



Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue

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www.psfrd.org

FIRE CHIEF
SALVATORE A. D'ANGELO III

**MINUTES
OCTOBER 18, 2016
WORKSHOP AND REGULAR MEETING**

**Held at the Indian Shores Municipal Center
19305 Gulf Blvd., Indian Shores, FL 33785**

**WORKSHOP MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:00 p.m.
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

ROLL CALL: Commissioners answering roll call were Vice Chair Laura Martin, Secretary/Treasurer David Gardella, Commissioner Lou Snelling, and Commissioner Larry Schear. Chair Joe Bruni was excused. A quorum was present with Vice Chair Laura Martin presiding. Attorney Jeff Albinson, Fire Chief Sal D'Angelo, and Finance Director David Martin were also present.

**SERVICE PIN AWARDS – Ryan London, Firefighter/EMT, for 5 Years of Service
Jeremy Sidlauskas, Lieutenant, for 15 Years of Service**

Chief D'Angelo presented Ryan London with a pin for 5 years of dedicated service to PSFRD.

Chief D'Angelo also recognized Lieutenant Jeremy Sidlauskas for 15 years of service, although he was not available to attend the meeting.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS: None.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:04 p.m.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

MONTHLY BUSINESS:

1. Approval of Minutes: September 20, 2016, Special, Workshop and Regular Meetings

Discussion: None.

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2016 Special, Workshop and Regular Meetings.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR
All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

2. Treasurer's Report: September, 2016

Discussion: Secretary/Treasurer Gardella stated that all balance sheet accounts have been reconciled as of September 30, 2016. The total asset value of both funds have decreased by 0.3% over the same period last year, which was mainly due to the opening of Station 26 and absorbing the cost until the EMS dispute with the County is resolved. Station 28's unfunded EMS expenditures contributed to that decrease as well. The Unassigned Fund Balance is at 21.8 percent of total operating expenditures. The budget deficit was reduced from just over \$390,000 to just under \$150,000 for the fiscal year. This represents a \$240,000 deficit savings, which is a direct result of staff changes, healthcare and worker's compensation cost decreases, and focused expense management by David Martin and staff. The fiscal year ending unrestricted fund balance is \$2,071,600, consistent of \$958,000 in the assigned fund and \$1,113,600 in the unassigned reserves. All investments are doing fine.

A motion to approve the September, 2016 Treasurer's Report.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MARTIN SECOND: COMMISSIONER SNELLING
All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

3. Correspondence: Secretary/Treasurer David Gardella read a letter to Lieutenant Chip Bodine from South Pasadena Fire Department, thanking him for his participation in their lieutenant assessment process.

Secretary/Treasurer Gardella also read a letter from a woman who was on vacation at 512 Gulf Boulevard a couple weeks prior, thanking the crew that responded to an emergency at their rental property for their professionalism.

REMARKS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

Dave Mott – 446 18th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Mott discussed that he purchased his house in Indian Rocks Beach six years ago, built in 1978, which required one smoke detector. They have since built that property into a four bedroom house, which now requires eight smoke detectors. He said that he feels that since they have "moved toward" more fire protection, there must be fewer fire calls. He stated that he does not see the need for the referendum.

John Pfanstiehl – 448 Harbor Drive South, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Pfanstiehl stated that the Board of Commissioner duties ends with, "The respect of the people and their government and promoting the public interest must be of foremost concern." He does not feel that the referendum is promoting the public interest, as the cost is five times as high as the fire fees in the Redingtons. He also discussed that he feels the ballot language is deceptive and that it is taking away the voter's rights. He would like the referendum withdrawn.

Liz Barrett – 19646 Gulf Boulevard, Indian Shores. Ms. Barrett stated that she finds it unbelievable that funding for the fire department would be based upon taxable property value. She asked what happens if the market crashes or there is another BP oil spill. She stated that the budget should be based on something more tangible that does not fluctuate.

Jim Myers – 337 Bahia Vista Drive, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Myers said that is up to the public officials to have the citizens' best interest in mind and to hold the Fire Chief accountable, and he stated that he is going to do his best to make it known that he feels that the Fire Chief has deceptively written the referendum.

Bob Linderman – 455 20th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Linderman stated that he is disappointed in the wording of the referendum. He said that his wife could not understand the ballot language. He discussed that he has lived in Indian Rocks Beach for 25 years and he has watched the fire department grow. He said cities are going broke because they can't fund personnel, well after they do not work for the agencies anymore. He stated the Fire Chief should find other ways to fund the department.

Bert Valerie – 447 18th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Valerie stated that he feels that the ballot language is poorly worded and when the election is over, nobody is going to know if the citizens wanted it or not. He does not understand why the Board would take away the citizens' right to vote on future changes and would like the referendum withdrawn.

Paul Kleeman – 469 20th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Kleeman said that he just moved to Indian Rocks Beach from Sand Key six months ago. He stated that all of the firemen know him because he “gets on them” when they are at the grocery store. He said that he feels that this is just an “open door for a runaway horse.”

