



## St. Tammany Parish Fire Protection District # 3

P.O. Box 849

Lacombe, Louisiana 70445-0847

(985) 882-5977 Office (985) 882-6664 Fax

admin@stfd3.com

Michael Geissler  
Fire Chief

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### Public Meeting of the Board of Commissioners December 11, 2024 *Meeting Minutes*

#### **Called To Order:**

Chairman Danny Hall called the meeting to order on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 6:04 PM.

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **Prayer**

#### **Roll Call:**

Danny Hall, Leo Casanave, Jeanne Hutchison, Murphy Arsenaux and Raymond Batiste were present.

Chief Geissler and Assistant Chief Guillot were present representing the Fire Department.

Chad Danenhowe was present representing PMI.

#### **Secretary Minutes:**

Approve minutes of November 13, 2024, public hearing and regular public meeting.

Mr. Casanave made a motion to approve the minutes from November 13, 2024. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

#### **Employee Recognition:**

Employee Recognition. Mr. Hall stated that he would like to recognize all at the fire department for the Santa parade that is going through the community, stellar work, making a lot of happy people and good community interaction.

Chief Geissler recognized the following:

- Elizabeth Sundeen has been at the department for three years.
- Lance Lopez started full time and came back part time for three years.
- Branley Polk has been here one year.

Chief Geissler recognized the following new hires.

- Lawrencia Patterson and Dustin Moreau are the newest full-time hires.

Chief Geissler also stated that there are some employees that need their pinning's done and they opted to do that in January when badges and collar brass are all in.

**Treasurer Report:**

Mr. Hall stated that the November operating account started with \$464,708.39 and ended the month with \$650,452.21.

The sinking fund for November started with \$1509.94 and closed with \$1510.31.

The Money Market opened in November with \$716,160.61 and closed with \$583,923.05. The reason for that was that the money market feeds the operating account so money will be pulled from the money market to the operating account.

Ad Valorem has also been received.

He stated that he also went through the credit card reports and has seen nothing out of the ordinary.

Mr. Batiste made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

**Chief's Report:**

Chief Geissler stated that the department is ramping up the community outreach and public relations which is important to the department and has always been important to him. He stated that he is glad that the department has the ability to expand on that and really be out interacting with the public.

He stated that Marc May, the District Chief, will be taking on some public relations. His first interaction was with people at COAST discussing safety.

Chief Geissler stated that there are plenty of toys for the Toys for Tots, there are two boxes plus. Toys and food for the food drive have been collected from people bringing them to the office and on the Santa rides through the neighborhoods. A representative from Toys for Tots will be collecting the toys and taking them to the gym, they will go directly to Lacombe on Saturday following Santa on the Bayou. The department will also be providing Santa for that event.

The department will also be participating in a health fair near Lishman's at the same time as Santa on the Bayou. They will be doing blood pressure checks at that event.

The Santa through the neighborhoods will continue this weekend and next weekend. He stated that he wished that they could reach every neighborhood and every kid but it is very difficult, but they would be doing their best and he hopes that they will come out Saturday.

Chief Geissler stated that the Fire Prevention Bureau got some things approved and will be approved by Resolutions later tonight. It is also on the January agenda for the Council meeting, this will be an introduction but will be voted on in February.

Chief Geissler stated that they are on round two of the Opioid lawsuit, they will have a meeting in January on that and the department will hopefully be approved for the next request for funding for two sets of the visual laryngoscopes used for intubation. Also, a set of CPR dummies that will support planned public outreach by doing CPR training. He is looking at \$32,000.00 in the next round.

The CEO of Lowes in Slidell donated twenty thousand smoke detectors to the State of Louisiana which will be distributed through the Fire Marshall's office. A handful of fire departments will be on hand for public relations for that.

Year to date calls is 1682. 141 for the month of November. Ambulance status is at 97% of having two med units up with two paramedics. There were a couple of days that one med unit was down for maintenance. Mr. Hall stated that it was incredible that the department has gone from eighty something percent to ninety seven percent.

