

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
February 13, 2024

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Mere

Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation – Commissioner Mere (Chief Underwood asks that we keep City of Ft. Myers and Tice Fire in our prayers as Ret. Asst. Fire Chief Craig Trammel who had been a Captain with the City and later became Asst. Chief with Tice passed away a couple days ago. He was a big part of the Fire Academy and touched many lives in the fire service.

Commissioner Griffin – Present
Commissioner Ducrou – Present
Commissioner Hansen – Absent
Commissioner Cook – Present
Commissioner Mere – Present
Chief Doug Underwood – Present
Office Manager – Present
Attorney Ian Mann – Absent

Others Present: Some Staff

Public Input Agenda Items – None

Minutes – Review and acceptance of the January 9, 2024 Board Meeting minutes – Motion made by Commissioner Ducrou to accept the minutes. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion. With no further discussion offered Chairman Mere calls for Review of Financial Reports for January 2024.

Financial Reports – Review and Acceptance of the Financials for January 2024 - Motion made by Commissioner Ducrou to accept the financials. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion. Chairman Mere calls for any discussion. Hearing none, he calls for vote and with all in favor, motion passed. With no further discussion offered Chairman Mere calls for Fire Marshal Report.

Fire Marshal Report – Chief Underwood states no Fire Marshals report this month. Chairman Mere calls for the Administrative Report. We have done a few special use permits, and we will soon be inspecting for the AG Expo. We will resume the others once that is behind us.

Administrative Report (attached) – Chief Underwood reads the Administrative Report into the record. Chairman Mere calls for any questions. Hearing none, he asks with the County taking over the Fair, are we still going to be able to bill for man hours over there? Chief responds he has informed them that we will be billing for man hours. We're probably going to bill them exactly how much it costs us, like we do for FEMA. It won't yield any dollars in the bank but at least we'll break even. Commissioner Mere states "as long as it doesn't cost us." He calls for any other questions and hearing none he calls for Union Petitions.

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
February 13, 2024

Union Petitions – NONE Hearing None, Chairman Mere calls for Old Business

Old Business –

- **Consolidation** – Chief Underwood states he has been meeting with the other Chiefs discussing fire department consolidation, as directed. He says a merger of this size; with Alva, Bayshore, Fort Myers Shores, Tice and North you would have 158 square land miles, compared with the Cape who has 140 square miles. We would be a larger District than the City of Cape Coral, the largest in the County. We would have to require 3.5 mills to get what we have right now with all of our Districts; which would create a \$30M budget; that call volume would be around 20,000. He did some comparison with Cape Coral, and they have a \$50M budget, that doesn't include capital expenditures, and some of the vehicle maintenance stuff; that's just their operating expense. Cape is running 30,000 calls; this district totals 20,000 calls with a population of 100,000. We run 1/3 more calls per capita than the Cape. Commissioner Ducrou asks if the numbers include the mutual aid runs. Chief states you would eliminate some mutual aid but it would probably wash as North doesn't run Alpha/Bravo calls. They are reducing their call volume down because they are busting at the seams. So, if we responded to all calls district wide, like all the other districts, you'd be about the same. Currently there would be 9 stations, you would need to add 3. Currently North is needing another station, they are currently in the process of getting that built; obviously Babcock is around the corner as well, and to keep everybody within that 5-mile range, we would need a small satellite station out off of 78 between the Bayshore and Alva in that 15 mile stretch between us, to get everyone in the ISO range. Chief states, some of the conversations, if we look at this further, would be looking at an assessment for long-term sustainment, with a flat-fee. Before it didn't work for us, but now there are getting to be more plotted lands here and Shores and North Fort Myers. We would need to explore that for the Charter. North, Tice and Alva are at 3.75 so they are at cap, they can't go any higher. Shores would be the donor district; they'd have to go up to 3.5 mills or we'd have to explore the assessment base. Commissioner Mere asks if we know what the individual budgets are versus combined, are we talking we'd need a \$30M budget? but if we broke everybody down, is that increasing...Chief Underwood states that is what we would need to keep all districts where they are at now. So that would bring Shores up to 3.5 and North, Alva and Tice would come down to 3.5. It may only be Tice & Alva at 3.75, but to average out to get that we would all need to go to 3.5. Chief Underwood and Chief Rewis worked on much of this, they pulled all the budgets and all the call volumes, the census for all the districts. He has had these conversations in Tallahassee with some of our legislators, most of them are not in favor of it at all, they say they like the way it operates, we don't have any issues; I've never had anybody come up to me to say there's an issue, we like smaller government; and that's coming from our local Rep. Spencer Roach. They like it the way we are. The others are in favor of it if it's going to save money. And everything we've studied so

