

**Spring Hill Fire Rescue
Commission Meeting
October 10, 2001 - 7:00 p.m.**

Present: Chairman Kanner, Commissioner Andrews, Commissioner Hollander, Commissioner Martin, Chief Morgan, Attorney Cobbs, (attending in place for Attorney Salzman)

Excused: Assistant Chief Morrison, Attorney Salzman

Call to Order

Chairman Kanner called the Commission Meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Invocation

Rev. Clemons gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Kanner led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Consent Agenda

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

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to accept the Consent agenda.

Commissioner Hollander seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (4-0).

Report of Counsel

Attorney Cobbs had nothing to report.

Chief's Report

A. Budget Amendments

Chief Morgan stated that there was nothing to report on this issue they already discussed this at the last Commission meeting.

B. Results of RFP

Chief Morgan stated that he received a letter from Communication Development Services, this was the only vendor to show interest in our tower replacement. He feels that we have two options. Either to start over again and try to attract more vendors, or to have the District along with the Attorney meet with Nextel, to negotiate a contract for the tower construction. The Representative from this company Ms. Hawkins, met with him and explained what their number one option would be. They want to construct a tower, gift it to us as a government agency we would own it, and they would take care of all expenses. We could lease out space to other companies on the tower, it would depend on how high the county would allow us to go with a tower as to how many customers we could get. Depending on the location and how many companies are interested, we could get anywhere from \$700 to \$1500 a month. They would need about 110 feet but it would have to be higher than that to attract other people.

Chairman Kanner asked now how high is our present tower?

Chief Morgan stated we are between 60 and 70 feet. We would have to put our name on the zoning change request, but they would furnish the legal services to do that. They have an attorney on a retainer that deals with zoning changes, but he would like our attorney involved. He asked the Board for permission to enter negotiations and bring the information back at a later date.

Commissioner Martin stated that before Nextel changes their mind he would like the Chief to get some feedback from them as to what their intentions is.

Chief Morgan stated that he would negotiate with Nextel, then meet with Attorney Salzman, have him review it and come back to the Board before we sign any documents.

Chairman Kanner stated as directed.

Commissioner Andrews arrived at 7:20 p.m.

C. New Vehicles

Chief Morgan stated regarding the letter for the County Sheriff's office, regarding the 2002 Malibu vehicle, we are budgeted this year for the replacement of the inspector's vehicle. The vehicle would be \$14,575, and this bid is less than last years. He would like the Commission to consider a new 2-way radio for the vehicle because the van has an older radio and that is the only one left. We have \$18,000 budgeted and he would request that the \$18,000 remain in the budget

to allow for the purchase for traffic package of \$450.

Motion

Commissioner Hollander made a Motion to purchase the Vehicle, radio and package detail up to \$18,000.

Commissioner Panozzo seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

D. Status Of Projects

Chief Morgan stated that the Board received a copy of a letter from Medicaid regarding the pay back of money owed them. Attorney Salzman has reviewed this agreement and negotiated the money down to \$20,161.70. The Board needs to authorize and sign the settlement, Chief feels that the money could come from reserves.

Commissioner Hollander asked if there was anything in writing from Attorney Salzman with regards to this agreement?

Attorney Cobbs stated that both she and Attorney Salzman reviewed this agreement.

Commissioner Martin asked for a recap of this issue because he was out of town when this situation came about.

Chief Morgan stated that since we have been in the Ambulance billing business we have billed all our transports as ALS calls. Medicaid has done an audit for a three-year period and said that we can only bill ALS for an ALS patient. We stated that we only have ALS units, we do not have BLS units. Then Medicaid came and requested copies of approximately 118 run reports. They sent them to their medical expert which is a Doctor they have on a retainer. He looked at them and said some of them were not ALS calls, and the rate should be that of a BLS call. We had some calls for chest pains with morphine administered, they said these were not ALS calls. According to their system some should have been BLS and some non ambulance transports. If we get a call in the middle of the night and someone has stomach pain, we are going to take them to the hospital. Medicaid just won't pay the rate of a ALS transport for those calls. These are charges they feel they have over paid and they want a refund.

