



St. Tammany Parish Fire Protection District # 3

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Michael Geissler
Fire Chief

Special Public Meeting of the Board of Commissioners September 18, 2024 *Meeting Minutes*

Called To Order:

Chairman Danny Hall called the meeting to order on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 6:00PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Prayer

Roll Call:

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

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

Mark Waniewski was present representing PMI.

Secretary Minutes:

Approve minutes of August 14, 2024, regular meeting.

Mr. Casanave made a motion to approve the minutes from August 14, 2024. Mr. Batiste seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

Employee Recognition:

1) Employee Recognition. Chief Geissler recognized Captain Jim McQuilkin. He stated that Captain McQuilkin had been at the Department 28+ years and officially makes 15 years full time on September 15th.

Chief Geissler also recognized Lawrencina Patterson. She has been with the department for 1 year.

Treasurer Report:

Mr. Hall stated that it will be a little different tonight, Mr. Waniewski will do the treasurer's report. Mr. Waniewski stated that there were no hardships in 2024. The budget will be required to be amended because of the 5% overage in expenditures because of the increase in personnel and pay adjustments. Payroll will be over because of the improvements approved by the Board.

Mr. Arsenaux made a motion to accept the treasurers report. Mr. Batiste seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

Chief's Report:

1) Response updates. Chief Geissler stated that there were 1285 calls year to date. In August there were 170 calls. In August, both med units were running 96% of the time. There were 5 calls transferred to Acadian. These 5 calls were legitimate for mutual aid, some of the med units were already on calls and once the med unit was out for maintenance. Mr. Hall stated that the department was meeting the goal of 95% plus.

2) 2024 budget. This was covered in the treasurer's report.

3) 2025 budget. Chief Geissler stated that he and Assistant Chief Guillot have been working on the 2025 budget coming up with ideas, purchases, and advancements for next year. There is a first draft compiled and they have been meeting with the board members individually to discuss some of those items to make sure that they meet the needs of the District in 2025. There will be some money set aside as far as strategic planning for 3-5 years in the future. Mr. Hall stated that he has had an opportunity to meet with both Chiefs and that he is impressed with the amount of thought going into the budget. He encourages anyone on the Board to meet with the Chiefs, he feels that it is setting the District up to be in a good place in 2025. Mr. Arsenaux has met with both Chiefs and feels that they have done a really good job with the budget and looks forward to seeing the 3 and 5 year plans because there is actually capital outlay for that. The other three members are being scheduled to meet with the Chief's on the budget. Mr. Arsenaux said that it is progressive and moving forward and that he feels that the remaining three board members will be pleased to hear the plan. Chief Geissler stated that he would get input from employees and will progress with strategic planning. Chief Guillot stated that in 2025, the manpower did move forward and is reflected in the budget now, the average went from 4 ½ to 7 1/3.

4) Hiring update. Chief Geissler stated that 2 full time employees and 1 part time employee were hired in the last month. One is a 10-year vet in the fire service. We are also still receiving applications as late as today.

5) Life improvement updates. Chief Geissler stated that there have been some things done internally to satisfy the work environment. Kentwood water at each station for quality of water was purchased. Gym equipment has been requested for a while, a treadmill, a bike, and a stair stepper were purchased which will keep the employees prepped for their job.

6) Smoke and gas detector. Chief Geissler stated that they need to replenish or replace and update the multi gas detectors on the rescue trucks. They do have a quote under \$10,000.00 but he wanted to bring it to the board's attention. Chief Geissler also stated that they will be looking into grants as well. Two detectors and equipment to calibrate them is around \$7800.00.

Old Business:

1) Medical billing and collections, status of transition to Koronis Revenue Solutions. Mrs. McCarthy stated that the transition was going really well. Most information requested from Insight billing has been received and transferred to Koronis. A supply charge list has been put together by her and Chief Geissler and submitted to Koronis. Their access to insurance websites is almost complete and they have access to Image Trend where they will be able to pull reports for billing. Koronis will have a start date of October 1 and will also provide training for the employees. Insight is aware that a

termination letter is coming because of an insurance website verification went to Insight. They were made aware by a phone call received after the insurance verification.

