



## JOINT BOARD CONSOLIDATION MEETING BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### MINUTES FROM JANUARY 15, 2008 JOINT BOARD MEETING

Commissioner Schweers opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Silent Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance

### ROLL CALL

San Carlos Park Fire District: Commissioners Everett Glover, Mary Lou Garofalo, Lawrence Sweeney and Grant Schwalbe

Bonita Springs Fire Rescue: Commissioners Edward Fitzgerald, Frank Liles and Bob Paterson

Estero Fire Rescue: Commissioners Dick Schweers, Sam Levy, Barbara Akins and Gayle Sassano

Commissioner Schweers entertained a motion to appoint a chair for the joint board meeting. *Commissioner Akins made a motion to appoint Mary Lou Garofalo as chair for the joint board meeting. Commissioner Sassano seconded. All were in favor, motion carried.*

### PRESENTATION OF WHITE PAPER

Bonita Springs Fire Rescue – Fire Chief Phil Kinsey presented the introduction. San Carlos Park Fire District – Fire Chief Nat Ippolito presented the historical perspective. Estero Fire Rescue – Fire Chief Jeff Lindsey presented the white paper research findings (current/immediate, short term, long range, and challenges)

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Commissioner Garofalo noted that public comment is limited to three (3) minutes.

Mr. Mike Keister, 10110 Villagio Palms Way #206, Estero, Florida 33928 spoke as a representative of the Villagio Condo Association in support for consolidation

Walt Stevens of Southwest Florida Firefighters and Paramedics (address not provided) noted a lot of information is not being provided but will take place during this process.

### COMMISSIONER ITEMS

Commissioner Garofalo asks that commissioner comments be limited to three (3) minutes.

Commissioner Sassano expressed her gratitude for the efforts of the committee and the fire chiefs and believes consolidation/merger merits further investigation.

Commissioner Paterson suggested that the three departments need to share their financial information as none was included in the white paper. Commissioner Paterson also stated that he feels there are savings in a shared maintenance facility and the need to establish a committee to look into feasibility, land, staff and equipment; look to the chiefs for direction.

Commissioner Levy requested that if the three districts go forward with consolidation, that an independent outside consultant be employed with the cost shared by all three districts.

Commissioner Fitzgerald noted that the 3 minute time limit is unfair and he takes exception. Commissioner Fitzgerald proceeded to read his three page prepared statement. ***Commissioner Fitzgerald then made a motion that our three fire district boards prepare a RFP to engage management consultants, with successful histories of merger/consolidations of small to medium sized fire departments in the United States, to Conduct a Cooperative Services Feasibility Study for the Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Fire Control and Rescue Districts of Florida, for the stated purpose of consolidation or merger of our three districts.*** Commissioner Schweers inquired of the attorneys if a motion could be made to this effect at a joint meeting. Attorney Charles Schoech noted that the boards can approve the motion to take the motion back to their individual boards for discussion and decision to be made among their individual boards as to sharing the expenditure for a consultant. ***Commissioner Schweers seconded the motion.***

Commissioner Sassano inquired as to whether or not a financial limit for a consultant needs to be included in the motion. Chief Lindsey provided information regarding an RFQ (Request for Qualifications).

Commissioner Schwalbe inquired as to tabling the motion until all commissioners have a chance to discuss. Motion tabled for further discussion. Commissioner Schwalbe stated that as commissioners we owe it to the people we represent to move forward and examine the study; also, the need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party study. Commissioner Schwalbe noted that the pricing of the study it would come out of the 2008-2009 budgets so there is time to move forward, but in the meantime, he would like to see commitment/buy-in from the fire chiefs and the organizations that they are willing to move forward before spending taxpayers' dollars to do a study.

Commissioner Liles inquired as to the steps and procedures of merging or consolidating with regard to the legislature. Attorney Lewis noted that the boards collectively can decide to do a merger study as they control the budget spending for their district. Attorney Lewis noted that functional consolidation would not require legislative approval but would be accomplished through an interlocal agreement; however, a total merger would require a legislative act.

Commissioner Liles noted that he is here to save the taxpayers' money and the need to start off crawling before we get up and running; need to talk about things that are really feasible. Commissioner Liles doesn't believe there are too many things we can do to really save enough money to brag about.

Commissioner Akins noted that the white paper is what she expected and that the committee and the fire chiefs produced a good product. Commissioner Akins also noted the need to take the immediate steps to bring together consolidation which will lead to buy-in and move into short-term and then explore different departments combining.

Commissioner Sassano inquired as to the cost involved with a RFQ vs. a RFP. Chief Lindsey noted the cost involved with an RFQ is primarily the advertisement and publishing.

Commissioner Sweeney noted the vehicle maintenance and keeping people and the expense involved; bigger costs more money.

Commissioner Levy noted that there is a motion on the floor to hire an independent consultant. It was noted that the motion had been tabled to allow discussion by all commissioners.

Commissioner Akins reiterated the need to move to the next step. Commissioner Sassano inquired as to the sharing of financial information by a representative from each board, a union representative and a financial officer representative from each district.

*Commissioner Garofalo asked Commissioner Fitzgerald to restate his motion which had been seconded by Commissioner Schweers. No further discussion. A vote was taken 8 commissioners were in favor, 3 opposed. Motion carried by a vote of 8-3.*

*Commissioner Garofalo then instructed each board to take the motion back to their individual board for further discussion and voting at their regular board meeting in February. The votes will then be tallied through the three fire chiefs.*

*Commissioner Akins then asked for a consensus among the three boards for the committee and the fire chiefs to continue working towards the short-term goals without spending money. There was a consensus among the boards to move forward.*

Don Eslick from the Estero community briefly addressed the boards and expressed his gratitude to the committee for their report.

Commissioner Paterson noted that the full merger completion date of September 2010 as stated in Commissioner Fitzgerald's statement was unrealistic and did not want to provide false information.

Commissioner Sassano inquired as to the next joint meeting time for the boards. It was noted that it will be left up to the three fire chiefs to establish and coordinate the next meeting.

*Commissioner Garofalo adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.*

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**Gayle M. Sassano, Secretary**  
**Estero Fire Rescue**