

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

June 10, 2014

**Minutes**

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

Commissioners absent: Jack Wilson

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

Present: Dawn Stuntz

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

**Public Comments:**

Patty DeFrenza of 259 Chipola Cove – commented about the vote to eliminate EMS and stated that the Charter states that we must provide emergency medical service, meaning basic and advanced life support service as defined in section 401.23 of the Florida Statutes. She stated that your charter regulates that and further said that the Florida Statutes 401.23 states advanced life support means treatment of life threatening medical emergencies through the use of techniques such as endotracheal intubation, the administration of drugs or intravenous fluids, telemetry, cardiac monitoring, and cardiac defibrillation by qualified person, pursuant to rule for the department. Ms. DeFrenza stated that these are the requirements of the charter and the Florida Statute for the Destin Fire Control District. She stated that she believes that the vote to end EMS on October 1<sup>st</sup> is a violation of the Charter and the Florida Statute and she asks that the Board of Commissioners rescind that vote until the fire budget can be trimmed in a different manner such as the elimination of the fire boat.

Patty DeFrenza stated that she contacted the Watch Commander for the Coast Guard and they are first responders on water proof life rescue and stated that they also have fire fighter capabilities as they have a P6 pump with a hose line and a generator. She stated that the boat costs over \$100,000 to purchase and the budget shows \$3,000 for repairs. She suggest that you sell that boat and let the Coast Guard provide rescue and fire suppression as this is a duplication of service.

Tommy Green commented in response to the fire boat suggestion. He stated that if a boat is tied to a dock the Coast Guard will not respond. He stated that if the fire engine cannot get to the dock, you can't do it and there are a lot of docks in this town which we cannot get to with a truck. He stated there are several buildings on the harbor side of Holiday Isle which probably have a setback of about 15 feet and if we ever got in a fire in one of those townhomes and the wind was right, we could not put a firefighter between the water and the building. He stated that fire would have to be fought from the water.

Mike Buckingham stated that we would not be able to get anything for the boat if we were to sell it. Tommy Green stated that if we did, it would just be a one-time patch and would not fix the ongoing issues. He stated we feel the need for the fire boat here because it is for safety and we have used it

on gulf rescues and rescues in the pass as well as putting out boat fires on docks because the Coast Guard would not respond to a boat tied to the dock.

Tommy Green responded to the first questions concerning the District's charter. He requested that Patty DeFrenza read section 8, special powers. Ms. DeFrenza read "The board shall have and may exercise any or all of the following special powers relating to facilities and duties authorized by this act: (1) Establish and maintain emergency medical and rescue response services and acquire and maintain rescue, medical, and other emergency equipment pursuant to the provisions of chapter 401, Florida Statutes..."

Tommy Green stated that this charter says, the Board shall have and may exercise any of these options. He stated if we are going to do it, we must do it in compliance with Florida Statute, but we don't have to. He further stated that the District has done this while we could, but now with financial constraints put on us, we are not able to.

Ron Bockman of Waterview Towers Yacht Club – asked if you have continued financial concerns, are there any ideas as what the next services are to be eliminated. Tommy Green stated we might need to shut down a truck and reduce man power. He stated the Board is charged with the fiducial responsibility of maintaining this department, which includes balancing a budget every year. He stated he does not want to do away with the paramedics or the ALS, but the majority of people who voted are not willing to pay more and we are going to do what we can.

Ron Bockman asked what were the alternatives which were considered, that were considered more important, so this was the one which was eliminated. Chief Sasser stated there were three different options all of which involved eliminating positions. He stated one of them was closing the station and another was to shut down a truck. He further stated that every one of them involved personnel reductions. He stated the voluntary separation incentive program was implemented to eliminate those personnel as a cost reduction measure instead of laying them off.

Tommy Green stated there is a system in place to provide medical services, but there is no backup for the fire department. He stated we need to maintain our integrity as a fire department.

Ron Bockman asked what the alternative is. Tommy Green stated it is the County EMS. He stated that is their job and they collect taxes for that. He stated in the past we have put the money up to enhance this medical service to the community, but it is getting to the point where cannot afford to do it anymore.

**Review of the minutes:**

Minutes for the regular meeting of May 13, 2014 were presented. Rick Moore made a motion to approve the minutes of May 13, 2014 as presented. Hillary Anderson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Review of the financial report:**

The financial reports for the month ended May 31, 2014, were presented. Kathryn Wagner stated cash is now on a decline and will remain so until we begin to receive our upcoming year ad valorem taxes. Account receivables are high due to waiting to collect our first three billings to the TDC, however they are in line and everything is considered collectible at this time. Accounts payable are in line and other accruals and equity are adjusted accordingly. She stated expenditures were in line for the month, however there are a few which are over budget. She further explained this is going to

happen as we are eight months through our fiscal year and we operate off of a razor tight budget and occasionally we are going to go over if there is something like a large repair. She stated other line items which are coming in under budget and other revenue which is not accounted for which will take care of these items over budget. She stated the target percentage after completing eight months is approximately 34% and if you go to page 16, you will see year to date expenditures with a remaining 42.7%. Hillary Anderson made a motion to approve the report. Mike Buckingham seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Old Business:**

1. Budget and Restructuring of the Department and 2. Voluntary Separation Incentive Program  
Chief Sasser stated the Board made several decisions last month and there have been three individuals who have taken the VSIP program so far. He stated there are three to four others who are seriously considering accepting it.

