



# *Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue*

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**FIRE CHIEF  
JEFFREY DAVIDSON**

**MINUTES  
DECEMBER 19, 2024  
SPECIAL, WORKSHOP, AND REGULAR MEETINGS**

**Belleair Beach Community Center  
444 Causeway Boulevard  
Belleair Beach, FL 33786**

**SPECIAL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER  
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

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

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**GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:**

**Mike Burton** – Former Fire Chief Mike Burton expressed concerns about the current state of the District and gave a history of his experience with Chief Davidson during the transition. Chief Burton explained that he has had a career-long commitment to professional development and shared concerns regarding the modification of promotional standards and prerequisites, as well as concerns about the preparation and experience of two current administrative chief officers and suggested the Commission to take a deeper dive into those positions. He added that he feels decreasing standards is an insult to those who have done the work to be eligible for promotion. Chief Burton gave a brief history of his tenure as Fire Chief and the obstacles faced and added that no employees were terminated during that time and only one demotion occurred. He expressed concern over the number of District employees terminated, demoted, or coerced to resign in lieu of termination since Chief Davidson has become Fire Chief, and commented that he believes this number exceeds the number of negative employment actions that occurred during the tenure of the last three fire chiefs combined, serving from 2010 – 2022. He continued that he has reviewed Mr. Collins’ report and the amount of concern by the workforce and the judgement and leadership gaps

cannot be overlooked. Chief Burton stated that he believes Chief Davidson's mistrust of District Administrator Kimberly Hampton is misplaced. He said he believes Ms. Hampton does not fit into Davidson's desire to have loyalists surrounding him, and stated she will speak the truth and put the needs of the District first. Chief Burton stated that over his tenure as a fire chief of four agencies, he has never worked with administrative staff member more honest, trustworthy, and capable than Ms. Hampton. He stated that, similarly, Assistant Chief David Karpinecz is not the problem and urged the Commission to bring him back to work immediately and believes his alleged offense to be trying to hold an underqualified employee accountable. Chief Burton shared concerns related to likely demonstrable service gaps related to back-to-back hurricanes with the Assistant Chief being sidelined. Chief Burton stated that Chief Davidson and his staff deserve credit for the new ad valorem revenue but believes Chief Davidson to be spending freely and creating new positions to support his loyalists, and urged the Commission to take careful look at all new positions and evaluate their necessity. Chief Burton informed the Commission that if he can assist in moving the District forward in the interim, he is happy to do so. He stated that the image and reputation of this District is greatly suffering within the fire service community. He continued that leading is never easy and often lonely and asked the Commission to demonstrate true leadership. He stated that the Commission has the prerogative to defer any action and see how things shake out, but suggested approaching such inaction with the awareness that this will be like watching a slow motion crash, for which there will be continued damage and injury, and that they will have to acknowledge that they had the opportunity to avoid the crash and chose not to. Chief Burton thanked the Commission for their service provided to the community.

**Richard Matthews** – Mr. Matthews stated that he spoke at a Commission meeting a couple month ago about leadership. He said that the one thing that strikes him about the investigative report is the overwhelming lack of confidence and trust in Chief Davidson, and stated that once it is gone, it is gone. He said that once that trust is gone, in his experience, the person is removed, because the firefighters need to believe in their leader. Mr. Matthews stated that while Assistant Chief Karpinecz is accused of being too hands-on with personnel, he believes that to be a great thing. He explained that the de jure leader is the leader who is appointed, while the de facto leader is the leader in charge, and it sounds like the Assistant Chief is the leader in charge, because he is the one the personnel will go to. Mr. Matthews also discussed that he read the recommendations in the report and commented that there must be some way of monitoring who is actually running things if everyone remains in place. He stated that he finds it very concerning that the Fire Chief had a weapon in his vehicle and explained that every law enforcement officer in the state gets issued their weapon, as well as their ammunition, so it can be tracked in case there is a failure. He shared concerns about not knowing what Chief Davidson's training is and asked the Commission if they are willing to take on the liability if that gun discharges when responding to a call. Mr. Matthews stated that he does not believe Chief Davidson is authorized to carry a firearm in his District vehicle, and shared concerns when carrying it on school properties and similar places a civilian.

