



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON

MINUTES JULY 19, 2022 WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS

Indian Shores Municipal Building
19305 Gulf Boulevard
Indian Shores, FL 33785

WORKSHOP MEETING CALLED TO ORDER PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Chair Joseph Bruni (via telephone, approved unanimously by the Board), Vice Chair Louis Snelling, Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear, 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.

Commissioner David Gardella arrived after roll call (6:12pm).

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: June 21, 2022, Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

**A motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2022,
Workshop and Regular Meetings.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: June, 2022

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear stated balance sheet accounts have been reconciled as of June 30, 2022. Consolidated government funds, assets, and liabilities are \$3.9 million; the investment program in accordance with District policy is \$3.6 million; current liabilities are within normal end-of-month limits, at \$109,000; the capital projects fund revenues total \$29,000; 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 June, 2022 Treasurer's Report.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

REPORTS:

1. COMMISSION: None.

2. ATTORNEY: Attorney Jeff Albinson stated that he has worked with Chief Davidson and Laura Donaldson to review the ballot language and resolution. He also discussed that the State Legislature has adopted a new law requiring special districts to go through a performance review process and discussed the ability to piggyback on the contracts of other government agencies as opposed to submitting an RFP, and PSFRD is considering doing so off West Manatee Fire Rescue, which is a very similar department to PSFRD.

(Commissioner Gardella arrived during this time.)

Mr. Albinson expressed concerns over the cost burden of this requirement as well as how the data will be used. He confirmed that this will be required every five years moving forward.

3. CHIEF'S REPORT: Chief Davidson stated that he has no report and will have further discussion on the forthcoming action items.

ACTION ITEMS:

22-12 Maintenance Technician Position

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that Mark Wilder who had been in the Maintenance Technician position with PSFRD for 14 years, has retired unexpectedly and with no notice. As a cost savings to the District, the Chief stated he has decided not to fill the position and has asked the firefighters to begin performing general maintenance around the stations and added that anything else will be contracted out. He stated that he would just like to freeze the position for now but not remove it from the budget completely.

A motion to freeze the Maintenance Technician position and come back to the Board for approval if reopened.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

22-13 Performance Review Approval

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks explained that this performance review is the new requirement that Mr. Albinson discussed earlier in the meeting. She agreed that piggybacking off West Manatee will be a significant cost savings to the District. She stated that the Board has a copy of the proposed contract with BJM Group, as well as an FAQ document from FASD. Ms. Jeanine Bittinger and Mr. Richard Cristini with BJM Group each made a brief presentation to the Board and explained their approach. They explained that they are in the process of creating a template and there has not been much guidance from the State; however, they said that they assume the project will take 400 to 500 hours of their time. Vice Chair Snelling asked if there would be required involvement by the Commission. Mrs. Brooks stated that there would likely be, and added that it appears this will be an intensive process that will use all of the District's resources. She explained that the House of Representatives issued a staff final bill analysis to go along with HB1103, which expected that the bill may require expenditures by special districts to the extent that additional staff may be necessary to comply with the additional reporting requirements. Mrs. Brooks added that she does not believe PSFRD will need to hire additional staff and will get the job done with the current staffing.

Commissioner Gardella asked the members of the BJM Group how many of these types of reports will their firm be working on now that this is required. Mr. Cristini stated that there are 52 or 53 districts in the State that will require it. He added that they are currently working on West Manatee Fire District and explained the process. Commissioner Gardella asked, since the required depth of the report is unclear, would there be a way to complete a minimum level of reporting and decrease the cost. Mr. Cristini said that the current estimate is based on the minimum level of reporting. Additional discussion ensued.

Attorney Laura Donaldson stated that she has been very involved with this new legislation. She explained that the Speaker had decided to perform audits of special districts, which included

hospitals, soil water, fire, and mosquito control, because it was found in some of these districts there was a significant amount of money being wasted. She added that the review was not initially geared toward fire districts, and fire districts will be the only type of special district to have any control in this process. She said the purpose is to ensure special districts are setting and meeting performance goals and encouraged everyone to reach out to their legislators if they would like it to be stopped in upcoming years.

Commissioner Gardella asked what the District's audit costs each year; Finance Director Brooks stated that she will get him that information.

Commissioner Gardella also asked why action on this item was necessary today, to which Mrs. Brooks responded that the District needs to get in line now, as there are very limited vendors providing this service at this time.

A motion to authorize the Fire Chief to enter into a contract with BJM Group.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER BRUNI

Four Commissioners in favor; Commissioner Gardella not in favor.

