



**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
October 10, 2006**

**MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 11, 2006 FIRST PUBLIC HEARING**

Commissioner Schweers opened the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Silent Prayer  
Pledge of Allegiance

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioner Akins, Commissioner Schweers, Commissioner Sassano and Commissioner Morris were present. Commissioner Levy was not available for the meeting.

Chief Lindsey shared a brief video presentation in honor of the fallen heroes of 9/11.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON FIRST PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA ITEMS**

No public comment.

**DISCUSSION BY THE BOARD ON THE PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE AND BUDGET**

Commissioner Schweers noted that each board member has had plenty of opportunity to look through the budget, study it, and some of the most important things in here, without raising questions at this point, are the operating reserves, our capital ad valorem reserves and so forth. It is very important, something that has been neglected until a couple of years ago because the district has been trying to catch up with growth in this area. Commissioner Schweers provided a brief millage rate history and noted that we are still playing catch up to a large degree with the purchase of five new engines, ladder trucks and brush trucks. With the life expectancy of the trucks being 10 years and impact fees cannot be used to replace the vehicles, as well as the threat of hurricanes such as Charley and Wilma, the need to increase our reserves is very important.

Commissioner Morris commented that our reserves are the most important thing. That we can be at ease with this millage and that it is increasing/stabilizing our reserves so that we will have something for those “rainy days”.

Commissioner Sassano first and foremost thanked Chief Lindsey and his staff for an excellent job in the budget presentation, down to definitions; it was heartwarming and so easy to understand.



A lot of time and effort was put into this and a personal thank you to all, you did a wonderful job. Commissioner Sassano also commented, impact fees cannot pay for a lot of replacements that will need to be made in the near future and the need for the administration building, the need is there to build up our reserves. As taxpayers we would all like to see the millage rate go down, but in being a responsible board, does not see how the millage rate can be lowered when looking to the future.

Commissioner Akins agreed that the millage rate should stay at 2.0 mils and the need to continue increasing the amount of the reserves.

***Commissioner Schweers called for a motion to be made to tentatively adopt the proposed millage rate of \$2. Commissioner Sassano made a motion, Commissioner Morris seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.***

Commissioner Sassano had no further comments on the budget.

Commissioner Morris stated that nothing is reasonable anymore, that everything is going out the roof (insurance coverage, maintenance repair, etc.) Commissioner Schweers inquired as to how we can stabilize and reduce. With the five year plan are we looking at how we can stabilize and when we can top out and hold our own, such as equipment and manpower? Chief Lindsey noted that as of today, we are undermanned by 18-21 to be able to staff the vehicles appropriately and reserves for time off. Current ISO rating went from a 5 to a 4 because of staffing and 3 additional firefighters would be needed in order to go to a 3.

Commissioner Akins inquired into the maintenance position going from two part time employees to a full time employee and a part time employee; with regard to benefits does not appear to be a breakeven situation. Chief Lindsey provided the explanation that some of the responsibilities of the maintenance employees would phase out, over time, some service contracts, i.e. lawn maintenance which would require the initial purchase of the equipment, therefore EFR would not be paying close to \$25,000 in contracted service for lawn maintenance. The contract portion for the lawn service is in the budget and should this proceed forward, we would then transfer the money budgeted for lawn service to the purchasing of the equipment. Commissioner Akins inquired if a trailer would be required to move a lawnmower. Chief Lindsey stated that the equipment needed and trailer could be purchased within the \$25,000. Chief Lindsey further commented that the first year into the second year for the transitional phase, with the return on investment; realization of cost savings during the second year. Commissioner Akins inquired as to how the budgeted number for the landscaping maintenance was obtained and whether or not bids were taken from other companies. Chief Lindsey stated that the current landscaping contract was used for budget planning purposes.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to how much of this entire budget package was being spent on upgrading technology in the office. Chief Lindsey noted the difference in hardware and software; some of which comes from capital outlay (hardware – servers, computers) and some from repairs and maintenance (546). Commissioner Akins inquired as to the 51% increase in repairs and maintenance and if this was mainly due to technology upgrades. Chief Lindsey noted that in addition to the technology upgrades, the increase in repair and maintenance can be attributed to vehicle maintenance issues, in and effort to reflect this appropriately.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to the expense for the new phone system. Chief Lindsey reminded the board of their approval in November of 2005 to upgrade only a portion of the phone



