

Village Fire Department
Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, July 27, 2022
Minutes

**VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT
REGULAR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
MINUTES**

Wednesday, July 27, 2022, 6:03 P.M.

Present & Voting Were:

City of Hilshire Village	Commissioner Ron Presswood, Chair
City of Hedwig Village	Commissioner Matt Woodruff, Vice-Chair
City of Spring Valley Village	Commissioner Allen Carpenter, Treasurer
City of Bunker Hill Village	Commissioner Keith Brown, member
City of Hunters Creek	Commissioner Rob Adams, member

Present Were:

City of Piney Point Village	Alternate Aliza Dutt
City of Bunker Hill Village	Alternate Clara Towsley
City of Hunters Creek Village	Alternate Pat McClellan
Village Fire Department	David Foster, Fire Chief
Village Fire Department	Katherine Stuart, Administrative Specialist
Randle Law Firm	Brandon Morris, Attorney
City of Piney Point Village	Bobby Pennington, City Administrator
City of Hedwig Village	Tom Jinks, Mayor

Not Present:

City of Hedwig Village	Alternate Doug Bergen
City of Spring Valley Village	Alternate Bo Bothe
City of Piney Point Village	Commissioner Zebulun Nash, Secretary
City of Hilshire Village	Alternate (TBA)

2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC –

- None

- 3. CONSENT AGENDA** – All Consent Agenda items listed are considered to be routine by the Board of Commissioners and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Board Member so requests, in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

3A. Approval of Minutes – May and June 2022

3B. Approval of Bills Paid – May and June – GF & FF

Commissioner Presswood asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Carpenter moved to approve the consent agenda; Alternate Dutt seconded.

Commissioner(s) Adams Brown and Woodruff voted “Aye,” “Noes” none.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. REPORTS

4A. Steering committee report and possible action

Station update

Chief Foster stated a construction meeting took place Monday and Joiner is reviewing all documents and walking the roof. A change order will be submitted, and any remaining funds in Fund 4 will be transferred as money not used toward the facility. The retainage is the balance owed to Construction Masters. Once all monies have been paid out to all parties, the balance will then be presented to the fire commission and allocated with their direction. Chief Foster did mention in the previous meeting that the balance left over would possibly be used to fund the annex and tower roof, including the funds 40K budgeted in 2022.

Commissioner Woodruff asked about the fund balance of fund 4, Chief Foster responded that the fund balance is \$300,000 including the retainage.

Alternate McClellan asked about the ADA (American disability act) restroom. The Chief responded that the restrooms have been modified to satisfy the ADA requirements and all changes have been submitted to the state. The state has received the documents has approved the modifications.

Roof update

An RFP has been submitted and a proposal opening is scheduled for August 3, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. Karl Schaack, Price Consulting will provide pricing for the replacement/refinishing of the annex and training tower roof.

4B. Treasurer's Financial Reports – May and June 2022

Katherine Stuart stated that the Village Fire Department is over budget in several areas. The commissioners are aware of these overages. The areas that are over budget are overtime, gas and oil (G&O), and maintenance of vehicles.

Commissioner Presswood requested the department consider other options for electric providers due to the increasing cost of public utilities on the budget.

4C. Fire Chief's Report – Events of May and June 2022, monthly performance, a record of calls, response times, and ambulance staffing

Chief Foster reported five of the six cities (Bunker Hill Village, Hunters Creek Village, Hilshire Village, Spring Valley Village, and Piney Point Village) approved the 2021 overage, 2022 amendment, and 2023 Budget, the budget has been approved. Chief stated the department has had a lot of fires; two of them were caused by power spikes or transformer fires and another was caused by pool pumps. We have placed information on the website about pool pump safety.

The department is staffing the 2nd ambulance at the commission's request 24 hours a day and two new employees have been offered a conditional job. The Department has seen an increase in the number of simultaneous calls presented in the ***July Response Chart (Article 1)***. The chart has three colors: yellow, red, and black. Yellow is a single truck response, red is a multiple unit response, and black is a simultaneous call/with no other resources. As you have seen in the chart the department ran 3 simultaneous calls in July, this leaves the department with no resources if other calls were to come in. This chart provides visual documentation of the calls monthly and demonstrates the need for Rescue 2.

Commissioner Woodruff asked how many occasions during this time (black periods) no resources were available, did another call come in?

Chief Foster stated 4 times this month we had no resources and if another call came in, we would use the resources that we had and split the time with the Deputy chief driving an apparatus and/or the Fire Chief.

Alternate Dutt asked, "How does the situation affect response times?"

Chief Foster stated the department will work with the resources and ensure that incidents are attended to.