Chief Geissler stated that they are continuing to work on PIAL. New fire hose was ordered and was received today. Turn out gear and drop tanks for water haul has also been ordered. They also want to advance in the MultiRay gas detectors.

Mr. Batiste made a motion to accept the Chief's report. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

### **Old Business:**

Top-down Review.

Mr. Hall stated that it was very encouraging considering where we were until the time the review was done. There are seven categories in the report, and he would briefly address each one as follows.

- Leadership and management – Mr. Hall stated that overall employees expressed satisfaction with the election of Chief Geissler and Chief Guillot. They feel that under the current leadership the department will be recognized for its true qualities and strengths.
- Training and Development – 66% of the people interviewed said that the department would benefit from additional training. Mr. Hall stated that there are already things in place to get that training.
- Morale and Work environment – The entire department agreed that morale and overall positivity within the environment was on the rise. Mr. Hall stated that people say it's getting better. All members of the department maintain positive relationships with one another. Mr. Hall stated that is the brotherhood that has been talked about.
- Equipment and Resources – Mr. Hall stated that the consensus indicated for the major renovations at station 32. The report indicated the need for a dedicated training facility and concerns of the aging fleet.
- Safety and Health. There are some concerns about one-man engines, overall department members reported they feel safe and that there are no significant health concerns.
- Staffing – Feeling that more qualified firefighters should be hired. Indicators suggest a training officer is needed to oversee training programs and assist the department members in identifying opportunities to further develop their careers.

- Overall audit observations – Communications and a clear sense of direction would help align everyone’s efforts towards common objectives and further strengthen team dynamics.
- Summary - There are no inner personal issues among the department members and contract workers in contributing to a positive work environment. All members expressed satisfaction with their pay and had no complaints, which suggests a good level of morale with the team. The department is currently heading in the right direction with members working toward a collective goal for improvement.

Mr. Hall stated that was a stellar report on the fire department. It comes from a concerted effort on the board, the administration and the workforce. The concerns of the aging fleet will be worked on in the near future with strategic planning. Mr. Arsenaux stated that it is a good report and obviously a lot of it has to do with leadership, not necessarily the Board, but a lot of the morale are generally passed down through leadership. The fact that morale is up between individuals in the department speaks volumes because you can get a lot done when that’s going well.

Annual leave buyback update.

Mr. Hall asked if annual leave was getting down to a manageable number. Chief Geissler stated that with scheduling and people taking annual leave to get the numbers down, there are still five that total around \$17,000.00 as far as buyback hours. Chief Guillot stated that that number started around \$80,000.00 and that number keeps going down. He stated that by the end of the year it may be down another 8-10.

Employee handbook.

Mr. Hall asked Chief Geissler about the status of the employee handbook.

Chief Geissler stated that there is still some work to be done, there are three more chapters that he needs to finalize. These are chapters that were put out prior to him becoming Chief so he wanted to give them a second review and put them out to employees again. There are some changes that need to be updated. They are also working on SOG’s which need to be updated, which is a PIAL mandate.

Call for exam (Chief and District Chief status)

Mr. Hall asked for an update. Chief Geissler stated that he has completed the District Chief job analysis. Mr. Hall stated that he was working on the Chief’s analysis.

Longevity Pay

Mr. Hall stated that in May, Resolution 2024-014 was passed, and it approved the 2024 pay scale specific to longevity pay. The new rate took effect on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. Administration has requested to have an amendment to the start date of the longevity pay in 2025 start on the second pay period in January.

Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to amend Resolution 2024-014. Mr. Arsenaux seconded.

