

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

August 9, 2016

Minutes

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

Absent: Mike Buckingham

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

Present: Dawn Stuntz

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

Public Comments:

John Harvey of 4327 Preserve Place, Destin stated as far back as March 3, 2016 the District has been aware of the number of public records requests and the effects it has on the District's staff and was discussed at a meeting with Chairman Green and Chief Sasser. He stated he was interested in Chief Sasser's detailed presentation on how staff will fulfill public records requests, what the cost to the District would be including salary, benefits and training fulfilling records in the Sunshine Law. John Harvey stated the District should bring volunteers into the staff to do tasks done by Ms. Henderson in order to free Ms. Henderson up to work on public records requests part time. He stated there are plenty of high school students that need community service hours as well as many retired citizens who would be glad to volunteer. He further stated a second option would be enlisting the help of a temp agency to find someone with the skills to take care of the District's needs in order to fulfill public records requests this will allow the District to bring in someone that does not require benefits and allow Ms. Henderson to remain in her current position. John Harvey stated these were two alternatives to hiring someone permanently, but if the District gets to the point they need to hire someone permanently using a temp agency will allow you enough time to evaluate them before hiring them right off the bat. He further stated trying to get volunteers or hiring someone through a temp agency would be cheaper, we would not have to give them benefits and they do not have to be in here every day.

Deborah Thurmon of Destin stated she did not want to give her address for identity theft reasons. She asked how the agenda is set and how to get on the agenda. Tommy Green stated this is a comment period not a question and answer period but he would be happy to answer those questions after the meeting.

Deborah Thurmon stated she asked because there was a pay increase for the Fire Chief on the agenda and it was not on there anymore. Tommy Green stated there was an amended agenda sent out. Deborah Thurmon asked if it was sent out to the taxpayers. Kathryn Wagner stated it was posted to the website.

John Harvey asked how many public records requests are coming in now. Tommy Green stated that would be addressed later in the meeting.

Review of minutes:

The minutes for the regular meeting of July 12, 2016 and special meeting of July 27, 2016, were presented. Jack Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes of regular meeting July 12, 2016 and special meeting July 27, 2016. Bob Wagner seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Review of the Financial Report:

Kathryn Wagner presented the financial report for July 31, 2016. She stated with 2 months remaining in the fiscal year expenses are on the decline, prepaids are beginning to expense themselves out and we are preparing for the yearend close with no abnormal expenses to address other than equipment under \$1000. She further stated these expenses are non-capitalized expenses that have already been approved for the purchase of new equipment on the new fire engine and will have a yearend budget adjustment to allocate them into the correct category.

Bob Wagner made a motion to approve the financial statements for July 31, 2016. Rick Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

1. Planning project

Chief Sasser stated the ISP scheduled and conducted a few interviews and needs to schedule several more. He stated he would like to meet with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Harvey to discuss the ISP's ability to accomplish what we are asking them to do.

Jack Wilson asked if Chief Sasser was going to reach out Mr. Harvey and himself. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Tommy Green asked if the ISP will be doing anything with the Commissioners. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Jack Wilson stated the objective would be to interview all the Commissioners, but they are starting in the middle of the organization so they get a good picture of how things work.

Chief Reports:

1. Beach Safety report

Joe D'Agostino stated the season is winding down with the first significant drop in attendance and nothing out of the ordinary to discuss.

Rick Moore asked in light of the lightning strike on Okaloosa Island, what we do for our guys when lightning is in the area. Joe D'Agostino stated 2 lifeguards along with the Harbor are allowed to carry their personal cell phones and monitor the weather with an app they have downloaded. He stated if there is a lightning strike within 5 miles there are designated areas for zoned lifeguards to seek shelter.

Tommy Green asked if there really have been 58 rescues and 73 assist on Crab Island this year. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Tommy Green stated on Crab Island alone there has been half the activity as on 7 miles of beach and make it very important that we are out there.

Chief Sasser stated it is a congested area with a lot of people and hazards that most people are not aware of; where with 7 miles of beach there is not going to be rip currents all up and down the beach all the time. He stated right next to Crab Island is the current flowing out to the Gulf and it is constant and that is where we run into those issues.

Joe D'Agostino stated on the beach we have the ability to let the public know where the dangerous area is and to stay out.

Jack Wilson asked what a boat infraction was. Joe D'Agostino stated for Harbor 9 it was people who anchor on the East Jetty when they are supposed to stay outside of 700 feet.

