

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

October 11, 2016

**Minutes**

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

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

Staff absent: Division Chief Kathryn Wagner

Present: Dawn Stuntz

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

Tommy Green stated September 25, 2016 the District and the citizens of Destin experienced a huge loss in the passing of Battalion Chief Mike Urenda. He stated to keep his family, fellow firefighters and this Board in your prayers and we will do whatever we can to help his family.

Dawn Stuntz reminded the Board they are in negotiations and cannot comment on any item that might be subject to negotiation or brought up in the contract.

**Public Comments:**

Jennifer Malich of Lakeside Drive stated the mission of the Destin Fire Control District, as described in the audit, the primary purpose of the District is to provide fire suppression, fire inspection, rescue and emergency medical care for the following areas in Okaloosa County; all lands bounded on the west by the East Pass, on the north by Choctawhatchee Bay, on the east by Walton County and by the south the Gulf of Mexico. She stated it is an expectation and assumption that the Board will be fiscally responsible, but the primary purpose of the District is to provide fire suppression, fire inspection, rescue and emergency medical care. It is a high risk, high cost, and high reward entity with no margin for error when it comes to the effectiveness of this department. Please keep this in mind as we enter 2017 because we cannot continue the nonsense that has consumed this District for the last several years. She further stated moral and accountability starts at the top.

Jennifer Malich stated Jack Wilson publicly stated to address the Board, in a letter to the Destin Log, so she did. She stated Mike Buckingham, Rick Moore and Jack Wilson have all had conversations with her, however after sending multiple emails to all Board members and Chief Sasser only Rick Moore responded. Jennifer Malich suggested emails be updated or respond back to the public. She further stated the Board is bound by the Sunshine Law, while not an expert, she does expect the Board to adhere to a higher standard of ethical conduct; someone among the Board or Chief Sasser provided a member of the public an email that should have only been obtained through public records. Jennifer Malich stated she believed Kathryn Wagner when she responded, as custodian of records; she is adhering to the public records policy which

means one of you did not. She stated if the Board wants to hear what the public has to say, they have to listen, really listen not argue or defend their position. She further stated one Board member told her they going to vote against Mr. Norton's proposal until they heard the audience laugh; they were not laughing at you, but the ludicrous articles being proposed. Jennifer Malich asked the Board if they have allowed their conscious to be swayed over time by relying on a few individuals rather than thoughtful meditation on the issues at hand.

Jennifer Malich stated someone brought to her attention they were fearful that if an emergency were to be called to their family or their business that this fire department would not respond appropriately. She gave examples of instances where men of this fire department acted with integrity and to their responsibilities. She further stated it was important to note these men continually act with integrity and would never not answer a call, please think about that when you are writing comments on social media that are degrading to our firemen.

Jennifer Malich stated for the record she has had public records requests that are outstanding for over 5 weeks now and Chief Sasser told her he would try and work in Kathryn Wagner's absence to get these records responded, but these public records requests have been outstanding for a long period of time.

Jennifer Malich stated the annual audit states that although it is important to the long term existence of the District to maintain its financial health, assets are accumulated only to the extent required to insure that there are sufficient reserve funds for future operations and anticipated capital acquisitions. She stated the District has an impact fee bank account and an impact fee reserve account on the equity side; so far this year the District has taken in over \$120,000 in impact fees. She further stated impact fees are to purchase certain capital assets such as fire trucks and bunker gear; according to Jack Wilson's article in the Log, the asset account was established to also purchase capital assets, but that is exactly what impact fees are for, according to State Statue. Jennifer Malich stated the Board likes to operate with no debt and purchase capital assets outright, yet the Board fails to acknowledge the significant debt and liability to the retirement trust fund which is where those excess dollars should be allocated to at this point in time. She stated purchasing capital assets with debit is not necessarily bad considering current interest rates because impact fees taken in overtime could be used to pay that debt. Jennifer Malich stated Ron Gerdeman should have done or should be doing a study of those impact fees of what contiguous districts are and increase impact fees accordantly. She stated if Ron Gerdeman needs help, she would be happy to pull public records requests of contiguous districts and do the analysis for him.