**Todd Grantham** – District Chief Grantham stated that he has been with PSFRD for 30 years and believes Chief Davidson is one of the best fire chiefs the District has ever had. District Chief Grantham stated that he will not comment on Chief Burton as he does not believe he is worth the time to speak to. Chief Grantham also spoke to the credibility of Division Chief Stoneburg and Division Chief Schwab. He explained that the claims in the report were just personal opinions of firefighters who are not qualified to be lieutenants, and lieutenants not qualified to be district

chiefs. Chief Grantham stated that Chief Davidson has integrity, fairness, and is equal across the board. Chief Grantham stated that the Union has painted themselves to be liars, as they said “95%” but the only people who knew about it were the Executive Board and a couple other individuals. He also said that there are things that have been done by the other individual who has been off, and that there is a lot of other information that is not available right now, or is only available to the Fire Chief, and stated there needs to be something done in reference to that. Chief Grantham suggested that personnel are only unhappy since the negotiations and the option of exchanging days for time. Chief Grantham made statements about holiday pay and discussed how the way it was done was not sustainable, and discussed that Chief Davidson wants to exchange R-Days for a large pay raise and discussed options with R-Days. Chief Grantham stated that nothing fits the Executive Board’s agenda, so they are trying to smear Chief Davidson, which he stated is pathetic, and suggested they are disgusting and incompetent. Chief Grantham stated that President Hott and the Executive Board cannot even follow their own contract. He also spoke about the wives of firefighters speaking at public meetings, such as the wives of Lt. Zeiner and Lt. Hott and suggested that they do not have the guts to speak for themselves and he believes that to be sad. Chief Grantham stated that he moves forward with things, but thinks it is unfair that they are going to “make that statement and do that.”

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**ACTION ITEMS:**

**24-44 Investigation Report on Agenda Items #24-26, #24-27, #24-30  
Milton Collins, Esq. – Independent Investigator**

**Discussion:** Attorney Albinson discussed that Attorney Milton Collins agreed to come back to provide a supplement to his report, which was provided early in the day.

Mr. Collins stated that he was concerned about some of the allegations shared by some of the members. He explained that there are two laws that he and the Board must comply with – the Firefighter Bill of Rights, and an exemption in Florida statute Chapter 119 regarding employee misconduct allegations, which allows for information related to allegations against public employees to be temporarily confidential until those matters are reviewed, and a finding of facts has been issued.

Mr. Collins stated there is an issue of distrust across the board, and employees concerned about reprisal and their jobs. Mr. Collins addressed an allegation made against Assistant Chief David Karpinecz regarding his role in a Union complaint. Mr. Collins stated that Chief Karpinecz did play a role in preparing the initial complaint, but as Chief Davidson may have concerns about this, that is protected conduct, and he is allowed to do that, within certain limits.

Mr. Collins said that he has included some allegations against Chief Davidson in the report and did not include others. He explained that his role in this report is not to sustain charges, but just to share that there are other existing issues. Mr. Collins added that, during his investigation, he was contacted by non-employees who had complaints against members of the District; however, those are not in the report as they included mostly off-duty conduct. Those individuals may file written complaints, and the Board could then retain someone to investigate them.

Mr. Collins stated that the primary issue has to do with a loss of trust when it came to promises and statements made by the administration. He added that, when combined with some of the other concerns raised, he believes there to be very real issues going on. Mr. Collins said that he does not want to steer the Board one way or another. He continued that if the Board chooses to retain all employees involved, he has provided a pathway in the first report, and recommendations in the second report that may help. He added that this supplemental report could have looked very different, but he does not feel that he has the authority at this point to unload a lot of the allegations made unless the Board chooses to retain him to conduct an internal affairs investigation.

Vice Chair Bolling stated that, at the last meeting, Mr. Collins suggested a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and asked how that would work. He stated that he also has a second question, which is, based on some of the recommendations regarding appointing a new negotiator, etc., if the PIP were to be implemented, what type of success does he believe the District might have, given some of the personality issues that are going on. Mr. Collins stated that the Board would designate someone as a point of contact to work on implementing the PIP, and that he would work with that one person to develop a plan of action, which would include a list of deficiencies and timelines for addressing those deficiencies. He explained that every 30 days, the Board would go over the progress as an agenda item, and, for example, at the end of 90 days, assess how the Fire Chief fared. At that point, he stated, the Board can choose to discontinue PIP, or, if he is struggling, they can extend it, or, if he is failing, the Board would then have other options. Mr. Collins continued that, regarding ensuring that the personalities can continue to mesh, he believes removing Chief Davidson from the bargaining table would be a great help. Mr. Collins stated that he does believe Assistant Chief David Karpinecz and Division Chief Lou Stoneburg have a real issue but stated that Chief Karpinecz has stated he is willing to work it out. He added that some changes would have to be made while they worked out their differences.

