



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

**304 FIRST STREET
INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FLORIDA 33785-2587**

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**FIRE CHIEF
JEFFREY DAVIDSON**

**MINUTES
NOVEMBER 21, 2023
WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS**

**Indian Shores Municipal Building
19305 Gulf Boulevard, 4th 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.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

**23-38 Request for Proposal (RFP) #24-001
Request for Auditing Services**

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks stated that the RFP #24-001 Request for Auditing Services was advertised on October 25, 2023, and responses are due November 22, 2023. She confirmed there have been no responses at this time. Director Brooks stated the next meeting of the Auditor Selection Committee is scheduled for November 28, 2023, at which time the Committee will rank the respondents. She added that December 6, 2023, is reserved for the interviewing of firms, followed by the final Committee meeting on December 14th, and approval from the Board is scheduled to take place at the Commission meeting on December 19th. Commissioner Koskinas inquired as to what will happen if no responses are received. Finance Director Brooks stated that the RFP will have to be re-advertised and the District will direct-

solicit more firms. She added that she recently requested and received a list of firms from the Auditor General to direct solicit should the RFP need to be reissued.

**23-42 Request for Proposal (RFP) #24-002
Delivery of Three Fire Stations via P3**

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson stated that his team has been working diligently with Attorney Laura Jacobs Donaldson’s firm, Attorney Jeff Albinson, and ZHA, Inc. to put together and publish an RFP for competing bids via a public-private partnership (P3) as well as an RFQ via design-build for Station 28. He clarified that these are two separate publications, with the RFP for P3 published on November 12th with a deadline of December 11th. He explained that there will be a public meeting in the bay at Station 27 on December 11th to open those bids. Chief Davidson stated that the RFQ for design-build will be published on November 29th, with a deadline of December 29th, and a public meeting that same day to open those bids.

**23-43 Request for Proposal (RFQ) #24-001
Delivery of a New Fire Station via Design-Build (Station #28)**

Discussion: This item was discussed in conjunction with Item #23-42.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS – Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer

Commissioners voted for board officers via paper ballot. Votes were tallied by Attorney Jeff Albinson, who read the winners of each position as follows:

- Chair – Louis Snelling (5 votes)
- Vice Chair – Elizabeth “Betsey” McKenna (4 votes)
- Secretary/Treasurer – Lawrence Schear (5 votes)

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: October 17, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2023 Workshop and Regular Meetings.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

2. Treasurer's Report: October, 2023

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks explained that she was unable to complete the report for this month due to unforeseen circumstances. She stated that the October report will be presented with November's report at the December meeting. Director Brooks also informed the Board that an offer of employment has been extended to a part-time Administrative Finance Assistant candidate, which will provide much-needed assistance in helping get things caught up.

3. Correspondence: None.

GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE: None.

REPORTS:

1. **COMMISSION:** Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated that he has been approached by the Indian Shores Property Owner's Association (ISPOA) to take on the role of president. He explained that he was concerned about any conflicts of interest, but he stated that Attorney Albinson has confirmed he believes there are none. Secretary/Treasurer Schear also stated that his wife, Diantha Schear, the current Vice Mayor of Indian Shores, will be running for Mayor in the upcoming election.

2. **ATTORNEY:** Attorney Albinson reiterated that he had worked with Secretary/Treasurer Schear regarding his concerns but explained that since the ISPOA president is not a governmental position, there is no issue with him serving in both roles.

Attorney Albinson discussed an issue which he has been working with Chief Davidson on regarding an employee who inaccurately completed paperwork related to one of his medical certifications and, because of this, the Medical Director decided to temporarily disallow him to practice as a paramedic. The employee was sent home and not allowed to work during the fact-finding process. It was found that the employee, who is currently on light duty and has not been working in the capacity of a paramedic, did attend and complete the class in question. Chief Davidson explained that the employee made an error in judgment when uploading information to a new system, but was never out of compliance, and has since been reinstated by the Medical Director. The Chief added that, while there was no ill intent, the employee was disciplined for his error in judgment and suspended for one 24-hour shift, which he was able to choose to deduct from his PTO bank. Attorney Albinson commended Chief Davidson for his leadership throughout this issue.

Attorney Albinson stated that the EEOC claim filed by former firefighter, Charles Morris, seems to be at a standstill and there is no new information regarding this issue.

Attorney Albinson discussed that he and Chief Davidson have been meeting each month about 10 days before each Commission meeting to go over and discuss any issues related to the District and that has been beneficial.

3. **CHIEF'S REPORT:** Fire Chief Davidson commended Finance Director Brooks and

District Administrator Hampton for their work in submitting the TRIM package for the District's first year levying ad valorem taxes. He stated that he received a letter from the Department of Revenue confirming that they received the District's TRIM package, and it contained no errors and all documents were 100% in compliance. Chief Davidson stated that both Director Brooks and Administrator Hampton have taken on so many additional responsibilities and have been incredibly busy lately. He explained, as mentioned earlier, they did extend a job offer for the part-time administrative position, after they reviewed over 50 applications and resumes, and interviewing seven (7) candidates. Chief Davidson confirmed that this position is much needed to allow both Director Brooks and Administrator Hampton to work on things only they can do. He explained the position is currently 20 hours per week, \$18 per hour, and no benefits; however, he believes this could transition to a full-time position over time.

Chief Davidson stated there are a lot of items, such as furniture and supplies, that the District no longer needs or no longer has room for. He knows the District could donate them; however, he would like to know if some items are able to be sold and requested Attorney's and Board's input. Secretary/Treasurer Schear stated that he feels that decision should be left to the Chief's prerogative, and Attorney Albinson agreed.