Jack Wilson asked if it was just seeing the infraction. Joe D'Agostino stated yes.

Jack Wilson asked what the infractions on Crab Island were. Chief Sasser stated he would get that answer to Mr. Wilson.

Rick Moore stated he has seen people use a blowup children's pool to traverse from the beach to Crab Island.

Joe D'Agostino stated it could be anchoring in the corridor or anchoring in the channel.

2. Training Report

Chief Sasser stated there was 21 hours of training reported.

3. Inspection Report

Ron Gerdeman stated receiving paperwork for a development that is about 86 townhomes.

4. Response Change report

Chief Sasser stated a fractile response time of 90% for the month of July with 88 calls in Zone 1 and 421 total responses which was a significant increase for July. He stated 279 calls for Station 9 and 142 for Station 10.

Jack Wilson asked if he had made any progress in extracting any data from the County. Chief Sasser stated yes, the County's Chief of Dispatch will extract the data and provide it to us it will just take him a bit of time to go back where we left off, but he will provide it.

5. Overtime report

Chief Sasser stated 1 24 hour incident and a few holdovers but nothing of any significance.

New Business:

1. 2016-2017 Budget Presentation

Kathryn Wagner stated the problem in the past had been maxing out the millage rate while expenses continued to go up. The steps the Board had taken over the last few years had allowed us to present a break even budget. This budget will allow us to not only grow the number of firefighters but to provide some stability of expenses into future years by creating the opportunity for the District to lower the millage rate.

Bob Wagner asked Kathryn Wagner to clarify if we were lowering the millage rate. Kathryn Wagner stated that was the proposal.

Kathryn Wagner stated the taxpayers have told us repeatedly that this District will not see an increase in our millage cap; by reducing the millage cap now this will allow the District to add 2 additional firefighters this year which will level the shifts out and apply for the SAFER grant again in the hopes of hiring an additional 3 firefighters however after the 3rd year the expense is born by the District. She stated history has shown maxing out the millage rate is risky if there is any fluctuation with property values the District has no other revenue sources to help meet our expenses in any given fiscal year. The District has been prudent with the reserves over the last few years to handle fixed assets and it would be a detriment to the fiscal year to have a large capital expenditure come out of 1 fiscal year ad valorem tax collection so the asset fund that was created is working properly.

Kathryn Wagner stated she would not review every line item but will hit on larger line items or line items that are changing due to an abnormal situation. She stated we are presenting a balanced budget which will produce an advalorem tax rate of .9498 which is the equivalent of a decrease of \$5 for every \$100,000 of assessed value basically keeping our revenue at the same value of the current fiscal year ad valorem taxes. She further stated if we increased our taxes to the full 1.0 millage rate it would allow an additional \$273,000 to go into the budget so the Commission has the option to approve what is presented or propose us to work up some different numbers, but we are proposing a rollback. Kathryn Wagner stated personnel services has been adjusted to the current staffing level adding 2 people within advalorem proceeds, adding 3 people under SAFER grant and adjusting benefits as contractually obligated to do for the upcoming fiscal year. She stated 1 item that has not be adjusted at this point is the pension liability because we are not going to take a stab at what it is going to be, we have time to get from the Pension Board's actuary what the true effect of change in the Pension article will be, but we expect it to go down by \$35,000. Because it is expected to go down an option would be to lower the millage rate even further or the excess funding could be used to pay down the Pension, with time before the budget hearing a budget workshop could be held to determine what to do. Kathryn Wagner stated under personnel services insurance benefits has been reduced according to contract and received a quote from the insurance carrier at a 10% increase however changes cannot be made to the plan except through negotiations. She stated legal services has a proposed reduction of \$42,000, however not as low as in years past because if the Local does not approve the contract presented to them the Commission will have to go straight into negotiations again. Another item to mention under utilities is cable which would be doubling due to Cox requiring every TV used to have its own box.

Rick Moore asked if we normally only have 1 TV. Kathryn Wagner stated all the bunks have TVs. Chief Sasser stated there are 7 bunks in Station 9 and 4 bunks plus the primary TV at Station 10.

Rick Moore asked if that was considered a fringe benefit. Chief Sasser stated yes we provided it in the past.