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
February 13, 2024

far, and when talking to several consultants, and having a consultant look at it; there's not a district in the state of Florida that has ever consolidated and it saved money. It has all been significant increases. Even the latest one down in Collier; so it is not a cost saving drive, there's a lot more that would have to be implemented. Commissioner Ducrou agrees it wouldn't save money, he's trying to understand, you guys are talking you would have to add stations, that would be included in the consolidation, that you would want? Chief Underwood states there are two in the works now, between Babcock and North, and a small satellite station would put everyone at the ISO within that 5 road miles. Commissioner Ducrou states, but it wouldn't be a requirement of consolidation; that's if you're trying to make things better, but if you're just consolidating what we have now, just combining it, you're not going to go out and increase services. Chief Underwood states, no, but you would have to have that information when you're talking because you have to look at your ISO ratings; you have one District that is an ISO 10 and everyone else is a two or three, so you could have potential to increase your ISO throughout all the districts, so those are the things you have to consider, do you need to... Typically when they look at consolidation, they look at where are you duplicating efforts, where do you have two stations within a ½ mile of each other, where we can close a station, where we can relocate those personnel somewhere else; but in the situation we are all at, is we are all spread pretty thin. We are still smaller Districts, that haven't grown like down south like Bonita and North Collier. That's some of the things they look at, do you have too much where you can reduce down, or do you not have enough. Chief states he spoke with Special District Services that did our study and is familiar with consolidation on just one level, and Jim Engle from one group who has a 30-year history, throughout the state, up the East coast and across the North, panhandle area, and has seen the consolidations and even the reversals like City of Jupiter is going through now, where the City let the County take it over and are now back-tracking back to the way it was. Adam Botana is big on consolidation; he wants it to happen. Tiffany Esposito which covers the Lehigh area, little bits of Shores and Alva, she's all in favor of it, but it's conservative. She's very, very conservative, and states she's all about saving money, so if it's going to save money, I'd be all for it and I'll push for it, but if there's no way it's going to save money; and if you all are doing it for functionality, then great; Jenna Persons-Mulica, she's kind of in the same boat, it's great that we're looking at it, but she's not a big advocate, or saying it's got to happen, because she feels there could be some significant costs. And we would have the consultant explore multiple ways of doing it; one being do nothing, option two is Functional Consolidation, which we are already doing, and we are continuing to improve, such as closest unit response, number three is the number of departments involved, maybe only these two or these three, not all five. Or look and say all five looks great. Commissioner Ducrou asks if the state is looking to encourage this, can we utilize them for the funding source. Chief states in talking with Rep. Botana, I was kind of leading the meeting with myself, Captain Swindle, I had an Assistant Chief from Ft. Myers Beach, I had a Commissioner from Iona, and the Chief of Sanibel in the room. We had several meetings at the same time, so we split groups up there; I led a group and Chief Cambareri led a group. I think Botana was confused,