Chief Sasser stated we have received our preliminary assessment from the tax collector office, with an increase of about 5% over last year. He stated projections have been done prior to the budget process to assist with our reduction plans.

Kathryn Wagner stated the preliminary assessment from the property appraiser and the number we are looking at is 5.363%. She explained when we started this process a rough estimate was prepared using a 1.5% increase in ad valorem taxes and we adjusted our expenditures for inflation and were looking at a deficit of around \$610,000. She stated with the preliminary number from the property appraiser, this deficit is now projected to be at \$448,000. She stated three individuals have taken the VSIP, which is an irrevocable program, which saves approximately \$333,000, bring the estimated remaining deficit to \$114,000. She stated as soon as the budgeting process begins she will begin going through the budget line item by line item with a razor just as before.

Chief Sasser stated that we need more personal than what we have and reducing those is not the direction he nor he feels the Board wants to go. He asked the Board that if we have more people take it then what is need to balance the budget, that he be able to hire new people in to replace them.

Rick Moore asked Chief Sasser if the MOU has been signed yet. Chief Sasser stated no, it has not. Rick Moore asked the Board if it was their understanding that the motion he made last month to approve the incentive program go hand in hand with the MOU for the manning. Mike Buckingham stated that was his understanding. Tommy Green stated no, he did not understand that it was tied to it and thought it was a totally different item. Hillary Anderson stated she thought the MOU was something to do with overtime. Tommy Green and Hillary Anderson both commented that previous discussion was about shutting down a truck. Hillary Anderson stated we are already low manning as it is. She stated you don't have to have an MOU to go down to two trucks.

Rick Moore stated that with two suppression apparatus which we can go down to, we should not be seeing any more overtime. Chief Sasser stated it should be somewhat reduced.

**Chief Reports:**

1. Beach Safety update

Joe D'Agostino began by complementing our race team on their finish in St. Augustine. He stated preventive actions are up and rescues are down so it has been a really good season. He stated we

had our first really busy day, near max capacity in all the condos, and with the red flags we did not have a single rescue. He stated the crew is doing a really good job.

Rick Moore stated for the public record that the individuals going to these contests are going on their own dime and it is not coming out of the District.

## 2. Training report

Chief Sasser stated that each shift received 21 hours of training in May and they are doing a good job.

## 3. Inspection report

Ron Gerdeman presented the May inspection report. Rick Moore asked about plan reviews for buildings. Ron Gerdeman stated there are a few going on, but in the early stages and we have not seen the plans yet.

Tommy Green opened the floor to Ron Bockman who expressed concern as a resident of a local condominium where emergency lights were not working in the hallway/stairs. Ron Gerdeman stated it is the management homeowner association's responsibility to maintain that equipment. He asked Mr. Bockman to follow up with him after the meeting to further address this issue.

## 4. Paramedic report

Chief Sasser presented the May paramedic report. He stated the call volume was 333 for the month of May and should remain high for the months of June, July and August.

Chief Sasser commented that there was a high rise fire at SunDestin this past weekend. He stated there was a great multi-agency cooperation with EMS and the Sheriff's office and our guys did a phenomenal job.

## 5. Overtime report

Chief Sasser presented the May overtime report. He stated May shows a reduction of almost half of April. He stated we still have two people out with extended medical issues.

## **New Business:**

### 1. Dispatch Services Agreement

Chief Sasser stated a copy of the old agreement and the new agreement are presented and changes have been highlighted. He noted minor changes on page 2, item #1, item #4, and item #6 as well as the term of the agreement. He recommends the Board to approve this agreement as there is nothing in it which would tie our hands. Hillary Anderson made a motion to approved new dispatch service agreement. Rick Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

### 2. 48/96 Hour Shift Work

Hillary Anderson stated she had concerns about the reality of doing away with this schedule. She stated there have not been any safety issue findings. She stated other departments in the area and all over the country were doing it. She stated we talked about it being a money issue and if you look at our overtime report overtime now is even greater than it was when they were working 48/96. She stated she had spoken with a majority, if not all of the employees at this District, and the comments she received is that it is a moral issue. She stated the employees feel that they have more time with their families as they are working other jobs. She further stated that this should be reconsidered if these are the legitimate reasons that we did away with the program, being safety and money. She

asked to reconsider it from the findings and what we have in front of us to determine if these are both valid.

