

SPRING HILL FIRE RESCUE
Commission Meeting
October 30, 2002
7:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Kanner, Commissioner Hollander, Commissioner Panozzo,
Commissioner Martin, Commissioner Marasciullo, Chief Morrison,
Assistant Chief Davies, Attorney Cobbs

Excused: 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 Hollander made a Motion to accept the Consent Agenda.

Commissioner Marasciullo seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Report of Counsel

A. Contract - Assistant Chief

Chief Morrison stated that Attorney Cobbs has a copy of the draft contract for the Assistant Chief, dated October 18, 2002, with all the changes Attorney Salzman recommended. In order for the Board to approve the contract, he has given them a copy of the draft (copy attached).

Attorney Cobbs stated that Attorney Salzman has looked at the draft and has not found a problem with it.

Motion

Commissioner Hollander made a Motion to (approve Chief Davies contract).

Commissioner Panozzo seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

The Board signed Assistant Chief Davies contract.

Chairman Kanner stated that he wanted the Board to be advised, two weeks ago he was served with a summons. Whoever occupies the Chair must accept the summons for the Fire District and the summons will be on their record.

Chief Morrison explained that because their maintenance building was built the contractor went out of business toward the end of the contract. Therefore, they had to invoke the bond. The bonding company took over the project and the money was put into a holding account with the County. The money was paid to the vendors as the project was completed. This was the former Chief's (Mike Morgan) project. They have not received any communication from the bonding company until two weeks ago. They were served with a summons because the Department failed to pay the remainder of the money. The paperwork was sent to Attorney Salzman, and was discussed with their insurance company. This issue was researched, and the bonding company never asked for these funds. However, there is money in holding, and these funds are available in a separate account. Attorney Salzman advised him that they are done with their part. Attorney Salzman will notify the bonding company and ask them to drop the suit and meet with them for discussion.

Chief's Report

A. Independence

Chief Morrison stated that due to the newspaper article regarding the Independence brochures, when payment was submitted to the County they wanted to get another legal opinion so they went to their legal counsel. The County's legal counsel determined that the brochures were legal and proper. In speaking with Amy Gillis, County Finance Director, a motion is needed from the Board verifying that the brochures were for educating the public about the Independence issue and encouraging the public to grant them Independence, which would be for the public's best interest.

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to (verify that the purchase of the Independence brochures was for public education of the issue)

Commissioner Marasciullo seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Chief Morrison stated that the project for seeking Independence, is going fine. He was on the Bob Haze radio show and faced his audience on Independence. He, Chairman Kanner and Lt. Lopez were invited to speak at the Timber Pines forum to educate its residents, and he feels it went very well. However, the forum at Springstead Theater did not go so well. They did not have the turn out they had hoped for.

Chairman Kanner asked why was that not advertised properly?

Chief Morrison stated it was not advertised, because speaking with the media, and the two reporters, they said they would put it in the newspaper. The St. Pete Times did an exceptional article regarding the meeting, and it was on the front page. The Hernando Today did not advertise at all. When he questioned the reporter, he was told it was advertised the day before. He was depending on that to inform the public rather than spending the taxpayer's money. Also, there were other things going on that night. Springstead high school had their homecoming, Timber Pines had their Candidate's forum, and the Democratic Executive Committee had a meeting. He felt it was a positive evening with the people who attended. Captain Mike Rampino, on his off-duty time is organizing groups to go to the polling places to pitch for Independence. If anyone is interested, they can contact Mike Rampino.

Chairman Kanner asked whatever happen to the educational seminar at the Palace Grand?

Chief Morrison stated that it didn't go, but instead, Commissioner Marasciullo was entertaining there and allowed him to come on stage to discuss the Independence issue, which was better than a rally, and did not cost the District anything. In talking to the audience that night, he feels it was a positive reception.

Commissioner Martin asked if the 30 second spot on Bay New 9 about Independence is going to be running continuously between now and Election Day?

