

SPRING HILL FIRE RESCUE  
Commission Meeting  
July 28, 2004  
7:00 p.m.

**Present:** Chairman Hollander, Commissioner Panozzo, Commissioner Martin,  
Commissioner Marasciullo, Commissioner Jacobs, Chief Morrison,  
Assistant Chief Davies, Attorney Salzman

**Excused:** Dr. Blackburn, Jimmy Zabetka

**Call to Order**

Chairman Hollander called the Commission Meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**Invocation**

Commissioner Panozzo gave the invocation.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Hollander led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Chairman Hollander asked if there were any questions regarding the Consent Agenda.

**Motion**

*Commissioner Marasciullo made a Motion to accept the Consent Agenda.*

*Commissioner Panozzo seconded the Motion.*

*The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).*

**Medical Director's Report**

No Report - Dr. Blackburn was not present.

**Report of Counsel**

A. Discussion - Liebman

Attorney Salzman stated that at the previous meeting the Board requested that he look into the details of the charging parties. The demands that the charging parties have requested are unrealistic. The charging party has not only requested \$20,000 in back pay, but for health insurance, medical fees and attorney fees. Therefore, he feels the Department shouldn't proceed any further with this issue.

Chairman Hollander stated that the next step would be up to the charging party.

Attorney Salzman stated that the charging party would get a Right to Sue letter from the EEOC. Based on his investigation, the Department did not do anything wrong.

The Board gave consensus to follow Counsel's recommendation.

**Report from Training Officer**

No Report - Jimmy Zebetka was not present.

**Chief's Report**

A. Assistant Chief's Evaluation

Chief Morrison stated that according to policy, the Fire Chief is to evaluate the Assistant Chief. He has met with the Assistant Chief to discuss the evaluation and the Board received a copy of that evaluation. Based on the Assistant Chief's performance over the last year, he recommended that the Board approve a 6% raise.

Commissioner Panozzo asked what was the percentage of the Fire Chief's last raise?

Chief Morrison said 5%. The Assistant Chief's contract states a raise between 3% - 8% will be based on merit.

Commissioner Martin stated that he was not present last year for the Assistant Chief's evaluation. What did the Assistant Chief receive last year?

Chief Morrison stated that Assistant Chief received the full 8%. Currently the Assistant Chief's salary is roughly \$62,500, whereas, Hernando County is paying their Assistant Chief \$77,000. Last year he recommended an 8% increase because he felt the Assistant Chief's salary was not in line with the standard salaries in the area.

Commissioner Martin asked what changed between last year and this year? Was the percentage based

upon what the surrounding areas are paying?

Chief Morrison said no. A percentage is based upon merit and last year he recommended that the Assistant Chief receive an 8% raise for his first year of service, based on merit and equity in that position according to the surrounding areas.

Commissioner Marasciullo stated that the budget reflects a current annual salary for the Assistant Chief to be \$65,659.

Chief Morrison said no. The budget the Board received was built for October of next year. The Assistant Chief's current salary is \$62,532.

### **Motion**

*Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to accept Staff's recommendation to give the Assistant Chief a 6% raise.*

*Commissioner Jacobs seconded the Motion.*

*The Motion carried unanimously (4-1).*

Commissioner Martin opposed the Motion.

### **B. Budget Update**

Chief Morrison stated that the budget has to be approved by the Board, then sent to the County by June 30<sup>th</sup>. After that date, by Florida Statue, the Property Appraiser has to release the finale figures. He received the finale figures, which equates less than \$200,000 more for the budget. The estimated revenue went from 6.6 to 6.8, the Tax Collector and Property Appraiser's figure went up. The Fire Service contract went up from 6.6 to 6.8. The most difficult task is to predict the Balance Forward Cash as to what is going to be in the checkbook by the end of business on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Total Estimated Revenue went from \$10,172,00 to \$10,299,135. Page-5 of the budget changed to a Total of 241,250, due to a new computer Laptop, Winch for the Brush Truck, K-12 Saw, Administration Expansion, Station-3 renovation, Tile Replacement Station1-2, Reroof Station-2 and Kitchen Cabinets Station-1. The Administration budget on page-10 has some figures that were not finalized. The contract for Worker's Compensation has not been signed, therefore, that figure has not been finalized. Last year that figure was budgeted at 443,750, but this year the figure is 425,000, which was a reduction even though they will be increasing employees. The Travel & Per Diem-Class C has been increased with the anticipation that the Board will approve the fuel reimbursement for the fire police. Staff requested an increase in Operating Supplies and Data Processing Supplies. The Reserve for Contingencies has gone up from 125,000 to 132,032 and Reserve for Cash Forward went from 912,000 to 958,251. They still

do not have the Health Insurance figure for next year, but the budget reflects a 12% increase. He will be meeting with their Agent in August along with the Health Insurance Committee and will bring the information back to the Board. Page-20 under Operating Supplies has increased a little due to the purchase of the MSA hot spots, which can detect the temperature of a surface in a burning building and the purchase of chainsaws and cordless saws. The Clothing-Uniforms has increased because of the purchase for dress uniforms and the hiring of new employees. Safety Gear and Supplies have increased, due to the six new employees that will be hired. Those were the only changes to the budget from the original one which the Board tentatively agreed to.

