



# *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 MARCH 21, 2023 WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS**

**Indian Shores Municipal Building  
19305 Gulf Boulevard, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Indian Shores, FL 33785**

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

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

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**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS:** None.

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**GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:** None.

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**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None.

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### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

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### **REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

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#### **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:**

**23-10 Extrication Equipment Donation**

**Fire Chief**

**23-11 Advertisement for Professional Design and Construction –  
Review and Evaluation by Architect or Engineer (FS 255.065)**

**Fire Chief**

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**MONTHLY BUSINESS:**

1. Approval of Minutes: February 21, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings

**Discussion:** Chair Louis Snelling stated that “Station 41” in the minutes should be changed to “Station 44.”

**A motion to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings with the proposed changes.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA**

**All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

2. Treasurer’s Report: February, 2023

**Discussion:** Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated that the investment program is in accordance with policy at \$5.62 million held in interest-earning accounts and \$320,000 in non-interest checking. The Capital Projects Fund includes impact fees received during the month totaling \$2,688. Capital expenditures during the month totaled \$20,961, which represents the first payment on the new Pierce Enforcer lease. Regarding the General Fund, the District’s FEMA claim for Hurricane Ian was approved and a check for \$113,687 was received last week. Expense projects are within the adopted budget. Operating expenses during the month include four new Motorola radios, totaling \$25,263.

**A motion to approve the February, 2023 Treasurer’s Report.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS**

**All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

3. Correspondence: None.

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**GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.**

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**REPORTS:**

1. **COMMISSION:** Secretary Treasurer Schear stated that Mayor Soranno made him aware of another potential property available for Station 26. He added that, while it might be further south than preferred, it is on the beach side, with a beach access road for water launch, so he feels it should be considered.

2. **ATTORNEY:** Attorney Jeff Albinson stated that he has been working on Action Item 23-11 with the Chief regarding proposal requests. He stated that he has also been working with Assistant Chief Higley on the sale of the old squad. Chief Davidson mentioned that it has a generator as well, but the District is not in a rush to sell it. He added that he has found another

company that he used to work with that may be an option.

Attorney Albinson discussed that he has also been working with Assistant Chief Higley in an attempt to develop a better system to allow Indian Shores to provide PSFRD with copies of all building permits. He stated that the District will provide Indian Shores with an email address to send permit information, as well as the date the permit was applied for. Secretary/Treasurer Schear asked if other towns and cities follow the same process, to which Attorney Albinson replied that the only disconnect has been with Indian Shores for some reason, and all other towns and cities are submitting plans to the District for review.

**3. CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Davidson stated that he recently attended the Certified District Manager (CDM) program through FASD in Tallahassee and is now officially a CDM. He mentioned that the June FASD conference is coming up and encouraged all Commissioners to get involved. He continued that these conferences provide great networking opportunities, as well as the opportunity to meet our legislators and keep up on new legislation. He also mentioned that he spoke to Laura Jacobs Donaldson while he was there and said that he would like to begin working with her in September for appropriations with the new legislature to apply for funding for the new fire stations.

Chief Davidson stated that Mrs. Brooks and Mrs. Hampton have worked hard on multiple projects the last few weeks. He stated that the FEMA Staffing for Adequate Firefighting and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant has been submitted and has no match this year, meaning that the District has applied for four additional firefighters so that the squad can be utilized full-time as an engine, and those four positions would be fully funded by the federal government for three years. He continued that the grant request was made in the amount of approximately \$1.1 million and covers the costs associated with hiring, salaries, benefits, etc. He added that it will also help improve the District's ISO class rating to a 1. Chief Davidson stated that a request has also been submitted to Pinellas County for a transport-capable rescue unit and associated personnel as part of the EMS enhancement request process.

Secretary/Treasurer Schear inquired about the Indian Shores property. Chief Davidson stated that he has a lunch meeting tomorrow with Mayor Soranno's friend who is unsure as to what to do with the property. The Chief stated the property is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile north of where the station currently is which fits into the District's long-range plan. Chief Davidson also mentioned that he would like to obtain the proper funding to enact a lifeguard program on the beach so that it is not funded by the taxpayers and that would be a perfect location to have that.

Chief Davidson stated that he has been working with Mike Lynch and he has identified a property appraiser who has now visited the property in Indian Rocks Beach. He will provide an appraisal by Friday or Monday, but the Chief stated that we still must wait to find out about the EMS enhancement from the County.

Commissioner Gardella asked if the SAFER grant covers all costs for the entire three years. Chief Davidson confirmed that it does, and that Finance Director Brooks' work on the 20-year plan is what the District is adhering to. Discussion ensued.

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**ACTION ITEMS:**

**23-10 Extrication Equipment Donation**

**Fire Chief**

**Discussion:** Chief Davidson stated that the District has a set of extrication equipment that is at

least 30 years old and is not part of the asset list. He stated that there is a volunteer department in Tennessee, Engine 63, that we donated a 1984 engine to years ago, and he stated he would like to donate this equipment to them as well. Attorney Albinson stated that he will draft up a waiver for the receiving party to sign. Discussion ensued regarding other potential recipients.

