



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON

MINUTES AUGUST 15, 2023 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 Chair Louis Snelling, Vice Chair Elizabeth "Betsey" McKenna, Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear, and Commissioner Heather Koskinas. A quorum was present with Chair Louis Snelling presiding. Attorney Jeff Albinson, Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson, Assistant Chief Douglas Higley, and Finance Director Erin Brooks were also present. Commissioner David Gardella joined by telephone for discussion purposes.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

23-26 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

Discussion: Fire Chief Jeff Davidson announced that PSFRD was awarded the FEMA AFG in the amount of \$200,152.75 for the purpose of purchasing firefighting hose, four thermal imaging cameras, 11 radios with speaker microphones, and new fitness equipment for all three stations. He added that there is a 5% matching requirement for this grant.

23-27 FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant

Discussion: Fire Chief Jeff Davidson stated that the District applied for the FEMA SAFER grant to hire an additional four firefighters, which would be 100% funded by FEMA for three years. If the District is awarded this grant, it would allow Squad 26 to become a permanent engine. The request of \$1,144,000 would fund all onboarding, equipment, etc. He added that, beginning in the fourth year, the District will have to budget for the additional personnel. Chief Davidson stated that all awards are said to be made no later than September 30th.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: June 20, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: June and July, 2023

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear stated that the investment program is in accordance with policy, with \$4.39 million held in interest-earning accounts, and \$268,000 in non-interest checking. In the capital projects fund, \$4,300 was collected in impact fees during the months of June and July. Fiscal year to date impact fee collections total \$69,000. In the general fund, \$5,000 was received from FEMA for our management costs to process the Hurricane Ian claim. The surplus 2001 Freightliner Squad was sold for \$12,500. Year to date Fire Prevention income totals \$46,000.

A motion to approve the June and July, 2023 Treasurer's Reports.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: Secretary/Treasurer Schear read a letter regarding a patch that was received from another fire department.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear commended Assistant Chief Doug Higley for his recent presentation in Indian Shores.
2. **ATTORNEY:** Attorney Jeff Albinson stated that he has been working with Chief Davidson on a new EEOC complaint made by former firefighter, Charles Morris. He explained

that this claim is covered under the District's insurance, with Rey Velazquez assigned as the District's attorney. Attorney Albinson stated that he has also been working with the Chief on some other items, including the ALSFR agreement as well as funding issues.

3. CHIEF'S REPORT: Fire Chief Davidson stated that the recent special district performance review process suggested making regular reports to the Board regarding department statistics. He gave the following statistics for the month of July:

- 376 emergency responses: 310 medical and 66 fire-related.
- 35 public education contacts and many walk-ins, as well as other public education opportunities when the crews are out in the public.
- 197 total fire inspections: 68 annual inspections and 127 re-inspections, and a total of 210 violations cited. He added that PSFRD always makes sure to work with the owners on correcting the issues.
- Personnel participated in a total of 555 training hours: 394 fire training hours and 161 medical training hours.

Chief Davidson stated that the District received a \$3 million check from Pinellas County for Station 28 which was picked up last Tuesday and deposited. Of the \$3 million, \$1 million is from ARPA funds with restrictions that must be followed, and the other \$2 million came from Penny for Pinellas funds. He stated that the District intends to move as quickly as possible on that project.

Fire Chief Davidson stated that he is working with Pinellas County officials to possibly obtain a piece of property at Tiki Gardens, and it is on their list of potential projects.

The second annual 9/11 walk will take place beginning at 8:00am at Belleair Beach City Hall. Chief Davidson explained that participants will walk toward Indian Rocks Beach and back, for a total of 3.43 miles, which is representative of the 343 firefighters that perished on 9/11.

The Chief stated that David Karpinecz has been working as interim Assistant Chief of EMS and Operations and is doing a fantastic job. His employment contract will be brought forward at September's Commission meeting to make it a permanent promotion. Chief Davidson explained that this promotion will create a firefighter vacancy. Interviews were recently conducted, and second interviews with the Fire Chief begin tomorrow. He added that this will also allow for an eligibility list to be created in the event the District is awarded the SAFER grant.