Jennifer Malich stated the Destin Fire Control Charter states in section 12 that the District shall adopt a five year plan to identify facilities, equipment, personnel and revenue needed by the District during that five year period; the plan shall be updated in accordance of section 189.415 of Florida statue and shall satisfy the requirement for a public facilities report required by section 189.415 2. She stated she was glad the charter was more stringent than Florida Statue however the District had the help of the ISP in developing a long term strategic plan, but lost that assistance due to the inability to share critical information because of management's fear of showing their hand during negotiations. At some point management and the Board must realize in order to move forward as a District they have to think strategically and be forward looking or cause your own self demise. She asked how on earth the Board can plan for the future by planning what capital assets you need first; this is putting the cart ahead of the horse, you need to

know rough estimates which lead to revenue expectations which lead to personnel plans which then lead to plans for facilities and equipment.

Jennifer Malich stated as noted in the beginning of the speech the jurisdiction is all lands. She asked why we continue to entertain the idea of monitoring Crab Island when we do not effectively monitor and maintain the current beach safety and fire district.

Marie Romero of 115 Airport Rd Unit 110, Destin stated she asked the military personnel in charge of Crab Island whether we as citizens are responsible for anything at Crab Island and he said no. She stated it is military property and they appreciate the assist of the fire boat, but the citizens should not be responsible for paying for it, so that is something that definitely needs to be looked into since everything is a budget crisis. She further stated the citizens of Destin are complaining about taxes so we should definitely not try to get another fire boat, we need the lifeguards on the beach because that is what we are responsible for.

Marie Romero stated people think she is here because of who her husband is, but she was a mother long before she was Felix's wife and her daughter lives right up the street and the 35 years still bothers her. She stated there is a lifespan on this job, they get sick, they get old, they lose their vision and it is the same in the military; 55 years olds are not sent overseas to gun fight with 20 years old and that is what really bothered her at the impasse meeting because these guys should be able to move on with their lives, mentor the new guys, there should be a good age span and guys should be capable and healthy and be here for the citizens; they should be comfortable that the guys that are going to work on them or put the fire out at their house are experienced but not too old. She further stated our new hire would be 64 year old when he retires, that is crazy; he will need reading glasses on the side of the road trying to read medication or try to work people, go into burning buildings. Marie Romero stated who cares about 48/96; the biggest problem is the 35 years if you want your 5 years in the DROP. She stated most citizens do not understand the toll this job takes on people. She asked if the Board if they want the guys to be healthy and to have good insurance because they deal with sick people every third day and they have to do things that expose them to sickness. Marie Romero stated they should have good health insurance and suggested returning flex cards to the guys and not the families.

Deborah Thurmon of Destin stated she still had public records outstanding as of September 11, 2016 and is still being over charged per Florida Statue.

### **Review of minutes:**

The minutes for the regular meeting of September 13, 2016, the tentative hearing September 13, 2016, the final hearing September 21, 2016 and the special meeting September 27, 2016 were presented. Rick Moore made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting September 13, 2016, the tentative hearing September 13, 2016, the final hearing September 21, 2016 and the special meeting September 27, 2016. Jack Wilson seconded with a correction.

Jack Wilson stated on page 28 of the special meeting September 27, 2016 change PNL to operating revenue statement.

Bob Wagner seconded with the amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Review of the Financial Report:**

Chief Sasser stated since Kathryn Wagner was absent the financial report of September 30, 2016 would be presented next month; however Kathryn Wagner wanted the Board to know we did transfer \$700,000 of the short term bond fund invested with the State which will get us through until we receive our advalorem taxes and payables were taken care of in her absence, when she returns she will be closing out the year and preparing for the audit. Chief Sasser stated he and Kathryn Wagner will be working to fulfill records requests.