Chief Morrison stated that he believes it is just a fill in for right now if there isn't anymore news it will stay in the loop.

Commissioner Panozzo asked if Tony Mosca was still living in Spring Hill, because he thought he moved to Pasco County.

Commissioner Marasciullo reported that he still lives in Spring Hill.

Chief Morrison stated he was surprised to hear Mr. Mosca's view on Independence, because he has always been pro-independent.

Commissioner Panozzo stated that in Mr. Mosca opinion they can go to the State legislator and request more then 2.75 mills and the State will grant it.

Chief Morrison stated that it is hard to come up with a good argument against Independence and he can see some people reaching at straws. There was a letter to the editor in one of the newspapers stating that their tax rate would go up if they went Independent, which is absolutely not true.

Commissioner Hollander stated that he is amazed, no one can argue with the fact that they have an astounding record in this State, as far as, a department. Not even the St. Petersburg Times could argue about that. Nobody has said anything about the fact that their budget has always been balanced and it had nothing to do with the County. The County had never interceded on their budget to make it balance, it has always been done by administration. There are 52 Districts in this State like Spring Hill Fire Rescue, and out of the 52 there are two that are dependent, and they are one of them. As Chief Morrison stated, it is very hard to make an argument on fact, as to why they should not be granted Independence. They can go back in history and talk about prior Board's, but the bottom line is, the performance of this District. Regardless of what happened on the Board. People talk about the Board's bickering, but the Board's function is to discuss issues. It can be called bickering or discussion, however, the District faired very well all those years, from those discussions. Here they are today, in the year 2002, for the past two years he has been on the Board, and he does not recall anything even sounded close to bickering. He does not recall the Board having any problems making decisions, even with very difficult decisions. Therefore, should they go back in history to determine what they should do for the future of the Board? He thinks that is what they have to bring to the people. The question is not "why should they be Independent" it should be "why not."

Commissioner Panozzo stated that he noticed in the newspaper that they do not deserve to become Independent because he and Commissioner Marasciullo are pro-union. He does not know where the newspaper gets their information, because any contract that was voted on was a 5-0 vote, therefore, the whole Board is pro-union, the way he looks at it.

Chairman Kanner stated that the Board was never recognized by the St. Petersburg Times in the past. If you look in the newspaper on a weekly basis, listed is "know your elected officials." The Board is not part of the list. When he became the Chairman three years ago, he spoke to Mr. Conrad, and Mr. Webb, but he fell upon deaf ears. The Board is not paid. Therefore, it is not recognized.

Commissioner Hollander stated so if they were paid they would be recognized?

Chairman Kanner stated that was his opinion.

Chief Morrison stated that there were two people interviewed on Bay News 9, one was for Independence and the other was against. The gentleman who spoke against Independence stated “It is a great fire department, why change it.” It is hard to get the word out to the public that a vote for Independence does not change the department. In fact, it guarantees that it will not change the department without the permission of the people of Spring Hill.

Commissioner Panozzo stated that the last time the County adjusted their budget on medical expenses, in which they took the County’s projected growth rate of 5%. The year before in the County’s budget, Spring Hill Fire Rescue spent all the money they had in the budget for medical supplies. They had added the 5% to the budget, which was the normal projection by the County, then submitted the budget, however, it was cut by the County Commission.

Chief Morrison stated that the Board spends weeks and many workshops talking about the budget. When they go before the County, they get squeezed in between the Sheriff and other County departments. There were some politicians who were angry with this fire District and were going to prove they had some influence. He would have to research the issue, but he believes they did not ask for an increase in that number, it was their medical supply line item number. That is the line for all the supplies in the back of their ambulance, however, not for the big items. The Department asked for the same amount as the year before, however, one of the County Commissioner who did not have any background in the medical area felt they could buy less medical supplies and cut it by \$5,000. It had a trickle down effect on the Board, whereas, it came out to be a total of \$89,000. Then the County’s attorney said they cannot do individual line item cuts, however, the County can increase the Departments reserve funds by \$89,000, because they do control the reserves. That was a contentious year, but since then the relationship with the County has been great.

