

LEHIGH ACRES FIRE CONTROL AND RESCUE DISTRICT

COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

August 19, 2009

The August 19, 2009 regular Commission Meeting of the Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District Board of Commissioners was held at the Veteran's Park Recreation Center, 55 S. Homestead Rd., Lehigh Acres, FL. The meeting was opened at 4:00 PM by President Berndt. Present were Commissioners Berndt, Adams, Guzman, Hemingway and Barrett. Chief Don Adams, Fire Marshal Ken Bennett, EMS Division Chief Mike Pcolar, Administrative Assistant Susan Platas, Finance Specialist Anita Kressel and Secretary Janis Williams. Attorney Richard Pringle was also in attendance.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, Commissioner Berndt asked Chief Adams to give the invocation.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Berndt asked if there were any additions, corrections or deletions to the Agenda. Commissioner Hemingway requested to add Possibility of New Income, under New Business. Commissioner Guzman motioned to accept the Agenda as amended with a second from Commissioner Hemingway. Motion carries.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- Fire Board Special Meeting Minutes of July 14, 2009
- Fire Board Regular Meeting Minutes of July 16, 2009
- Treasurers Report

Commissioner Guzman motioned to accept the Consent Agenda as presented with a second from Commissioner Barrett. Motion carries.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

CHIEF ADAMS:

- Chief Adams reminded Commissioners that we have the ability to raise ambulance fees, but this must be done at the next meeting to be effective for the 2009/10 fiscal year.
- Chief explained the reason for the recent lay-off's and that these lay-off's were not a surprise.

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DVP 6 and 19:

Walt Stevens, President of Local 1826 stated that the District 6 brought forth concessions and since then, they have voted on those concessions and are being presented to the Commissioners at this time. He also spoke about the Department's labor attorney wanting to set up negotiations and why he has been given direction to negotiate when District 6 has already been doing this. Walt is asking that this Board and the Chief honor the agreement that we had and freeze the contract. He also stated that when the July 14th meeting ended, we believed that the intent of the Board was no lay-off's until Sept 30. We, the union were led to believe when we left that meeting that we had until Sept. 30th. Employees were not only disrespected as individuals, but they were given Administrative Leave with pay. Walt is asking that this Board honor what was said in the intent of what was voted on July 14. This action was clearly wrong and he'll leave it at that.

John Wayne, DVP of District 19 wanted to discuss with the Board the amount of money Lehigh taxpayers are paying to Lee County EMS. After reading information to the Commissioners, John was requesting that the Board look into these three options:

- 1) Ask Lee County for the funds that Lehigh Acres residents pay them for ambulance service.
- 2) Ask Lee County to give us 2 rescue units to staff the two stations
- 3) On September 30, 2009, we cease to provide ALS ambulance transport service.

DEPARTMENT ATTORNEY:

Attorney Pringle stated he had two things to talk about. The first relates to the special assessment approval by referendum. One of the dates for a possible election was 12/1/09. You can proceed but you'll have to pay the full cost of the election yourself. If you go on a day another District has an election, you can share the costs. Attorney Pringle stated by silence on the Commissioners side allows for him to remove the 12/1/09 referendum date off the table. Other dates in 2010 will be reviewed.

The second item is the line of credit. Commissioner Hemingway asked at last meeting under condition to please explain Item C of the handout.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Linda Carter, Lehigh Acres resident had concerns regarding the budget and things that are being paid for. Ms. Carter also does not want to pay the \$100 tax assessment fee. We can volunteer.

Steve Baker, Lehigh Acres resident stated he, and Community leaders support Chief Adams. He has attended all meetings.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Credit Line – During discussion of acceptance of this credit line, Attorney Pringle mentioned that this was received today and Commissioners didn't have much time to review.

Commissioner Guzman motioned to table the credit line to the August 27, 2009 meeting with a second from Commissioner Hemingway. Motion carries.

2009/2010 Commission Meeting Dates - Commissioners were handed meeting dates for the upcoming fiscal year for their regular Commission meetings. Commissioner Guzman motioned to accept the fire board meeting dates presented with a second from Commissioner Hemingway. Motion carries.

Oct 21, 2009
Nov 19, 2009
Dec 17, 2009
Jan 21, 2010
Feb 18, 2010
Mar 25, 2010
Apr 21, 2010
May 19, 2010
June 17, 2010
July 21, 2010
Aug 19, 2010
Sept 22, 2010

Possibility of New Income – Commissioner Hemingway stated \$1380000 is what Lehigh taxpayers pay LCEMS. He wants to pursue this avenue to try to get 50% or 100% of this revenue returned to fortify the ambulance squad. He would like to try to pursue to get more money from the county. It was stated that normal protocol is that the Chairman of one board to approach the chair from the another board. Commissioner Berndt stated the Fire Chief should attend also along with the Chairman of the Board to visit Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah. After some discussion it was determined that Chief can make an appt to speak to Chairman of Lee County Commission and Commissioner Berndt and Richard Pringle will attend also.