Chief Davidson stated that a decontamination grant is also in process to purchase new gear extractors for all three fire stations, and Assistant Chief Higley worked on the FEMA Fire Prevention & Safety grant for the purchase of training and equipment. He stated that all employees have recently been participating in annual ethics training.

ACTION ITEMS:

23-28 Fixing of Non-Ad Valorem Rates (Resolution 2023-08)

Discussion: Attorney Jeff Albinson read Resolution 2023-08 in its entirety.

A motion to adopt Resolution 2023-08.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

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

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that this RFQ is to comply with Florida Statute that requires the District to hire an architect or engineer to review the unsolicited proposal received and to establish a design criteria package for competing bids. Three submittals were received. He explained that the administrative staff sat down as a team and ranked the respondents in order based on the criteria identified in the RFQ, and the ranking system was provided by Attorney Laura Jacob Donaldson's office. It was determined that ZHA, Inc. ranked number one on the team's list, and the Chief stated that he is asking the Board to allow him to enter into negotiations with ZHA, Inc.

Commissioner David Gardella stated that ZHA had disclosed that they are currently involved in an active lawsuit with Panama City and asked if that had been investigated. Chief Davidson stated that the team did research the lawsuit which seems to be due to going over costs on the builder's end.

Commissioner Gardella asked if the fees charged on other projects are known. Chief Davidson said that those fees are not known, and the next stage would be to enter into negotiations with ZHA. Chief Davidson added that ZHA was the only company with extensive experience with other fire stations and he appreciates that they work for the buyers.

Commissioner Gardella asked if this company does drawings. Chief Davidson stated that they do not, and their responsibility is to provide the design criteria and identify the standards that must be met. The forthcoming RFP will be for the design build process itself.

Commissioner Gardella asked if they have done other P3 proposals from Fortress, to which the Chief stated that he does not know that at this time.

Commissioner Gardella asked if the District is required to move forward with a P3. Chief Davidson said that the District is not required to use a P3, but it must be a design build company, which will be identified in the advertisement.

Attorney Albison stated that the role of this architectural firm under the statute at this point is not to build anything or commit the District to anything. He explained that this firm is hired to establish a set of criteria under which a station will be built to meet today's requirements, as well as future requirements.

Remarks from audience:

Kelly Cisarik – Ms. Cisarik recommended selecting a firm with expertise in flood zone construction and site plan so that the District is able to build a station they are not required to evacuate.

Additional discussion ensued. Attorney Albinson explained that the Board is unable to authorize the Chief to enter into negotiations without a dollar amount identified. Action Item #23-11 was tabled until the end of the meeting.

23-21 Auditor Selection Committee

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that an advertisement went out seeking members for the District's Auditor Selection Committee which received no respondents. Indian Shores Vice Mayor Diantha Schear ran it through her legal team and learned that she can serve on the committee. Mrs. Brooks also reiterated that Commissioners Koskinas and Gardella had volunteered to serve on the committee at a previous meeting. Finance Director Brooks stated that Vice Mayor Schear served on her own town's Auditor Selection Committee, and she is grateful she is also willing to serve on ours. Attorney Jeff Albinson confirmed that committee members are volunteers only and not paid. Finance Director Brooks stated that Indian Shores' committee selected an auditor in just under two months. Commissioners concurred to move forward with Vice Mayor Schear to be added to the committee.

23-24 PSFRD Schedule of Fees (Resolution 2023-07)

Discussion: Assistant Chief Doug Higley apologized and stated that, as this was his first attempt at writing a resolution, he mistakenly missed adding a table in the document to include fees for plans review. He added that because the document already needed to be revised, he opted to include language regarding the compliance software reporting fees due to the citizen feedback received.

Attorney Jeff Albinson read the amendments included in Resolution 2023-07.

A motion to adopt Resolution 2023-07, which amends Resolution 2023-01.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-25 Fire Chief Employment Contract Amendment #1

Discussion: Chief Davidson explained that the purpose of this amendment is to align all administrative employee evaluations to be on the same date each year, to be effective on October 1st. Discussion ensued regarding the timing of the evaluation and meeting dates. The amendment document was amended further to change the annual evaluation date by the Commission to be September 1st each year rather than October 1st. Additionally, the document was amended to read that discussions on the evaluation process and salary adjustments should take place no later than the date of the regular August voting meeting, instead of the September meeting. An additional amendment was made to clarify that, in the event the Chief's evaluation is not completed by October 1st each year, any subsequent proposed increases in salary would be retroactive to October 1st. Attorney Jeff Albinson read the contract amendment document with all suggested amendments.