B. Hiring List

Chief Morrison stated that with the Board’s direction, the last advertising process was to hire firefighter/paramedics and were not allowing EMT’s to apply. They received three applications which made it through the process. The three individuals made the hiring list, however, during the process one was promoted to Lieutenant in Pasco County. They have tried to locate the second applicant, but cannot find him. The third applicant accepted the position and should be starting November 1st. They have re-advertised for the position of firefighter/paramedic and he gave the Board a copy of the information (copy attached.) The closing date for this position is November 22nd, at 5:00 p.m. If they do not get a healthy response from the advertisement, he will come back to the Board in order to figure out whether to come up with a positive way to pull paramedics in or open it back up to EMT’s. They could get the EMT’s on board and then when they work out after the first year, train them to be a paramedic, this might be another option.

The Board further discussed advertising for firefighter/paramedic.

Chief Morrison stated that he will come back to the Board on November 22, regarding this issue, but he wanted the Board to think about this issue.

Commissioner Martin asked what is the cost to the District to send someone through a paramedic course?

Chief Morrison stated that the startup cost is \$900, which is for the first semester, tuition and books. This is paid up-front to help them get into school and then reimbursed on the second two semesters, according to their grades. The total package would possibly cost \$2,000.

The Board further discussed the hiring of firefighter/paramedic.

Chief Morrison stated that because larger departments boosted their entry level salaries, they are now competing for a smaller pool of qualified individuals. He does not like the fact that when they have three openings they only get three applicants. It does not allow him to pick the-cream-of-the-crop, and that is what he wants to pick for Spring Hill Fire Rescue.

C. Request for Sick Time

Chief Morrison stated that the Board has a copy of a letter from (Mike Morgan) sent to the Chairman requesting a balance of sick time after the employee left the department.

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion the sick time be denied.

Commissioner Martin seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

D. Request for Bunker Gear

Chief Morrison stated that the Board has a copy of a letter from (Mike Morgan) sent to the Chairman requesting to purchase bunker gear. Part of the bunker gear has already been issued and is being used, and is not available. He would be uncomfortable with the liability issue of safety.

Chairman Kanner stated that the department never sold their equipment to civilians.

Motion

Commissioner Martin made a Motion to decline to sell the equipment because it is being utilized, and the department does not sell equipment outside the District.

Commissioner Marasciullo seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

E. Employee Recognition/Christmas Party.

Chief Morrison stated that the Board received an e-mail regarding this issue. The date for this event will be November 23, 2002, starting at 6:00 p.m., at Heritage Pines. He hopes the Board will be attending this event. Traditionally, the Board would approve part of the expenditures for the event.

Commissioner Hollander asked where would the money come out of?

Chief Morrison stated that they can take it out under the Board's Division of Operating Expenses, which they did last year.

Commissioner Hollander asked how much did the Board give last year?

Chief Morrison stated that he believes it was \$300, but this year he would like to cap it at \$500.

Chairman Kanner asked why so much?

Chief Morrison stated that because last year they tried to do it at \$300 which was difficult.

Chairman Kanner stated that last year the Board was given one figure and when they received the bill it was almost twice as much as what they had agreed to.

Chief Morrison stated that if the figure is capped at \$500 he will make sure that does not happen again.

Commissioner Panozzo stated that he is in favor of putting a cap on the event.

Chief Morrison stated that the approximate figure for this event is \$25.00 per person, but he will get the exact figure from the hall. The price is going to reflect how many people will be attending.

Commissioner Panozzo asked if they have it in their budget?

Chief Morrison stated that they have it in the budget under Operating Expenses.

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo made a Motion to take the money out of the Commissioners' Fund for the cheese and vegetable tray and cap it at \$500.

Commissioner Hollander seconded the Motion.

The Motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Chief Morrison asked Chairman Kanner if he was still up to representing the Board on the Recognition Committee?

Chairman Kanner stated that if the Board agrees to it.

Chief Morrison stated that they will put a meeting together for next week. Traditionally, they have always asked for the firefighter of the year. That would be excluding their Dispatchers, Office Staff, and their whole support staff, therefore, they will be nominating employee-of-the-year, firefighter and paramedic. They will be recognized for their time and service. Assistant Chief Davies has pasted his 20-year mark. It will be a great night for fellowship, and it's good for the soul.

F. Department 401k Plan

Chief Morrison stated that currently, they participate in a 401k Plan and there is no contribution by the employer, it is 100% contribution by the employee. The department oversees the plan and they pay the maintenance fee for the plan. The plan has changed hands, they use to be with Aetna, but now they are with ING Retirement Services. The third party administrator, which oversees the plan, and keeps them legal has changed hands three times, and they are now with National Retirement Service. The department is not getting service from the company, they keep the department legal by filing the necessary Federal paperwork, but that is the minium this company does. Their total cost two years ago for the plan was \$2,415 and last year it was \$4,405, because there was a one time change in the Federal law on 401k's. The paperwork had to be re-submitted, which was \$1,200 of those funds. He feels the department is not getting their monies worth with this company. He was approached by a local businessman, Paul Conrad, with Edward Jones. He represents another 401k plan, Hartford. He met with Mr. Conrad and another representative and they gave him a short presentation of a plan they would like to give to the department. He feels this would be a good thing for the District because the cost would be considerably less. He cannot give an exact dollar figure until they finish estimating. Unfortunately, the company bases their cost on how much money is in the plan. The department had just gone over the million-dollar mark, which would have almost made it no cost, however, with recent events in the stock market, they are not in the million-dollar club anymore. Paul Conrad made a commitment to be their financial adviser for the employees who are in the 401k plan. He would like Paul Conrad to make a presentation to all the members of the plan and the potential members. Then leave it up to the members to vote on whether to switch from the current plan or to the new plan.

The Board further discussed the 401k plan.

Commissioner Hollander stated that his concern would be if they can use any money manager they want or do they have to use the companies. He is mostly concerned with the administrative end, as far as, filing the necessary forms and keeping them legal. Therefore, he would like the Chief to find out who would be on the administrative team, and do they have a tax attorney who specializes in this sort of issue, or a part-time financial consultant.

Chief Morrison stated that if the Board would like a copy, he has a list of the funds that Hartford is associated with. Mr. Conrad would not be the manger of the funds that would go through Hartford. Mr. Conrad would be the local contact to help the employees with their paperwork and adviser.

Chairman Kanner stated that Mr. Conrad should meet with Commissioner Hollander, if he does not mind.

Commissioner Hollander stated that he would be happy to talk with Mr. Conrad and Chief Morrison.

Chief Morrison stated that he will move forward with this issue, but no decision will be made until he figures out the cost for the District.

The Board agreed.

Chief Morrison stated that if the vast majority of the members of the plan do not want to do a move, then they need to consider it. To let the Board know, if the members do not want to make a move, he will come to the Board to discuss how they will pay for the plan. He had a few things that did not make the Agenda that he needs to discuss with the Board. There is a problem with their air-conditioning systems in the building. There was a flood in their file room, and due to this files got wet and the carpet was ruined. Files were not lost, and the cost to the District wasn't much. He does not want to put carpet back down, but he would like to replace it with tiles. He would also like to tile the lobby area and hallway, because the expense of cleaning the carpet has gotten out of hand. He is researching flooring for the Dispatch area, and he will come back to the Board with that information. They currently have money in the budget for tile work this year. That money was set aside for the stations, but they may be able to pay for the majority of the lobby and hallway out of the tile fund. He will get quotes from a couple of different tile companies. Regarding Rescue 2, in which the ambulance rolled over, they have not received any paperwork, but he believes the insurance company is going to Total that vehicle. Once he receives confirmation, he will come to the Board in order to replace that ambulance. Therefore, they do have replacement cost in their budget.