Chief Guillot explained that the 2.5% would be January for everyone instead of their anniversary date of hire. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

**New Business:**

2024-041: BOC Resolution (Adopt NFPA 1 Standard Operating Guidelines)

Mr. Hall stated that NFPA 1 has a lot of different topics around fire safety. The document would be used as a standard operating guide for the district. Mr. Batiste made a motion to adopt Resolution 2024-041. Mr. Casanave seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

2024-042: BOC Resolution (Adopt NFPA 101 Standard Operating Guidelines)

Mr. Hall stated that this compliments NFPA 1. This is a source to protect people. This is the NFPA equivalent of OSHA. Discussion took place regarding these guidelines. Mr. Arsenaux made a motion to adopt Resolution 2024-042. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

2024-043: BOC Resolution (Approve Establishment of Fire Prevention Bureau)

Chief Geissler stated that his intention is for this to continue the department's public relations in the area. The department would be able to be involved in the community, go to commercial buildings and discuss safety issues and concerns. This would continue into investigations so when there are fires the department can handle their own investigations formally. Major incidents, fatalities, hospitals and schools, the Fire Marshall's would have to be involved. It allows the department to deal with a lot of things the state typically does. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-043. Mr. Batiste seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

2024-044: BOC Resolution (Adopt 2025 BOC meeting schedule)

Mr. Hall stated that it is stated in the bylaws that the Board meet every second Wednesday of the month. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to adopt Resolution 2024-044. Mr. Casanave seconded. Chief Geissler stated that he would like to reevaluate the times to the meetings. He would like to push the time up earlier for the meetings to 5:00 pm. Discussion took place regarding changing the time of the meetings. Mr. Batiste made a motion to amend Resolution 2024-044 to change the start time for the regular meeting schedule to 5:00 pm instead of 6:00pm. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

Amended Resolution 2024-044 to keep dates but change the start time of the meeting to 5:00 pm. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to adopt amended Resolution 2024-044. Mr. Batiste seconded. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

Discussion of 2025 manpower budget line item.

Chief Guillot stated that the original budget was based off the six man per day with concerns of the inventory tax, so now that that's cleared up some for next year, manpower will be moved back to what is current as 7 and 1/3 per day which is what keeps both med units operational. This also puts more people on for special events as well as sending more people to training. No action required.

Record keeping software upgrade.

Chief Geissler stated that also approved in the budget were items such as scheduling, record management, and streetwise. There is a records management software called First Due which has a lot of perks and benefits and covers a lot of features that we are paying different companies for consolidated under one umbrella. He stated the plan was to switch to First Due which would be an increase in cost because of a lot of the perks. ER is ending, no tech support or upgrades as of now. He met with the representative from First Due and feels that this is the way to go. All reports will cross over which now they do not. He would like to get approval to move forward with this software, which would be about a \$10,000.00 increase for the first year. More discussion took place regarding the new software. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to approve the purchase of the new software up to \$27,000.00. Mr. Casanave seconded. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

2024 recap.

Mr. Hall stated that this is just for discussion, no action will be taken. There was a PowerPoint discussed (see attached).

#### **Challenges faced in 2024**

- Emergency response staffing was low

- Employee retention rates were deployable

- Emergency Medical Response coverage was at an unacceptable level

- Inadequate rescue equipment and PPE

- Ambulance billing practices did not meet the standards established by the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Louisiana statutes or opinions of the State Attorney General's office

- The general outlook for the department was poor

#### **What we accomplished in 2024 to meet the challenges**

- Improved emergency response equipment

- Conducted facility upgrades

- Addressed Employee Needs

- Improved billing practices

- Enhanced ambulance response

- Built/improved relationships

- Installed modern technology

- Expanded services

- Building for the future

Mr. Hall stated that while there will be challenges for the department in the coming year the overall outlook for the department is strong. It's strong because of the hard work accomplished by every employee and board member as business partners associated with this department. He stated that he recently asked an employee who worked for us, left and then reapplied why did she want to come back she said "I see the potential this department has now". He thanked all at the department, the board, and the public that supports the department.

Mr. Casanave made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. A vote was taken.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.