

**DESTIN FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT**  
Regular meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners  
**Main Station**  
848 Airport Road  
Destin, Florida 32541

February 9, 2016

**Minutes**

Commissioners present: Tommy Green, Rick Moore, Jack Wilson, Bob Wagner,  
and Mike Buckingham

Staff present: Chief Sasser, Division Chief's Ron Gerdeman,  
Joe D'Agostino and Kathryn Wagner, and  
Allison Henderson

Present: Dawn Stuntz

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Tommy Green.

**Public Comments:**

Chairman Green instructed the public they must state their name and address, their comments are limited to five minutes and this was not a question & answer session for the Board.

Shane Stewart of 306 Primrose Circle stated negotiations have come to an impasse and there will be no winners from an impasse. He stated the money spent resolving the matter could be better spent and suggested a union representative, a commission representative and an outside mediator, not associated with either side, sit down and work it out. Shane Stewart stated he read the articles and felt both sides were over the top. He further stated the District had gone through tough times and there are hurt feelings on both sides, but there has to be resolution that allows everyone to move forward without spending additional funds. He stated once accomplished a healing period should take place to repair the mistrust between all parties.

John Harvey of 4327 Preserve Place stated it was a pivotal time for your fire district in what happens. He stated you have already spent about \$89,000 in fees to an attorney negotiating your contract and you are at an impasse. He stated that is taxpayer money, District money, money that could be going to the firefighters. He further stated Chief Sasser has the ability to sit down with the Union and solve this.

Patty Defrenza of Destin stated she did go to the union meetings and for firefighters to have to call in or answer their phone within 10 minutes was ridiculous and thinks it is illegal. She stated duty shoes should stay in the station and should be paid fully. She stated she had asked the Board when you had decided to hire Bob Norton from south Florida, how much he is going to cost, is there a cap limit or are you paying expenses. She stated you did not know and suggested the next time you make a decision like that you should get all of the information because you have a fiduciary responsibility.

Patty Defrenza volunteered to negotiate with the firefighters along with an accountant. She stated these articles were not difficult and does not understand why the Chief didn't work with them and go through the articles and then if there was difficulty hire a lawyer.

Prebble Ramswell of 14 Country Club Drive stated she had been working to pass a bill for an additional 10% funding from the TDC for public safety personnel. She stated one bill which is part of the tax package has passed the apportion and tax committee and is now on its way to the House. She further stated the bill which was on its own in the House has just passed so it will be going out to the floor. Prebble Ramswell stated Chief Sasser had written a letter of support for the bill and is trying to get one from Sheriff Ashley as well. She further thanked the Board for all the worked they have done.

Jack Wilson asked if this was Matt's bill. Prebble Ramswell stated the bill was by Representative Drake, senate bill 1502.

Deborah Thurmon of Destin stated back to the attorney thing and to Patty, both of us asked and you told us in a meeting on public record that it was approved by the Board. She stated there was nowhere in the recordings or in the minutes where the Board voted for the attorney. She stated if you said the Board approved it, then you had to vote for it, and there was nowhere in the minutes or in the recordings where Chief Sasser told the Board that the attorney would cost \$30,000. She stated that must mean that there must have been another meeting that the public was not privy to. She further stated there were no public notices where you had a meeting to discuss hiring of an attorney. She asked where did you vote to approve the hiring of Robert Norton to negotiate on behalf of the Fire Control District.

Discussion between Shane Stewart and Deborah Thurmon was held in regards to the budget and spending of funds for attorney fees.

Deborah Thurmon stated the taxpayers cannot find where the attorney was approved. Tommy Green stated he would see what he could find out. Deborah Thurmon stated if there was an approval then there was a meeting that the taxpayers were not noticed to which would be a problem with the taxpayers.

Deborah Thurmon stated the taxpayers and herself have had problems with public records. She stated the are requesting simple requests and are getting this special service charge of \$49.15 per hour to do everything. She stated it is keeping a wall up for the taxpayers from getting the information that we are requesting. She stated those are our records, those records belong to the taxpayers and as the custodian of records it is her job to provide access. She further stated if we continue to have problems we only can pursue our rights under the law.