Commissioner Martin asked how bad-off are the two backup ambulances that the department has now?

Chief Morrison stated that the mechanic will not allow the one ambulance to go out on long

distance transport.

Commissioner Martin asked if they bring in a third new Rescue this year, how will that effect their vehicle replacement program?

Chief Morrison stated that it will speed the clock up. He recommended they stay on track in order to have something worth money to trade in, because this would be a cost savings to the District. There is a new ambulance coming in within the next few weeks and that will become Rescue 2, then a new ambulance will follow that one, which will become Rescue 1. Their current medium duty ambulance (big red box) will become one of their backup ambulance. When

Rescue 2 is replaced it will go to Rescue 3, and Rescue 3 will become a backup. Within six months, their two backups will be medium duty.

Commissioner Martin stated he realizes they got a special deal on ordering two Rescues, but is it possible to piggyback a third vehicle at the same price?

Chief Morrison stated he spoke to the sales representative and the same price was honored, because they are buying three Rescues in the same year. They would not get the \$5,000 discount for the use of their vehicle as a demo. Because they were piggybacking another fire departments bid for \$121,000, the sales representative will allow them to purchase the new ambulance at that price. In the policy, the replacement value of Rescue 2 is \$105,000, therefore, it will be a minimal expense to the District. One of the two older ambulances that is functioning as a backup will go to rehabilitation, and the other will be traded. He will put all this information together for the Board to review once he has confirmation.

Chairman Kanner asked if the insurance company will allow them to buy-back Rescue 2?

Chief Morrison stated that he got together with Assistant Chief Davies and the mechanic and they are going to look at buying it back. First they would have to find out the cost, but the mechanic said the transmission is new, he feels it would be worth bringing it back in. Because this vehicle has been Totaled, they would be buying it back for salvage only. At a previous meeting Commissioner Panozzo had requested to have gutters put on the front of the building, and wanted to let him know they have been installed. The Board received an e-mail about the television show (The New Detectives) that has contacted the District. This show is part of the Discovery channel, and he suggested the Board watch an episode or two to get the feel of the show. The show will have re enactments of the arson fires and everything that transpired. Since it will be an arson case, there may be possible interviews. There should be no cost to the District and it should give them positive P.R.

Chairman Kanner asked what does he mean by “should be no cost?”

Chief Morrison stated that if there is any cost to the District he will let the Board know. The

Christmas lighting ceremony will be, as always, the night after Thanksgiving on Friday, November 29th, at Headquarters. One of their retired firefighters, Dave Kennedy, has taken over the project. This topic will be on the agenda at the next Regular meeting.

Chairman Kanner asked what is being done about the sinkhole at the maintenance building?

Chief Morrison stated that there is a Purchase Order to LRE and they have agreed to honor the original quote they gave them which totaled out at \$8,705. Coastal Engineering will oversee the project.

Chairman Kanner asked how much is Coastal Engineering charging to oversee the project?

Chief Morrison stated that it is an hourly rate, which was estimated at \$4000 to \$4500.

Commissioner Martin asked regarding the air-conditioning overflow, what if they install an alarm in the pan for the water level?

Chief Morrison stated that the air-conditioning pans have shutoff switches. The flood was caused by a shop-vac that got filled up and spilled.

Unfinished Business

Commissioner Martin asked will there be a proposal at the next Regular meeting for the Military Leave Policy?

Chief Morrison stated that he is in receipt of the draft with Commissioner Martin's suggestions. Prior to the meeting he would like to get together with the Union and Lt. Eagles, and hopefully, it will be finalized before the next regular meeting.

Commissioner Marasciullo asked are the Sheriff's deputies using Station #1 yet?

Chief Morrison stated that he has not heard back from the Sheriff's office, since he told the Sheriff they would not be supplying the labor or the material to build an office.