system; the administration modular unit and the connection of Station 2, approximately \$30,000. The request for this budget year 06-07 is to complete the phone system by connecting Station 3, Station 4, Station 1 and Red Base, which allows all the phones to connect in and a multitude of security issues and training possibilities. Commissioner Akins then stated, that last year in October or November, the initial request for the complete phone system was approximately \$90,000, and we are still at about \$90,000, so we really didn't make any progress; we just delayed spending the rest of the money. Chief Lindsey commented that the phone system request from last year was not budgeted and the board approved only a portion of phone system. Therefore, this year staff has budgeted for the remainder of the phone system to avoid coming to the board after the 06-07 budget is approved and asking for money for an unbudgeted item.

Commissioner Akins inquired into the \$3,000 budgeted for a laser printer for Red Base and a recent lightening strike to the existing equipment in which EFR collected almost \$800 from insurance. Chief Lindsey stated that it was a temporary repair until the equipment could be replaced. Commissioner Akins would rather have seen the staff come to the board, requesting to purchase the needed equipment immediately, allowing the board to come up with the money instead of throwing the \$800 away.

Commissioner Morris inquired as to the expected life of all the new equipment, technology. Chief Lindsey stated it is approximately a 3 year cycle. Commissioner Morris asked if this package would get EFR to where we would like to be. Chief Lindsey stated, that for this year, yes and that the reality is technology is always changing. Commissioner Morris suggested making all the technology purchases to get EFR to where we need to be, to be good for 3 years to avoid purchasing computers every year. Commissioners Akins disagreed with Commissioner Morris that technology, all new equipment today will change and next year there will be a piece of equipment that is needed. Commissioner Akins would like to see more annual purchasing vs. all at one time purchasing. Chief Lindsey stated that annual purchasing is the current path staff is taking, unless directed otherwise by the board. Commissioner Akins asked if any of the \$500,000 for capital improvements is being used for technology. Chief Lindsey stated that these designated funds are for repairing and planning to replace apparatus, such as fire engines, over the upcoming years, not additional but replacing. This reserve fund could be used for technology in an emergency situation not covered by insurance for some reason.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to the miscellaneous items under repair and maintenance, (i.e., painting, driveway, ceiling) and whether or not EFR is at a point in time where they can start putting these things on a regular schedule to be done. Chief Lindsey stated that this is something we are working towards. Commissioner Akins stated that it is very important that we establish some type of schedule. Commissioner Akins stated that we need to get these kinds of costs under control. Commissioner Sassano noted that this is the whole idea of getting the plan in place; that these things are spelled out specifically on the financial end.

Commissioner Morris inquired as to the replacing of 12 existing computers as to whether or not the computers are working now and if they can be used to the end of their life and then replace them. Chief Lindsey explained that these units have already met and some exceeded their life expectancy as far as for EFR purposes; computers may be used in a different capacity outside of EFR.

Commissioner Akins inquired about the on call status platform, as it looks to her we have the equipment but not the manpower. Chief Lindsey stated that this is correct, and provided a brief explanation as to current staffing issues and the emergency vehicle to be located at Station 2 due



to the large call volume. Vehicle responses within the proper zones, with the proper equipment, proper people and the proper time; try to staff according to peak call volumes and within those particular zones. Chief Lindsey noted that the on duty battalion chief will set staffing of the emergency vehicle based upon on duty personnel and ensuring we are in compliance with any rules and regulations we are governed by.

Commissioner Akins inquired about interest earnings and the increase of 127% and what this is based on. Finance Director April White explained that this is based on the fact that now we have reserves and cash in the bank. Commissioner Akins asked if this puts EFR in any precarious situation of taxes. Ms. White stated no.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to where the ambulance bay rental goes; does that go into ordinary income? Ms. White stated that the ambulance bay rent goes right back into the general fund cash, basically for the purpose of maintaining the station. Commissioner Akins asked if that is why 381 was reduced by 100%. Ms. White commented that is reduced because our previous auditor liked to see cash moving from fund to fund, actually recorded as a transfer, however, the new auditor does not require that and the actual transfer we make from fund to fund is just an accounting request.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to the negotiating of a new contract with the firefighters next year and what has been projected in this budget as a percentage. Chief Lindsey clarified that this budget will not be affected by the negotiations of the firefighters' contract; this will affect budget year 07-08.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to the 203% increase in overtime; at what point do you project we are going to get a handle on this, when we get 21 more firefighters; as personnel are hired, shouldn't overtime cost come down? Chief Lindsey stated that in previous years overtime was not appropriately budgeted for and therefore, staff is making every attempt to budget appropriately this year, hopefully we will have now stabilized what is projected instead of going over on overtime. Commissioner Schweers noted that overtime was dramatically understated in past years.