Mr. Hall asked that a letter be drafted to Insight.

2) Cost of recovering money owed by former employees. Mr. Hall stated that there were three previous employees that went through training and left the department and owed money. Previous tries with small claims and collections have not solved the issue. The total owed by the three employees combined is less than \$3000.00. Mr. Hall stated the Board could vote on making this total accounts receivable and erase from account as unrecoverable debt from the three employees. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to write off the debt from the three employees as unrecoverable debt. Mr. Casanave seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

3) Top-Down Review/HR Audit. Mr. Waniewski stated that he had three dates for Andrea Taylor to be on site, September 27, October 4, and October 11. He stated that he would work with the Administration to select the best date based on the calendar schedule and then will start setting up employee interviews. Mr. Waniewski stated that the interviews would probably take two days.

New Business:

1) Chief selection. Mr. Hall would like to discuss the date of hiring the new Chief. The current positions will be made provisional later in the meeting. Discussion took place of when to enter the hiring process. The Board would like to wait until after the beginning of the year to give the Board information from the Top-Down review as well. No action taken.

2) Training Officer. Mr. Hall stated that he discussed with both Chief's, and they would like to start the process of establishing a training officer position. This title was also discussed and will need to be changed, but the person may still be doing training. Chief Geissler stated that opening up as training officer would be a separate division. Other options were being looked at and a survey received from Civil Service would title the new position. Proof of funding and Board support is needed for Civil Service to start the process. Chief Geissler would like to start the process through Civil Service to move forward to opening the position. Mr. Arsenaux made a motion to approve the new position and funding for the position in the 2025 budget. Mr. Casanave seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

3) 2024-021: BOC Resolution (Approve Engagement of Koronis Revenue Solution, LLC-EMS billing) – Record keeping. Mr. Hall stated that at the last meeting, discussion of hiring Koronis Revenue Solutions, LLC took place. This is just to sign the Resolution into the record.

4) 2024-022: BOC Resolution (Approve Termination of Insight Billing Corporation – EMS Billing) – Record keeping. This was approved at the August meeting.

5) 2024-023: BOC Resolution (Approve Provisional Appointments of Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief) Mr. Hall stated that this is a formality to approve provisional position for Michael Geissler as Fire Chief and Michael Guillot as Assistant Fire Chief. Mr. Arsenaux made a motion to approve. Mr. Batiste seconded. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

6) Increase monthly spending limit on department Visa Credit card. Mr. Hall would like to increase the monthly spending limit from \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00 on the visa card. He stated that this does not increase his one-time spending authority, it is still at \$10,000.00. This is being requested in case of emergencies such as a hurricane. This would be for Chief Geissler and Assistant Chief Guillot, each having a limit of \$20,000.00 monthly. Mr. Casanave made a motion to approve. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

7) Issue department Visa card to Assistant Chief. This was approved with the approval of increasing the monthly spending limit above.

8) 2024-024: BOC Resolution (Approve workers' Compensation Insurance) The new policy reflects the new wages and personnel approved by the board. The new policy reflects those changes. Mr. Casanave made a motion to approve. Mr. Batiste seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

9) 2024-025: BOC Resolution (Approve Sweep Bank Accounts to Transfer Capital Funds to Operating Budget) Mr. Hall stated that he and the Chief's met with Ms. Williams from Hancock Whitney bank as well as the financial advisor. Discussion took place regarding keeping large amounts of money in the operating account and the safety of those accounts. The discussion of taking a bulk of money being place in a money market which would also allow interest being earned and the money being less vulnerable. This would also allow money being transferred as needed. Mr. Waniewski stated that this is a standard business practice of sweep accounts so that the department is maximizing interest and only leaving funds needed to clear transactions in the operational account. This is an automatic process; this Resolution and Resolution 2024-026 go hand in hand to allow to develop and approve a financial strategy for the department. Mr. Batiste made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-025. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. No further discussion took place.

Motion carried.