Commissioner Knighton stated that he understands Mr. Collins has done his best to protect the District. He explained that he believes the open container allegation is a big issue, as it is a violation of law, Standard Operating Procedure, and ethics, if it is true. Commissioner Knighton stated that the report says it needs to be reviewed and inquired if that is something Mr. Collins could do. Commissioner Knighton continued that he believes this to be a separate issue with the liability it puts on the District and believes it needs to be looked into. Mr. Collins stated that yes, he could, and would adhere to the Firefighter Bill of Rights and conduct a formal investigation. He added that the subject would be entitled to a representative and would be questioned, as well as any other witnesses. He explained that the credibility of the witnesses would be assessed, and a decision would be made based on the evidence presented. Mr. Collins agrees that it is an issue and stated that it came up more than once in his interviews, which is why he included it in the report. Commissioner Gardella asked if this was related to the open container by a passenger in the vehicle, to which Commissioner Knighton responded that it was a passenger, but it is still illegal and the driver of the vehicle is the one who is responsible.

Secretary/Treasurer Heather Fleming-Koskinas asked if Mr. Collins has encountered a scenario in which one side is trying and the other side is not cooperating and, if so, what suggestions does he have to encourage cooperation. She added that sometimes the failure to cooperate may get the outcome one side is hoping for. Mr. Collins stated that employees participating in this behavior

have been cited for SOP violations.

Mr. Collins discussed that if the Board chooses to implement a PIP, it is included in the cost, and he will be here to see it through.

Attorney Albinson stated that Attorney Tom Gonzalez has confirmed that he is in the process of reaching out to Chief Karpinecz's legal counsel so that he can be returned back to active duty as soon as possible. Discussion ensued with Mr. Collins on the hostile work complaint now being resolved and the consideration of reorganization – either Chief Karpinecz or Chief Stoneburg – without marginalizing any person while the Board figures out how to address the issue.

Attorney Albinson mentioned that any terminations that have occurred did not take place only on the Fire Chief's whim, and all actions have been consistent with Attorney Gonzalez's legal advice.

Chief Davidson stated that he read Mr. Collins' report and has taken everything seriously and has begun writing out a plan. He added that he was already working on separating the duties between Chief Karpinecz and Chief Stoneburg. He added that he has started working on securing a conflict resolution person to work with Chief Karpinecz and Chief Stoneburg and assist with training and conflict resolution. He stated that there are some other things he has mapped out and planned but just needs a little bit more time to implement them.

Vice Chair Bolling asked if Chief Davidson had any additional comments regarding Assistant Chief David Karpinecz returning to duty. Chief Davidson stated that he would like to take a few minutes to backtrack. He explained that people have been making public comments and making statements about whatever they want without any education or facts. He stated that the attacks that have been carried out on his family and himself have been abusive and continue. He discussed a negative interaction that he had with Chief Karpinecz's father-in-law in front of his family and stated that the same person accosted his wife at September's meeting. Chief Davidson asked, based on some of the statements being made, what kind of human being talks to another human being in that way. He explained he was commended just last year for raising morale within the rank and file, establishing a new hiring standard, and providing a safe work environment, leadership, mentorship, and succession planning. Chief Davidson stated that a written statement made in the past by Chief Karpinecz to the Board stated that Chief Davidson has made history, has accomplished what no other fire chief has been able to accomplish, provides security for the rank and file, and establishes positive relationships. Chief Davidson stated that that all changed after negotiations. He stated that no credible fire chief will come to this organization and give the Union everything they ask for. Chief Davidson discussed the need to give back time to be able to increase salaries, and his multiple requests to the Union to negotiate together. Chief Davidson stated that he left another job as Fire Chief that he did not need to leave, but he knew that PSFRD was set to be bankrupt in 2027 and he thought he could bring value to the department. Chief Davidson discussed his accomplishments, such as the successful referendum, \$4 million from Pinellas County, increased EMS funding, \$1 million from the State, the addition of a fourth fire station, and the addition of an ALS transport-capable rescue unit that will be paid for by Pinellas County.

Chief Davidson referenced page 15 in Mr. Collins' report regarding providing documentary evidence of ancillary issues. He said that he has that document which will explain so many things as to what is going on. He continued to explain that Chief Karpinecz provided a list of concerns

on July 11, 2024, and the allegation of brandishing a firearm on July 9, 2024 was not in there. Chief Davidson discussed the Union complaint being crafted by Chief Karpinecz and Union President Greg Hott over the course of three weeks, as well as Chief Karpinecz's whistleblower complaint, which Mr. Collins stated appears to be a defensive tactic. Chief Davidson stated that he was actually helping an employee on July 9, 2024, and discussed how thankful that employee's wife is to him for helping him.

Chief Davidson said the open container incident never happened and that he does not drink alcohol. He added that no person has ever been in his District vehicle like that. He discussed that he also does not use his District vehicle to tow his camper, and that he and his wife own their own trucks. He added that the only time his camper has been towed by another vehicle was by Chief Schwab's personal vehicle. Chief Davidson then handed a photo to the Commission to illustrate zero tow miles on his District vehicle.