Kathryn Wagner stated a proposed increase to repair and maintenance of \$6,000 since the buildings are aging and in need of window repair, lighting repair as well as painting. She stated proposed increases in capital outlay to include \$61,000 in building improvements for insulating

the buildings and an exhaust system for Station 9. Chief Sasser stated the system is not required since there is a drive through bay however there had been some complaints from the guys the exhaust from the trucks does pump out right where they are bunkering out. He stated that was a significant concern for us; this year we would like to install the system in the 2 bays where we have the twin diesel engines and need year install a system for the gas engines.

Rick Moore asked if this would be the same system that is in Station 10 where they hook the exhaust to the tailpipe and not a fan on the side of the building. Chief Sasser stated yes, we already have the fan and that is not going to do the job.

Kathryn Wagner stated the next item proposed to increase would be bunker gear which would be a result of hiring new people; equipment other including new mannequins, an AED for Boat 9 and a new compressor at \$26,000. Chief Sasser stated a new and better compressor is needed to fill the upgraded CPA tanks with funds from the asset fund since the original compressor has fully depreciated. Kathryn Wagner stated a proposed increase in furniture of \$12,000 to purchase new commercial strength recliners for Station 10; lastly \$53,000 for 2 vehicles, Beach 10 and the Fire Marshall vehicle. She further stated all capital outlay proposed would be funded from the asset fund. Kathryn Wagner stated 1 item overlooked was under training and per diem a proposed increase of \$20,000 to allow training to be done at our site for high rescue training and haz-mat training. She stated Beach Safety is a self-contained budget funded by the TDC and the City of Destin.

Kathryn Wagner stated the budget presented reflects a shortage of \$1, 153,742 before receiving revenue from other sources such as funding from the State Pension fund of \$336,187, \$550,000 from the TDC, \$100,000 from the City of Destin and the use of the asset fund for capital expenditures of \$167,555 which brings us to a break even budget. She stated this budget was worked on by Chief Sasser and the Battalion Chiefs to identify what was needed and are proposing a rollback.

Rick Moore stated he liked the idea of a rollback.

Tommy Green stated it would give us room if there was fluctuation in property values and felt it was a good safety net.

Jack Wilson stated he disagreed. He asked the average value of a home in our district. Rick Moore stated \$300,000. Jack Wilson stated that would only be a savings of \$15 to the taxpayers. He further stated the Commission had twice gone to the taxpayers asking for an increase and were told no; the pension fund dropped below 60% now we have a smidge extra why not leave the millage rate where it has been and put the extra into pension fund to build that back up. He stated it was good optics to cut the rate but would be better optics to take care of the firefighters' pension that way by overfunding the pension should there come a time where it was needed the funding could be reduced therefore creating a cushion. He further stated he was bothered by the fact that the funding to the pension went backwards despite all the steps taken to improve it and while it will never be 100% we've got to do better than 59.8%, this would allow us to do that in a modest way holding all of our options in place. Jack Wilson stated if it was a significant rollback he would be in favor but since it was minimal he would take that money and put it into the pension fund.

Tommy Green stated he could understand that and had no objections to putting the money into the pension fund since we are obligated to do that every year, but would like to see what comes back from the actuary and what effect that would have.

Rick Moore stated property values have increased and are going to continue to increase if it continues on trend. Tommy Green stated that trend could turn around like it did in 2008. Rick Moore stated we would have that cushion to go back up to the max millage rate if we needed to.

Jack Wilson stated instead of rolling back and then raising rates the next year we park the funds in the pension fund and if we did this for a few years we could be operating at a millage rate of 1.0, bring a whole shift back in and claw back what we lost. Jack Wilson stated we do need to wait and see what the actuary says and where the numbers are and the Commission should decide what to do with the modicum of money.

Kathryn Wagner suggested a special meeting possibly Tuesday August 30th after the Pension Board meeting since the actuary should be done by then. Jack Wilson stated he would not be available that night.

Kathryn Wagner stated she would look over the calendar and make sure there are no other big hearings scheduled such as the school board, city or county and get in touch with the Commissioners to set up the special meeting.

Rick Moore asked if any numbers were figured into the budget concerning a station at the west-end. Kathryn Wagner stated no, not at this time. She stated we are trying to get manning up to sufficient levels in order to operate 3 apparatus.

Kathryn Wagner stated due to the TRIM process a hearing has been set for September 13, 2006 and a millage rate of 1.0 which is where we have been and can be taken down but not up.

Kathryn Wagner asked if the Commission had any suggestions or additions to the budget that are not in there. Tommy Green stated he did not see anything.