Jack Wilson asked how far behind public record requests were. Chief Sasser stated he would have to look at the book to see, but he knows Ms. Thurmon and Ms. Malich both have requests that have been waiting a while and they need to be fulfilled.

Jack Wilson asked if someone else can fulfill them while Kathryn Wagner is not able to work. Chief Sasser stated some the requests go into the accounting program so he would need Ms. Kathryn's help getting in there and pulling them, but maybe he could enlist the assistance of the auditors to make that happen. He stated between himself and Ms. Allison we should be able to fulfill some of the requests.

Jack Wilson suggested maybe we could go out of the order received to fulfill requests that can be done in her absence. He stated it would be nice to get the backlog down.

**Old Business:**

1. Planning project

Chief Sasser stated we are putting together the five year plan that will meet the state statute and will present it as soon as possible; after that we will begin working on the long term plan similar to the ISP.

Rick Moore asked if the ISP was not involved. Chief Sasser stated they are not involved.

Rick Moore asked why that was. Jack Wilson stated they gave us a letter stating they could not do the work given all that was going on. He stated he did not understand it because we basically constructed a work program for them to go through which was done purposely to avoid anything related to the contract. He further stated they could have started with the strategic issues such as what we are trying to accomplish in the District and then when the contract was done they could come in with detailed costs, but that is not how they saw it. Jack Wilson stated the ISP did not need much of anything from us to go out and figure out some of our biggest problems like should we be in beach safety, should we have ALS, how do deal with accounting, how do you deal with the stations we have and the topography of our district; none of those need any critical information. He stated their letter was vague and unclear.

John Harvey stated he sent 3 emails to different members of the committee and has not received an answer from anybody.

Jack Wilson stated for the record John Harvey was a member of the strategic committee and went to all the meetings.

John Harvey stated the ISP is not even answering emails as to why.

Tommy Green asked if we need to look elsewhere for assistance. Chief Sasser stated no, the five year plan to meet the statute we can take care of ourselves, but we will start to take on the task of

what Mr. Wilson laid out with the same group of people and maybe a few others. He stated he asked Mr. Wilson and Mr. Harvey if they would allow us to give it a shot.

**Chief Reports:**

1. Beach Safety report

Joe D'Agostino stated we would be on the beach 2 more weeks, but it has been a busy fall.

2. Training report

Chief Sasser stated Battalion Chief Urenda took care of this report and we do not have the report for this month, but will present it next month.

3. Inspection report

Ron Gerdeman stated this is Fire Prevention week, but we will do it all month. He stated 1st graders will be walking down to the Fire Department this week for our program; the guys will setup the ladder and we will be doing our program inside.

Rick Moore asked about the question from last meeting. Ron Gerdeman stated the impact fee from Seaglass apartments would be roughly \$90,000.

4. Response Change report

Chief Sasser stated we had been waiting on numbers from the County which were received just recently, but have not had a chance to go through it all to see if it has everything needed. He stated if it does not then we will go back to the old report minus the County's data.

5. Overtime report

Chief Sasser stated due to Ms. Kathryn's absence he will present the report next month.

**New Business:**

1. Approve- Other Post-Employment Benefits Program (OPEB) actuarial valuation as of October 1, 2015

Chief Sasser stated this was a required report done by Foster and Foster which determines the impact the benefits provided to retirees.

Tommy Green read the opinion letter and asked if he was correct in the understanding that the plan was going along as it should. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Bob Wagner made a motion to approve the OPEB actuarial valuation as of October 1, 2015. Rick Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Resolution 17-01- Declare Beach Safety ATVs and UTV Obsolete

Chief Sasser stated ATV's and UTVs are rotated every 2 years and since we have 8 we will rotate 4 this year in order to buy 4 more.

Tommy Green asked if this was equipment purchased with money from the TDC. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Rick Moore asked if the 2016 vehicle was an older 2016. Joe D'Agostino stated that was when it was received it is actually a 2015.