Deborah Thurmon stated we can get 17,000 emails from the City of Destin for nothing and to get 600 emails its \$350.00. She stated has requested files from every other fire district and she has never been charged a dime. She stated it almost makes it apparent that there is a problem with transparency here. Deborah Thurmon stated she wanted to know what is in those emails, what is here that is being hidden and why is it so expensive to get.

**Review of minutes:**

The minutes for the special meeting of October 7, 2015, special meeting November 4, 2015 and regular meeting December 8, 2015 were presented. Rick Moore made a motion to approve the minutes. Jack Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Review of the Financial Report:**

Kathryn Wagner presented the financial report for the month ending January 31, 2016. She stated the balance sheet reflected a strong cash position having collected over 70% of ad valorem taxes. She stated accounts receivable are all collectible at this time and accounts payable are in line. She stated other assets and liabilities are adjusted at year end. She further stated fund balances had been adjusted accordingly for the activity for the month.

Jack Wilson asked what was in receivables. Kathryn Wagner stated receivables consisted of re inspection fees, CPR classes, system malfunction fees and holding AED batteries in stock to service equipment placed out in the community.

Jack Wilson asked what receivables consist of. Kathryn Wagner stated receivables consist of re-inspection fees, cpr classes and system malfunction fees. Jack Wilson asked if we age the receivables. Kathryn Wagner stated yes with 10% aged beyond 120 days and we are in the process of doing aggressive collections.

Kathryn Wagner presented the revenue over expenditures vs. budget report stating for the most part all revenues and expenditures are in line with a target percentage remaining of 67% which is on target to come in on budget.

Rick Moore made a motion to approve the financial statements for January 31, 2016. Jack Wilson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business:**

**1. Institute for Senior Professionals (ISP)**

Chief Sasser stated he met with Jack Wilson, John Harvey, and Kathryn Wagner to discuss objectives they would like to accomplish with the Institute for Senior Professionals which they submitted and are waiting on their response.

Jack Wilson stated the objective of the meeting was to decide what the questions are, what is the mission of the Destin Fire Control District, what resources might be required to accomplish that mission and then do some sustainable testing. He stated we broke down the mission and approach into three categories; fire prevention/suppression, medical and beach safety.

Jack Wilson stated what is the mission around the fire department and how do we segregate the cost of fire rescue calls and medical calls. He asked is the demand in this segment was increasing or decreasing. Jack Wilson stated it was pointed out how few structure fires occurred yet that is the primary mission and what we are geared up and staffed to do.

Jack Wilson stated the second area of our mission is medical. He stated we do not have the authority to do medical as that comes under Okaloosa County and we work under their license when requested by them. He stated questions would be what portion of EMS dollars are spent

within our district boundaries and what portion of the County taxes are collected from our boundaries. He stated Okaloosa County does a great job with our assistance and how would they fair without our assistance.

Jack Wilson stated the third area of our mission is beach safety. He questioned how efficient is our beach safety, which could be compared easily to the rest of Okaloosa County. He asked is the 100 days of summer expanding, what are the tourist demographics and what are their trends. He stated as a result, our service area is expanding as we recently added the east pass and looks like we are adding crab island.

Jack Wilson stated we have contacted the institute to see what help they can provide. He stated through them we should sharpen the key questions, agree to the scope and report back to the Commission.

Jack Wilson asked if John Harvey had anything to add. John Harvey stated it was imperative that we do get the ISP involved and hoped the Board would approve what you put together.

Chief Sasser stated ISP indicated they have 2 retired professionals in their group that may be able to assist the District as they have experience with emergency management.

Rick Moore recommended the Board move forward with ISP. Tommy Green stated there was consensus of the Board to move forward.

