots for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer. Attorney Jeff Albinson tallied the results, which were as follows:

Chair – Snelling (3 votes), Gardella (1 vote), Schear (1 vote)

Vice Chair – McKenna (2 votes), Gardella (2 votes), Snelling (1 vote) – A tiebreaker was tallied, resulting in McKenna (3 votes), Gardella (2 votes).

Secretary/Treasurer – Schear (4 votes), Snelling (1 vote)

Commissioner Louis Snelling assumed the position of Chair.

Commissioner Betsey McKenna assumed the position of Vice Chair.

Commissioner Lawrence Schear retained the position of Secretary/Treasurer.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: October 18, 2022 Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2022 Workshop and Regular Meetings.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: October, 2022

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated all balance sheet accounts have been reconciled. The financial report is still in process. The investment program is in accordance with policy: \$1.87 million held in interest earning accounts and \$359,000 in non-interest checking. Capital Projects Fund: Impact fees received during the month total \$31,106, of which \$25,773 relates to the prior fiscal year. The General Fund is within the adopted budget.

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

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Joseph Bruni – 14434 Oliver Street, Largo – Mr. Bruni expressed concerns regarding Commissioner Gardella’s discussions with residents about the referendum. Mr. Bruni stated that all Commissioners had been educated by legal counsel regarding allowable communications required by new legislation regarding the referendum. He explained that he was contacted three weeks prior, while he was still Chair of the Board, regarding a concern that Commissioner Gardella had violated ethics laws. Mr. Bruni asked Commissioner Gardella if he had try to sway voters or constitutions on how to vote. Commissioner Gardella confirmed he did not. Mr. Bruni then read a text message from Commissioner Gardella to a resident, “Anthony,” in which Commissioner Gardella asked him to vote “no” on PSFRD’s referendum question which asked voters to implement a new .67 millage rate. He further read that the message indicated that, if the referendum passes, it “will double whast I/we pay.” The message from Commissioner Gardella also read, “I happen to be a fire commissioner and I voted no.” Commissioner Gardella responded to Mr. Bruni by stating that he was informing him of the tax and what to expect on the ballot but did not direct him how to vote. Mr. Bruni quoted the text, “I would ask that you vote no.” Mr. Bruni then began to read a similar social media post made by Commissioner Gardella. Attorney Jeff Albinson reminded Commissioner Gardella that, while he respects Mr. Bruni, Commissioner Gardella is not required to respond to questions. Mr. Bruni stated that he believes Commissioner Gardella should step down from the Commission.

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** No reports.
2. **ATTORNEY:** No report. Attorney Albinson stated he has just been working on general operational issues with the Fire Chief.
3. **CHIEF’S REPORT:** Fire Chief Davidson stated he is extremely pleased with the outcome of the referendum and thanked department staff, Union, and Commissioners for their efforts. He added that, in the last year, a lot has been accomplished, to include, from the County, a minimum of three seats of EMS funding, \$3 million earmarked for Station 28 and an EOC, and \$1.3 million for the ladder truck reimbursement.

Chief Davidson stated that District Chief David Karpinecz, Lieutenant Steve Raisch, and FF/Paramedic John Webber were recognized with a life-saving award in Redington Shores last week for an incident involving a Commission who suffered cardiac arrest during a public meeting. He also added that Chief Mechanic Tom Bruni and Life Safety Inspector Robert Hill are being recognized tonight by the Indian Shores Police Department for their work on turning an old Humvee into a high-water rescue vehicle for the Town.

The Chief stated that there is one new-hire currently in process who transferred from another agency and should be on board in December; however, there is still one vacancy, as well as a Lieutenant vacancy which a testing process will soon take place for. He added there is only

one qualified internal candidate for the Lieutenant position.

Chief Davidson stated that there was a termination which occurred recently due to an off-duty road rage incident involving a District employee. The original charges included two felonies and a misdemeanor, and despite appearing that the felonies are being reduced to misdemeanors, it was determined that the employee could potentially jeopardize the safety of the public as well as other firefighters, and was given the opportunity to resign, which was declined, and the employee was terminated. Attorney Albinson stated that he had received the arrest affidavits and he, with the Chief, completed a factual investigation. Attorney Albinson continued to give a more detailed summary of the road rage incident that took place.

Chief Davidson stated that District employees participated in a charity tea party and served lunch to 240 women at Church of the Isles. He also discussed that he would like to begin an annual awards ceremony to begin tentatively in February 2023. Chief Davidson also thanked Attorney Albinson for buying lunch for on-duty employees on election day. Mr. Albinson stated that he felt it was a great turnout and enjoyable time.

ACTION ITEMS:

22-21 Commission Seat 4

Attorney/Chair

Heather Koskinas – Oath of Office

[This item was moved to the beginning of the meeting.]