Commissioner Hemingway motioned that the Chief, Commissioner Berndt and Attorney Pringle be our reps to meet w/Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah and his staff to discuss an interlocal agreement and other avenues of obtaining revenue with second from Commissioner Guzman. Motion carries.

Public Comment:

Linda Carter, Lehigh resident stated in the paper it states that the budget hearings are at East Lee County High school. This is not accessible for the handicap.

Lauren Schulky, Lehigh Acres resident stated she has been waiting since Hurricane Charley to get a tax break. Ms. Schulky's comments are: Now you want to access a \$100 tax. I cannot afford it. There are a lot of people who cannot afford it. I'm about ready to let my house go. I can't help wonder if this goes through how many other people are going to start asking for more money. You guys are doing something wrong if you can't run the budget. You need to keep pursuing the EMS double tax issue. We should not be paying this double tax.

Cathy Kruse, Lehigh resident stated she is deeply saddened. She is embarrassed as what has happened to the fire department. Other comments from Ms. Kruse are: There is a complete breakdown of trust and respect. I cannot image anyone with any ounce of integrity handling this the way it was handled. There is no wonder why men and women lost trust. It's no longer I've got your back – it's watch your back. I want to be part of your solution. There are many misconceptions that the public has with the budget your trying to work with. You are your own worst enemy. We do not run not only firefighting services, we run an ambulance service. We chopped 49% of our firefighters. They need to be brought back – it was totally unprofessional.

Robert Anderson, Lehigh resident stated last September Mr. Anderson filed charges against some of the Commissioners for double dipping.

John Wayne, DVP 19 failed to mention that he made a request to Chief to postpone negotiations due to everything that happened yesterday. Wants to wait for information to come back prior to negotiation sessions. I would like to request that we negotiate with Chief and not the attorney.

Walt Stevens, President Local 1826 stated the concessions should be taken care of this evening. Should be voted on this meeting regardless of whatever other actions you take. The Sept 30 date needs to be addressed. Whatever has changed needs to be addressed. These people need to hear you state your answer and why.

He also would like to hear what has changed to change the lay off date to 9/1 instead of 9/30. He needs answers. Members here need answers. We are laying people off and he doesn't know why.

Dean Parkinson – SW Ranches Florida stated he had a hard time sleeping last night when he saw that 35 employees being laid off. He doesn't know how that decision has come to so quickly. He doesn't know how anyone can find that way acceptable. The bargaining unit has continued to come up with solutions with the Chief. He hopes you can come together and find a solution. He's disgusted for them.

Kathleen Hanna – has a long history w/Lehigh Fire Dept. She will tell you when you think of a firefighter – you think of trust and honesty. Chief Adams has mismanaged funds and taken trust away from the people. As to the residents - her son and husband put their lives on the line every day. This \$100 assessment fee – you're telling me to save your lives and your family, you don't have 27 cents a day. I truly do not believe that. My husband and son's lives are not worth 27 cents a day. You want them ready and want them there but you're not willing to pay.....shame on you.

Bob Hanna –property values dropped 49%. The level of service that we provide here costs money. We all understand property taxes dropped 49%....you'll be paying lesscitizen's will be paying less with the \$100 tax.

Commissioner Comments:

Commissioner Hemingway gave a brief explanation of why he voted to continue with the \$100 tax assessment fee. He is still working on tax assessment fee. It will be good.

Commissioner Barrett thanked public for their input.

Commissioner Guzman thanked public for coming out. He stated EMS will give us 3 ambulances and as of yesterday, we are providing 3 ambulances. Why should we keep the ambulances if we're paying LC EMS for ambulance service. A safe environment is what he wants to provide.

Commissioner Adams stated he is curious what the concessions amount to. Why were the laid off employees sent home. Chief Adams stated is a prudent practice to send people home when you lay them off. The budget will be presented at the August 27, 2009 meeting.

Commissioner Berndt stated with the reduction in service, there are no games being played – we need to continue to pursue different streams of revenue to bring these people back to work. I would agree that we need to continue pushing forward and allow the citizens of Lehigh to make that decision as to the level of service they want in the future.

Motion to adjourn 5:54pm