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Commissioner Carpenter stated that he had an event where he was at the hospital, the emergency room, and waited 6.5 hours. He watched as the EMS crew waited “wall time” during the time he was waiting. He stated this is what is happening, and if we see this with both of our ambulances, it will affect the fire department on the EMS side as well as the firefighting side. He mentioned that if we must remove an individual out of a Fire/EMS calls we are not providing safety to our crews and we are minimizing our resources. Therefore, the Commission acted and staffed the second ambulance FT with overtime. “Wall time” is not getting better due to staffing issues at the hospital.

Commissioner Brown stated that when this staffing ambulance question came about, he began to research the issue. The data that he put together:

- 56% of calls result in transport/transfer of patients which is 8%-10% over the national average of 40's%
- 30% of the calls are high-acuity calls (Heart problems, difficulty breathing, stroke,) calls that need treatment on the way to the hospital
- Increased calls where there is more insurance (individuals with health insurance)
- Increased calls due to an aging population

He suggested providing different options may help to alleviate some of the pressure on the EMS crews and analyze these responses even more.

Chief Foster stated that the department has several protocols in place to help the EMS crews:

- Dispatch can triage the calls – they provide minimal medical direction with the use of medical protocol cards
- Predetermined protocols -
- Example: *Sick call rescue 1 and if the staff needs more people the Engine and the Rescue are sent*

Chief Foster stated that we are purchasing an ambulance this year and one next year. Those trucks are 10 years old.

Village Fire Department has a capital replacement fund that enables long-term savings to purchase capital items such as apparatus.

Alternate Dutt asked if we could find a solution to the “wall wait time” at the hospitals.

Chief Foster stated there is not much we can do; until staffing at the hospital increase, the “wall wait times” will continue.

Call volume: The decision to staff the 2nd ambulance was a good decision. The dispatch time is very good. Every day a report is sent to the commissioner and mayors on the calls for the previous day. The commission and mayor also receive a monthly report.

Department Staffing- Chief Foster stated he rehired one employee that resigned due to personal reasoning, however with the short duration he was able to come back to the department during the hiring process. We had a tremendous turnout of applicants and a great applicants pool. A question arose as to why we received so many applicants in comparison to prior hiring times. He stated that the benefits increase helped.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS** – The Board will discuss and consider possible action on the following:

- **None**

6. **CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTIONS** – The Board will discuss and consider possible action on the following:

- **None**

7. **DISCUSSION ITEMS/PRESENTATION OF SPECIAL REPORTS** – The Board will discuss and consider possible action on the following:

7A. Second Ambulance Staffing – discussion occurred during Fire Chief’s report

7B. Bylaws and rules of procedure and 7D. Discuss the process for budget overages, amendments, and fund transfers

Commissioner Woodruff requested that 7B and 7D be combined, and Commissioner Presswood approved.

Commissioner Woodruff stated there has been some talk/concern on why the City of Hedwig Village is concerned about certain things and the reality is several things: the City of Hedwig Village feels that they were blindsided by the 2021 overage, 2022 amendment, and 2023 increase. There are general rules and procedures in place along with checks, and balances. Therefore, if someone does not communicate information there is still an opportunity to find things and I was not here around the table for June, so I do not really know what went on. But it appears to me trying to get up to speed so I can do a better job as a commissioner. The former commission in several respects did not follow the bylaws rules and procedures and the interlocal agreement. There is a provision in the bylaws that says the commissioner should put a budget together and brief the mayors on that budget and give them sufficient time to be considered as an option. Woodruff asked Mayor Jinks, Mayor of Hedwig, “Did you get briefed on the fire department budget?” Jinks stated, “No, I did not.” That was a failure to follow the bylaws also it would appear that the budget was adopted not at the June meeting, but sometime in May. Bylaws say it should be June. Things were confusing to us as we are trying to pull this all together. We are finding out that in 2022 try to come up with the money for 2021 plus we have a budget amendment for 2022. There was a comment that the commission decided to staff 2nd ambulance in OT. But if you look at the interlocal the commission does not have the authority to

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do so... As Stated in the *interlocal agreement section 5.01.d* (attached interlocal) stated Commissioner Woodruff.

Commissioner Woodruff stated that it appears to us that it should have come to our city before money was spent. He also said the August meeting has all three items on the agenda. Hedwig Village fully supports the Village Fire Department and fully supports personnel. He just wanted to make sure we have been following procedure and being transparent.

Commissioner Carpenter stated that all documents are public, and the meetings are all public.

Commissioner Presswood stated that he read the questions, and in the *Interlocal 5.02*

5.02. The Board of Commissioners shall hold at least ten meetings a year. A majority of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Any and all actions of the Board of Commissioners, other than actions relating to the expenditure of funds for major capital items, as that term is defined in ARTICLE 5, Section 5.01 d hereof, and to the approval of a proposed budget, may be approved by a favorable vote of a majority of the members present. Any and all actions relating to the expenditures or disbursement of funds for major capital items and to the approval of a proposed budget must be approved by the favorable vote of a majority of the fiscal voting strength of the entire Board. Such fiscal voting strength shall be computed as follows:

The representative (Commissioner) of each contracting city shall have a vote equal in strength to such city's proportionate share or interest in the VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT, as such proportionate share or interest is established under the provisions of ARTICLE 6 of this Agreement.