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
February 13, 2024

thinking we may have been the Beach, because he said “you’ve got 10 months to get this figured out”. Because he wants to put a bill out next year. But later conversations between the union and him, his only goal right now is the Beach. I was confused, he doesn’t even cover our area; he does have the ability to push a bill in Lee County even though he doesn’t cover our District, and he can be persuasive; he has Giallombardo on his side, two huge proponents of consolidation. He did say “get me a letter and I’ll fund it.” It’s too late in the game this year to fund it because the budget literally dropped the next day. It’s difficult to send him a budget without some kind of formal, even informal estimate. Anything to be put on the ballot would be 2026, We have two more legislative sessions before 2026. Commissioner Griffin asks, we were talking earlier about savings, is that savings for the taxpayer or the district or what? Chief states the taxpayer, but no district has consolidated with another district and saved the taxpayer dollars. Chief responds with a district like ours, we’re not top heavy at all; we have an assistant chief at North, Tice, and Shores. When it comes to staffing in general, we don’t have a lot of different positions, it’s just the two of us and we wear a lot of hats. There’s some talk that about the only money we would save would be in Commissioner salaries. Commissioner Ducrou states “I don’t think you’ll ever save money with this. There are duplications, with small departments, you have to have 2 engines, 2 brush trucks; we have a lot of redundancy because you would have other stations to share it with, the only thing I see as a positive is you would have a standard level of service to the areas. Chief Underwood states, and that’s why says I don’t care what it costs, it’s a continuity of service. And I think we do provide a much higher level of service than we did years back. When I first started, it was very territorial. Commissioner Ducrou states the functional consolidation came about because the first study that was done scared the s__t out of the fire chiefs. So, they figured they would consolidate without consolidating. He states, and that’s fine, as long as we’re working toward this goal here. Work between departments to try and get lower prices on bunker gear, supplies, anything, that’s the smart way to do it. You’re accomplishing a lot of the same goals. Chief agrees, “100%” The idea of functional consolidation, saving money and still maintaining the District identity. There’s pros and cons to all of it, I think it’s definitely worth studying. Commissioner Griffin asks how the other districts feel, are they pro or what? There’s, when it comes to the guys and change, it’s pretty scary. What’s going to happen to our contracts, what ‘s going to happen with our pension, leveling pay... it’s all hypothetical until you get a new Board of Commissioners who lays it out. Commissioner Ducrou states the questions about salary and stuff can all be put in the study; say, we’re trying to bring people up to a percentile...how would that affect the budget. I have no idea whether I’d be for it or against it because we don’t have any information. If you do the study then you can say why you’re for it or against it and you’re making a smarter decision. Chief states that is the way he’d like to see this go. He says if the state would pay for this, he knows Spenser Roach would be more than willing to sponsor an appropriations bill. After talking to Jim Engle, we’re taking \$70-80,000 and he could have it done in about 9 months. Obviously going through the RFP process and feeding the data that isn’t readily available will take a month or so, he said it would take about 9 months. There’s

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
February 13, 2024

discussion on saving money, combining reports like our efficiency study and Chief states that's why we did the report with Shores, we spent \$50,00 between us and other districts spent \$50,000 each. Chief states he will keep the Board informed and all the Chiefs involved in our preliminary study are taking this information back to their Boards, and they will meet late summer again to discuss pushing for appropriations next year so it can be put on the 2026 ballot.