Chief Davidson stated that the District has spent about \$20,000 in public records request, and Chief Karpinecz continues to submit more requests. Chief Davidson stated that he does not know how Chief Karpinecz expects to work things out when he is requesting records related to Chief Stoneburg and himself. He continued to discuss that he has been trying to encourage cooperation, and also discussed that he has only terminated one employee.

Chief Davidson then asked Vice Chair Bolling to repeat his question. Vice Chair Bolling stated that he understands Chief Davidson has had an illustrious career, as many people in the audience have. Vice Chair Bolling asked if a decision has been made with the labor attorney and Chief Karpinecz's attorney to return him to duty. Attorney Albinson stated that Chief Karpinecz can return to work at any time now that the hostile work environment complaint has been cleared up. Vice Chair Bolling asked what the effective date will be for Chief Karpinecz's return to work. Chief Davidson stated that Chief Karpinecz can return to work whenever he would like. He added that his suggestion would be after the holidays, but it is whatever Chief Karpinecz and his attorney decide.

Chief Davidson stated that his employment contract says that he, as the Fire Chief, is the final decision for all personnel matters, including hiring, firing, promotion, demotion, duty assignments, discipline, and non-Union salaries. He stated that he must be allowed to do the job the Board hired him for, and he must be allowed to run the department without interference. He stated he needs to investigate the findings of potential wrongdoings to determine if disciplinary action is warranted. He continued that page 12 of Mr. Collins' report states that his actions will be scrutinized due to the timing of the complaints, and that the Fire Chief has been advised to be sure claims are supported by evidence – no one is immune from accountability, but it must be adjudicated fairly. Chief Davidson stated that he has been advised by labor counsel that there are things that must be looked at, but the first thing to do is to comply with the direction of the Board; therefore, if the direction of the Board is to bring Chief Karpinecz back to work, that is what he will do.

Chair Betsey McKenna stated that there are indications that Chief Karpinecz was working with the Union and inquired if Chief Davidson has a job description available for him. Chief Davidson responded that he had Chief Karpinecz's job description in front of him. Chair McKenna asked what his job description says about confidentiality. Chief Davidson quoted the section on duties

and responsibilities, which addressed confidentiality. Chair McKenna inquired as to what impact does Chief Davidson believe Chief Karpinecz's return to work will have on the administration. Chief Davidson stated, at this point, if the Board would like to fire him, they can fire him, and continued that he will turn in his resignation right now. He stated his opinion is, he was hired to do a job, and if the Board did a survey, all but one member of the administrative team, to include district chiefs, do not want to work with, or cannot work with, Assistant Chief Karpinecz. He stated that Chief Karpinecz has lost the trust of everyone he works with. He continued to explain that Chief Karpinecz's position is funded by Pinellas County for EMS, so he will reassign Chief Stoneburg to oversee operations, which he believes will alleviate some of the issues. Chief Davidson expressed concerns about problems not stopping, Chief Karpinecz's complaint that was filed with the State that was dismissed due to lack of legal basis, and Lieutenant Zeiner being allowed time off to go on a cruise with his family during Hurricane Helene. Chief Davidson stated he would love to be able to have a dialogue with all members to squash any rumors.

Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas stated that, sometimes, just because you can say something, does not mean you should. She continued that there is a lot of mudslinging, and she does not believe every accusation needs a comment. She stated that leadership starts with the Fire Chief, and if he has lost the ability to lead, he will not be leading this department. She stated that there is a horrific sense of retaliation, and the perception throughout the report is that Chief Davidson is promoting his buddies. She explained that, between the report and speaking to personnel, her understanding is that the firefighters in the District really like and trust Chief Karpinecz and consider him a mentor. She asked Chief Davidson how his comments help the situation or help quell the fear of retaliation. Vice Chair Koskinas stated that if we do not have a functioning department to provide the services to the District and we can't retain the people threatening to leave, the buck stops with the Fire Chief. Chief Davidson stated that he has not lost the ability to lead. Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas stated that the sentiment in the District says otherwise, and the perception is things are being hidden and being done behind the scenes, and asked what his plan is to fix that. Chief Davidson stated it comes down to education, as well as being more transparent and open. He stated that he wanted to do station meetings last year, but Union leadership shut it down. Discussion ensued in which Chief Davidson gave examples of leniency he has provided to employees.

Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas stated that the supplemental report describes Hurricane Helene response being perceived as a disaster. Chief Davidson stated that is not the case at all, and discussed decisions that were made that some personnel were not happy with, and discussed things that were done very well during the storm.