### **Chief Reports:**

#### 1. Beach Safety report

Joe D'Agostino stated beach service begins in under 30 days with training starting next weekend. Rick Moore asked how many lifeguards will be on staff at the start of the season. Joe D'Agostino stated 12 to 18 which then builds through the summer.

Rick Moore asked for the date for the testing of new lifeguards. Joe D'Agostino stated the first test would be around March 21, 2016 to coincide with Okaloosa school break and the second would be May 23, 2016 for college students.

Bob Wagner asked how many junior lifeguard participants go on the work with beach safety. Joe D'Agostino stated he did not know the exact number but he does have some. He stated the 16-18 age groups can be difficult with the Florida Labor laws since they cannot drive the vehicles until they are 18 and require a 30 minute breaks while on shift.

Prebble Ramswell stated as a co-lead instructor for junior lifeguards she has witnessed how competitive kids are for the slots available.

Jack Wilson asked if Joe D'Agostino anticipated any change in coverage for East Pass or Crab Island. Joe D'Agostino stated no.

#### 2. Training report

Chief Sasser stated total training for December was 20 hours and January was 21 hours which included high rise training at Silver Shells and Hurlbert Field. He stated because ISO had

changed the training facility requirements Hurlbert Field is the closest training site so training will be done in the slower months. He further stated the high rise training had been put to good use with the fire at the Palms and the guys did a great job.

### 3. Inspection report

Ron Gerdeman stated inspections had been busy with a new free standing emergency department at the east end of the District and Goodwill expanding their building. He stated he had received plans for an assisted living facility on Beach Drive and apartments on Commons Drive and Henderson.

### 4. Response Change report

Chief Sasser reviewed the response change reports for 2015 stating we had meet the 8:59 response level by 92% and zone 1 is still the zone which receives the heaviest response. He reviewed the January 2016 response change reports stating a change has been made to the fractile repose change report to comply with the NFPA requirement of 7:59 response.

Chief Sasser presented the tracking of the response changes which were implemented in October 2014. He stated there were 489 calls in which we were not requested to respond to which consisted of 324 alpha calls, 133 skilled nursing facility calls and 32 animal lock in calls. He stated we were requested to 88 alpha and 13 skilled nursing facility calls. He further stated the call breakdown after the change shows 60% of the calls were medical and 40% were fire.

Jack Wilson asked what we are doing with all the time we have saved. Chief Sasser stated we are able to do some additional training with some of that time.

### 5. Overtime report

Chief Sasser presented the December 31, 2015 overtime report and stated a new position was filled from the most recent retiree and that did required some overtime be used until the position was filled but did save some money in the short time. Chief Sasser stated the District is now into comp time.

### **New Business:**

Tommy Green requested Chief Sasser research the expense required to for someone to do public records requests since they seemed to be so frequent. Rick Moore asked how many requests we have had. Deborah Thurmon suggested uploading some of it to the internet.

#### 1. Request for Bids- Upgrade and Installation of Fireboat Electronics

Chief Sasser stated 1 bid was received and recommended the Board approve the bid. Jack Wilson asked if this bid was within the budget. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Bob Wagner made a motion to approve the bid for the purchase and installation to upgrade the fireboat electronics. Jack Wilson seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 4 yes and 1 abstention, with Mike Buckingham abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

#### 2. Request for Bids- Waverunner, UTV, and ATV's

Chief Sasser stated 3 bids were received to replace the beach safety vehicles and recommended the Board approve the lowest bid.

Bob Wagner made a motion to accept the bids from KM Cycle. Mike Buckingham seconded.

Rick Moore asked who was awarded the bid last year. Chief Sasser stated KM Cycle.

The motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Automatic Mutual Aid Agreement with South Walton Fire Department

Chief Sasser stated South Walton Fire Department asked for an updated individual mutual aid agreement and recommended the Board approve the agreement. He stated this agreement is not different than what we have with any other fire department.

Mike Buckingham made a motion to approve the automatic mutual aid agreement with South Walton Fire Department. Rick Moore seconded.

Jack Wilson asked if South Walton Fire Department has a mutual aid agreement with Okaloosa County EMS. Chief Sasser stated yes.

