

**Spring Hill Fire Rescue  
WORKSHOP MEETING  
(VOTING MEETING IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING)  
12/10/08**

Present: Commissioner Jacobs, Commissioner Giammarco, Commissioner Brosnan, Commissioner Pasquale, Interim Fire Chief Rampino, Assistant Chief Davies, Attorney Salzman

Excused: Pastor Clemmons

**Call To Order**

Chairman Jacobs called the Workshop meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**Invocation**

Chairman Jacobs gave the Invocation

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Jacobs led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Open Forum**

Mr. Jim Monk, Spring Hill thinks having two meetings a month is better than having one meeting a month. He would like to know where the District's surplus is located.

Attorney Salzman responded it is maintained in a fund the County has on the District's behalf.

Mr. Ken Fagan, Spring Hill thinks everything should be discussed at the meetings, the Board must demonstrate leadership and they should have two meetings a month that are run like the County meetings. Open Forum questions should be answered..

**Election of Officers**

There was a consensus of the Fire Board to hold Election of Officers in the voting meeting that follows the evening's workshop meeting.

## **Report of Counsel**

Attorney Salzman stated his report will be part of Chiefs' Report and Unfinished Business.

## **Chiefs' Report**

### **A. Update on Independent Districts**

Interim Fire Chief Rampino reported he and Assistant Chief Davies met with Palm Harbor Fire & Rescue Special District Fire Chief Angle Tuesday to discuss what is entailed in running a Special District and they also reviewed the Special Districts Handbook. Interim Chief Rampino informed the Board two very important points discussed were, completing form DR20 accurately to show truth in millage and that they conduct business in the Sunshine. Chief Angle also invited them back and offered them the opportunity of training there and future visits from the Board and Staff. Chief Angle conveyed to them the State required financial forms that are mandatory to be filled out are challenging at first but manageable. There is a \$175 fee which pays for a person in the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in Tallahassee, Florida to assist Special Districts with these type things. Also, when Special Districts are audited, the auditors give suggestions on ways to save additional money.

Interim Fire Chief Rampino stated, they also discussed being part of the Florida Association of Special Districts (FASD) and would recommend they take part in the many benefits the Association has to offer Special Districts. There is a Conference in January and a General Meeting held in June and he would recommend the Board send Staff to attend. The conference provides useful and important legal advice and other information and is a forum that the Special District's attorney attends as well. There is a requirement to pay half of the first year's fee of two-thousand dollars to join the association. He will check with the County to see if they have the dues dollars in their budget. It's an excellent association and the only organization that looks out for the Independent Fire Districts.

Commissioner Brosnan asked if they can file-on-line.

Interim Fire Chief Rampino stated he will find out and let Commissioner Brosnan know.

Commissioner Giammarco suggested waiting until the time approaches before spending the two-thousand dollars for membership. He would suggest going to the conference, etc. and learning what they can instead of joining the association. What does the Chief see them needing to do or change when they are an independent District.

Interim Fire Chief Rampino stated what he sees changing is they will need to have in place a finance person involved in the budget, the department's various comprehensive, current and facility plans. Those types of things will have to be put together.

Commissioner Giammarco agrees and suggests not having a Q&A Coordinator position filled at this time, but focus on a financial officer type position immediately.

There was a consensus of the Board Interim Chief Rampino will present job descriptions and requirements of a administrative / financial officer position to the Board for their consideration.

Attorney Salzman recommended the Board have it included in Unfinished Business at the upcoming voting meeting. He informed the Board, there are three Special Districts that he handles presently, including Chief Angle's and has for at least ten (10) years. The FASD is a great organization and he would be able to assist the Board with the process and with joining the organization.

#### **B. Employee Recognition / Union Christmas Party**

Interim Chief Rampino stated the Employee Recognition Merit Awards Dinner was a success and read off who received citations, awards including years of service awards. A letter was read by Commissioner Jacobs from the family regarding the rescue of their son by the Spring Hill Fire Rescue team of Engine & Ladder Company 2 C Shift Acting District Chief Alexis Lopez, Captain Daniel Papa, Captain Michael Carpenter Firefighter Matthew Hirschak, Firefighter Joseph Midili, Firefighter Michael Sellitto and Firefighter Ronald Brunetti, and Company 4, C Shift Captain Edward Falk, Firefighter Troy Hagar, Firefighter Robert Del Vecchio, Firefighter Stephen Smith and Firefighter Christopher . Firefighter Paramedic Troy Hagar was cited as rescuing under a dangerous situation and received the medal of valor award for his part in the rescue. Firefighter Paramedic Troy Hagar also received the Firefighter of the Year Award.

#### **C. Rescue Team Evaluation Results**

Interim Chief Rampino informed the Board the department's Operations Rescue Evaluation by the State received a score of 95% and he is proud to say they qualified to be deployed.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **Legislative Bill Draft Update**

Attorney Salzman informed the Board he would suggest discussion of the 2.75 millage cap and pointed out the actual allowable millage cap is much higher. He informed the Board there will not be a need for a new fire board election after the bill passes. Also, salaries in the future will be handled as 191 provides. He also informed the board the second vote which is for independent status and to set the millage is a two question vote. There's the request, the Bill, then an election. He will see if the legislature will require it to be two questions since the question of do they want an independent district has already been answered (with the non-binding straw vote on November 4, 2008). Also the legislature said they can work out the time period with the County so it can be held during the general election 2010. He does not see a problem from the County, especially with local legislature assuring them of the legislature seeing no problem working timelines out with the County.