District Administrator Kimberly Hampton asked to speak and read aloud a document:

While I have stayed relatively quiet in these meetings so far, I would just like to just take a few minutes and appreciate you allowing me to offer my perspective on this situation. First, while I understand the perception, it needs to be understood that this is not a "union vs non-union" issue. I do not want to speak on behalf of anyone other than myself, but many of us in administration are also experiencing a very toxic work environment. In my position, I gain nothing from telling you any of this. I only risk my job, but now that it is public knowledge that Chief Davidson has stated

that he does not trust me, I feel like it is necessary for me to share some things. I have worked for Pinellas Suncoast for over 9 years and worked for a county fire department for 8 years before that. When I came here from my previous department, I had a letter of recommendation from the Fire Chief and from the Union President. In my role, I have been very capable and successful in maintaining positive and healthy working relationships with both sides of the fire service. For the first time in my entire career, I am now having significant difficulty doing that. There are many things I could talk about; some you have read in Mr. Collins' report and some you haven't. I want to focus, though, on the fact that my main fear is that the Board chooses to move forward with the recommended action of "training" and "intensive team building." I do not see this as a realistic option. There are actually a multitude of reasons I believe this to be true, but I can tell you that our last "team building" event – bowling at Maple Lanes on a Saturday – began with Chief Davidson texting me about an hour beforehand to let me know that his wife, Alisha, "does not like me at all," and proceeded to tell me the completely absurd reasons that she allegedly doesn't like me. He ended the text with, "Now let's go have some fun!" I was confused as to why he might do this, but it was very clear to me when I pulled into the parking lot of the bowling alley, and he got out of his District vehicle with a woman who was not his wife. This woman also stepped out of Chief Davidson's District vehicle with an open container of alcohol, and he proceeded to offer me alcohol out of a cooler that he had in the back of his District vehicle. At a team building event before that, Chief Davidson took us on a boat, and the day started nicely. It ended, however, with him sitting by himself on the boat for the remainder of the day on his phone. One of his division chiefs informed us that Chief Davidson was texting someone and broke a "no contact" order that day – likely referring to one of the many domestic violence or stalking injunctions that he has had against him. As I only would like to speak for myself, I do feel that I have been treated differently and targeted since I spoke at the September Commission meeting. I can provide countless examples of this. Chief Davidson completely fabricated and pieced together a story during this investigation to make it appear that I have been doing parts of my job unethically and has completely removed me from processes that are typically in the normal scope of my employment. He has suggested to other employees that they cannot trust me, offered to provide employees with offices away from me, and has spoken to other employees on multiple occasions about giving my job responsibilities away to other people. These are the same, predictable patterns I have watched him go through with Chief Mortellite, Chief Higley, and Chief Karpinecz as soon as he felt they did not blindly trust him. At one point, Chief Davidson has actually told me and Finance Director Erin Brooks not to trust ANYONE in the department – other than him, of course. At the September 17th meeting, I spoke up because I was worried about the investigation being impeded. I do not believe these concerns to be baseless. That night, immediately after the meeting, Chief Davidson drove directly to Station 27 and went to his office. The very next morning, on September 18th, Chief Davidson contacted our IT company and instructed them to make him the sole decision maker on our account – removing me. That same night, when I was at home in bed around 10pm, he texted me, letting me know that since he respects my boundaries so much, that he wanted me to know that he was deleting me from social media. The irony of that statement is not lost on me. Since that day, it has been made very clear to me that I am on Chief Davidson's "bad side" and his normal followers have followed suit. He has allowed chief officers to act a certain way toward me and get away with it. Chief Davidson recently even asked me to write a memo to document a negative interaction I had with a division chief, and I did – yet I never heard anything else about it. I understand why he is doing this. I understand that he cuts people out when they don't blindly follow him. I understand that he becomes threatened when people see through him and his actions.



I feel that as I have become increasingly willing to challenge him on his decisions, it has also become increasingly obvious that he is trying to build a fabricated case to get rid of me. On September 26th, Chief Davidson's wife, Alisha, reached out to me directly, confronting me about Chief Davidson's extramarital affairs. I had what I thought was a meaningful and productive conversation with her. During this conversation, she told me that I should protect myself from him the best I can. She also told me that his actions have already hurt a lot of people and are going to hurt a lot more. She said that she would be willing to speak to the investigator, and she stated that she hopes he resigns and gets some help. I don't know what to say about this and feel that it speaks for itself. I have truly been uncomfortable around Chief Davidson since he started working here, and that has only intensified over the last three years. I feel that I am speaking up for what is right, but I am honestly very afraid of what kind of retaliation will come next. I am afraid because his wife told me I need to protect myself. I am afraid because he has been allowed to wave a gun around employees in his District vehicle. I am afraid of the erratic behavior. I tell you all of this because I recognize manipulative and abusive behavior when I see it, and I am very confident there is no amount of team building that will help this situation. Training and mentoring may be helpful for other members of our administrative staff, but, as we have heard many times, Chief Davidson has 37 years of experience in the fire service, many of those as a chief officer, so I am unsure exactly what training is needed to act with integrity, and treat people fairly and with actual, genuine respect. There is an inherent lack of accountability and oversight in this department simply due to the nature of the structure of our organization. I am currently taking an HR certification class and have been speaking to colleagues in HR roles in other organizations, and the things I have learned make it so apparent that our work environment getting to this point with such inaction and so little assistance is wildly unacceptable. Mr. Collins told us that, in his experience, to fix this type of problem in the fire service, the only two options are either to remove the problem or to implement training and team building. If the Board chooses the latter, I hope someone can explain in specific detail how they truly believe that team building – in an organization of nearly 50 people working vastly different schedules – is going to be effective, how we will find time for this level of team building, how it will rebuild genuine trust, and exactly what this team building looks like. Or, is it that we are just pushing the problem further down the road than it already is? Thank you.