Bob Wagner made a motion to approve Resolution 17-01. Rick Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### 3. Ratification of 9/27/2016 meeting

Rick Moore made a motion to ratify the September 27, 2016 meeting. Mike Buckingham seconded.

Jack Wilson asked if there was an update. Chief Sasser stated we have received word the State will be releasing the 2015 funds.

Rick Moore asked if that was \$237,950. Chief Sasser stated yes.

Jack Wilson stated that basically makes the pot right for the portion of the pension funding which we paid with District funds, and now the State money comes in for last year, which is what we thought would happen.

The motion passed unanimously.

### 4. Mike Urenda Benefits

Chief Sasser stated as mentioned in the beginning of the meeting we lost one of our own on September 25, 2016 and this department has never experienced or been through anything like it before. Chief Sasser stated he would like to ask the Board to assist the family by paying out his vacation and sick leave. He stated we paid out around 432 hours of vacation in order to make his check whole for the last pay period so his widow would not experience that loss. He further stated there are still another 147 hours of vacation and over 1500 hours of sick leave. Chief Sasser asked the Board to consider paying vacation hours and some, part or all of his sick leave. He stated Mike rarely took sick leave. He further stated a policy would be drafted based on the decisions made for any future need.

Mike Buckingham made a motion to approve the payment of all Mike Urenda's vacation and sick leave.

Bob Wagner asked to clarify if Mike Urenda was part of management and not a part of negotiations. Chief Sasser stated that was correct and what we have gone through is not covered in the CBA.

Bob Wagner stated if he was in the Union, he would have to say no, but since he was not and it is not negotiable he would second the motion.

Jack Wilson asked what else can be done. He asked if there were death and disability benefits. He asked where Mike was in terms of eligibility for retirement. Chief Sasser stated as it stands now Mike's wife will receive 10 years of his retirement, but we are looking into other interpretations.

Tommy Green asked about health benefits for the family. Chief Sasser stated because he was off duty when it occurred his widow could select to go with COBRA either with the plan the current employees are on or the plan the retirees are on. He stated a Board member had asked about helping out with health insurance. He further stated when he met with Mike's wife she did share she had lost her job.

Jack Wilson asked what benefits the spouse of a retired fire fighter would receive. He asked if there was a survivor benefits package. Chief Sasser stated when a retiree retires they make a selection at that point about what a widow would receive; they could go 50%, 75% or 100% . He stated the health insurance would be outside the system. He further stated there are life insurance policies; one from Ocean City because he was a Commissioner there, one from Valparaiso because he worked there part-time and two from here. Based on what the death certificate states and the timing there is a chance it could be a line of duty death in which case there could be other benefits for the family.

Tommy Green stated it was uncharted waters for the District and we need to do whatever it can to help his family. He stated he disagreed with Mr. Wagner he would do the same thing for anyone that worked for this department.

Bob Wagner stated for the record because it is negotiated through the contract, legally it would probably not be something we could do, but because he was management we can.

Tommy Green stated he mistook his statement, but it does not matter who it is, if they are in this department they will get our full support.

Rick Moore asked Chief Sasser to work on a policy. Chief Sasser stated he would use the decisions made to assist in drafting a policy.

Mike Buckingham asked Mike's wife was covered through the end of the year with his health insurance. Chief Sasser stated no, insurance ended at the time of passing.

Jack Wilson stated a starting point in drafting a policy would be that Mike was eligible to retire, there were benefits that were accrued and at a minimum we should provide what Mike would have gotten had he been able to retire. He stated he did not know what that would be, but it seems to be a good place to start and from there have policy for someone that is not yet eligible to retire.

The motion passed unanimously.

Rick Moore asked about a memorial for Mike. He suggested planting a tree at each station with a plaque. Chief Sasser stated we can make that happen.

**Next meeting:**

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

**Adjournment:**

With no additional business to be discussed, the meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.