Commissioner Brosnan asked why the Board was not informed there is a need for a second vote to gain independence.

Attorney Salzman assured the Commission the need for a second vote had been discussed in the past.

Commissioner Giammarco stated he had asked the attorney about this in the past also because it was confusing.

Attorney Salzman assured the Board this had been discussed throughout and that perhaps he did not make himself clear.

Commissioner Panozzo asked Attorney Salzman when did he think would be a good time to consider hiring a finance officer.

Attorney Salzman stated they would have to discuss with the County if it County wants to keep things status quo until 2010. If the County says no and severs ties, they would have to get things in place fairly quickly.

Interim Chief Rampino informed the Board July 1, 2008 the County is severing ties with the District and will discontinue services such as payroll check writing.

He was told by the County Administrator, they will not be half married to the Fire District.

Attorney Salzman asked the Board to decide on what millage cap they can agree upon to state in the drafted Bill.

Interim Chief Rampino asked the Board to review the millage history data presented to them. He stated it is his honest opinion, there's going to be more than a 10% reduction in assessed value. It would be important that the Board take that into consideration because the Board is going to have to decide on a millage rate that is going to allow the District to continue conducting business comfortably. If the Board realizes a 10 percent reduction in assessed value at the current millage rate, it has to ask itself if it can operate with a loss of approximately eight-hundred sixty thousand dollars in revenue.

After reviewing the millage history data and discussion by the Board, there was a consensus of the Board to cap the millage at 2.75 in the drafted House Bill.

## **B. Meeting Format**

Attorney Salzman recommended the Board re format their meetings to allow a more organized meeting. One suggestion he has is that Open Forum not be a back and forth discussions between the public, Board and Staff. He would suggest after a comment at the Open Forum by the public, the Board respond with "Thank You for your Time" or a similar response. He suggests this to prevent the heated discussions and comments that were time consuming and non productive which took place between the Board and the Public at Open Forum by the last Fire Board. He does not recommend the Board respond to questions during Open Forum.

The Boar was not comfortable with the suggested format of no response to questions asked during Open Forum. After further discussion, there was a consensus of the Fire Board to continue allowing questions to be answered by the Board and Staff that are Fire Department related questions. If they were not able to answer a question due to lack of information, they would invite the person to allow the Board or Staff to contact them with the information within the following business days.

Attorney Salzman discussed agenda formats for the meetings and stated they could be combined if there is a voting meeting immediately following a workshop. It would also be possible if the Board wanted to have Vote As You Go formats to their meetings which would allow the monthly meetings to be workshop and commission meetings combined. It would eliminate the need after deciding on issues in workshops to wait two weeks to vote on those items in a commission meeting.

After further discussion, there was a consensus of the Board to change the agenda format to include the public can approach the Board on agenda items as they come up as an open forum format and that all meetings should be Vote As You Go meetings.

## **New Business**

### **A. Fire Chief Position**

Chairman Jacobs asked for the Board to make the Interim Fire Chief, the Chief.

Attorney Salzman recommended direction from the Board for the attorney to negotiate with the Interim Fire Chief and to bring the information back to the Board..

Commissioner Giammarco stated the position needs to be voted on and an employee package should be presented by the attorney that is beneficial both to the Interim Chief and the Department. The Board needs to show solidarity as a Board and to the Interim Chief. Interim Chief Rampino has done an excellent job and he needs security in moving forward. He would also like to recommend making Mike Rampino the Fire Chief and waiving the requirement he live within the District's boundaries; and also waive the requirement for having an educational degree. He feels Interim Chief Rampino has done an excellent job in the position and would not want those requirements to prevent the Board from offering the Interim Chief the position.

Commissioner Bosnan asked Interim Chief Rampino if he would accept the position without an employment agreement in place.

Interim Chief Rampino stated, he would not feel secure without some type of employment agreement put together.

Commissioner Jacobs agreed stating the Interim Chief is in a precarious position being the Interim Chief and not having any guarantees.

After further discussion, there was a consensus of the Board for the Attorney to meet with the Interim Chief to discuss an offer of employment and employment agreement package which will be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

Commissioner Jacobs stated the Board can call a Special Meeting to approve the Interim Chief becoming the Fire Chief and an employment package if necessary.

Attorney Salzman stated he does not think that is necessary and it will be ready at the January 14, 2009 meeting.

Interim Chief Rampino stated he appreciates the vote of confidence and doesn't think what he requires to accept the position in regards to security is something they cannot work out.

**Adjourn**

Commissioner Jacobs adjourned the workshop at 9:10 P.M with a ten minute recess before the voting meeting commences.

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Leo Jacobs, Chairman

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Michele B. Stevens, Recording Secretary