

# **LEHIGH ACRES FIRE CONTROL AND RESCUE DISTRICT**

## **SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING**

### **MINUTES**

**February 10, 2014**

The February 10, 2014 Special Commission Meeting of the Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District Board of Commissioners was held at Lehigh Acres Fire Control and Rescue District Station 104, 3102 16<sup>th</sup> St SW, Lehigh Acres, FL 33976. The meeting was opened at 6:00pm by Chairman Becker. Present are: Commissioners Adams, Kruse, Becker, Carter; Fire Chief Wayne, Division Chief Nickell, Finance Mgr Larry Tibbs and Administrative Assistant Platas. Attorney Pringle was also in attendance. Commissioner Danis attended at 6:06pm.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, the Department Chaplain gave the invocation.

Commissioner Becker stated the purpose of this meeting was to have a presentation from the Government Services Group (GSG) on the proposed fire assessment fee. This is the first meeting to discuss putting a fire assessment fee on the ballot in November 2014.

We hired this company, GSG, who will present Assessment Methodologies tonight. Chief Wayne explained how we got here, with the downturn of the economy, the department and the money we have lost throughout the years.

Camille Tharpe, Senior Vice President, Director of Government Services Division and Jeff Rackley, Senior Project Manager from GSG said we are not here to give rates, we are here to provide information to the Board.

Special Legislation that passed last year said that Special Districts could fund fire and EMS services with one assessment fee.

Methodology Options that GSG is recommending:

Historical Demand -- based on calls for service.

Fire Protection Capacity -- a little more complex and more complicated. This recommendation is pretty much off the table because we have over 90000 vacant lots.

Many questions were asked by residents.

Commissioner Carter stated vacant land fires should be treated like a structure fire. She feels that everyone should pay the same and be treated the same.

Commissioner Danis stated it should be on the acreage and unit size.

Commissioner Adams stated he hopes the members of the public research this on their own to make an informed decision. He wants everyone to have good service from the fire district.

Commissioner Kruse stated we have done a poor job of educating the public on what we do here. We've experienced growing pains with the growth of Lehigh Acres. She has gained a lot of experience from being on the Board. She would like to have the consistency and know the money we are working with. Stay with us, give us time to get the facts together and attend our meetings.

Commissioner Becker stated we have not done a very good job educating the public. We are sorry. Our firefighters make a fair living. We are not the top paying in the county. We are in the lower third of the county. We want to be equal to others so we can get good employees so we can keep them and keep our level of service up and top notch.

GSG recommends moving along the path that has been tested and court approved. They do need legal counsel – on an as needed basis.

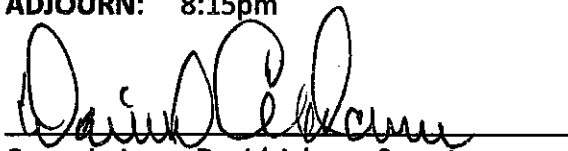
Richard Pringle stated the attorney firm is Nabors, Giblan and Nickerson , PA out of Tallahassee is familiar with this process and can be used on an as needed basis. GSG is requesting this from the Board between now and the 25<sup>th</sup> of Feb at an hourly rate at \$250 an hour.

After some discussion, Attorney Pringle stated the Board needs to accept Nabors and Giblan as special counsel for this purpose only. Commissioner Kruse motioned to use Nabors, Giblan and Nickerson, PA as special counsel for the fire assessment purpose only with a second from Commissioner Danis. Motion carries 4-1 with the opposing from Commissioner Carter.

Attorney Pringle stated GSG has enough information and guidance that was given to them for them to proceed.

Historical Demand Methodology with a lot of variations for the February 25, 2014 Commission Meeting so the Board can make a decision.

ADJOURN: 8:15pm



Commissioner David Adams, Secretary