Chief Davidson stated that the State of Florida completed an on-site safety practices and policies compliance inspection recently and have provided a certificate confirming the District's compliance with this program, as well as related State Statutes and Florida Administrative Code.

The Chief stated that all four firefighters under the SAFER grant have been hired and are at various stages in the onboarding process. The two last of those new hires include: Kavaris Service who came from Sunstar and is a former Marine; Aaron Flannery, former member of the National Guard and Coast Guard, and a water rescue expert. Chief Davidson explained how these new personnel will help with overtime as well as the District's ISO rating. He also mentioned that ISO will be hosting a class on December 13th to help personnel understand the process ahead of the next ISO assessment.

The Chief stated that personnel completed 771 total training hours during the month of October, 572 of which were fire-related and 179 were medical and responded to 284 calls for emergency services.

Chief Davidson discussed that there are vacancies for the positions of District Chief and Lieutenant; District Chief testing will be late January 2024 and Lieutenant testing will be late February 2024. He added that those promotions will be recognized at the annual banquet which is tentatively scheduled for April. Additionally, six personnel are registered for a one-week Honor Guard program, which is being solely funded by Belleair Beach residents Lori and Karen, who are amazing supporters of the Fire District as well as the community.

Chief Davidson stated that he is trying to schedule another meeting with the County regarding the Tiki Gardens property. He explained that he and Chief Karpinecz have been working diligently on obtaining midyear funding from the County for March due to the need for an additional unit on the beaches. The Chief said he is proposing an incremental plan to the County, in which the County funds a transport-capable rescue truck for the District and two personnel in March as a peak-time unit. This will transition into a 24/7 unit when the new station is built, funded by the County. He said that previous discussions on this have gone well, and he would like to lay out the entire plan before Christmas break.

Chief Davidson stated that, once Station 28 is underway, he is going to ask the County for additional funding. He explained that the District was given \$3 million based on the settlement agreement in 2016/2017, but costs are obviously much higher now. He also added that

other departments, such as East Lake, Palm Harbor, and Lealman were given \$5 million and that was back in 2019. The Chief stated that he just wants to ensure PSFRD is funded in the same manner that other departments are being funded.

ACTION ITEMS:

**23-44 FY2022/2023 Budget Amendment #2
(Resolution 2023-13)**

Discussion: Finance Director Erin Brooks explained that, within 60 days of the end of the fiscal year, the District is able to amend its budget for the prior fiscal year. This amendment is to include additional revenue from Pinellas County that was not known at the beginning of the budget year. She explained that this adds \$4.6 million to the fund balance, made up in the following ways: Increasing EMS funding revenue by \$4.3 million – \$3 million for Station 28 funding, the portion of Truck 28 not yet accounted for, and the additional half seat of funding. Also included is an adjustment for interest since interest rates this year were extremely high, increasing the budgeted amount by \$181,000. She further stated that miscellaneous revenues in the general fund for Hurricane Ian include Assistant Chief Higley’s deployment and a little over \$5,000 in management costs. The main claim was pushed back into FY22 by the District’s auditors last year. Miscellaneous revenues in the capital projects fund include an adjustment for impact fees up by \$69,000, and there is an adjustment between the general fund and capital projects fund for some expenditures between each of those funds. This leaves the District with an amended budget with total revenues of \$11.5 million, and total expenditures of \$7.586 million. The overall net change in the fund balance for the year is \$3.942 million, which is up from the negative \$658,945 originally planned for in the adopted budget.

Albinson read Resolution 2023-13 in its entirety.

A motion to adopt Resolution 2023-13.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-45 Letter of Intent – Church of the Isles Property Purchase

Discussion: Fire Chief Davidson explained that Church of the Isles is requesting a letter of intent before moving forward with further discussions or appraisals of the property. This letter does not oblige the District to purchase the property, but does express the District’s intent to do so.

A motion to allow the Chief to provide the Letter of Intent to Church of the Isles and to move forward with discussions regarding the purchase of the property to build a new fire station.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-46 Legislative Appropriations – Letter of Support

Discussion: Chief Davidson said this letter was drafted on behalf of the Board to provide support for the District's request for \$7 million in funding through legislative appropriations to build a new Station 27. Chief Davidson stated that he will be going to Tallahassee two times in January with Laura Jacobs Donaldson to take part in the legislative delegation process.

A motion to authorize the Chief to provide the Letter of Support for Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District Fire Station #27 project.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

23-41 Fire Chief Evaluation – October 2023

Discussion: Chair Snelling explained that the Chief's evaluation was supposed to be completed in October. He discussed that he believes the ratings on this evaluation for Chief Davidson are the highest of any Chief. Chair Snelling reminded the Board that during his last evaluation in March, the Board suggested a higher salary increase, but the Chief only wanted to accept a 5% increase due to all of the unknowns at that time. The Chair stated that he has reviewed the salaries of the other Fire Chiefs of special districts around Pinellas County, as Fire Chiefs of special districts have vastly different responsibilities than those of municipalities. He further explained that to bring Chief Davidson's salary to a midrange between the other chiefs evaluated, he is proposing a 14% increase, which will bring his annual salary to \$155,610, retroactively to October 1st.

A motion to authorize a 14% increase to the Fire Chief's current salary.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR SECOND: COMMISSIONER MCKENNA

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Chief Davidson thanked the Commission for the generous increase. He discussed that he would also like to work toward budgeting significant raises for all personnel, if possible, prior to the expiration of the current Collective Bargaining Agreement in 2025. Chief Davidson stated that he has some cost savings ideas in the works and would like to transfer that to the salary and benefits of the District's personnel.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

APPROVED:



Louis R. Snelling, IV
Chair

ATTEST:



Kimberly G. Hampton
District Administrator



Date Approved