The motion passed unanimously.

### 4. Investment of Funds

Kathryn Wagner reviewed a presentation for the investment of funds providing options to execute the investment policy while maintaining guidelines of safety, liquidity, than finally highest yield. She recommended zeroing out account balances to maximize investments. She reviewed a cash flow analysis of the checking account and recommended an initial investment of \$2,500,000 with periodic adjustments to maintain a target balance.

Kathryn Wagner reviewed the total funds to invest which consist of funds coming from three different sources, Trustmark checking, Trustmark money market and Wells Fargo. She stated they are making the recommendation to put the maximum of 25%, which is approximately \$1,200,000, into CDs because this is approximately 3 months of operating expenses which the Commission determined several years ago would be the minimum level for reserves. She stated this would be a long term investment.

Kathryn Wagner stated they also recommend putting \$750,000 in the Day to Day Fund of the Florida Local Government Investment Trust and the remainder into the Short Term Bond Fund of the Florida Local Government Investment Trust. She further stated an estimated over a 12 month period would yield approximately 0.78% or \$37,000.

Jack Wilson stated the approach taken is outstanding and very conservative. Jack Wilson asked why she recommended investing in a 0.80% 1 year term CD instead of putting it in a short term bond fund or a longer term CD. Kathryn Wagner stated she is not recommending you put it in that CD, as it was just used as an example for a 12 month period of where we would be with our yield. She further stated if the Board decides to invest in CDs the District it would go out for an RFP.

Jack Wilson stated this was a great start and hoped other groups that invest fire funds might think using state resources might be a good idea.

Shane Stewart asked if the short term bond fund is the same as the old state board of administration fund. Kathryn Wagner stated yes, however changes within the fund and directors of their policies has been made.

Jack Wilson made a motion to approve the distributions and investments of District funds as provided in option 1. Mike Buckingham seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 5. Election of Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary/Treasurer)

Bob Wagner made a motion to keep the status quo and re-elect Tommy Green as Chairman, Rick Moore as Vice-Chair, and Jack Wilson as Secretary/Treasurer. Rick Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

#### 6. Appointment of Employee Relations Commissioner

Tommy Green stated he would like Mike Buckingham to remain as Employee Relations Commissioner.

Mike Buckingham stated he would like to stay.

#### 7. Response services at West end of District

Mike Buckingham stated he had contacted the Sheriff's Department in regards to response services at the west end of the district and about sharing the substation on Stahlman Avenue. He stated they have a bay available and are interested in sharing some space at Station 10 in return. He further stated he had researched the cost of a small first responder vehicle required for the substation to be \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Mike Buckingham asked the Board if they would like him to proceed with researching the cost to build out the space and equipment. He stated he had spoken with Chief Sasser about the possibility of hiring another firefighter to help man the substation.

Bob Wagner stated while he liked the idea of having a response vehicle on the west end his concern was manning the station. Bob Wagner asked if the District could afford it after losing the SAFER Grant. Mike Buckingham stated he had spoken with the Chief Sasser about it and he will present the Board with some numbers.

Tommy Green stated impact fees might be used for the vehicle, but manning will be the critical issue.

Rick Moore asked if there was room at Station 10 for a Sheriff's substation. Mike Buckingham stated yes.

Jack Wilson stated this was a perfect question for the strategy of the District. He stated while it seems to make sense to put a small response vehicles on either end of the District with the big guy in the middle it may not be the right question.

Shane Stewart cautioned the Board on reducing manpower in one place to cover another.

Mike Buckingham stated he would like to get the ball rolling to get something on the west end and asked the Board if he should proceed. Tommy Green stated yes.

**Next meeting:**

Tommy Green reminded the Board that the next regular meeting will be March 8, 2016, at 5:30 p.m.

Prebble Ramswell updated the Board on the Crab Island safety corridor. She stated it was awaiting permits from DEP and Fish & Wildlife.

**Adjournment:**

With no additional business to be discussed, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.