Hillary Anderson asked Chief Sasser to comment. She asked if this is not the reason that the 48/96 was done away with, if safety and money are not the issue. Chief Sasser stated that her comment about moral is absolutely at the crutch of it. Hillary Anderson stated that if that was the issue did anyone else on the Board not recognize or see that those were not valid issues which took away the program.

Tommy Green stated we were always on a 24/48 and we agreed to try the 48/96 for a while. He stated it was done on a trial basis and after looking at it over the period of the trial basis it was the decision of the majority of this Board that it was not in the best interest of the District.

Hillary Anderson stated she would like someone to explain why it was not in the best interest of the District, because we looked at the overtime report, which is even higher now than it was in the past, we have looked at the safety and have no safety findings. She stated that at this point these gentlemen and women which we may have working here, they work 24 hour shifts and then they have been mandatoried to work again. She stated no one on this Board or the Chief seems to care that they are working 48 hours shifts then. She asked, why, is it because the employees were happy with that and it was taken away from them and the Board sits here and has no legitimate comment on why it should stay intact.

Rick Moore stated he thinks the union took a vote and elected to give it up. Hillary Anderson stated she did not believe that was the case. Rick Moore stated that we had an MOU.

Tommy Green stated that regardless of the fact, once we went to 48/96 our overtime allotment was used up a lot quicker. Further discussion was held on why the overtime has gone up. Tommy Green stated that the contract would have to be reopened to negotiate this and being that they have not been willing to open up anything, he stated he does not think we should either.

Tommy Green opened the floor for public comments.

Jeff Anderson of Spanish Moss Trail – commented that we are the ones working that shift, we are the ones here and we have 30 guys who love it. He stated he gets to see his kids more and now he feels people are playing games with the 48/96. Further discussion was held regarding total hours worked on 48/96 compared to 24/96. Jeff Anderson stated that he was baffled as to why something that guys were so happy about was just taken away.

Rick Moore asked why did you vote to give it up.

Mark Baugh of Shalimar – reviewed the process of the Board setting a special meeting and the MOU being voted on which would allow both parties to continue to talk and work out the differences and if they could not the 24/48's would go back.

Further discussion was held on the special meeting and the MOU.

Mark Baugh stated we had no option, either it was going to be taken away from us or we would agree to pass something to allow us to continue to talk. He stated if we went forward with it the overtime problem would not exist anymore, the safety issue could be debated, but what has been

created now with the mandating of overtime is now many guys, on almost a daily basis here, are working 48 hours and then they have one day off to rest and they are back here for another 24 hours.

Mike Buckingham stated his whole issue was safety.

Mark Baugh stated that now you have individuals who are working from anywhere from 72 to 96 hours straight between working their part-time jobs and coming in here and having to work 48 hours. He stated guys are getting off from other fire departments, who have been on for 24 hours, or ambulances for 24 hours, who are coming straight into here and working for 48 hours, so now they are up for 72 hours.

Mike Buckingham stated that Chief Sasser is the one running this department and if he sees that there is an issue then he will bring that to our attention and he will take care of that because that is his job.

Rick Moore stated you work for this department first and that is what we are paying you for.

Bob Wagner of Misty Lane – asked is the first priority of this department to take care of Destin, and if it is, why are we working 24 hours in an off facility and then coming in here tired. He stated that is derelict of duty and you should not be able to do that. He stated that as a taxpayer first priority should be here.

Patty DeFrenza asked how many structure fires are there per year in Destin for physical exertion. Chief Sasser stated he did not have that data right in front of him, but would say we probably have 25 to 30. She asked how many senior employees are eligible for their pensions currently and why are we taking last in and first out. She asked why aren't we looking at the people who are making \$70,000 to \$100,000 per year, who are not riding rigs and who are not physically firefighting, who are eligible for their pension. Rick Moore stated our contract is the reason.

Chief Sasser stated that he has told the board, in several different meetings, that if you make a decision which effects part of our employees, it will affect all of our employees, including himself.

Tommy Green stated the contract negotiations are next year. Attorney Dawn Stultz stated nothing in the contract is up for discussion and the contract is not open, so terms and conditions of the contract are what they are until it is open for negotiations.

### 3. Proposed dates for Budget Workshops and Meetings

Chief Sasser stated a calendar has been presented with proposed dates on Tuesdays for budget workshops. He stated our preliminary and final public hearings in September are dates which we typically set. Discussion was held and a direction was given to advertise the proposed dates.

### **Next Meeting:**

Tommy Green stated that the next regular meeting of the Commissioners would be on July 8, 2014 at 5:30pm.

### **Adjournment:**

With no further business to be addressed, the meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.