Chairman Kanner asked what happens in the future?

Chief Morgan stated that we are now billing according to their schedule. We are sending out an ALS unit and Billing of a BLS rate.

Chairman Kanner asked if we can appeal this?

Chief Morgan stated Pasco county was not willing to appeal their own.

Commissioner Martin asked if we decided to appeal this, how much money are we willing to spend in regards to this \$20,000 fee?

Chairman Kanner stated that it is not just \$20,000 because from here on in we have to charge ALS calls at a BLS rate and we do not have a BLS unit.

Chief Morgan stated that the first figure was \$26,000 and we got them down to \$20,000. He feels that they would be more successful getting the people in the industry to change the laws.

Commissioner Martin asked Attorney Cobbs if they decided to pursue this issue and the State realized there was an error in our favor and being we are a government agency, would we be entitled to recoup legal expenses?

Attorney Cobbs stated that she does not think so.

Chairman Kanner stated that maybe we should send out some letters.

Commissioner Martin asked if there is a penalty clause regarding this issue?

Attorney Cobbs stated 10 days.

Chairman Kanner asked for a Motion.

Motion

Commissioner Hollander made a Motion to pay the bill from the Attorney General's Office, regarding reimbursements of Medicaid funds in the amount of \$20,161.70.

Commissioner Martin seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

E. Recommendation of Hiring P/T Communication Officer

Chief Morgan stated there is an opening remaining and the next person Doreen Eckert, she is number 4 on the list and would be the next person in line offered the position, because they have offered number 1 full time. Number 2 does not want part time. They have hired number 3 as part time and undergoing his physical and background check at this time. He requested from the Board authorization to offer that position contingent upon passing the physical and background check. If for some reason that person does not want that part time position, we would go to the next person on the list.

Chairman Kanner asked what happened to number 1?

Chief Morgan reported that she has been offered the full time position that is opened.

Chairman Kanner asked if they have received an answer yet?

Chief Morgan stated that they have not. If for some reason that person wanted part time instead of full time that would be offered to her at that time.

Commissioner Martin asked how long are offers by the District allowed to be pending for one applicant?

Chief Morgan stated they ask them to come in and talk and we usually get an answer, but if not and they want a week to think about it that is fine, but we never had to go beyond that.

Motion

Commissioner Andrews made a Motion to hire P/T Communication Officer as presented by the Chief.

Commissioner Hollander seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

F. Report on Thermal Imaging Camera

Chief Morgan stated regarding the memo for the proposal on the Thermal Imaging Camera. We have been looking at two different types, the Microbolometer and the BST Microbolometer. He recommend the BST Microbolometer because it is the newest technology, the cost is \$16,477, which includes a vehicle mounted charger, transmitter receiver and monitor in that price. The other thing he wanted the Board to consider is a nice feature, but not something we would use often. He will try to get a hold of the vendor to see if there would be a discount if we decide not to go with the receiver and monitor.

Captain Rampino stated that the Microbolometer is very high technology and we will need training.

Chairman Kanner asked if it comes with training?

Chief Morgan stated three days of training to cover each shift.

Chairman Kanner asked if there was an extended warranty?

Chief Morgan stated they come with a standard one year warranty. The case may have a life time warranty. If you ship it out, they will have it back to you within 48 hours.

Commissioner Andrews stated that Scott was in the lead to come out with good technology he did some research on them about two years ago. He does not know if they upgraded to this Microbolometer technology.

Captain Rampino reported that any of the agencies they contacted purchased other equipment, but did not mentioned Scott.

Chief Morgan stated before we vote on this issue we need to discuss the funding.

Chief Morgan stated we have \$7,400 available through the County EMS grant that has been awarded to our Department, that will go towards this camera. The remaining, he would suggest come out of the vehicle replacement program we have \$146,000 in this line.

