



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON

MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 27, 2023
BUDGET HEARING, WORKSHOP, AND REGULAR MEETINGS

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

BUDGET HEARING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:04 PM
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Chair Louis Snelling, Secretary/Treasurer Commissioner David Gardella, 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. Vice Chair Elizabeth “Betsey” McKenna and Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear were excused.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

23-33 Adoption of the FY2023/2024 Final Millage Rate
(Resolution 2023-11)

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that there are no changes from the tentative millage rate previously adopted by Resolution 2023-09 on September 13, 2023. Attorney Jeff Albinson read Resolution 2023-11 by title only.

A motion to approve adopt Resolution 2023-11 adopting the final millage rate
for FY2023/2024.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

**23-34 Adoption of the FY 2023/2024 Final Budget
(Resolution 2023-12)**

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that the final budget has changed since the tentative budget was adopted due to being awarded three (3) grants with a \$12,158 match, resulting in a \$624,593 increase in revenue and a \$636,750 increase in expenses. Director Brooks stated that the engine committee is currently out of state specifying the details for the new engine. She continued to explain that there may be amendments to the capital expenditure plan after the final assessments of bunker gear and engine appliances and equipment are complete. She described the income and expenses for each of the three FEMA grant awards. \$45,148 was awarded for Fire Prevention & Safety with a \$2,150 match, \$210,160 was awarded for Assistance to Firefighters Grant with a \$10,008 match, and the first-year award for SAFER is \$381,441 with no match. These grants increase Personnel Services – Compensation by \$233,025, associated Benefits by \$161,426, Operating Expenses by \$96,723 and Capital Expenses by \$145,577. Attorney Albinson read Resolution 2023-12 by title only.

**A motion to approve adopt Resolution 2023-12 adopting the final budget
for FY2023/2024.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS SECOND: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The Budget Hearing was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.

WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

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

Discussion: Fire Chief Jeffrey Davidson gave a history of Squad 26 and the District's need for it to operate as an engine, focusing on firefighter safety, ISO rating, as well as solidifying coverage throughout all areas of the District. He further explained that Squad 26 has been staffed by three personnel through the use of overtime. Chief Davidson stated that this is the reason for applying for the SAFER grant, which was awarded on September 20th. The SAFER grant funding totals \$1.114 million and will allow the District to hire four firefighters, completely funded through FEMA for the first three years, with the District beginning to pick up the cost in year four. Chief Davidson stated that job offers have already been extended to two candidates. He commented on District Administrator Kim Hampton's increased responsibilities with the grants and all of the work currently going on and the need for part-time administrative assistance.

23-35 FEMA Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S) Grant

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that the FP&S grant funding totals nearly \$43,000 with a 5% match from the District. Assistant Chief Higley explained that some of the funding will be utilized to pay for firefighters to work a total of 500 hours of voluntary overtime to complete building preplans throughout the District, as the last time that project was completed was in 2012 due to staffing constraints. He explained that the grant will also purchase tablets and software for the preplan drawings. Chief Higley stated that Fire Prevention Officer Robert Hill's bunker gear was already given to him second hand and he is the District's only fire investigator currently, and the grant will allow for the purchase of two sets of new bunker gear for fire prevention. Chief Higley stated that funding will also be used to allow him to attend the National Arson Conference in Las Vegas with all expenses paid, and allow him to become an entry-level fire investigator, as well as allow Officer Hill to attend the Florida conference and obtain continuing education credits. Fire Chief Davidson mentioned that preplans lacked points during the 2021 ISO evaluation, so receiving the funding to pay firefighters to work extra duty to work on preplans is a significant benefit.

23-26 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that the District applied for high priority items in accordance with the AFG Notice of Funding Opportunity. The AFG funding totals \$210,000 with a 5% match from the District and will allow for the purchase of three sets of gym equipment for all three stations, fire hose, thermal imaging cameras, and portable radios. He added that everything has already been ordered other than the thermal imaging cameras, which different models are currently being tested District personnel.

