

WEST MANATEE FIRE & RESCUE DISTRICT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

*Minutes of July 19, 2022
Administration Building and via Zoom*

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Larry Jennis, Robert Bennett, David Bishop, George Harris, and Al Robinson. The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silence and the oath.

Commissioner Bennett motioned to approve the excused absence of Chairman Jennis and Commissioner Harris from the June 21, 2022, meeting; seconded by Commissioner Bishop; motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Harris did listen to the June 21, 2022, meeting via Zoom.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR REALLOCATION OF NON-AD VALOREM ASSESSMENTS: Administrative Assistant Wright verified that public notice was advertised in The Bradenton Herald on June 29, 2022 and July 6, 2022 and read Resolution #2022-03. Attorney Kardash first explained that the letter that was sent to all parcels in the District was required from the Florida Statutes, some areas being verbatim hence the way it was written. Attorney Kardash then paraphrased a correspondence from Chief Rigney explaining the history of non-ad valorem assessments in our Fire District and common misconceptions the District staff experienced while fielding calls from taxpayers in reference to this letter. Attorney Kardash addressed a mistake regarding dates included in the letter, she explained that there will be a continuation of the public hearings on Thursday, July 21, 2022, due to this issue. She also read the WMFR Rules of Decorum to the public. Chairman Jennis opened the public hearing for public comments. The first comment came from Jesse Davis of West Bradenton. Mr. Davis expressed his support for the reallocation of non-ad valorem assessments towards non-transport ALS. Mr. Davis also articulated his longtime support of the West Manatee Fire & Rescue District and their continued push to increase their services for the residents of the District. The next public comment was from Richard Coyne of Palma Sola Park. Mr. Coyne explained that he lives near single family homes that operate as rentals. His concern was why should they be considered a single-family home for tax purposes such as fire assessments versus being classified as a motel/hotel. This considering the heightened risk they pose with the amount of people inhabiting them. The last comment came from Derrick Warner of Palma Sola Park. Mr. Warner also expressed his support for the reallocation and attributed it to having the best available ALS care as quickly as possible. Mr. Warner said he believes this is the most important service that the Fire District can provide especially in a District that has little fire incidents. Chairman Jennis turned to Fire Marshal (FM) Kwiatkowski to speak on Mr. Coyne's concerns. FM Kwiatkowski explained that the Florida Fire Prevention code doesn't currently have an occupancy for what we are experiencing in our District with vacation rentals. He stated he has requested a new land use code for vacation rentals with the Manatee County Property Appraisers Office so that they could target single-family homes operating as hotels. FM Kwiatkowski also noted that in the last 2 years, 80% of the fires in Holmes Beach occurred at vacation rentals. FM Kwiatkowski said he is trying to work with the County and Island Municipalities to enforce at least the minimum of the Fire Prevention Code at these rental homes. Commissioner Bishop stated unfortunately there is no bureaucracy stating that single-family homes or duplexes must inform anyone of their rental status. Commissioner Bishop stated that it begins with the County and building codes and a change to this would have to come with great support from the Manatee County Commissioners. Commissioner Bishop then shifted to the topic of Advanced Life Support. He spoke of a personal experience where response times and the highest quality care were detrimental. Because of this incident occurring in middle of the night, Station 1 was not staffed with EMS hence why it took them so much longer to respond versus WMFR being able to respond in 3 minutes. He stated that with this service of ALS, it doesn't matter who gets there first if our family members are getting the best quality care. Commissioner Robinson stated his opinion on Government and how this letter cost the District a great deal of funds and confusion. Commissioner Bennett expressed his support for the District progressing in the County as the first to become an ALS department and how much it benefits the community. Commissioner Harris empathized with Mr. Coyne's situation and concerns. Commissioner Harris then referenced the "Manatee County Rule" that could've been if the Manatee County Commission didn't allow WMFR to become an ALS department. He expressed how proud he is of the District for bringing ALS as related to the Fire Service to this County. Chairman Jennis then closed the Public Hearing for continuation on Thursday July 21, 2022.

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PUBLIC HEARING ADOPTION AND LEVY OF NON-AD VALOREM ASSESSMENTS: Administrative Assistant Wright verified that public notice was advertised in The Bradenton Herald on June 29, 2022 and July 6, 2022 and read Resolution #2022-04. Attorney Kardash presented the Resolution defining it as the Resolution that levy's the assessments for the new purpose which would be the dual purpose of fire protection and EMS. Commissioner Harris asked Attorney Kardash if transport in the future would then be considered another purpose or would it be considered under the umbrella of ALS services. Attorney Kardash responded by stating the addition of transport would have a way greater impact on the budget so there would most likely have to be an increase just for that contrary to what the District is doing now by reallocating funds within our normal operating budget. Chairman Jennis opened the public hearing for public comments; there were none. Chairman Jennis closed the Public Hearing for continuation on Thursday July 21, 2022.

CHANGES TO AGENDA: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

CONSENT AGENDA: Commissioner Robinson motioned to approve consent agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner Harris; motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS: None

CARRIED FROM CONSENT AGENDA: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

CHIEF'S REPORT: FM Kwiatkowski announced that our ISO rating remains a 2. He then mentioned that the District is offering Hands-Only CPR on select Saturdays every month at the Admin Building and Holmes Beach City Hall. Deputy Johnson stated that the goal is to teach everyone over 18 Hands-Only CPR. These courses are offered free to the public.

Commissioner Harris asked Chief to expand on what the ISO rating is and why a score of 2 is beneficial to the taxpayers of the District. Chief Rigney explained that the lower the number the lower your fire insurance will be. Chief stated the only way to score a 1 would be to hire about 40 more people and have them strategically located around the District, however that is not financially beneficial. The score depends heavily on how many people you can have arrive to a structure fire within 9 minutes which is currently impossible. He stated we are still able to maintain a such a good score due to our fire prevention measures and the number of hydrants we have around the District. Commissioner Bishop mentioned that score was a 4 a number of years ago and we have made a lot of progress.

OTHER REPORTS: None

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS: None

NEXT MEETING: Continuation of Public Hearings, Thursday, July 21, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.at Administration building.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Jennis adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

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Chairman



Secretary