Chairman Hollander stated since the 4-years he has been on the Board, he has been educated on the events that happen in the field and now has an idea as what Commissioners are suppose to do. He has learned whatever decisions the Board makes it can be a life or death situation. The Board shouldn't trivialize their decisions nor the media. In his opinion, Spring Hill Fire Rescue is a community fire rescue service and what differentiates them from the County is the Spring Hill Fire Rescue is expected to do better then the County. It's not something they brag about, but the community voted for a community fire service and the people knew they would pay more for that service because they know they want specialized premium service. The Department wants to provide the community with highly trained people and he feels they have come along way in their training program due to Jimmy Zabetka and Dr. Blackburn. The Department wants to provide the best equipment for the community and tries to get it to the community as quickly as possible, which at times can be a problem. The Department is focused on the community, not the whole County. There is always an issue of response times in a life and death situation because sometimes a resident may take over an hour to decide to call 911 for a cardiac situation. A quicker response time will determine not only saving a life, but if the person will have permanent brain damage. If they can improve one-minute of their response time in one-year they will have saved lives or the quality of a life. He has expressed his thoughts to the Fire Chief as to what they can do today to accomplish this task, other than building a Station-5.

Chief Morrison stated that the Department tries to do as much as they can afford, but he feels a fifth ambulance would be the answer, not a fire truck, but a Day-Car. This would reduce response times. The Department can't get their training done because of the call load. They have been trying to bring everybody up to operations level in the hazardous material arena, which must to be done. An additional unit will give them more people and it will be less likely to have people pulled out of the training class. The long distant transports into Tampa puts mileage on the Department's vehicles and also increases response times. Right now the budget cannot afford a full time ambulance, but a Day-Car could work. This ambulance would run from Monday-Friday, 8:00-5:00 to do transports, then measure the effect of it. This would also increase their level of service to Spring Hill while staying inside their budget.

Chairman Hollander asked the Board if they feel this is a subject to discuss at the next Workshop?

The Board agreed this subject should be looked into.

### **C. Cost of Audit**

Chief Morrison stated that he spoke to Karen Nicolai, Clerk of the Circuit Court, if there is a cost

for the audit it would consist of the scope of work. Karen Nicolai feels there will be no cost unless they ask for more than the normal audit. The County has two staff auditors, but they are extremely busy. If the audit is put on the County's calendar, it will be done down the road. Karen Nicolai thinks it's a bad idea to do an audit in an election year and feels it's best to do it after the election.

Commissioner Martin stated that the elections are over with respect to the Department. They would be requesting the service from the County Clerk's office, which they have indicated the audit will not be done for a year.

Chief Morrison stated that the majority of the Board will be gone in two-months. If the Board defines the scope of the audit, it will happen a year from now and this will give the responsibility to the new Commission.

Commissioner Martin stated that therefore, anything the Board has pending at the end of their term should die and anything that is outstanding the new Commissioners should make new decisions on? He brought up the audit issue many months ago and discussed the scope of it. There was a list of things the Clerk of the Court would do for them at no charge and it would be brought back to the Board for review.

Chief Morrison stated that he will ask Karen Nicolai, but he believes there wasn't a menu. He and Karen Nicolai discussed the possibility of the Board adopting a policy that follows the County purchasing policy. He feels that would be an advantage for the Department. The County already audits the Department's purchasing procedures on a daily basis. If the Board wants an audit, whereas, an auditor gives the Department suggestions that would not cost anything, but if the Board wants everything audited, whereas, to develop new purchasing manuals and new safeguards, then the County will have to charge the Department for those procedures. He feels he cannot lock the County into a price because when they come and do the audit they may find the job to be easier or harder than anticipated. His direction was that this audit would not be done until after the election year. Karen Nicolai informed him that the Clerk of the Court's office is so busy that the audit could not be done for at least a year.

Chairman Hollander stated that maybe they can request a purchasing audit to be scheduled. Then when the next Board is elected they can define exactly what type of audit to have.

Chief Morrison stated that he will contact Karen Nicolai and request to be put on the calendar.

Commissioner Martin stated that when he spoke to Ms. Nicolai, she said the reason why they usually wait until after an election year was because maybe an incumbent may use it as a reelection tactic, which

does not apply in this situation.

The Board gave consensus for the Fire Chief to contact Karen Nicolai put the Department on the calendar for an audit.

#### **D. Medicare Update**

Chief Morrison stated that the finale figure the Department owes Medicare is \$38,858.46. Some of the other EMS service had their overpayments waived, which is good news because the Class Action Suit is looking better. There was a time element involved with the payment to Medicare, therefore, he approved the payment to Medicare. An Appeal letter will be filed and all EMS providers will try and file them at the same time. Hopefully, the Appeal letter will be filed next week.