**A motion to donate the hydraulic extrication equipment to a fire station of the Fire Chief's choice.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS**

**All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

**23-11 Advertisement for Professional Design and Construction – Fire Chief  
Review and Evaluation by Architect or Engineer (FS 255.065)**

**Discussion:** Chief Davidson stated that staff has been working on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for station bids. According to Florida Statute, since the District has received an unsolicited bid, we are required to hire an independent third party to oversee the entire process. He added that the District must hire a construction manager at risk no matter what, similar to a general contractor. We must develop and advertise an RFP separately for that person. Attorney Albinson explained the process further. Chair Snelling inquired as to whether the District could piggyback off another project, such as Station 46 in Clearwater. Chief Davidson said that he will look into it. Commissioner Gardella mentioned that he knows someone at Biltmore Construction working on that station and offered to reach out to him to learn what the process would be.

**A motion to allow the Chief to pursue either piggybacking on a construction manager contract or to prepare and submit an RFP.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR**

**All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

**23-08 Fire Chief Evaluation Chair**

**Discussion:** Chair Snelling stated that some of the evaluations were submitted only right before this meeting so there was not enough time for the Chief to review all evaluations. He stated that last month he asked the Commission to proceed with a pay raise for Chief Davidson. Chair Snelling discussed that he has met with Finance Director Brooks and it appears the budget is currently in good shape. He added that, should a raise be approved tonight, it will need to be made retroactive to July of last year in accordance with the Chief's employment contract. The Chair explained that, in looking at the Fire Chief salary study for all of the surrounding areas, a 5% raise would put Chief Davidson in the mid-range; the retroactive payment for 8.5 months being \$4,300. Discussion on offering the Chief a higher raise ensued. Chief Davidson stated that he does not wish to accept more than 5% at this time due to the fragile state of the District.

***Public comment:***

**Kelly Cisarik** – Ms. Cisarik discussed that the PSFRD Fire Chief is required to do exponentially more public outreach than a typical fire chief, as the fire district encompasses multiple cities, towns, and unincorporated areas. She stated that she feels Chief Davidson has been doing a great job, especially related to employee relations and pursuing grant opportunities.

**A motion to approve a 5% raise for Fire Chief Jeff Davidson.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR**

**All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

**23-09 Employment Contract Amendment**

**Fire Chief**

***Discussion:*** Chief Davidson stated that this amendment is part of a restructuring and discussed that, upon his arrival, he only had one Assistant Chief, and at that time changed Chief Mortellite's title to Deputy Chief. The Chief stated that he now realizes Chief Mortellite has been assigned an unreasonable workload over the years. He discussed that in looking at succession planning and mentoring for the future, he has decided to shift some of those responsibilities to the District Chiefs. Chief Davidson said he wishes to make a second amendment to Chief Mortellite's contract and re-title him back to Assistant Chief and to shift his focus solely to EMS and to align with Assistant Chief Higley's title.

**A motion to make a second amendment to the employment contract to change John Mortellite's title from Deputy Chief to Assistant Chief.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA**

**All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

Chief Davidson said that he wanted to mention that the firefighter vacancies within the department have been filled, one of which is a transfer from Seminole Fire and the other coming to PSFRD from Hillsborough County Fire.

Chief Davidson also discussed the recent EMSAC meeting and explained that enhancements first go through the Data Driven Focus Group, which is comprised of fire chiefs, and he stated that the District was able to show the need and the solution to the long-term problem. He stated that he felt everyone was supportive, and that the next step is the EMS Advisory Council. He added that Assistant Chief Higley made the presentation. After that, he stated, he will need to meet individually with the County Commissioners who are the people who make those decisions based on the recommendations. He encouraged the Commissioners to provide any support and involvement they are able to give. Chief Davidson stated moving Station 27 north will create another coverage gap and working on that is what will solidify the District's funding, as well as relieve Clearwater and Largo of a few hundred calls they are currently helping us out on because they are often the closer unit. The Chief added that he is meeting with the Assistant County

Administrator tomorrow on the Station 28 project, as there is a deadline, and the District is ready to move forward but we keep running into delays.

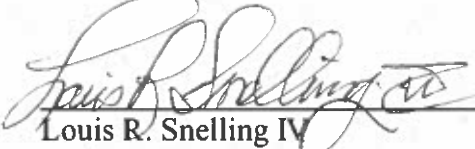
Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated that the District was well-represented at the Indian Shores St. Patrick's Day celebration last Saturday and thanked Robert Hill for his attendance. He added that he would like to have another engine and a full first aid station next year.

Fire Chief Davidson said that he also wanted to mention that the Division of Forestry lets PSFRD use the high-water rescue vehicle that Tom Bruno and Robert Hill have been working very hard on. He stated that the vehicle has so many problems, so he contacted Forestry yesterday to see if there is anything they could do to help. He stated that Mr. Hill followed up and the vehicle should now be ready by Friday.

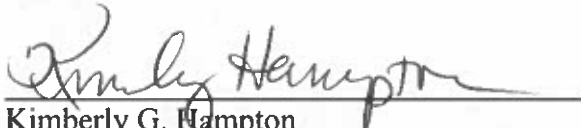
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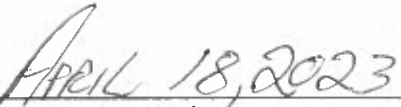
There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 7:04 p.m.

**APPROVED:**

  
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Louis R. Snelling IV  
Chair

**ATTEST:**

  
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Kimberly G. Hampton  
District Administrator

  
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Date Approved