Chief Foster stated that this situation is not a 2022 amendment it is the 2021 overage, staffing the 2nd ambulance. In August 2021, the fire commission voted to staff the 2nd ambulance due to the need of the fire department this recommendation came from the Fire Chief; and as a result, a line item, that was already approved ran over resulting in a 120K deficit. The books were not closed until after the audit, therefore, the fire department is requesting the money for 2021 now. The audit closes at the end of April. In which the budget overage, amendment, and the proposed budget went out to the cities.

Commission Carpenter and Alternate Dutt stated that the cities were aware of the OT for staffing rescue 2 and that this was approved every month from the first request in August 2021.

Attorney Brandon Morris stated that for a budget amendment you need a majority of the cities, and the rules and procedures were followed accordingly.

Alternate Dutt stated that is what we have: a majority vote.

The interlocal overrides the bylaws, it could be a matter of interpretation and the interlocal could be reviewed by the cities.

Commission Woodruff stated that if the commission is wanting to amend the budget over 10,000 go back to cities and receive in writing city approval.

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The process should be the responsibility of the appointed fire commissioner to go back to City governing body by communicating all the information.

The commission passed the budget- informing the board to administer the budget to their City to seek approval. The final budget is approved/not approved, and this becomes the budget.

Commissioner Woodruff asked for a definition of a budgeted item and a non-budgeted item.

Definition of a non-budgeted item- an item that is not a line item....

A new pickup truck is not a budgeted item.

The line item already has Overtime has a budget and the commission need to add money in it.... Then it is now amended and becomes a new budget.

Commissioner Woodruff requested following the budget approval by the commission that the mayors are briefed before the budget goes out to each city council.

Commissioner Carpenter stated this is good to inform the mayor, however, the governing body that administers the Village Fire Department is the board of commissioners, the Fire Commission. He also stated the Fire Chief does not work for the mayors or city council but the Fire Commission.

The bylaws were put together to govern the fire commissioners.

The Fire Commission is board independent entity, and each fire commission vote is 1/6th.

Mayor Jinks stated that before voting on a budget, knowing would help. For example, he stated that without communication the cities are unable to prepare.

Commissioner Presswood stated it is the responsibility of the appointed commissioner to notify their city's council.

Commissioner Carpenter stated that the commissioner for Hedwig prior to the current commissioner, worked extremely hard and put items in place for the fire department that would not have been done otherwise. They genuinely worked for the good of Hedwig and the fire commission.

He also stated that all meetings, again, are open meetings and the budget meeting dates are provided.

Commissioner Brown stated that each Commissioner would be happy to meet with the mayors in May even though the budget is not final in May but to brief the mayors.

Commissioner Carpenter stated that for clarity and reference, the VFD interlocal and bylaws are on the website Villagefire.org.

7C. Exploring alternates for backup ambulance service when all the VFD assets are unavailable

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Commissioner Woodruff stated that the discussion could be later but at 100% utilization of equipment are in use and another call comes in situation adequate level of care to our residents.

Fire suppression service – HFD delayed

Look at alternatives with HFD

Options:

- Arrange for contact with a private ambulance service if 100% assets are used, we post a unit in this area with transport capability.

Commissioner Brown the volume of calls would not justify paying a premium

- Pay standby time. Need a solution
- Interlocal with another small city

Alternate Dutt stated speaking for Piney Point as a council member that the residents would be very upset if we outsourced this incredible resource, we have in the Village Fire Department to a private ambulance or going to another smaller city viable solution, I don't think that the residents signed up for that when they purchased homes in the villages. Private ambulance services are gambling on people's lives.

Commissioner Carpenter stated that 3 full-time employees were sought to alleviate some of the stress and these options were not the direction of the commission.

Commissioner Presswood suggested Chief Foster get prices on all alternatives when all VFD assets are unavailable; on-call ambulance, staging an ambulance from a private service in the village, or interlocal with another small department.

8. **CONSIDERATION OF AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING** – The Board will discuss and consider any actions:

- **None**

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – The Board of Commissioners will retire into Executive Session as authorized by Chapter 551; Texas Government Code, to discuss the following matters:

- **None**

10. **ACTION – CLOSED SESSION** – The Board of Directors will discuss and consider any actions necessary on items discussed in Executive Session.

11. **FUTURE TOPICS**

12. **NEXT MEETING DATE**

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- **August 24, 2022**

13. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Presswood moved to adjourn at 8:24:57 p.m. seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted.

Commissioner Ron Presswood, Chair

Attest:

Commissioner Zeb Nash, Secretary