Fire Chief Davidson introduced audience member Lori Shelley as one of the District's biggest supporters and discussed her generous donation to the fire department last year. He explained that, this year, she is purchasing all of the items needed for the District to reinstate its honor guard, to include schooling for personnel, uniforms, and equipment.

23-11 RFQ – Professional Design and Construction – Review and Evaluation by Architect or Engineer (FS 255-065) (ZHA, Incorporated – Update)

Discussion: Chief Davidson gave an update on the design criteria package and stated that ZHA, Inc. is currently doing the work for \$10,000. He stated that the design criteria package as well as the Request for Proposal (RFP) draft should be completed by the end of next week. Once completed, the RFP will be advertised for 28 days to review competing bids for new fire station designs.

23-29 Legislative Appropriations – Station 27 Rebuild

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that he has been working with Laura Jacobs Donaldson and her team on the legislative appropriations request and discussed response time issues the District is facing. The Chief confirmed that Representative Kimberly Berfield will be sponsoring the

District's request and preliminary paperwork was filed today. Chief Davidson stated that the District will tentatively be asking for \$6 million toward the rebuilding of existing Station 27 and \$1 million toward the future station at the north end of the District. He stated that their team feels confident that the District has a 90% chance of receiving this funding. The process will be finalized around March or April 2024.

Chief Davidson mentioned that salaries do need to be increased for firefighters but there are too many unknowns with the new fire stations at this time, so firefighters will receive the previously negotiated 4% increase this year. The Chief stated that he definitely wants to look into an increase during the next negotiation session, but right now he must ensure that the District has what it needs for these upcoming projects.

Chair Snelling asked if Pinellas County officials have come any closer to agreeing that PSFRD needs a north station, to which Chief Davidson confirmed that they have. He further explained that, after the most recent Levrum study two weeks ago, it was agreed that the District 100% needs that station. Options are being discussed regarding planning, staffing, and housing. Chief Davidson explained that it may begin as a peak staffing unit only and becoming a 24/7 unit as the station is built. Chief Davidson also discussed other potential projects, such as building a station on the Tiki Gardens property, as well as a lifeguard program.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: August 15, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings
September 13, 2023 Budget Hearing

Discussion: None.

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 15, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings and the September 13, 2023 Budget Hearing.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: August, 2023

Discussion: Chair Louis Snelling read the Treasurer's Report in Secretary/Treasurer Lawrence Schear's absence. Chair Snelling stated that the investment program is in accordance with policy, with \$7 million held in interest-earning accounts, and \$260,000 in non-interest checking. In the general fund, \$3 million was received from Pinellas County for Station 28 funding. Prevention

income for the month totaled \$12,875; \$1,900 of which came from the new short-term rental program.

A motion to approve the August, 2023 Treasurer's Reports.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS SECOND: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** None.

2. **ATTORNEY:** Attorney Jeff Albinson stated he has been working with Chief Davidson on a few items, such as the employment agreement for Assistant Chief David Karpinecz and the EEOC situation discussed last month. He added that EEOC had suggested that they would like to mediate the case; however, it does not appear that there is a claim to mediate. Attorney Albinson stated that he and the Chief have also been working on an issue related to the Pinellas County run card system and described a history of the run cards and the process by which they are assigned and discussed some problems affecting PSFRD's incident responses. Chief Davidson stated that most of the problems related to EMS responses were rectified once the County transitioned to the AVL system for medical calls; however, PSFRD is still not being dispatched to certain fire calls that they should be, particularly in the Redingtons. Attorney Albinson discussed the existing contract between the Redingtons and the City of Seminole and explained that PSFRD is running a significant number of calls in that area – up to 75% perhaps – and the City of Seminole the one being paid for it. Chief Davidson stated that during a recent period of time, Seminole ran 29 EMS calls in the Redingtons, while PSFRD ran 417 and Madeira ran 210. Chief Davidson confirmed he is not trying to take over that jurisdiction and is happy to supplement their fire service but needs to protect the District and the firefighters. Attorney Albinson also added that it is to protect the District's budget. Additional discussion ensued regarding specific incident response issues.