Chair McKenna stated that, while the hostile work environment issue has been cleared up and Chief Karpinecz can return to work, she is still concerned about the lack of confidentiality between Administration and the Union. She stated that she understands Chief Karpinecz's role to be Chief Davidson's confidant, and the documentation she has seen does not support that.

Commissioner Knighton stated that Mr. Collins' report states that Chief Karpinecz did not do anything wrong in the actions he took. Vice Chair Bolling stated that the matter needs to be concluded, and the next steps need to be determined. He added that it is concerning that they may not be able to work together, despite a PIP or team building. Vice Chair Bolling stated it is a small fire district with big objectives, and this is nonsense that we do not have time to deal with.

Chief Davidson stated Chief Karpinecz is cleared but it is still hostile. He stated that Chief Karpinecz has the right to come back, but he is going to be placed right back off work under investigation, at the direction of the labor attorney. He added that if the Board vote that they would like him to resign, he will submit his resignation immediately. He also stated he will stay on board until a suitable replacement is found. He explained there are millions of dollars at stake and there

is not one person who has all of the information that can take care of it all. Chief Davidson stated that, if Chief Karpinecz is placed under investigation and it is determined that he did nothing wrong that warrants any discipline, he will resign on his own at the conclusion of the investigation.

***Public Comment:***

**Kristin Karpinecz** – Mrs. Karpinecz stated that some things Chief Davidson has said are not truthful. She explained that Chief Karpinecz was put on administrative leave without any access to his work computer and has had to dispute claims against him without any access to his information, which is one reason he is making the public records requests. She added that he has not even seen the public record of the hostile work environment claim that was made against him. She said he is not making requests maliciously, but to try to understand things that he has been involved in. She said that there were 15 occasions in which Chief Karpinecz asked Chief Davidson for help with the situation between himself and Chief Stoneburg. She continued that Chief Karpinecz was aware of the contention between them and asked for guidance from Chief Davidson in his new role, but he never got the help. Mrs. Karpinecz also stated that she can attest to some of the statements made by District Administrator Kimberly Hampton. She stated that she has a text message from Alisha Davidson, Chief Davidson's wife, that she knows Chief Karpinecz was "feeling the pressure," that she knew he was going to be fired in the next couple months, and that he should watch his back. Mrs. Karpinecz explained that Mrs. Davidson stated that she has seen Chief Davidson do this to other people, that once he loses your trust he will go after you, and that Chief Karpinecz is now on his list. Mrs. Karpinecz stated that she would be happy to provide proof of those text messages to the Board.

Discussion ensued among Attorney Albinson and Board members about potential dates Chief Karpinecz can return to work. Vice Chair Bolling stated that he has asked about establishing a firm date from Chief Davidson but has not gotten an answer. After some discussion, Chief Davidson suggested that Chief Karpinecz return either January 2, 2025 or January 6, 2025. Chief Davidson stated that we will communicate that to Chief Karpinecz via email, and mentioned that he still has some things he needs to do, such as restructuring and securing a person to work with Chief Karpinecz and Chief Stoneburg on conflict resolution to determine how to resolve some of their issues. The Board agreed to let Chief Karpinecz decide if he would like to return on January 2<sup>nd</sup> or January 6<sup>th</sup>.

Vice Chair Bolling stated that it now needs to be determined how the two sides will work together. Commissioner Gardella stated it may be foolish to think this can be resolved in a 60-day period, but funds were spent on this investigative report and he thinks the recommendations should be implemented.

Chair McKenna stated that many of the accusations were not found to be true by the investigation. Citizen Graylon Hampton stated that is not true and that she was incorrect, as Mr. Collins stated he did not do an internal affairs investigation into those items and that would be additional. Chair McKenna stated that several chairs were not sustained, and Mr. Hampton reiterated that he did not conduct an internal affairs investigation. Chair McKenna stated that the speaking was out of order, and stated that, even with the sustained charges, people are allowed to make mistakes, and Chief Davidson has done a lot of good things for the department and based on that, she stated she is

hoping for reconciliation. [Multiple inaudible comments from various audience members.]