22-14 Final Budget, Workshop, and Regular Meetings in September

Discussion: Finance Director Brooks stated that District Administrator Kim Fugate has more information on this item. Ms. Fugate explained that Pinellas County has amended their budget meeting dates and that change requires the District to change the date of its final budget meeting, which will be immediately followed by the Workshop & Regular Meetings. There was a consensus among the Commission to hold the Final Budget Meeting, Workshop, and Regular Meeting on September 27th.

A motion to reschedule the final budget meeting to take place on September 27, 2022.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

22-15 November 8, 2022 Referendum Ballot Language (Resolution 2022-02)

Discussion: Attorney Jeff Albinson read Resolution 2022-02 in its entirety. Mr. Albinson discussed the question that arose at last month's meeting regarding holding a special election in 2023. There was some confusion on whether or not that could happen, as a bill does exist prohibiting such, but is limited to certain special districts and does not apply to PSFRD, which means the District could hold a special election in 2023. Based on information from the Supervisor of Elections, the District's cost to place the referendum on the ballot for the November 2022 general election would be approximately \$2,000, while a special election would cost roughly \$40,000. Mr. Albinson also briefly discussed the history of the overturned ad valorem referendum

due to the wording of the ballot language. Attorney Laura Donaldson added that the language must be very clear, and it also must be translated into Spanish, which may not be a word for word match. She said that she believes the ballot language being presented is very clear and unambiguous.

Brandon Anderson – PSFRD Firefighter Brandon Anderson discussed concerns about the fate of the District as it relates to layoffs and family concerns. Firefighter Anderson spoke in support of approving the resolution and moving forward with the referendum.

Mary Miller – PSFRD Firefighter Mary Miller gave a personal account of her time so far with PSFRD, as well as her military service. Firefighter Miller spoke in support of approving the resolution and moving forward with the referendum.

Jim Millican – Division Chief and Fire Marshal of Lealman Fire District, as well as President of the Florida Association of Special Districts, Jim Millican, stated that it is his job to help all special districts make good choices and to protect them. He explained that PSFRD is the only career fire district in the State of Florida that does not have an ad valorem tax. He added that only volunteer departments tend to be solely funded through non-ad valorem assessments. He stated that ad valorem revenue is required for the District to grow and discussed increased costs and other burdens that fire districts face. Chief Millican spoke in support of approving the resolution and moving forward with the referendum.

Commissioner Gardella said that he feels the non-ad valorem assessment is a positive thing for the District and that a special assessment should be requested each time a capital improvement is needed. He stated that the District has more property value based on the land in its jurisdiction than any other area of the County and that the assessment structure balances it out. He believes that instituting an ad valorem taxing structure and the capital improvement plan is too aggressive.

Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated that he believes attempting to pass resolutions and referendums every single time the District needs something is unrealistic and ad valorem is the only solution that enables the District to continue to exist in the future.

Commissioner McKenna stated that she does not feel that the Commission is in a position to take the time to handle the situation the way Commissioner Gardella is suggesting. The replacement of the three stations has been put off for so long that the District is at the point where it will not have the reserves to sustain itself. She added that she does not want to be on the Fire Commission that is told the District is being absorbed by surrounding fire departments. She stated that she is in support of moving forward with the referendum, and added that she hopes that in the future, the District is in a stable place that allows the Commission to even lower the millage rate.

Vice Chair Snelling stated that the non-ad valorem assessment structure is what got the District into this situation, and it has been fighting to get out of a hole for years. He stated that moving forward with this is the best decision for the department, and added that, if the department does dissolve, the residents will pay an ad valorem tax to either Seminole, Clearwater, or Largo to provide the services at a much higher millage rate.

Chair Bruni stated that he concurs with Vice Chair Snelling and added that PSFRD's fire stations

are the worst he has seen in Pinellas County. He added that additional assessments will not allow for the District to come up with the money necessary to rebuild its stations. Chair Bruni also agreed that if the District dissolves, Pinellas County then has the authority to contract the services out to other departments at a much higher rate. He said that he does still have concerns about the timing of the referendum and its success due to inflation but feels that this is the only choice the District has.

Louis Stoneburg – PSFRD Lieutenant Louis Stoneburg spoke in support of approving the resolution and moving forward with the referendum.

Commissioner Gardella added that he does not want to see the District dissolve; he just wants to preserve the tax structure and increase the assessment rates to give the department what it needs. He said he appreciates all of the work everyone does.

A motion to adopt Resolution 2022-02.


MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

Four Commissioners in favor; Commissioner Gardella not in favor.

In response to his earlier question, Finance Director Erin Brooks informed Commissioner Gardella that PSFRD's audit fees last year totaled \$18,300.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 7:42 p.m.

APPROVED:



Joseph V. Bruni, Chair

ATTEST:



Kimberly G. Fugate, District Administrator

8/16/22

Date Approved