Jim Palamara – 102 15th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Palamara said that he has lived in Indian Rocks Beach for 36 years. He said that he believes the fire department needs funding, but he does not feel like he should pay another tax. He thinks that the Redingtons need to pay and that the Board needs to get their EMS funding from the County.

Eddie Bie – 497 20th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Bie said that he feels the ballot language is deceptive. He does not understand why it was put together as a millage rather than a flat tax. He said that there needs to be more transparency regarding where the money would go, as he does not have any problem funding the fire department.

James Terry – 14850 113th Avenue, Largo. Mr. Terry stated that he is in favor of the referendum. He explained that when the department was established in 1953, the legislature established it on a flat assessment that does not work anymore. Mr. Terry discussed that the other fire districts in the county, including the county itself, are on ad valorem. He discussed that auto insurance is based on the value of your automobile; you pay higher premiums if you drive a more expensive car, and it is the same with your home. He said that, in order to save the fire district, it needs more revenue, and the most fair way to do it is a blended program of flat assessment so everyone pays something, and a small ad valorem rate. Mr. Terry used the example that, right now, residents who live in mobile homes pay \$260, and someone who lives in an 8 million dollar home in Belleair Shore also pays \$260. He thinks there needs to be a form of taxation that is more equitable for everyone.

Andrea Bycroft – 1878 Beverly Circle North, Clearwater. Ms. Bycroft said she is affected by the increase but has no say as to whether it passes or not, as she owns three properties on Indian Rocks Beach, but her primary residence is in Clearwater, so she is not able to vote on this issue. When she first read about it, she thought the tax was being lowered. She explained the cost of maintaining rental properties on the beach is getting to be too much. She said if they were in Redington Beach should would be paying \$100. She wants the question withdrawn.

Nancy Obarski – 708 Beach Trail, Indian Rocks Beach. Mrs. Obarski stated that she made a public records request for all of the costs associated with the referendum, but the request would cost her \$135 for 195 pages. She said that is not transparent and the District should be able to tell the citizens how much has been spent. She said that if the 195 pages is an indication of what was spent, nobody is going to be happy. She said that it's time to stop listening to the lawyers and listen to the citizens. She wants the referendum withdrawn.

Jerry Newton – 438 Harbour Drive North, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Newton stated that he feels the ad valorem is a fair way to produce more revenue to run the department. He said that his issue is that he thinks it is a 96% increase for the average homeowner on Indian Rocks Beach. If you have a \$500,000 home, you've “increased almost double.” He stated that he was raised having respect for firefighters, but he thinks that this referendum is deceitful and wrong. He said that the increase is not realistic and it was done in an “intentionally deceitful way.”

Bill Thomas – 470 20th Avenue, Indian Rocks Beach. Mr. Thomas agreed that the fire department needs more funding, but that his opinion is that the language is “a blantant attempt to circumvent the voting rights act, by implementing hidden literary tests for the American voters.” He said the Spanish-speaking and Asian-speaking voters will not be able to understand it and wants the referendum withdrawn.

Tom Rask – [Did not state address; stated “Unincorporated Pinellas County.”] He stated that he did not know the meeting was taking place until he was on a bike ride an hour prior to the meeting and spoke with people standing outside. He said that he went home and looked at the PSFRD website and did not see the meeting notice. He feels there are problems with how the meeting is noticed under the Sunshine Law. He said that if there is a violation, the referendum can be withdrawn. He said that if the Board declares that the meeting at which it was voted to put the question on the ballot was not properly noticed, the meeting would be void.

Rebecca Sacra – 368 La Hacienda Drive, Indian Rocks Beach. Mrs. Sacra stated that she is married to a firefighter and has been a volunteer firefighter herself, and she recognizes there needs to be more funding, but she feels this is deceptive and and would like the referendum withdrawn.

Kelly Cisarik – 448 Harbor Drive South, Indian Rocks Beach. Mrs. Cisarik discussed that she thinks the ballot language is deceptive and wants the referendum withdrawn.

REPORTS:

[Note: The batteries in the recorder died at this point and there was a break in the audio recording.]

1. COMMISSION: Secretary/Treasurer David Gardella asked for Attorney Jeff Albinson's input on whether the referendum can be taken off of the ballot at this point in time. Attorney Albinson stated that it is already on the ballots that have been distributed, so it will not "come off" at this point. He continued that if the referendum fails, it will be a moot point. If the referendum passes, then the District still, at that point, could possibly decide not to impose the ad valorem tax, or take some other action. He does not think a motion today, that was seconded and carried, serve to take it off the ballot. Attorney Albinson said that he does not have a definitive answer and is simply making an educated guess, but this is why Lewis, Longman, and Walker was hired, as ballot issues are a very specialized area.