Commissioner Martin stated he would like to see the final budget and maybe they could move some money around.

Chief Morgan stated that if they move the money from the vehicle replacement program they would be taking it out of the Capital Line, but could always replace it from the reserves. They are not ready to purchase a vehicle right now.

Commissioner Martin stated he knows the need for this piece of equipment, he does not want to cast this out in the blind and then later find out that they have to shuffle money around.

Chief Morgan stated that if they are concerned about the County's final recap of their budget after the Budget Amendments, this is not going to affect the Capital Line of their budget. It is going to affect some reserves, salaries, benefit insurance lines, but nothing is coming out of the reserve to start with.

Commissioner Hollander asked when would be the next time they would have to go into the Replacement Fund?

Chief Morgan reported that the original plan was to fund a rescue unit 50% this year and 50% next year, but there is enough money in there now to fund the rescue unit. He will come back to the Board with that proposal in the future.

Commissioner Martin stated this is more of a need then a want and maybe they should go ahead and purchase this piece of equipment.

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to purchase the BTS Microbolometer and move the money out of the vehicle replacement program to pay for it above the EMS grant.

Commissioner Andrews seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

G. Salary Increase for P/T Employees

Chief Morgan reported that at the last meeting all the bargaining unit employees and the mechanic were given the contract figure of 3.5%. That percent was also suggested by one of the Commissioners for the Part Timers. Part timers donot receive any benefit so it is up to the Board how they want to do it.

Commissioner Panozzo asked if they are just looking at Hydrant and Supply?

Chief Morgan stated yes.

Commissioner Panozzo asked when was the last increase for Part Timers?

Chief Morgan reported every year in October.

Chairman Kanner asked what is the hourly wage of Supply now?

Walter Michalski, Supply division stated he makes \$6.12 an hour and he has been with Spring Hill Fire Rescue a year and a half and has not received an increase yet.

Chairman Kanner asked Angelo Laparito, Hydrant division, how much does he make an hour?

Angelo Laparito stated he makes \$9.00 an hour and he has been with Spring Hill Fire Rescue for 10 years.

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to bring the Supply person up to \$7.00 an hour.

Commissioner Andrews seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Motion

Commissioner Andrews made a Motion to give the Hydrant person a 5% increase.

Commissioner Panozzo seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

7. Unfinished Business

A. Options for Locks on Doors

Chief Morgan stated that the Commission had talked about the recent events in the World, regarding terrorism and security. Hernando County has been working on this issue and he had a draft copy of that. It addressed different areas, but not specifically security for the stations. Also, Hernando County Emergency management is meeting with County Administration and Staff to go over their new I-Dent card entry system, which was purchase before September 11th, and are now just implementing it. It is an ID magnetic card, with a picture, there is a lot of information on the card. He suggested that we meet with them because they didn't know if it would be \$200 or \$1,000 alot,

Chairman Kanner asked if the Chief looked at the Dig-A-Pad also and make a comparison?

Chief Morgan stated he would also get some prices on that as well.

Chairman Kanner asked about the mileage books, if they were up and running?

Chief Morgan stated that the mileage logs are in distribution.

B. Discussion on Fire/Police Training

Commissioner Martin stated that he sent a letter to Steve Aanonsen, President of Spring Hill Fire Police Association. After they agreed upon the concept of additional training of Fire police, he spoke to Sheriff Nugent and asked him when our Fire Police are working a scene do they have the authority under the Deputy on the scene, and Sheriff Nugent stated that from a legal stand point he did not know he would have to look into it. While our volunteers are controlling traffic do they have the authority to do so and he said he believes so, because they have in the past. He also asked if they would assist them by giving them some formal training, Sheriff Nugent said yes, anything they need in that respect. The Sheriff's office would be more than happy to accommodate them. He asked the Board for input on types of training. He said that Chief Morgan stated when they offer training to the Fire Police they must realize this is additional training to enhance their abilities. This does not allow them to respond first to a scene and take control by conducting first aid or anything that may interfere with our paid personnel. In regard to Basic first Aid, Chairman Kanner is willing to train them in that area.