Rick Moore stated in the future we should look at the cost for the west-end station. Chief Sasser stated the biggest hurdle would not be funding the cost of the apparatus or remodeling the station since we could use impact fees the biggest hurdle would be the consent cost of personnel. He stated if we could get staffing levels up and were able to man 3 trucks then 1 of those trucks could be moved to a new station, but personnel needs to be first.

2. Public Records Requests/Staffing

Chief Sasser stated a couple of Commissioners requested this be placed on the agenda along with costs involved.

Kathryn Wagner stated the figures presented were from the March meeting however we had gone from 107 records requests to 218 which put a demand on us. She stated a rough estimate of time spent fulfilling these 218 requests would be 10 minutes per request or 6 full days but does not include the significant amount of time to research statues to insure requests are filled properly. She further stated options include a part-time assistant and a full-time assistant.

Kathryn Wagner stated a few problems with Mr. Harvey's suggestion of using volunteers such as dependability and knowledge of records. She stated anyone who handles public records is responsible for public records, but the responsibility ultimately falls on the public records liaison and will be under the supervision of Kathryn Wagner.

Tommy Green asked if the City of Destin hired a full-time public records person. Chief Sasser stated yes. Tommy Green asked if the County has one. Chief Sasser stated yes, more than one.

Tommy Green asked if it was not uncommon to have a Public Records Custodian. Chief Sasser stated no.

Kathryn Wagner stated Ms. Henderson is a part-time employee and her time is busy fulfilling other duties if the Commission sees the need to add other personnel that is an option.

Kathryn Wagner stated she was only one person and is doing the best she can to fulfill these requests but is concerned it will impact her ability to perform her other job functions.

Rick Moore asked how many full-time and part-time employees the District has had in the past. Chief Sasser stated 3 full-time administrative staff along with an Assistant Chief and a Medical Division Chief.

Tommy Green stated there is a need for it; knows Kathryn Wagner has been in the office until 8 or 9pm on some nights and needs help.

Bob Wagner stated he liked the idea of a part-time assistant instead of full-time. Bob Wagner asked if the \$50,000 listed on the presentation was already budgeted. Kathryn Wagner stated no, it would have to be added.

Tommy Green asked what kind of training would be available. Chief Sasser stated there are in house classes or classes put on by organizations such as the State of Florida or the Foundation. He stated he had attended both and would recommend they attend both, but more importantly in house on the job training with Ms. Kathryn.

Rick Moore asked Chief Sasser what his recommendation would be. Chief Sasser stated he recommended a part-time employee.

Rick Moore asked if their sole job would be public records. Chief Sasser stated that would be the primary job, but not the sole job. Kathryn Wagner stated records management would go hand in hand with the job. Chief Sasser stated there were several items on the list concerning records management that have not been the priority and bringing someone on will help get some of those things done

Bob Wagner stated the advantage of starting with part-time would if the requests drop off after a year then you are not stuck with a full-time employee or if they continue to grow they can be made full-time.

Chief Sasser agreed and recommended starting with a part-time employee. He stated while he appreciated other suggestions he recommended this option while temp agency can work well he had seen where there are times they do not work well.

Rick Moore stated he liked the idea of part-time because when Allison Henderson is off there could still be someone here.

Kathryn Wagner stated we could overlap the schedule.

Rick Moore made a motion to move forward with hiring part-time staff to fulfill records requests. Bob Wagner seconded. Rick Moore amended his motion to records management. The motion passed unanimously.

John Harvey stated he would like to clarify his remarks earlier concerning volunteers. He stated his intention would be to use volunteers to do the mundane tasks not public records.

Tommy Green asked if Mr. Harvey had his question answered earlier concerning the number of public records requests. John Harvey stated yes, 218 requests over 8 months come out to be about 2 a day.

Chief Sasser stated as the Board knows they do not come in that way. John Harvey stated some days you may get 5 and some days you may not get any. Chief Sasser stated some days may be 15 or 20.

Bob Wagner stated over the last 2 years he had been on the Board we have tried to make it financially sound and have had to make tough decisions and implement those tough decisions. He stated he had asked to put on the agenda a raise for the Fire Chief not because everyone else got one except for him, but because he has worked hard and done things that were tough and he deserves his raise too. He further stated he hoped sometime in the near future it can be put back on the agenda and give him his raise he deserves.

Next meeting:

Tommy Green reminded the Board that the next regular meeting will be September 13, 2016, at 5:30 p.m., the Public Hearing on September 13, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. and the Public Hearing September 21, 2016, at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment:

With no additional business to be discussed, the meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.