Commissioner Morris inquired as to how much of the overtime is attributed to PPL. Chief Lindsey provided an explanation that training events, education, short term disability, unscheduled personal leave, etc. contribute to the cost of overtime.

Commissioner Akins inquired as to the vehicles, that this is a replacement cost, not an increase in the number of vehicles, as well as if this was going to be put on some sort of regular program. Chief Lindsey stated yes and that staff is in the process of working on obtaining a fleet number through Coconut Point Fort which will help in cost and maintenance issues. Staff will continue to compare with the state contract.

Commissioner Akins asked for a recap on the addition to Station 3, Battalion Chief quarters. Chief Lindsey noted that further information would be provided during the regular meeting which follows, but noted that at this time there is not a space for the Battalion Chief. Originally the thought process was to include the Battalion Chief quarters in the administration building. However, since the Battalion Chief is 24/7, he needs to be a part of a fire station, and none of our stations took that into consideration. Therefore, we're looking to make this addition to Station 3 which is located in the center of the district, where we can house the Battalion Chief so, first they will be close to administration to fulfill those roles, and secondly, he will still be part of the



station environment as they are the first line supervisor, past the operations chief, in the field setting. Commissioner Schweers noted that since the Battalion Chief is 24/7, the addition to Station 3 would be more cost effective for utilities for the nights and weekends as opposed to having the Battalion Chief quarters within the administration building.

Commissioner Akins stated that she has a problem tentatively adopting this budget. She further stated that she understands why we are designating funds for debt and capital improvement and self insurance and other things, but believes that adopting the amount that has been designated for chief officer retirement is not something that we should do and that putting it in this budget and tentatively adopting it basically says that we are going to do this. Commissioner Akins asked if this board decided to give the chief officers \$500,000 in retirement, are we operating in the fiscal manner that we should and are we doing anything irregularly here? Chief Lindsey noted that he was instructed by the board earlier in the year when this was presented to look at this again with the costs and bring it back again in October. Chief Lindsey commented further that the intention of the budgeted amount of \$500,000 was to be prepared when it is brought back to the board in October, and if the board elects to go forward; to make sure we were in the position and had funds set aside that are designated for that amount as a reserve. If the board decides against this, those funds could then be transferred into another designated account within the reserves. Attorney Charles Schoech stated that budgeting the funds does not commit you to spending the funds; it enables you to spend the funds but is only one of the three steps necessary. You still have to enter into the contractual obligation to put the expenditure in place by changing that retirement plan, as it cannot be done without the board.

Commissioner Akins stated that this is her last comment and that she would be far more comfortable moving that \$500,000 up into the Operating Reserve and whatever we do regarding those retirements, then we take the money out of that. Commissioner Sassano noted that there has been discussion among members of this board in the past regarding taking money from Peter to pay Paul and personally feels that having it designated in a specific area, and we are not committed to spending it at this point, but it is there for a specific purpose, but if we choose not to do it, it can go somewhere else. If remembering correctly there has been discussion in the past regarding taking money that was not properly budgeted and moving it and that this was a good move on the part of Chief Lindsey.

***Commissioner Schweers called for a motion to be made to tentatively adopt the proposed budget as presented. Commissioner Sassano made a motion, Commissioner Morris seconded. Commissioners Morris, Sassano & Schweers were in favor. Commissioner Akins opposed. Motion carried by a vote of 3 to 1.***

***Commissioner Sassano made a motion to hold the Final public hearing on Monday, September 25, 2006 at 5:15 p.m. at 8681 County Road, Estero, Florida 33928. Commissioner Morris seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.***

***Commissioner Sassano made a motion to adjourn the first public hearing, Commissioner Akins seconded, all were in favor, motion carried.***

Commissioners Schweers adjourned the First Public Hearing at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



---

*GAYLE M. SASSANO, Secretary*