**A motion to implement the recommendations in the report from Attorney Milton Collins.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER BOLLING**

**MOTION FAILED; no further discussion.**

***Discussion:***

Commissioner Gardella suggested having discussion on which bullet items should be incorporated and make a decision on a timeframe to implement these items.

Vice Chair Bolling stated that he feels the PIP should be implemented on both sides with a 90-day window and reassess every 30 days. He added that if things have not improved by 90 days, then the Board will have a different decision to make and multiple people may be leaving.

Commissioner Knighton stated that Mr. Collins said he could draft an action plan. He added that he feels it is important for everyone to be able to see expectations and progress. Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas stated she does not feel a 30-day check-in is enough and actions should be monitored under a microscope. She said Chief Davidson has done good things for the District, but this is his only chance. She stated she understands District Administrator Hampton's concerns about team building. She added that 90 days is too long and believes 60 days should be enough because things have to get better now.

Attorney Albinson reminded everybody that while he works with Chief Davidson on a regular basis, he is not his client, and nobody individually is his client, as the District as a whole is his client. He stated this is also true of Attorney Tom Gonzalez. Attorney Albinson suggested that he will reach out to Attorneys Collins and Gonzalez and have them put together a PIP. He also stated that he does not think there are two sides, and it will only apply to Chief Davidson. He said he agrees that check-ins need to happen more regularly and will suggest every seven to ten days. He also discussed that the Board has the ability to stop the process at any time.

Vice Chair Bolling asked if the Board will have a tool to validate what is shown to them. Attorney Albinson confirmed and assured the Board that Attorney Gonzalez has 40 years of dealing with these kinds of issues so he is sure there is some sort of standard they utilize.

**A motion to authorize Attorney Albinson to communicate and hire Attorneys Milton Collins and Tom Gonzalez to work together to put together a PIP with a minimum 10-day reporting period with formal updates at each Commission meeting.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER KNIGHTON**

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

The Special meeting was adjourned in due form. A brief break was taken before the Workshop began.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

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**WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER**

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

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**GENERAL REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:**

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**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**24-46 Discussion with Synovus Bank Regarding Financing for Station 28**

*Discussion:* Chief Davidson stated that Finance Director Erin Brooks had to leave, but is the expert on this. He explained that she has been working with Synovus on the financing for Station 28. He stated that the project is past the 60% design phase and before going further financing must be in place. After working with attorneys, Synovus was able to amend some terms and provide a term sheet. District Administrator Kimberly Hampton explained that this was a Workshop item as the representative from Synovus was going to make a presentation, but instead was able to provide a term sheet for the meeting which is listed as a separate action item on the Regular agenda.

The Workshop was adjourned in due form.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

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**REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

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**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:**

**24-47 Synovus Bank Term Sheet for Station 28 Funding**

**24-48 Emergency Procurement Authorization – Station 27 Mitigation**

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**MONTHLY BUSINESS:**

1. Approval of Minutes: November 12, 2024 Workshop and Regular Meetings  
December 9, 2024 Special Meeting

*Discussion:* None.

**A motion to approve the November 12, 2024 Workshop and Regular Meetings and**

**December 9, 2024 Special Meeting.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER BOLLING SECOND: COMMISSIONER KNIGHTON**

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

**2. Treasurer's Report: November, 2024**

- **Discussion:** Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas read the Treasurer's Report for period ending November 30, 2024. The investment program is in accordance with policy at year end with \$8.96M held in interest earning accounts (\$3M of which is restricted for Station 28) and \$1.2M in non-interest checking. General Fund: Budgeted revenues for ad valorem tax, fire assessments, and EMS funding are being received according to schedule. Fiscal year to date Fire Prevention revenue totals \$5k and investment interest totals \$69k. Major fiscal year expense totals for personnel services – compensation and benefits are currently projected within budget. A budget amendment will be required for hurricane-related operating expenses and reimbursements once those amounts are known. The District has three hurricane claims in process with FEMA (Debby DR4806, Helene DR4828, and Milton DR4834). The total requested reimbursement for Debby DR4806 is \$120k for Overtime, Equipment Usage and Materials. Claims for Helene DR4828 and Milton DR4834 will involve those same cost categories plus damages to facilities and equipment not covered by insurance that are in the process of calculation. Insurance receipts to date total \$206k; \$26k for replacement PS-900 and \$180k for storm related damages. Capital Projects Fund: Fiscal year to date impact fee receipts total \$9k and capital expenditures total \$257k; representing two scheduled apparatus lease payments and the purchase of replacement PS-900. A budget amendment for Station 28 construction will be required once known.

