



# *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  
OCTOBER 15, 2024  
WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETINGS**

**Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District – Station 27  
304 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785**

**WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER  
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

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**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:** None.

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**GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:**

**Kayla Zeiner** – 4874 Blue Jay Circle, Palm Harbor – Mrs. Zeiner introduced herself at Lieutenant Zeiner’s wife and provided a document to the Board which she read aloud:

Good evening, Pinellas Suncoast Fire Commission. I am here tonight to inquire about the status of the investigation concerning Chief Jeffrey Davidson. While I understand that recent events, including two hurricanes this month, may have contributed to delays, we are eager to see this investigation initiated as soon as possible due to ongoing concerns regarding Chief Davidson’s actions.

In addition, I am inquiring about the progress of all three complaints currently being investigated by the third party. How much is the Commission willing to spend on this investigation? This potentially could cost upwards of \$250,000, considering the hours required to review the District’s SOPs and procedures, and ensure due process for different levels of service.

If personnel are sent off duty to participate in the investigation, overtime will be paid. If they are sent on duty, this would take away services from the citizens of the District, all over a situation that has been validated as true but is not criminal.

I would also like to express my disappointment that no action was taken at the last Commission meeting to place Chief Davidson on leave. It was stated that “we can’t run the department without a fire chief;” however, I would like to remind the Commission that, according to the PSFRD Bylaws, Section 2B clearly states, “The Board of Commissioners is the head of the Fire Department. Pursuant to, and consistent with, the Enabling and Constituting Authority and all other applicable law, the Board has the power to supervise, control, regulate, and manage the Department and enforce all necessary and desirable rules and regulations.”

Additionally, Article Six under the Board states, “The Board of Commissioners shall have the overall responsibility and authority for overseeing the operation of the Fire Department and for ensuring that its mission and purpose as set forth in The Act are properly carried out.”

These Bylaws underscore the Board’s ability to ensure the department can continue to function effectively, even in the absence of a fire chief for a period of time.

Furthermore, we are aware of four firefighters who have applied to Madeira Beach Fire due to the current work environment at Pinellas Suncoast Fire, two of whom are in leadership positions. One of these officers has 20 years of experience in the field. When individuals with this level of experience are willing to start over after building long careers, it reflects how difficult the work environment has become under Chief Davidson’s leadership.

In light of these concerns, we would like to propose that an anonymous climate survey be issued to Union members, assessing the culture and climate of the department under Chief Davidson. The survey would be rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 5 being “Strongly Agree.” The proposed statements are:

1. The Fire Chief is transparent.
2. I am satisfied with the Fire Chief’s leadership.
3. I trust the Fire Chief.
4. The Fire Chief is effective in resolving issues.
5. The Fire Chief trusts the firefighters.
6. The firefighters trust the Fire Chief.
7. The Fire Chief respects the firefighters.
8. The firefighters respect the Fire Chief.
9. I would recommend PSFRD as a great working environment.
10. If I could make the decision again, I would work at PSFRD.
11. The Fire Chief treats the entire department with fairness.
12. I am optimistic about the future of PSFRD under the current Fire Chief.
13. I am more positive about my affiliation with PSFRD than I was a year ago.

14. I am proud to serve at PSFRD.

15. I am comfortable having a differing opinion than the Fire Chief.

This survey can also be extended to gather feedback on the Assistant Chief, Division Chiefs, and administrative personnel to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the department's leadership.

I would also like to bring to your attention a similar situation that took place in Polk County on September 13, 2024, where the Fire Chief resigned after a report detailed a toxic workplace and low morale. If the climate survey at PSFRD yields similar results, the Board could potentially save thousands of dollars in legal fees for an extended investigation if Chief Davidson is terminated or resigns.

In the franchise I own, we utilize a similar survey where HQ surveys franchise partners yearly with these types of statements to gauge the direction of the organization. This has been highly effective in capturing feedback and guiding leadership decisions.

We respectfully request that this investigation be prioritized and that the Board consider placing Chief Davidson on leave if the climate survey reveals a lack of trust and morale under his leadership. This would be a prudent action, considering the concerns raised by many within the department. Thank you.

**Larry Schear – 19829 Gulf Boulevard, Indian Shores, FL 33785** – Mr. Schear publicly commended Engine 27 crew's response to a structure fire recently.

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**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None.

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

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## **REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

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

**Action Item 24-33 ZHA Pay Application #1 - DELETE**

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### **MONTHLY BUSINESS:**

1. Approval of Minutes: September 17, 2024 Budget, Workshop, and Regular Meetings  
September 24, 2024 Budget Meeting

**Discussion:** District Administrator Kimberly Hampton apologized for the delay and explained that the draft minutes have not yet been prepared and will be ready for approval at next month's meeting.

2. Treasurer's Report: September, 2024

**Discussion:** Finance Director Erin Brooks apologized for the delay and explained that she did

not have time to prepare the Treasurer's Report but will have an update next month. She added that there were no extraordinary items during the month of September.

3. Correspondence: None.

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

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**REPORTS:**

1. **UNION:** Union President Gregory Hott stated there are no updates for the Union. President Hott did discuss that one of the firefighters, Carson Stitt, lost his home during Hurricane Helene. He said that there have been generous donations to the Stitt family including from the Union's benevolent fund. He also discussed that the Union lost merchandise during the storms and they are working on replacing that.

2. **COMMISSION:** None.