3. **CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Davidson stated that, during the month of August, PSFRD ran 264 medical calls and 74 fire calls; Fire Prevention completed 86 annual inspections, 39 re-inspections, and 6 short-term rental inspections, with a total of 163 violations; fire prevention made 30 public education contacts to include 16 adults and 14 children; personnel completed 441 total hours of fire training and 148 hours of medical training.

Chief Davidson stated that the District received notification today that it is being awarded a decontamination grant that was applied for, which will allow for the purchase of a new washing machine for bunker gear, saving the District \$5,100.

The Chief discussed that a new fire prevention officer will be starting employment with the District in approximately three weeks to address vacation rentals, inspection compliance in accordance

with the District's charter, and public education efforts. He added that this position should pay for itself once vacation rental inspections are where they need to be.

Chief Davidson stated that engine committee personnel are currently in Wisconsin doing an inspection of the new engine being built; expected delivery is around March 2024.

Chief Davidson stated that Firefighter Spencer Finkhousen and Assistant Chief Karpinecz are currently in South Carolina at a station design symposium. He pointed out that he wanted to send a firefighter rather than just chief officers since newer firefighters are the personnel who will be living in these stations for years to come.

ACTION ITEMS:

23-36 Employment Contract – Assistant Chief of EMS/Operations

Discussion: Chief Davidson stated that this employment contract is fairly standard and similar to the others chiefs' employment contracts. He did mention that the other contracts will need to be cleaned up in the near future to further mirror this version as it is much cleaner. Chief Davidson informed the Commission that the EMS/Operations Chief position is reimbursed by Pinellas County; the salary is commensurate with what he was making in his previous role. The Chief confirmed that the contract was reviewed by Attorney Albinson and is ready for authorization of the Board. Chair Snelling stated that he has never seen an Assistant Chief have so much responsibility at any other department; Chief Davidson stated that Chief Karpinecz is an exceptional employee and all personnel work as a team. He added that the District has seen a lot of movement in EMS because of the relationships Chief Karpinecz has been building during his time in an interim role. Assistant Chief Doug Higley also commented on the good work Chief Karpinecz is doing.

A motion to authorize the Chair to sign the employment agreement for Assistant Chief David Karpinecz.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-37 Fire Prevention Week 2023 Proclamation

Discussion: Assistant Chief Doug Higley stated that Fire Prevention Week is October 8th to October 14th this year and the theme is "Cooking Safety Starts with You." He discussed activities that PSFRD personnel will be participating in. Chief Higley read PSFRD's Fire Prevention Week Proclamation aloud.

A motion to authorize the adoption of the proclamation for Fire Prevention Week for 2023.

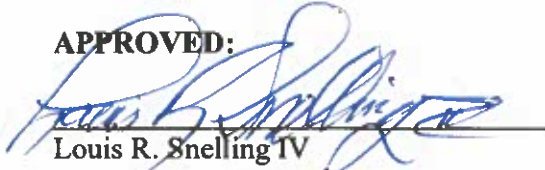
MOTION: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS SECOND: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Fire Chief Davidson mentioned that Representative Kimberly Berfield will be visiting Station 27 for a tour on October 26th prior to the delegation session and the Commission is welcome to join.

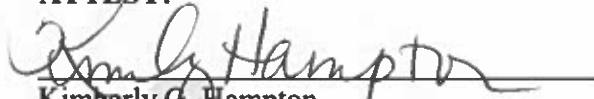
There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVED:



Louis R. Snelling IV
Chair

ATTEST:



Kimberly G. Hampton
District Administrator



Date Approved

DRAFT