



FIRE CHIEF
T. MICHAEL BURTON

Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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MINUTES JULY 21, 2020 WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS

Held Virtually Via Zoom

WORKSHOP MEETING CALLED TO ORDER PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Chair Joseph Bruni, Vice Chair Lou Snelling, Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Shear, Commissioner David Gardella, and Commissioner David Ardman. A quorum was present with Chair Joe Bruni presiding. Attorney Jeff Albinson, Chief Mike Burton, and Finance Director David Martin were also present.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

20-14 Fee Study and Funding Model – Consulting Firm

Discussion: Chief Burton stated that he would just like to receive feedback from the Commission on the subject of a future referendum and taking a serious look at the District's current funding model and how to sustain in the long-term. The last referendum, based on the flat fee model, assisted the District for a few years, but the fundamental issue still remains of revenue remaining flat, costs going up, and the requirement of going back to the voters every time. Recommending bringing on a consulting group to perform research on various fire-based models to provide a long-term funding strategy. Commissioner Gardella suggested re-visiting a similar study conducted when Chief D'Angelo was with the District; Mr. Martin stated that GSG conducted that study and a lot has changed in the District since that time. Chief Burton stated that GSG leans toward an ad valorem-based model, and that he would like a company to consider models that relate to the fire risk of a structure, square footage, etc., but he stated he would revisit the study. Discussion ensued regarding the challenges of assessing fees based on property value.

Commissioner Schear suggested looking into having the State change the District's charter. Gardella stated that the District is only going on the second year of revenue from the last referendum and was hoping to not yet be having this discussion. Chief Burton discussed that there was general acceptance among the Stakeholders' Group that an increase in the flat fee was the right thing to do at that time, but that a long-term solution was still needed. Chief Burton expressed the importance of doing proper research before going back to the voters, and Commissioner Ardman agreed and discussed that it is the Commission and Administration's job to build advocacy.

Mr. Martin discussed that the last 12 years have not allowed the District to build up its reserves, and because of this is so far behind that it cannot afford its own capital structure requirements. He added that the administration 10 years ago failed to see that the District could not survive on a fixed income, and is now in a position where action must be taken in order to survive.

Commissioner Schear suggested pursuing Penny for Pinellas 4 funding. Commissioner Ardman stated that there are a lot of challenges with that funding due to the lack of money currently flowing into that program.

Chief Burton stated that he is only looking for consensus to do more work on this and is nowhere ready to bring anything forward for action. Commissioner Gardella and Commissioner Ardman requested the previous report from the consulting company.

Mr. Albinson stated that, at one time, the Florida legislature required all special districts in the state to go to their local legislatures and create a new charter that would be adopted by the State legislature. The purpose was to bring all special districts into alignment with a set of basic operating rules. He stated that it was a preference of a lot of people at that time to have the new charter include an ad valorem component for raising revenue; however, the Board at that time voted against it, which is why the current iteration of the Charter remains the same as the 1950s iteration of the Charter regarding non-ad valorem assessments. This has been an anchor to efforts by the District to revise that to include ad valorem funding and has made it so the District must return to the voters every two to five years. Without the support of the full local delegation, there is risk involved with reopening the Charter that could affect the overall survivability of the District.

Chair Bruni stated that, if nothing is done, the District will be forced to return to the voters to increase the flat rate in the short-term versus going with another model. He stated that he feels Chief Burton should move forward with this research. Commissioner Ardman volunteered to work with the Chief on this, as he has spent 20 years in the consulting and engineering and being familiar with the process. Chief Burton stated that, with the Commission's approval, he welcomes Commissioner Ardman's help. There was consensus among the Commission.

In response to earlier discussion, Mr. Martin stated that the last consultant report cost the District approximately \$20,000.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:

20-15 Fire Chief Evaluation Process

Discussion: [Discussed during Fire Chief's report.] Chief Burton stated that he has updated the procedures for the Fire Chief evaluation process and is bringing forward to the Commission for approval. He stated there are no changes to criteria; just the institution of timelines, a remedy for the numbering system, and a few changes to descriptions. Chief Burton requested to send any recommendations to either himself or Kim Fugate, and he will bring to the next meeting for approval.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: June 16, 2020 Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: Commissioner Ardman suggested one correction: the minutes state the meeting was chaired by Chair Bruni, but it was chaired by Vice Chair Snelling.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2020 Workshop and Regular Meetings, with correction.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER ARDMAN

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: June, 2020

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated all balance sheet accounts have been reconciled. Consolidated government funds, assets, and liabilities are \$3.2 million; the investment program in accordance with District policy is \$3.1 million; current liabilities are within normal end-of-month limits, at \$91,000; the capital projects fund revenues total \$7.6 thousand; general fund assessments exceed the adopted budget, due to a large sales tax in prior year refunded expenditures from the County, EMS contracted funds are in line with the adopted budget, and unbudgeted CME pass-through funding offsets the related overtime expenditures, and a budget amendment is pending;

due to COVID-19, inspections were on hold, affecting fees; remains slightly ahead of GASB recommendations at 24.6%. Our fiscal general year fund protection does not include the FEMA cost recoveries for Hurricane Michael or COVID-19. See full Financial Report for further details.

