

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 17, 2011**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Kristie Anders, Marcia Andrews, Zeke McDonald, Joe Miklavcic (by speaker phone), Roy Wildeman and Chief Richard Pepper

ISLANDERS PRESENT: Andrew Anderson, Joyce Ballard, Firefighter Jon Bickel, John Bickel, Linda Bickel, Carolyn Creah, Charles Creah, Sue Ann Cousar, Clark Evano, Glenn Hedman, Fuzzy Jeffers, Hart Kelley, Asst. Chief Bob Kinniry, Vicki Kirsch, Dick Lewis, Mick Melvin, Steve Muse, John Porter, EMT Andrea Pepper, Bert Trapanese, Dave Tompkins.

1) CALL TO ORDER: Chairman McDonald called the meeting to order at 11:11 a.m.

2) MINUTES: Anders moved, Wildeman seconded, and all voted to accept as written the minutes of the August 20 regular meeting.

3) TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer explained the annual budget wind-down without incoming revenue and cautioned against unexpected costs. If all bills are in, net income is under budget by \$2,000 as of Sept. 1, a reasonable, short-term deficit. Current figures raised no alarms; capital reserves are drawn down by firehouse addition pre-construction costs.

Final auditor's report for fiscal 2010 was distributed to the board. As required by the Auditor and GASB 54, the board shall use a "Balanced Funding System," guidelines which were given the board to adopt. Treasurer said the changes may have value as a way to improve communication about reserve accounts.

Andrews moved, Miklavcic seconded and all voted aye to accept the Treasurer's report as presented.

4) CHIEF'S REPORT:

Calls to date are 74.

* L-191 – manager of Ten-Eight will bring in broker to market the Tele-Squirt, for a 15% to 20% fee, to be negotiated. Board asked whether the vehicle might be put out for bid. Chief and board agreed to research market options.

* Chief Pepper has completed advanced schooling and is certified as a Fire Officer II (copy attached). The board offered congratulations.

5) COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS:

A. Grants – Wildeman said that since the firehouse addition is a new footprint, the project is ineligible for an AFG grant. Another grant cycle begins in the spring.

6) OLD BUSINESS:

A. Referendum/Finance – Commissioners said the fire district can't commit future tax revenues to mortgage for a building project. The lease-buyback system (used to build the first firehouse) is legal and the current bidder has reduced rates from spring 2011. They added that a preliminary budget of \$700,000 which seemed good had produced reasonable assessment figures. However, last month's preliminary price list from the construction manager (\$1.2 million) led the board to request yet another approach to basic elements priced alarmingly high, such as pilings, concrete work and fire suppression/sprinkler systems.

The current price is 25% more than expected, per the Chairman, and the first request for new ideas lead to a price increase. He added that, while cost cuts are pursued, the financing process could begin, using the worst-case price. The board is examining the assessment method, a payment for almost all owners based on average parcel size, not property value (as with ad valorem taxes).

Secretary Andrews described the Fishkind & Associates methodology report: a fair and legal assessment, generally stated 642 owners pay the same amount per parcel (whether bare lot or big house) and the remaining 25 owners of larger parcels pay about 10 % more. Wildeman reported most-recent, worst-case cost estimates produce an assessment of about \$171 per year, per parcel, spread over 15 years.

Vice Chairman Miklavcic added that the board's continuing task is to get more local subcontractors to participate, bringing valuable experience and economies. He dubbed current estimates a deal breaker.

Several islanders resumed questioning (See 9/17 Budget Meeting Minutes) the need for and design of a firehouse addition, including these points:

- * Reconsider firefighter staff addition
- * House firefighters by purchasing a distressed property.
- * Buy and combine low-priced townhouses (proximity to firehouse is plus).
- * Renovate firehouse for bunk-house space (use meeting space).
- * Have chief and assistant chief operate like shift workers (no housing for family).
- * Erect a quonset-style building for equipment.
- * Avoid engineer-specified piling systems, using experienced island pile driver. Board noted projections for lower costs of staff firefighter versus expanding part time roster to meet current safety standards.

Fuzzy Jeffers, an experienced island builder spoke of:

- * cost of requiring bonded contractors.
- * expensive code requirements don't apply if dwelling were built on adjoining lot and bought by district.
- * referred to examples of very wealthy/very smart people who found ways to build large, tall-piling structures with standard wood pilings.
- * steel pilings on island appear to be weathering poorly.
- * some of best craftsmen reject government jobs for fear of slow payment.