#### **Unfinished Business**

##### **A. Station-3 Renovation - Committee Recommendations**

Chief Morrison stated that the Department sent out 9-packets for bids, but they only received back two responses. Last Friday the committee met and went over the proposals in order to distinguish which company would best fit the Department's needs. The committee ranked Atelier AEC, Inc. located in Tampa as the number-one bid Berry Walker, AIA, located in Ocala, as the number-two bid. He requested that the Board approve the committee's ranking first. One of the reasons the companies were ranked this way was because Berry Walker hasn't had a project in 7-years, whereas, Atelier Inc., is currently designing fire stations for Hillsborough and Pinellas County. They are not picking those companies, but are ranking them according to their response.

Commissioner Marasciullo stated that he was on the committee and made his evaluation on Atelier Inc., because it had more experience with the renovation of fire stations.

Commissioner Martin asked counsel if the request for proposals can be sent out again to see if they can get any more bids?

Attorney Salzman said yes, but they would have to reject the two bids they received and start the project over.

Chairman Hollander asked how would they justify rejecting those bids?

Attorney Salzman stated that they can rank them and this would put them in a position to negotiate. If the negotiations come in above what the Department feels is appropriate for the budget or contractual then they can reject the bid and start the process over again. Sometimes it can be rejected just because there

wasn't a good response.

Commissioner Marasciullo started that the construction field is so busy right now that the companies can pick and choose what job they want to do.

Chief Morrison stated that if he was an architect, he wouldn't want to work for the government because the government makes them work too hard for the money. That is why the Department cannot get people to work for them. He feels based on the bids received and what the committee discussed, ranking them one and two in order to move forward to the negotiation process would not be a waste of time.

Commissioner Martin asked what was this proposal appropriately called?

Assistant Chief Davies stated that according to Florida State Statute, it was called a Request for Architectural or Engineering Services.

Commissioner Martin stated that maybe this can be rejected due to insufficient responses and advertise it again to see if they get more responses in order to have something to compare.

Attorney Salzman stated that they would have to go through the whole process over again.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that they need to consider there is a shortage of construction material right now. That situation could get worse, not better. He feels the longer they wait, the cost of materials could go up. To do the process over again would be a waste of time.

### **Motion**

*Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to follow Staff's recommendation.*

*Commissioner Jacobs seconded the Motion.*

*The Motion carried unanimously (4-1).*

Commissioner Martin opposed the Motion.

Chief Morrison stated that the recommendation was to rank the bids as one and two. Per the County Purchasing department, he would need another motion from the Board approve Staff to negotiate with the company number-1 first. If Staff is not comfortable with the negotiations, it will be brought back to the Board to reject. Then Staff will negotiate with company number-2.

### **Motion**

*Commissioner Jacobs made a Motion to accept Staff's recommendation to open negotiations in the order that was selected and give Staff the priority to go from bid number-one to number-two as Staff sees fit.*

*Commissioner Marasciullo seconded the Motion.*

*The Motion carried unanimously ( 4-1)*

Commissioner Martin opposed the motion.

Chief Morrison requested a 5-minute recess

Chairman Hollander granted the recess at 8:25 p.m..

The Board reconvened at 8:32 p.m.

### **Fire Police - Fuel Cost Reimbursement**

Chief Morrison stated that Staff developed a form for the fuel reimbursement, then sent it to the County for approval. The form the Board received was directly from the County Purchasing Department. Each Fire Police person would have to fill out the form and sign it and an officer of the fire police would have to approve it, then submit it to Headquarters for the Fire Chief's signature on a quarterly basis. The Fire Police would also have to fill out the Florida State Travel Voucher. The checks will be made out to each individual fire police member at .29 cent a mile, which is a Florida State Statute rate. He would like the process to start August 1<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioner Martin asked what is the estimated annual reimbursement expense?

Chief Morrison stated that it is \$1,300 right now, which he feels is high.

### **Motion**

*Commissioner Marasciullo made a Motion to accept Staff's recommendation to reimburse the fuel cost to the Fire Police of Spring Hill Fire Rescue*

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*Commissioner Jacobs seconded the Motion.*

*The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).*

### **New Business**

There was no New Business to report.

**Comments of Commission**

Commissioner Hollander had no comments

Commissioner Panozzo had no comments.

Commissioner Martin had no comments

Commissioner Marasciullo stated he feels they need to purchase property for a fifth station, even though they are thinking of about another ambulance.

Chief Morrison stated that the ideal property has been identified, which is the property that is currently owned by the Utility Department. He has had ongoing conversations with them and committed to working with the Department. The only drawback to the property is the three wells that are on it, whereas, Swiftmud might require setbacks. He can contact the Utility Department to request a commitment of some sort and then let the Board know their answer at the next Workshop.

Commissioner Jacobs had no comments.

**Open Forum**

There were no comments.

**Motion**

*Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to adjourn the Commission Meeting.*

*Commissioner Jacobs seconded the Motion.*

*The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).*

Chairman Hollander adjourned the Commission Meeting at 8:40 p.m.

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Jeff Hollander, Chairman

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Joan E. Chiofalo, Board Secretary

