

DESTIN FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT
Final Budget Hearing of the Board of Fire Commissioners
Main Station
848 Airport Road
Destin, Florida 32541

September 18, 2014

Minutes

Commissioners present: Tommy Green, Rick Moore, Mike Buckingham, Hillary Anderson, Jack Wilson

Staff present: Chief Kevin Sasser, Kathryn Wagner

Present: Dawn Stuntz

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Tommy Green. He stated that the meeting was to discuss the 2014-2015 millage rate and budget. He stated that the Destin Fire Control District, a state taxing authority, proposes a millage rate of 1.0000 which is 5.01% greater than the rolled-back rate of 0.9523 mills.

The floor was opened for public comments concerning the millage rate. There was none.

Hillary Anderson made a motion to adopt Resolution 14-08 representing a millage rate of 1.0000 mills which is 5.01% greater than the rolled-back rate of 0.9523. Rick Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Tommy Green stated that the Destin Fire Control District proposes a budget of \$5,279,574 for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, which has been advertised prior to the public hearing and tentatively adopted at the tentative budget hearing on September 9, 2014. This budget is a 10.42% decrease from last year's budget.

The floor was opened for public comments concerning the 2014-2015 proposed budget. Patty Defrenza, 4648 Sunsail Circle, asked to receive a copy of the budget.

Steve Menchel, 65 Siesta Bluff, stated that he supports the District's employees, but he does not think a cost of living adjustment is the right thing to do at this time. It would not be viewed favorably to approve a COLA after balancing the budget by paying for voluntary separation and cutting Advanced Life Support. He questioned the legal and cell phone bills expenses, saying both line items have doubled for the upcoming fiscal year. He stated that the Board does not listen to cost-saving suggestions from the public. He also stated that scheduling a meeting on an election day was poorly thought out. He informed the Board that a candidate forum will be held for the Fire Board commissioners in mid-October.

Patty Defrenza agreed with the negative public perception. She questioned the legal expenses. Chief Sasser stated that the reason for the increase is due to contract negotiations in the next fiscal year. She asked if the District is undergoing pending litigation. Chief Sasser answered yes and that expenses related to litigation are not included in the line item. She stated that seven experienced personnel have left the District and new employees have been hired. She asked if the new hires were required to be a minimum of Firefighter II certified and paramedic. Chief Sasser stated that the new employees had to be a minimum of State of Florida certified Firefighter. Both new hires are EMTs. She stated that the District should mandate future hires as Firefighter II paramedics to save money on training and schooling. She questioned if an application fee was charged during the recent hiring process. This would offset training expenses. Chief Sasser stated that no application fee was charged and only one area fire district mandates its employees to have paramedic certification. She stated that in future hirings, the District should collect \$100 application fee to offset hiring costs.

Further discussion including the paramedic pay, paramedic school, and the county's ambulance paramedic occurred. Chief Sasser stated that Destin has more paramedics than most other departments in the south end of the county. Patty Defrenza stated that other departments do not have the influx of tourists that Destin sees. She suggested that the TDC be approached to increase its bed tax.

Hillary Anderson made a motion to adopt Resolution 14-09 representing the proposed budget of \$5,279,574 for the 2014-2015 fiscal year based upon taxable value of real property totaling \$4,747,835,164. Mike Buckingham seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

With no other business to be addressed, the meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m.