2. **ATTORNEY:** Attorney Albinson stated that he has been in contact with Mr. Collins regarding the investigation but is unclear whether he has started interviews yet, which District Administrator Hampton confirmed he has not. Attorney Albinson discussed that Mr. Collins was delayed due to the hurricanes, but he did reach out this morning and discussed scheduling interviews and Attorney Albinson confirmed that he has all of the materials he needs and is up to speed.

3. **CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Davidson thanked firefighters and administrative staff for their work during the two recent hurricanes, as well as their families. He discussed that Station 27 had extensive water damage, and a mitigation company was onsite the next day to begin repairs. Chief Davidson stated that there were two minor firefighter injuries during Hurricane Helene, but those personnel will be fine. He stated that he stressed to everyone that the goal through Hurricane Milton was to have no injuries and he believes there were none. Chief Schwab stated that he did sustain an injury during Hurricane Milton. He stated that the storms were a giant team effort, with constant coordination with Pinellas County EOC, as well as strike teams that were brought in from around the state to give our firefighters a rest. Chief Davidson stated that Station 26 is in worse shape than Station 27, and those personnel are currently working out of Station 28, with temporary housing expected to be in place soon. Chief Davidson stated that we will be working with FEMA on reimbursement as well as the District's insurance. Chief Davidson stated that the EOC operation through Hurricane Milton was the smoothest the District has ever experienced. Commissioner Koskinas asked about the use of the white, self-sufficient trailers as a form of temporary housing that is often brought in for law enforcement and linemen. Division Chief Schwab stated that the District has requested temporary housing through WebEOC and is looking at different options.

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

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**ACTION ITEMS:**

24-20 PSFRD Commission Seat 1  
OATH OF OFFICE - Mark Bolling

**Discussion:** [This item took place immediately after “Correspondence” earlier in the meeting.] Attorney Albinson administered the official Oath of Office for Commissioner Mark Bolling.

#### **24-34 Bunker Gear Replacement – Emergency Purchase**

**Discussion:** Chief Davidson that all firefighters were in contaminated water during the last storm. He explained that a professional company was brought in to decontaminate 59 sets of bunker gear; however, there is no way to guarantee that all contaminants were eliminated. The plan has been to replace all bunker gear over time according to a replacement plan, working toward all firefighters having two full sets of gear. He continued that now, since the storm, all bunker gear needs to be replaced immediately. Chief Davidson stated that we have received a quote for 60 sets of gear from the District’s preferred vendor that has been through the competitive bidding process under the Lake County contract which totals almost \$233,000. This will provide new frontline gear and some sets of backup gear. He also discussed that, long term, he would like to purchase new, full sets of bunker gear every five years. Chief Davidson stated that it typically takes three to four months to get new bunker gear by the time the firefighters are sized for the gear, and it is ordered; however, if this emergency purchase is authorized, the firefighters will have all new sets of bunker gear within 30 days. He stated that a claim will be made with FEMA requesting reimbursement but that is not guaranteed.

Commissioner Bolling asked what the health risks are to the firefighters. Chief Davidson explained that nobody can say for certain, but firefighters have an increased risk of cancer due to contaminant exposure, and the decontamination process is only guaranteed to remove 50% of the contaminants. Commissioner Gardella asked if this price is typical for new bunker gear, to which Chief Davidson replied that it is. Commissioner Gardella asked if the bunker gear was damaged while in the station or if it was damaged while being worn. Chief Davidson stated that all of the gear was damaged while being worn. Chair Snelling asked if the helmets, boots, etc. were able to be salvaged. Division Chief Schwab said that it was. Chief Davidson stated that all new gloves are being ordered as well.

Commissioner Koskinas said that the contents of everyone’s houses are emptied on to the streets due to that same water that has been contaminated with waste, pesticides, and salt water.

**A motion to authorize an emergency purchase of 60 sets of bunker gear.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER KOSKINAS    SECOND: COMMISSIONER BOLLING**

**All in favor, MOTION PASSED unanimously.**

#### **24-35 Reschedule November 19, 2024 Commission Meeting**

**Discussion:** At the request of the Fire Chief, the Board unanimously agreed to reschedule the Workshop & Regular Meeting originally scheduled for November 19, 2024 to November 12, 2024.

Chief Davidson informed the Board that Step 4 of the grievance filed by former Firefighter Mary Miller will be on the agenda for consideration by the Board of Fire Commissioners. Chief Davidson provided the Board with a copy of the grievance procedure from the Collective Bargaining Agreement. He explained the steps that have already taken place and what the next steps will be. He said that a formal notice will be sent to the Union Executive Board and he will email all documents to the Commission. Attorney Albinson asked Chief Davidson if he checked with Tom Gonzalez regarding the date change, to which Chief Davidson replied that he did.

Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas stated that she will not be at December meeting.

**A motion to reschedule the November 19, 2024 meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners to November 12, 2024.**

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

**All in favor, MOTION PASSED unanimously.**

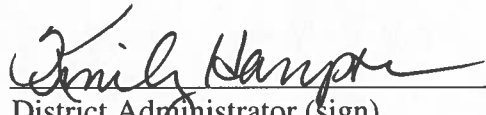
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There being no further business to come before the Board, the Regular meeting was adjourned in due form at p.m.

**APPROVED:**

**ATTEST:**

  
Chair (sign)

  
District Administrator (sign)

LOUIS F. SNELLING, IV  
Chair (print)

Kimberly Hampton  
District Administrator (print)

11-12-24  
Date Approved