Discussion: Commissioner Gardella stated that \$85,800 has been spent on COVID-19 due to firefighters being out, and inquired if it goes on to say that it could potentially be upwards of \$220,000 this year. Chief Burton stated that he will discuss this in his report.

A motion to approve the June, 2020 Treasurer's Report.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER ARDMAN SECOND: COMMISSIONER SNELLING

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** Commissioner Ardman stated that he appeared with Mayor Kennedy on her Facebook Live group a few weeks ago, and that he updated her audience on fireworks, COVID-19, and creating advocacy for some of the District's issues, such as fire stations and the need to upgrade, fire equipment, and the assessment fee structure. Commissioner Ardman also discussed that the Indian Rocks Beach Commission is having a work session on Thursday, July 23rd at 1:00 p.m. to discuss on-street parking.

Commissioner Schear stated that Indian Shores is putting up removable flags around the flag pole at the municipal center, representing the six military branches. He also discussed that there have been continued discussions with FDOT regarding Gulf Boulevard, and the prospect of widening the lane width, as well as other suggestions.

2. **ATTORNEY:** Nothing to report.

3. **CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Burton stated that the boat project at the Indian Rocks Beach dock has been completed. He shared a photo of boat wrap that is scheduled to be completed, and added that the wrap is possible due to a \$2,200 donation from Pioneer Mortgage, a new business in Indian Rocks Beach. The boat will have a small logo from the business. He added that signage for the dock space has also been secured. Commissioner Schear inquired as to if there was any issue with having the logo on the boat; Mr. Albinson stated that he is not aware of anything that would prevent it. Chief Burton stated that Assistant Chief Mortellite worked hard to have the projet completed, despite many obstacles.

Chief Burton stated, as of today, PSFRD has eight staff members who have tested positive for COVID-19, and six are still out of work awaiting clearance through the Workers'

Compensation process. Of 36 line staff, 14 have been out medically; 11 were COVID-related. Those not affected have been working extraordinary hours to keep units staffed, normally 36 – 48 hour shifts, and have done a great job keeping everything afloat.

Chief Burton stated that David Martin, Kim Fugate, and Marshall Eiss are back to working in a remote environment, and that a lot has been learned but it is working out very well. Visitors are still not allowed in the fire station other than immediate family and only in the apparatus bays. The District will submit all possible COVID-19 costs for reimbursement at the right time. Mr. Martin has estimated \$130,000 in hard costs as of this week. He added that this is different from any other reimbursement, as it is usually regional and not nationwide.

Chief Burton stated that the bargaining reopener is underway and will be discussed further during the shade session.

On the 4th of July, Chief Burton stated that he and Robert Hill supported Indian Rocks Beach with fireworks education and enforcement. The efforts were successful and there was a lot of positive contact.

The Chief stated that there was recently a productive meeting with Pinellas County staff and Optima regarding the fire station location study. He stated that he hopes to receive Optima's report back in two to four weeks so that work can start being done on a master plan to include fire station location plans and working with constituent cities on the beaches to gain support. He added that it will also help in pursuing Penny for Pinellas funding. Chief Burton stated the Optima study calls for three stations, all in new locations, with the data to support those. Commissioner Ardman inquired as to the cost of the study; Chief Burton confirmed that the study was paid for by Pinellas County and was of no cost to the District.

Commissioner Gardella inquired as to the prospect of hiring part-time firefighters to help with the excessive overtime. Chief Burton stated that it can be done, but would be a labor issue that would need to be worked through with the Association. He added that there had been discussions with neighboring agencies to borrow staff, should the need arise.

Commissioner Schear inquired as to the status of Squad 26. Chief Burton stated that the committee has been working on it, as he gave them 10 major areas to investigate. They will bring forward a data-driven recommendation on what it should be replaced with. Right now, the normal truck is back.

ACTION ITEMS:

20-11 Shade Session – Collective Bargaining Agreement Reopener

Breakout session began at 6:56 p.m.

Returned to regular meeting at 7:37.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 7:40 p.m.

APPROVED:



Joseph V. Bruni, Chair

ATTEST:



Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant

8/18/2020

Date Approved