Commissioner Marasciullo asked how was the drug testing going?

Chief Morrison stated that it is going fine.

New Business

There was nothing to report.

Comments of Commission

Chairman Kanner had nothing to report.

Commissioner Hollander had nothing to report.

Commissioner Panozzo had nothing to report.

Commissioner Martin had nothing to report.

Commissioner Marasciullo had nothing to report.

Open Forum

Gloria Olsen, resident of Spring Hill, stated that she and Chairman Kanner had some hard-times and good-times, and they never completely agreed on anything, but that is how it is supposed to be.

Richard Doherty, resident of Spring Hill, stated that he is a retired firefighter from Orange County. He is upset with the fact about Independence. When there are still only two men riding on a fire truck, and the rest of the State has three men on a truck. As a professional firefighter and a citizen he does not understand why they cannot have three men on a fire truck. He does not pay for professional witnesses to come and watch his house burn down. He has seen Independence signs all over the Spring Hill area, but only seven people showed up at a meeting. There are a lot of people who are not happy with becoming Independent. What about the firemen's raises, how will the department come up with money for them? Are they going to ask the public for money? They're professional firefighters they deserve raises. He does not see where they will get money next year if they get Independence this year, this is a big issue. His issue is about protection and manpower, to get three men on a truck.

Chairman Kanner stated that in fifteen years the Board has never asked for more money. Spring Hill Fire Rescue has been existing on 2.75 mills for as long as he can remember. Their millage rate and user fee are combined, which is the lowest rate in the State. The Board has always had a well-balanced budget with an excellent Reserve about one million dollars. Therefore, money is not a problem for this fire District. He is proud to sit on the Board with the other Commissioners, because they are able to manage a budget, including the Chief who was able to put together a budget for the Board. Money is not an issue and the fire department does not have a financial problem, never did and hopefully never will.

Chief Morrison stated that there is a twelve-year plan, and hopefully they will start a three-man station and a minimum of a five-man station at the beginning of the year, and one every year after that.

Richard Doherty stated that he is not concerned about a tax increase and he does not think that the people of Spring Hill are. They will pay money for fire protection, but they will not pay for minimum staffing.

Commissioner Panozzo stated that if the people of Spring Hill were asked to vote for 2.75 mills and two firemen or 3.75 mills and three firemen on a truck, how would they vote?

Richard Doherty stated that this is what the Board has conned people into believing. That the mills will stay at 2.75, and they will never raise the taxes. Well, that's very nice! But the Board should explain to the people that at 2.75 mills they are getting a bad Fire District! If the Board is going to hire professionals and act like professionals let the Spring Hill residents see it, don't show them Independence.

Chairman Kanner ended the conversation because Mr. Doherty was out of order and asked him to have a seat.

Commissioner Marasciullo asked for a two minute recess.

Chairman Kanner called for a recess at 8:28 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 8:30 p.m.

Gloria Olsen stated that she has been a resident of Hernando County for 20 years. She has used the Spring Hill Fire Rescue service many times and is well satisfied with the service in the County. She feels there are plenty of Real Estate Agents in the County if anyone is not satisfied with the service. She felt the gentlemen's (Richard Doherty) behavior was very inappropriate in the way he acted toward the Board.

Darryl Hamilton, resident of Spring Hill, stated when the Chief and Chairman Kanner came to Timber Pines to discuss Independence, it was very well received by the residents. He is not sure on how the people will vote, but the presentation was very professional and all their questions were answered. Timber Pines had a Candidate meeting, and each Candidate was asked "what is the downside of Independence?" Every Candidate said "there is no downside." He wanted to complement the Chief and Chairman Kanner on their presentation.

Chief Morrison thanked Mr. Hamilton for giving them the opportunity to give their presentation at Timber Pines and it helped the department with or without Independence.

Motion

Commissioner Panozzo 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 8:40 p.m.

Robert Kanner, Chairman

Joan E. Chiofalo, Board Secretary