Commissioner Andrews stated he would like to make a suggestion that rather than put two different classes on, train them with a 40 hour First Responder course which includes an Advanced First Aid.

Chief Morgan stated that is a good point and they could put that class on and Chairman Kanner could teach parts of that as well.

Commissioner Martin asked about Blood Borne Pathogens?

Chairman Kanner asked if that was part of First Responder?

Commissioner Andrews stated they need to have that for several reasons, and they should definitely have this training.

Commissioner Martin stated this is coming about because retention has been a bit of concern with the Fire Police. Once we decide where we are going, he will turn it over to their leadership and allow them to make it happen.

Motion

Commissioner Martin made a Motion that the Board approve of the training of Fire Police personnel. First Responder course, with the understanding that these volunteers will be able to act in the capacity for First Responder. With the Districts approval, the First Responder Blood Borne Pathogens class and Traffic moving control, and all related subjects which is to be offered through the Sheriff's Department. The First Responder with Blood Borne Pathogen class will be taught by Chairman Kanner with no cost to the District.

Commissioner Panozzo seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

8. New business

A. Coverage for Assistant Chief and Union President

Chairman Kanner stated that Assistant Chief Morrison and Lt. Ferriero are in New York. They are helping out at Ground-0. They are also helping with some other chores, funeral arrangements, whatever is needed they are there to help. He felt it is only fair that this Department authorize the Chief to grant them administrative leave.

Chairman Kanner passed the gavel to Commissioner Andrews.

Motion

Chairman Kanner made a Motion to authorize the Chief to give Lt. Ferriero 2 shift days of administrative leave and give Assistant Chief Morrison 4 days of administrative leave.

Commissioner Panozzo seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Comments of Commissioners

Commissioner Hollander - Nothing

Commissioner Panozzo - Nothing

Commissioner Martin wanted to compliment whom ever took the initiative to replace the American Flag outside the station. Also, to compliment the Union as a whole in their tragedy relief and he was glad to see that they were able to provide that public service.

Chairman Kanner asked was it \$130,000 that they collected?

Captain Rampino reported it was \$113,000 on the streets county wide and still have money coming in for the Golf Tournament set for November.

Commissioner Andrews stated in regards to a memo that he received from the President of the National Association of Fire Chief's, they recommend all fire stations to recognize the 30 day mourning period for the fallen firefighters. The Fire Department of New York raised their flags on Thursday, October 11th, 2001, at 12:00 noon.

Motion

Commissioner Andrews made a Motion to raise the Flag to full staff.

Commissioner Martin seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Commissioner Andrews stated he wanted to bring up the newspaper article based on comments he made at the last Commission Meeting. He was a little bit perturbed regarding a specific Commissioner who was quoted "taking a shot at a Commissioner." During Commissioner Hollander's campaign, his key issue was "not to attack members and keep harmony on the Board." Commissioner Andrews said he commented to the newspaper that regarding this issue, "for five years now he has not made personal attacks on anybody." Regarding the most recent issue. He requested information and made some comments, because we don't have the luxury of being able to discuss things or find out things at any given time. His point was to ask questions in these meetings so that all commissioners would hear the same thing. Any comments that he made regarding the EOC complaint was from records given to the Board. If that record was not complete, missing information, he does not have anyway of knowing that. He was told that is a

complete record, because an outside party requested it. Someone commented that two of the Commissioners are trying to get out of the decision they made. He stands behind his vote based on the fact that at the time the physical examine could not be completed. They were never told of the possibility of the OBGYN Doctor's input that may have allowed Dr. Blackburn to advise that they could have hired the person. If that would have been brought out at that meeting and this Board voted on that they wouldn't be sitting with this situation on their lap right now? His job as a Commissioner is 20% of the Board, and he is to look at the operations and procedures that they are done properly. His vote and comments are based on information presented to the Board, for them to make decisions by. If the information given to them is not complete, they have no way of knowing that. He said he is not saying that the Chief purposely did not tell them about the letter. The fact was that letter was never presented to the applicant and that first vote in July, the Board voted she would remain on the list. Maybe they would have handled this differently. He said that the Chief made a comment, "that she was recommended number one on the hiring list" (he was not insinuating anything). Through our testing process she scored number one, her written test, interviews, and experiences, she ranked number one by other people on the list.