- **Legislative Update** – The House passed the Special Districts bill, they removed the 10 year reauthorization, Term Limits are still there, several other items are still there, the Performance Review has to be done by December 1st; however the House has put out an amendment on their side, they still have a few things they don't like, such as the December first date as everything in reports is on a calendar year, so they are seeking January or February so calendar year data can be used. The Senate has agreed to change it to January 31st in their bill, done internally and posted to our website. Reporting our training to the state really didn't have any bearing on us as we already do. Really not a lot of bills have passed; not even the 3% COLA; the House said yes but the Senate did not. They are still working on how to fund that. Possibly asking the staff to give an extra 2%. Employees seem willing to give to 2% now to get the 3% but there were also limitations as to who would get the COLA there is still limitation on who would get it. So that one has failed for now. Commissioner Mere states the Special Interest Bill hasn't passed either yet. Chief states no, the Senate is hearing that again tomorrow and some of the Chiefs are heading back up to support the changes for that. And if they pass theirs, the House will either have to concede to the Senate's version or they just won't have companion bills and it won't go anywhere.
- **Ethics** – Chief states the Ethics bill did pass and Elected Officials are required to take the 4-Hour Ethics Training by the end of the year.
- **Perimeter Fence** – Chief has 3 quotes for fence. Tropical Fence sold out to another Co. Smith Fence sold out to another company, and Superior Fence who is \$900 cheaper (\$19,000). Commissioner Ducrou asks to see drawings. Chief brings them up on big screen. Commissioner Mere asks if we had our corners located. Chief states he has 3 of them. The 4th doesn't seem to exist. Seeing the layout it is discussed that we need to extend the rear from the back building to close to the creek with chain link and across the back maybe to Bill next door's rear gate with hog wire/bull fence. Commissioner Ducrou would like to see the layout before we proceed.
- **Impact Funds** - While Chief prepares his presentation Office Manager requests permission to move \$68,580.21 Impact Funds to General Fund to pay off the money the Impact Funds owes the General Fund. Commissioner Ducrou moves to move the money. Commissioner Cook seconded the motion and with all in favor, motion passed. Commissioner Mere calls for New Business.

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
February 13, 2024

New Business –

- **Closest Unit Dual Response** – This is something Chief Nisbet had been working toward for many years and now with new Chief's in most of the local Districts, they all agree this is a direction they want to go. Chief says it's not going to be 100% closest unit response like they do down South; Shores can be us to 31. For Fire response, Delta/Echo level calls, commercial vehicle fires, vehicle fire with structure in danger, those would be closest unit dual response as they require 2 engines anyway. So, on 31, instead of dropping tones for E131 and E-132, they'll call out us and Shores. The industrial Park will be dual unit response. Medical will be Echo only. Cardiac arrest, drowning, overdoses, where you need that second crew like engine and rescue for the extra hands; will be auto-aid, instead of waiting or having to call in for the aid. Roll-overs and pin-ins. Commissioner Ducrou asks so if our engine is at Publix, we could get sucked deeper into North? Chief states it is only high priority calls, which we counted and over a year between all 5 of our Districts, there were only 100 Echo level medical calls, North being the highest at 50. Chief doesn't see it being a big change from how we're doing it, they're going to call for rescue, it'll just be more automated for Dispatch, clean-up the process for dispatch, and cut response time. Commissioner Griffin asks if Charlotte County is involved. Chief responds he has had conversations with Jason and we will on our own do a verbal agreement with Charlotte County with regard to the Babcock calls as we get development there. (Though they are on board, they can't seem to get their Board to sign any Aid agreements with anyone.) Commissioner Ducrou states why he mentioned the Publix scenario is because when Lehigh transports to Gulfcoast or Healthpark, they are getting hit with closest unit response as soon as they drop off a patient. The County EMS has it in their agreement that they get 30 minutes to do paperwork when they drop off, and it's all in the way it's written. Lehigh is taking a beating on this. We need to make sure the playing field is equal. Chief says that's probably because they're doing Echo/Delta/Charlie closest unit. It's still being set up in CAD which is a good time because they are re-working CAD right now anyway, so it'll be about a month, and then we'll see how it goes and tweak it from there. With no further discussion offered, Chairman Mere calls for Chief Items.

Chief Items – None. Hearing none, Chairman Mere calls for Commissioner Items.

Commissioner Items – None. With no Commissioner Items offered Chairman Mere calls for Public Input.

Public Input – None - Chairman Mere calls for Motion to adjourn.

Adjournment – Commissioner Cook moves to adjourn and motion is seconded by Commissioner Ducrou and with none opposed, meeting is adjourned 8:00 p.m.