**A motion to adopt the Treasurer's Report for November, 2024.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER BOLLING**

**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. UNION: None.**

**2. COMMISSION: None.**

**2. ATTORNEY:** Attorney Albinson discussed that a letter was sent by a group called Friends of Indian Rocks Beach related to an issue they have with certain short-term rental fire

inspections. He stated that he has had two or three very productive phone calls with the attorney, one of which included the Fire Chief. He explained they are concerned that the District is not fulfilling what they define as its legal obligation related to the inspection of certain properties. He stated that he learned a number of properties had registered with the City of Indian Rocks Beach under their ordinance to obtain authority to operate as a short-term rental, but only seven or eight of those properties had registered the Fire District, which would trigger the District's ability to inspect the properties. Attorney Albinson confirmed that the District has inspected every property that has submitted a registration. He continued that it was agreed that the District would send a letter to these properties to inform them that the City's record indicates they are operating as a short-term rental and that the District needs them to comply and register to have a fire inspection conducted. He added that there is still some discussion whether the District has a legal obligation to scour the records of the City to verify registration status. Attorney Albinson stated that Chief Davidson has reached out to the City's administration to work something out to make sure in the future the District is notified when someone registers. He confirmed that he does not expect any legal action to come from this.

Attorney Albinson stated that he did work with Finance Director Erin Brooks and Attorney Laura Jacobs Donaldson on this Synovus project to make sure the documents were accurate.

**3. CHIEF'S REPORT:** None.

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

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**ACTION ITEMS:**

**24-47 Synovus Bank Term Sheet for Station 28 Funding**

**Discussion:** Fire Chief Davidson explained that the financing must be approved to continue moving forward with the Station 28 project. He explained that these terms were negotiated between the bank and the attorneys. He continued that, once financing is approved, Fortress will send the District a final agreement and we will have 40 days to accept or decline. He added that, if we decline, we do not owe any money, but, if we accept, we will have to pay for design and engineering with funds that were already set aside, in an amount totaling approximately \$600,000. Commissioner Gardella stated that he had asked Finance Director Brooks before the meeting if this is a fixed rate for 15 years, which she confirmed it is. Discussion ensued on interest and principal payments, as well as processing fees. Commissioner Gardella confirmed that he believes this to be good terms for the District.

**A motion to approve the term letter and have them finalize the proposal.**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER BOLLING**

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

**24-48 Emergency Procurement Authorization – Station 27 Mitigation**

**Discussion:** Chief Davidson stated that this document is a statement of attestation. He explained

that, when submitting for FEMA reimbursement, the District must abide by our purchasing policies. He stated that, while the policy in place is currently being revised, it states that, in the event of emergency procurement of contractual services, the Fire Chief shall file with the Board a statement certifying the conditions and circumstances requiring an emergency purchase of commodities or contractual services in excess of the threshold amount in Category 3. He discussed that the District contracted with BluSky after Hurricane Helene, at the recommendation of our insurance carrier, for the immediate mitigation of the storm damage so that the crews could get back into Station 27. He confirmed the purchase order has not yet been signed and described the damage to Station 27 and the mitigation process, as well as reimbursement processes through FEMA and the insurance carrier. Discussion ensued about what the deductible for flood insurance is. Division Chief Patrick Schwab discussed what has been received so far by insurance for stations and vehicles. Secretary/Treasurer Koskinas asked if there was an itemized invoice, to which District Administrator Hampton confirmed there is, and it is itemized by work done day by day.

after Helene came in we contracted with BluSky for the immediate mitigation of the storm to get back into Station 27 at the recommendation of our insurance carrier. Policy 259.3 subsection N – fire chief shall file with the board a statement certifying the conditions and circumstances requiring an emergency purchase of commodities or contractual services in excess of the threshold amount in cat 3. Statements shall be made within 30 days after the date of purchase order or contract... we have not signed PO yet. Also asking for approval for him to sign purchase order. Described damage to Stn 27 and mitigation process as well as reimbursement process through FEMA and insurance.

**A motion to authorize the Fire Chief to sign the purchase order for BluSky.**


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

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

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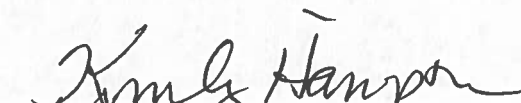
There being no further business to come before the Board, the Regular meeting was adjourned in due form.

**APPROVED:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair (sign)

ELIZABETH MCFENWA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair (print)

**ATTEST:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
District Administrator (sign)

Kimberly Hampton  
\_\_\_\_\_  
District Administrator (print)

1/21/25  
Date Approved