

Murrells Inlet – Garden City Fire District
Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes of November 23, 2015

Board Members Present: Al Hitchcock, Booty Shelley, George Oldroyd, Wesley Gordon, Kay Benton, and Moe Wells. Also in Attendance: Chief Knight, Assistant Chief Haney, Jerry Howerton, and Pat Walsh.

Public Comment: Wendy Swindell asked why the website doesn't have the September minutes posted. She also expressed concern that the budget meetings were not announced. She requested the public comment portion of the board meetings be moved to the end of the meeting so the public can comment on what is discussed during the meeting.

Maggie Fancher stated she pays 19.5 millage in the contract area of the fire district and lives the furthest from the local firehouse. She receives no communication from the Fire District, and has no voting rights, and yet she pays for the service. She is concerned about the embezzlement situation being closed, and wants to know who is responsible. She has heard that it is questionable whether or not Station Four will be built. Chairman Hitchcock responded by saying that Station Four will be built, and the money embezzled will be replaced by the bonding company. He also let her know the millage she pays will drop to fourteen percent once the contract area becomes a part of the district in January 2016. She asked about the checks and balances put into place to ensure no more funds will be embezzled. Moe Wells discussed the change in process for accounts payable and payroll. He also explained he is not a signer on the account, and that he is responsible for reconciling the bank statements. Wendy Swindell asked if the public will be notified when the money has been replaced by the bonding company. Maggie Fancher would like the Fire District to send each resident a letter to let them know when the contract area becomes part of the district. George Oldroyd gave his opinion of the attorney's use of the words case closed. He believes the attorney referred to the legal portion of the case and that it will not be closed administratively. Tyler Servant, Horry County Councilman, remarked that the contract had not been executed correctly, but he voted against taking back the \$500,000 for Station Four, because he did not feel it was fair.

Jerry Fancher did not sign up to speak, but asked to speak also. He said most of the people on the board know he has worked the last few years as an advocate for Station Four. One thing that bothers him is that he does not recall the board openly discussing the loss of the \$500,000 in any of the board meetings. He feels the \$500,000 was no longer available because the construction of Station Four had not started soon enough. He continued by saying that he had acted as an advocate for the board and now felt he had been used. Wendy Swindell noted this was related to her complaint that the minutes are not complete. She stated she attended a board meeting when the money being retracted was discussed, but it was not in the minutes. Moe Wells pointed out the board did not want to build a station that could not be manned. The millage increase was questioned, and Chairman Hitchcock explained the board did not lower its request to 14 mills; it was decreased during the legislative process.

Stephen Parchesky spoke regarding the increase in firefighter salaries. He felt the Fire District would lose personnel unless the board found a way to allow the seventeen percent raises asked for by Chief Knight. Chairman Hitchcock explained that with the increase in personnel next year, he did not feel the district could afford raises at that level.

The minutes of the meeting held on October 26, 2015 were presented. Chairman Hitchcock noted the words "audit the fits" on the last page should read "audit that fits." Kay Benton moved to approve the minutes with the correction, and was seconded by Booty Shelley. The motion carried unanimously.

Financials: Chairman Hitchcock asked if there were any questions regarding the financial reports. No questions were asked and Booty Shelley made the motion to approve the financials. Kay Benton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Firefighter's Report: Pat Walsh had nothing to report, but remarked he had not seen a crowd like the one tonight at a board meeting; and the board should take note.

Chief's Report: Chief Knight announced the Awards Banquet and Dinner will be held at Oceanside Village on December 5, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. He has included in the board packet a recommendation that he would like to discuss during the budget reading.

Assistant Chief's Report: Assistant Chief Haney reported the contract with the webhosting provider has not been renewed and he is in the process of getting the new website up and running. The Fire District will now have complete control over the website.

EMS Report: Captain Howerton reported another month of increased EMS calls. October showed an increase of 36 in Horry County and 16 calls in Georgetown County. This is a twenty percent increase.

Chairman's Report: Chairman Hitchcock gave an update on Station Four. The architect has created a list of thirty-one value engineering items to renegotiate with the lowest bidder in order to lower the price. Some of the items included in the list are the type of roof; omission of the storage building; omission of the shutters; and an alternate HVAC unit.

Budget: Chairman Hitchcock pointed out a deficit in the budget at this time of \$706,000. He noted \$300,000 is for Station Four; \$275,000 for a new truck; and \$200,000 for a new medic unit. He continued to say the bank balance is at its lowest point this time of year, and any surplus seen at the beginning of 2016 is due to the timing of tax payments. The Fire District requires approximately \$250,000 to \$260,000 to operate each month. The term slush fund is not accurate because a buffer is needed in the account if there is ever a delay receiving money from the counties. George Oldroyd stated he believes the down payment on the apparatus should be less, and a larger amount of debt carried. He also asked if the bank assessment has been received for the property valuation of Station Four and if there might be a different requirement for a down payment. Kay Benton stated the assessment would be done after the

contract was renegotiated; and options would be given for making the down payment on the loans for the building and equipment. Moe Wells expressed concern regarding moving payments from capital expenditures to operating. The salaries expense was discussed and how it compares to surrounding departments. Chairman Hitchcock stated the district does not lose personnel to other fire departments in the area. Booty Shelley stated he did not have a problem with a longer note payable here or there, noting the district has made larger payments, when the budget allowed, paying the loan off earlier. It was agreed to discuss the salaries in the next budget meeting. Chief Knight noted he is having some difficulty getting the requested salary information from neighboring departments. He explained the approach he used to arrive at the requested salary increases, and expressed his feelings about larger salary increases at the cost of quality equipment. Chief Knight proposed converting part time personnel to full time status in an effort to reduce overtime expense.

Moe Wells made a motion to approve the budget as written, and was seconded by Wesley Gordon. George Oldroyd did not approve. The motion carried five to one. The next budget meeting was scheduled for December 1st, at 5:00 p.m.

The Christmas Party will be December 5th, at 6:00 p.m.
The next board meeting will be December 14th at 6:00 p.m.

Old Business: None.

New Business: None.

There being no further business, Moe Wells made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Wesley Gordon. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved on 12/14, 2015



Al Hitchcock, Chairman