Chairman Kanner stated he did not want to get into issues about the case.

Commissioner Andrews stated that this was about him. If they want to start playing games in the Newspaper, you fired the first shot.

Chief Morgan stated that Commissioner Andrews is taking what the newspaper said out of context. One thing that he was involved in was the process. His rating of her was high and she was placed number one. The context of the paper did not mean anything other than that she was a good candidate.

Chairman Kanner stated they mentioned his name in that same newspaper article. Commissioner Panozzo, Commissioner Hollander, both went on the attack Panozzo didn't mention any names, but for years they stopped fighting on the Board. Commissioner Hollander's campaign said he would bring harmony to this Board, and he was surprised that he went on the attack. Anything he said to the St. Petersburg Times or Hernando Today was in public records. The fact that there was innuendos, that he was trying to get the Chief. The Chief did resign, however, talked him into coming back. So he is not out to try get the Chief.

Commissioner Andrews stated he would also like to make a point. That twice this year he pointed out reasons why the Board cannot continue in the direction that they were going, in the Chief's behalf. He had the opportunity at those times that if he were out for him he could have let it continue and let the cards fall as they may. So he does not know where these ideas and opinions came from.

Commissioner Hollander stated that he would like to tell the Board where his ideas and opinions are coming from. This whole thing is very transparent, not just to him but to everyone in the

room. This has been going on for five years they have attacked the Chief, harassment, or whatever you want to call it. He came into this about 10 months ago with an open mind and he let everybody know he was not taking sides. He didn't know the Chief, from a business point of view he only knows him now from running the Department. He saw some nasty stuff going on in this department. It was the last meeting that really pushed him over the line. It was obvious to him and other people in the room that the only reason that someone would put this Department in jeopardy, after the attorney three times admonished them, do not do this regardless of your constitutional right to be able to say whatever you want. They went on to talk about something that they were told not to talk about because it endangers the position of this Department. He never wanted to attack anyone on this Board. Some things are right and some things are wrong and some things are in the middle. On all things that are in the middle he did not say anything. This was clear and transparent to everybody. This is his position and stands by it. Five years have gone by with this happening. The Board has gone through new people coming on. It just amazes him that if the Chief is doing such a bad job how come the Board couldn't get three votes to get rid of him? He had asked for the Chief's resignation, and the reason that he sat down with him was not because he did anything wrong, but because he thought it was better for the Department in a whole that he resigned. Chairman Kanner saved his job and he didn't know what to make out of that, but he knows now. He thinks Chairman Kanner and Commissioner Andrews are here to give Chief Morgan a hard time. If they cannot get three votes to get rid of him, leave him alone and let him do his job. This is his position.

Commissioner Panozzo stated that was in the paper and still stands by that, any Commissioner willing to risk their lawsuit, to try and do the Chief wrong, is not doing the job that they were put in that office to do. Why pay an Attorney for advice if we are not going to use that advice? If that letter would have made a difference, they would be going against their own policy.

Chairman Kanner stated that has happened in the past. He is not going to get into specifics. When the counsel at the last meeting suggested that they do not discuss this in a public meeting, three Commissioners wanted to touch on the issue. So he was not going to censor the Board when they had three votes saying they want to discuss it. Anything he said or anything that Commissioner Andrews said was already in public records.

Open Forum

There were no comments from the audience.

Motion

Commissioner Andrews made a Motion to adjourn the meeting

Commissioner Martin seconded the Motion

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Adjourn

Chairman Kanner Adjourned the Commission Meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Robert Kanner, Chairman

Joan E. Chiofalo