Board noted that a sub's pay could be one week from invoice.

Chief Pepper gave background on building project, starting in 2004 talks about need for staff housing and project description in Public Facilities Plan 2009. State of FI-required report guides the district's planning—including rules for a government project; public bidding requirements; qualified/bonded providers; tougher building specifications.

District rezoned adjoining lot (prior zoning avoided Sprint tower) to commercial, as required for firehouse. Considering estimated firehouse construction cost, the district inquired about residential construction, but the State of Florida prohibits use of tax funds for any compromise building.

The project sequence is as follows:

1. Develop plans and specifications
2. Gets a firm cost (maximum)
3. Holds on – Island information meetings.
4. Formal on Island- hearing to answer concerns.
5. Draft resolution to assess the property owners. 6. Hold the referendum.

Miklavcic moved to table the referendum/finance effort (using worst-case costs) until the next meeting, to allow work on prices; modification of design.

Andrews seconded the motion. Discussion included the renewed pressure on contractors for piling, fire suppression/well and concrete prices. Also, noted time pressure to capture a financing deal that may be the lowest cost ever, while working toward March and April meetings to involve the most people in the referendum. All voted aye to table the issue.

B. Landing Zone lights – Chairman McDonald reported that, since last week’s notice of an imminent Emergency Medical Service improvement, he had contacted Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah about the County’s proposed instrument landing system for the airstrip designed to guide bad-weather/nighttime EMS helicopter landings (and Sheriff’s response). District sought a grant to pay the \$3500 cost of lights, required from the community. (UCF&RD cooperates in a regional marine rescue group; serves islanders and boaters.) Chairman added that Dist.1 Commissioner Manning shortcut the process--- Lee Co. Aviation EMS will fund the island system. Related navigation information is for public safety operators, only. The lights substitute for flashers currently placed on the strip by volunteers as they prepare for nighttime evacuations on the unlit airstrip.

Hart Kelley raised strong objection to the plan, citing lack of written notice to the airstrip’s board and concerns over FAA intrusion into the airstrip’s autonomy and unimpeded member use; suggested his Salty Approach membership would object to side issues of the navigation aid. He stated that the system change was prompted by one EMS helicopter accident resulting from pilot error by a lady pilot.

Chairman McDonald acknowledged the unfortunate lack of written communication with Salty Approach to support information conveyed earlier by conversations with Kelley.

C. Audit - GASB 54 – Board signed pertinent paperwork.

D. Line of Credit – Wildeman moved and Anders seconded the motion that commissioners accept Stonegate Bank’s proposal, dated August 15, 2011, pertaining to an emergency line of credit. (See prior meeting minutes for discussion.) Commissioner Miklavcic had been called away from phone participation. McDonald, Anders, Wildeman, Andrews voted aye.

Wildeman moved and Anders seconded the motion that several officers be authorized to transfer line-of-credit funds to appropriate accounts for emergency utilization. With Miklavcic excused, McDonald, Anders, Wildeman and Andrews voted aye.

7) NEW BUSINESS:

A. Chairman asked and learned that it was the sense of the board that we increase the frequency of letters and other communications to get information to our constituency.

8) PUBLIC COMMENT:

See Above – Most islanders left the room after item 6) B. Board reviewed and discussed some of the public’s alternates to the current plan of equipment bays and second floor housing.

Islander Dick Lewis asked whether the board had current insurance and bonds (Chief confirmed premiums are paid.) and added that if the board considered many of the suggestions for the firehouse addition they would break the law and misuse funds. Islands’ conflicts are familiar from Lewis’ decades as civil engineer and consultant for public and private projects. Quoting likely prices:

* Costs to renovate old houses or townhouses to public (taxpayer) facility standards equals little if any savings.

* Do SHC and UCFRD missions match?

* Off-UCFRD property sites equal complications (zoning, neighbors’ objections to 24-hour activity, vehicles . . .)

* Costs and limitations of a temporary building, eventual removal and replacement equals no long-term economies.

* Plan and price of current design are reasonable and timing is best district will ever see.

The board thanked Lewis for his comments and added that the islanders who left early might have used the above to inform their decision making. Chairman added that this board cannot and will not break the law.

9) NEXT MEETING DATE: 10/15/2011

10) ADJOURN: Andrews moved, Anders seconded and all voted aye to adjourn at 1:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Andrews, Secretary