22-25 Financial Auditing Services RFP

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that the District had a three-year contract with Saltmarsh, Cleaveland, and Gunn which ended with the September 2021 audit. Their renewal offer is a one-year contract which includes an increase of \$5,700 over the prior year. She explained that the alternative is, according to, Florida Statute 218.391, to go through the auditor selection process, which requires a three-member audit committee, with the Chair of the committee being a member of the Board of Fire Commissioners. The other two members cannot be employees of the District. Mrs. Brooks stated that the decision is up to the Board, but her recommendation is to accept the renewal offer and follow the auditor selection process property for FY2022. In response to Commissioner Koskinas' question, Finance Director Brooks did confirm that beginning the process now would be late in the game to meet the June 30th submission deadline, but not impossible. Fire Chief Davidson agreed with renewing the current contract and going out to bid for the following year.

A motion to extend the contract for Saltmarsh, Cleaveland, and Gunn for auditing services for one year as presented.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

Commissioner Gardella opposed; motion passed 4 – 1.

22-26 Interlocal Agreement with Pinellas County – Plans Review

Fire Chief

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson stated that this is an interlocal agreement between Pinellas County and the District. The District has an ordinance which allows for the charge of a fee for building and construction Ordinance in District to charge a fee for building and construction plan reviews to ensure they meet the life safety code. He explained that there had been some permits issued and the District was never notified, which is not unique to PSFRD. The fire marshals in the county came up with this agreement, in which the County will collect the plan review fee at time of application and submit to the District quarterly. The agreement expires September 2024. Fire Chief Davidson also discussed other items that he and Assistant Chief Doug Higley have been working on regarding fire prevention efforts and improvements. Commissioner Schear mentioned that there is a missing attached resolution; Chief Davidson said it will be included with submission.

A motion to enter into the Interlocal Agreement with Pinellas County for the collection of fees for plan reviews.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SNELLING

Commissioner Schear opposed; motion passed 4 – 1.

**22-27 FY2021/2022 Budget Amendment #1
(Resolution 2022-06)**

Finance Director

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that this budget amendment amends the budget for the capital expense items that did not come to fruition, including an impact fee study found not to be necessary, a support vehicle which was pushed out to a future year, and an operations division audit adjustment to FY21, as the District did not receive Squad 26 until FY22, so that down payment was moved from FY21 to FY22, which does not affect the overall budget.

Attorney Jeff Albinson read Resolution 2022-06 in its entirety.

A motion to adopt Resolution 2022-06.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

**22-28 FY2022/2023 Budget Amendment #1
(Resolution 2022-07)**

Finance Director

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated this amends current year budget. She explained that there is one payment for Truck 28 in the current year's budget. This amendment will pull two years in the future into this year so that the District can fully pay off the truck by November 25th, with the expected reimbursement coming from the County. She added that the current budget amendment is only asking for authorization for the expenditure portion and recognizing the associated revenues in that account.

Attorney Jeff Albinson read Resolution 2022-07 in its entirety.

In response to Attorney Albinson’s question, Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that the savings is \$1,658.81.

A motion to adopt Resolution 2022-07.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

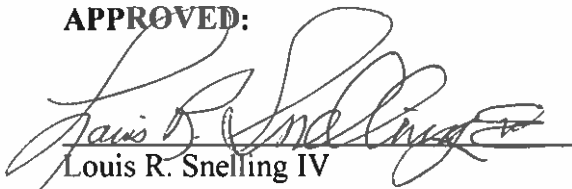
All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Betsey McKenna took a moment to give credit to Fire Chief Jeff Davidson for all his efforts and “going into the lion’s den” and accomplishing so much for the District in his first year as Chief. Attorney Albinson agreed that Fire Chief Davidson has done a great job, and wanted to also give credit to his predecessor, Chief Burton, for his efforts in building better relationships with the public. He explained that Chief Burton had also truly entered a “lion’s den” and took over during a time at which would a very high attendance at Commission meetings, with countless people sharing their negative feelings. He also had to deal with several lawsuits and other issues but did very well in accomplishing a lot for the District prior to Chief Davidson’s arrival.

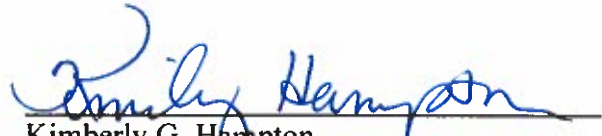
Mr. Joseph Bruni asked permission from Chair Louis Snelling to have the written documents he discussed in his public comments to be entered into the record, to which Chair Snelling agreed.


There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 7:35 p.m.

APPROVED:


Louis R. Snelling IV
Chair

ATTEST:


Kimberly G. Hampton
District Administrator


Date Approved