2. ATTORNEY: Attorney Jeff Albinson discussed the first arbitration, referred to as the "class arbitration," regarding a firefighter receiving a two-step increase. He stated that the Union challenged that raise, asserting that the Union Contract did not allow a two-step pay raise, but no language was found in the Contract that limited raises. The formal arbitration took place on July 17, 2016 and he discussed what has transpired since then and provided the commissioners with copies of the documentation. Attorney Albinson said that we will have an answer by November 12, 2016. He stated that, if the Union prevails, it only impacts the District in the way that the Fire Chief must treat every employee the same way in regard to giving raises, no matter the performance of the employee.

3. CHIEF'S REPORT: Chief D'Angelo asked Vice Chair Laura Martin if he was allowed to address the audience, to which she agreed.

Chief D'Angelo said that it is a pleasure to serve all of the citizens in the room, regardless of their view on the referendum. He explained that the fire service is a several million dollar business with the responsibility to save lives and protect property. He stated that he lost his father-in-law in a fire incident as a lieutenant for Metro Dade Fire Rescue and that he never wants to experience that again. He said he will look at everyone in the eye and tell them that there was no deception or manipulation in this process. He discussed that the fire department has been functioning on a fixed, non-ad valorem assessment since 2008 and we cannot continue to function in this way. Chief D'Angelo said that every time he speaks about the referendum, he has always been clear that this will be an additional tax on top of the \$260 non-ad valorem assessment, and that he feels this is the most equitable and fair way to fund the District. He stated that if the referendum passes, the new tax plus the current non-ad valorem rate together converted to a millage rate would be 1.834 and would still be the second cheapest in Pinellas County. The residents in the Redingtons do pay less, but they do not receive the same level of service. He added that he is trying to fix the inequity going on regarding PSFRD responding to the Redingtons. He discussed that the District is in compliance with the Sunshine Law. He stated that the District has experienced IT issues and is trying to make changes. He explained that the District has a very limited staff and is doing its very best to be accountable. He stated that we are also audited and held accountable by the same auditor as Belleair Shore. Due to our limited staff, the District has had to start charging for public records requests per State law, but any resident is more than welcome to walk into his office look at the figures for the referendum.

A citizen asked if the Chief will change the ad valorem to a reasonable increase. Chief D'Angelo said he is asking for a half mill because, if he asked for less, he would have to ask the Board to increase the rate the next year based upon the capital projects that need to be accomplished. He said that the District can function on a half mill for the foreseeable future. He stated that he is only asking for what every other government in Pinellas County has. He added that the District has not followed State statute regarding annual increases in its non-ad valorem rate, because elected officials many years ago voted for it to be fixed.

He also explained that every governmental entity that uses an ad valorem gives the authority to increase or decrease the rate to the elected officials in an open public forum. Citizen Tom Rask suggested implementing the ad valorem but capping the millage rate, to which Chief D'Angelo explained is exactly what the District is asking to do. Discussion continued to ensue between the public attendees and Chief D'Angelo.

[There was a five minute break at 8:34 p.m. Meeting resumed at 8:39 p.m.]

ACTION ITEMS:

- 1. 16-14 Fire Chief - Year Two Evaluation Process Board

Discussion: Chief D'Angelo thanked the Commissioners for their comments on his evaluations.

- 2. 16-15 Voluntary Pledge Letter for FEMA FY2016 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Fire Chief

Discussion: Chief D'Angelo explained that we are applying for federal funding through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant. This year, the District is applying for an aerial device, and can apply for up to one million dollars in federal funding. The Chief said that he is asking the Board to make a motion to make a voluntary pledge of \$100,000, to show their commitment if the District is fortunate enough to receive the grant that can be submitted with the application. This money would be taken from the impact fee fund that the District has set up statutorily. This would be in addition to the District's required 10% match of \$100,000, required by FEMA. The quotes that have been received for a new aerial have been approximately \$1.1 million.

**A motion to approve the voluntary pledge letter being submitted with the FEMA FY 2016 Assistance to Firefighters Grant application.
All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

Secretary/Treasurer David Gardella discussed that, over the last month and a half, he has been talking to residents in the District and, unless he explained to them in detail what the referendum question was about, most of them were not aware what they would be voting for.

A motion to withdraw the referendum question, or in the alternative, to invalidate the results of the referendum ballot question, pending further action by the Board.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: None
Motion failed for lack of a second.**

Commissioner Lou Snelling added that he has had a lot of positive feedback from the constituents that he serves on the mainland, and he does not want to take away their opportunity to vote on this. Vice Chair Laura Martin stated that she agrees that she has also received positive feedback as well. Commissioner Larry Schear stated that he has received positive feedback from the residents in Indian Shores. He added that they understand that they will be paying more, but they will get the service that they desire and they would like to continue.

MOTION: COMMISSIONER GARDELLA SECOND: COMMISSIONER SCHEAR

**A motion to adjourn.
All in favor, motion passed unanimously.**

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned in due form at 8:54 p.m.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:


Joseph V. Bruni, Chair Date Approved 11/15/16


Kimberly G. Fugate, Executive Assistant