10) 2024-026: BOC Resolution (Approve Implementation of Financial Services & Investment Ladder Strategies). Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-026. Mr. Casanave seconded. Discussion took place regarding using a secure investment that you maximize interest on the money by laddering, the money matures when needed for operations. Mr. Hall stated that a meeting with Edward Jones was also took place and there wasn't much that they could do for the Department. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

11) 2024-027: BOC Resolution (Approve Ratification of Signature Authority for Financial Services) This would Remove the former Chief Sicard and add Assistant Chief Guillot. This will include Board chairman, Mr. Hall and the treasurer, Mrs. Hutchison expanding their signatures to the financial side as well. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to approve. Mr. Casanave seconded. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

12) 2024-028: BOC Resolution (Approve Surplus of Selling Equipment Deemed of “No Value”) Mr. Arsenaux made a motion to approve. Mr. Batiste seconded. Chief Geissler showed pictures of several items that would be of no value. Mr. Hall stated that Chief Geissler will be able to follow a process established by the LLA to dispose of equipment deemed of no value. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

13) 2024-029: BOC Resolution (Approve Surplus Equipment Deemed “of Value”). Mr. Hall stated that the MCI trailer could be sold and there are items of value in the trailer. Chief Geissler stated that when the department received the trailer, we were receiving funding from the state to purchase the items in it. That Grant is no longer in place, so the items are just there in the heat. There is equipment of value that can be recycled into operation, but the trailer would be an item to surplus. He will follow the LLA process to dispose of it. Mr. Arsenaux made a motion to approve. Mr. Batiste seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

14) 2024-030: BOC Resolution (Approve Extension of Hancock Whitney Financial Services) Mr. Hall stated that they are capping out the fees and offering good services. We did meet with Whitney and Edward Jones and all that met with them feel it is in the best interest to stay with Whitney. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to approve. Mr. Casanave seconded. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

15) 2024-031: BOC Resolution (Approve to Rescind BOC Resolution 2019-016 “Fire Recovery USA Mitigation Rates”) Mr. Hall stated that this was discussed at the last meeting and this allowed the department to allow to charge for an emergency response. It was the Boards desire to stop the charge. Mr. Waniewski stated that since Insight Billing has been terminated, by default, this has also been terminated so this is a clean up resolution. Mr. Hall stated that he would like for the Department to reserve the right to bill for services outside of the norm, example, if there is a situation on the interstate with a company truck with a hazmat disaster with a staff on the interstate for 6 hours, he feels that the department should be able to charge for that at the Chief’s discretion but not to have so many prices for different circumstances. So, at the Chief’s discretion he could charge at the established FEMA rates for a crew and a pumper. The department will have the attorney see if that could be done. Mr. Batiste made a motion to rescind Resolution 2024-031. Mrs. Hutchison seconded. No further discussion. A vote was taken. Mr. Hall wanted it read into the record again that the Department reserves the right to bill on the Chief’s discretion.

Motion carried.

16) Retirement Benefits/Qualify Event: ACT 339 (LRS: 22:36) Mr. Waniewski stated that in 2022 the Legislature passed a bill that if you are a fire district or department that is 50 employees or less that you are now legally required to offer retirees to stay on your benefit plan until age 65 although they would pay the premium. In 2022 a Resolution was passed by the Board to establish that plan.

There were issues with the current agent to get this in place when Chief Sicard retired. His concern was the unexpected retirement of Chief Sicard and a very finite window to put all of this in place so he had no gap in coverage in September. Since he was the first eligible upon retirement and the agent had never done this before and was not knowledgeable of the act or what it took to mandate that primary carrier in the state of LA would recognize it. Mr. Waniewski stated that the department is in compliant with the law and the insurance provider is also in compliant with the law and it has been established that Chief Sicard can purchase benefits to age 65 under this law at no cost to the district. Mr. Hall's concern is that the agent missed this and wasn't knowledgeable about the act. Mr. Hall stated that he did not want to change insurance companies but maybe have some assurances that this agent can take care of the employees. Mr. Hall would like to have a motion to explore alternate agents. Mrs. Hutchison made a motion to explore and to reevaluate the current agent. Mr. Batiste seconded. This can be discussed at the next board meeting. No further discussion. A vote was taken.

Motion carried.

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

Motion carried.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 7:53.