A motion to approve the Fire Chief employment contract with amendments.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-29 Legislative Appropriations – Station 27 Rebuild

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson stated that the District has used the services of the law office Manson Bolves Donaldson in concert with Attorney Albinson in the past. The purpose of this item is to authorize Attorney Laura Jacobs Donaldson to provide legislative representation during the 2024 legislative session to pursue appropriations requests on behalf of the District from the State. Chief Davidson added that Ms. Donaldson worked for an agency in Immokalee recently and won them \$6.5 million toward a fire station and he would like the District to pursue the same process. He explained that, instead of charging by the hour, her fee would be capped at \$15,000, in three monthly installments of \$5,000, and additional expenses such as courier, document reproduction, etc., not to exceed \$2,000, for a total of \$17,000. Attorney Donaldson would represent the District from the start of the legislative session through the end of the project. The goal of this pursuit would be to obtain funding to rebuild and/or harden Station 27. Discussion ensued regarding the fees charged, the timing of committee meetings, etc. Attorney Albinson stated that there is often criticism for agencies using tax dollars to pay for lobbying; however, the reality is that if an organization is not doing that these days, then they are often behind the curve, and there is a much lower chance for those projects to be funded.

Remarks from the audience:

Kelly Cisarik – Ms. Cisarik advised finding a local representative or senator that is willing to sponsor, typically through the Pinellas local legislative delegation. Ms. Cisarik continued to explain how the process works. She added that the District wants a person at the local level who is familiar with local lawmakers.

Fire Chief Davidson added that Ms. Donaldson is the attorney for Lealman Fire Department and is very familiar with Pinellas County.

A motion to authorize the Fire Chief to enter into an agreement with Attorney Laura Jacobs Donaldson and/or her lobbyist services up to \$17,000, with \$2,000 of those dollars being for the services described.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-30 Emergency Medical Services ALSFR Agreement – Amendment #1

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson stated that this document is an amendment to the existing ALSFR Agreement. He explained that amendments are only needed when costs rise above 3%,

which is what happened this year due to required FRS contribution increases, which affected PSFRD as well as the majority of the other fire departments in Pinellas County. The Chief also discussed new criminal background check requirements for users of the Hexagon system which are included in the amendment. He confirmed there were no other changes, and the agreement still includes three seats of funding for Engine 26, Engine 27, and Truck 28. The total increase was \$2,149,180. Projected capital in FY26 is to replace the EMS coordinator vehicle. Other capital can change, and other amendments can be requested. Chief Davidson added that he and Attorney Albinson had met with them prior to signing due to a clause that stated if any language in the agreement conflicted with the settlement agreement, then the settlement agreement would prevail; however, that language was able to be taken out due to most of the stipulations in the settlement agreement already having been met when they issued the funds for Station 28.

A motion to approve the ALSFR Agreement Amendment #1.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

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

Tabled from earlier.

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that he researched what ZHA, Inc. had charged in the past, and learned that they had charged \$5,000 to review the proposal and issue the design criteria for one fire station in 2019. He added that, due to inflation, and the fact that the District will have three station projects, he would ask the Board to allow him to negotiate with ZHA, Inc. and enter into a preliminary contract to issue the design criteria package for three stations and evaluate any competing bids, not to exceed \$25,000. He explained that their cost to oversee the projects will be negotiated at a later date and brought forward for Board approval. Chief Davidson also stated that, due to the uncertainty of the projects, he will also ask if they can break it down by station.

A motion to authorize the Fire Chief to enter into negotiations with ZHA, Inc. and to authorized him to enter into a contract with ZHA, Inc. for the necessary services with a cap not to exceed \$25,000

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

APPROVED:

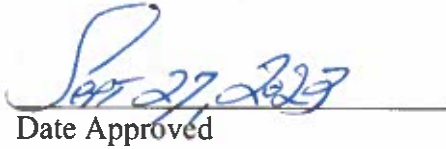


Louis R. Snelling IV
Chair

ATTEST:



Kimberly G. Hampton
District Administrator



Date Approved