

Amended Approved as amended on 3-22-2023.
Village Fire Department
Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, October 26, 2022
Minutes

Amended
VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT
REGULAR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
MINUTES
Wednesday, October 26, 2022, 6:05 P.M.

Present & Voting Were:

City of Hedwig Village	Commissioner Matt Woodruff, Vice-Chair
City of Spring Valley Village	Commissioner Allen Carpenter, member
City of Hunters Creek	Commissioner Rob Adams, member

Present Were:

City of Hilshire Village	Alternate John Cooper
City of Bunker Hill Village	Alternate Clara Towsley
City of Piney Point Village	Alternate Aliza Dutt
City of Hunters Creek Village	Alternate Pat McClellan
City of Spring Valley	Alternate Bo Bothe
Village Fire Department	David Foster, Fire Chief
Village Fire Department	Marlo Longoria, Administrator
Village Fire Department	Katherine Stuart, Administrative Specialist
Randle Law Firm	Brandon Morris, Attorney

Not Present:

City of Hedwig Village	Alternate Doug Bergen
City of Bunker Hill Village	Commissioner Keith Brown, Treasurer
City of Hilshire Village	Commissioner Ron Presswood, Chair
City of Piney Point Village	Commissioner Zebulun Nash, Secretary

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 – Regular meeting- September 2022

3B. Approval of Bills Paid – September 2022

Commissioner Woodruff asked for a motion to sever the minutes from the consent agenda.

Commissioner Woodruff asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented excluding the minutes for September. Commissioner Carpenter moved; seconded by Commissioner Adams.

Alternate(s)Cooper, Dutt, and Towsley “Aye”, “Noes” none.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. REPORTS

A. Steering committee report and possible action

- **Facility Update (roof and windows on bay doors)**

Facility update: Chief Foster stated the window on the bay door was covered in the approved impact-resistant film. The roof discussion has continued, and the contractor has agreed to cover the cost to perform a pull test recommended by Mr. Karl Schaack, the consultant hired by the board. The final step in the process is to perform the pull test on November 1, 2022. If the pull test passes, the roof is in the green and should withstand the pressure and wind speed as specified in the contract, but if the test fails the contractor has agreed to move forward with replacing the roof.

Alternate McClellan asked if the group performing the pull test was an independent contractor from the current contractor. Chief Foster stated PCI, Karl Schaack, the roofing consultant hired by the facility committee and commission will also perform the test.

No action will be taken at this time.

Alternate Towsley asked if the windows had the impact-resistant film set, is this a temporary fix or permanent? Chief Foster stated this is a permanent fix, the windows are now according to the standard requested by the approved specifications. The cost was \$8,000 to apply the film to the windows.

Storm Drain- the department discovered that every time it rained the ramp outside the annex and gym would have significant water collection. A scope test was performed and the drain between the new generator and the bayou was clogged with roots from the previous cypress trees. The contractor promised they could perform the removal for \$20,000. So, we received 4 bids from other plumbers and paid a little over 6,000 for the removal of the roots and replaced the old 8" drainpipe with a new 12" drainpipe. The removal was paid out of the contingency line item in the budget.

Plumbing Update- Previous meeting notes 9/26/2022

Chief stated the department replaced the drainage pipe near the new generator with a new 12" pipe. The original 8" pipe was blocked by roots. The blockage was creating flooding around the station. He also stated the station received 4 bids, \$22,000, \$12,000, 8,000, and \$6,100. The department replaced the pipe for \$6,100.

4A. Treasurer's Financial Reports – September 2022

Marlo Longoria stated when reviewing the budget summary, we, the Village Fire Department, are over the average that is spent this time of year due to the changes. The overtime (OT) line item is still high. Overtime this month was \$56,000. We had two full overtime periods with several out sick, or on injury leave, and of course, the continued staffing of the OT has not decreased by much. With the overtime budget so high, the chief stated he has asked if the third position is open for OT on the shift and not to fill it. Items that are over budget are the same ones that have been in discussion throughout the year, overtime, maintenance of vehicles, and public utilities. Ambulance supplies are another item the department is seeing an overall increase in. October's overtime is around \$22,000.

Commissioner Woodruff stated the cover letter stated a deviation from GAAP, explaining what the cover really means. Commissioner Woodruff requested that the accounts provide a detailed written description of the variances for the benefit of current and future commissioners. Chief Foster stated every new fire commissioner asks the same question. Typically, accountants, because the department is a cash zero balance, perform everything that is requested by the entity. Everything we do is audited and legal.

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

- Fully staffed (3 FTEs hired in September)

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- Trucks are all operational
- Calls- three ambulance calls today and 2 calls.
- Received the two VIN# for the new ambulances.
- Active Shooter drill- Chinese Baptist Church November 17, 2022
- Incident command training – October 18, 2022

Continued discussion on hiring 3 full-time employees to staff the OT for the second ambulance. Chief Foster stated for 2023 possibly move the OT budget to hire the 3 FTEs. In 2023 the line item for OT is over 400K, moving some of this money to hire and fully staff the second ambulance would decrease the OT line item and increase the salary line item. It roughly cost the department 103k for 1 FTE. The demand for the EMS Services is increasing overall. The need is becoming greater. The benefits component is 40%.

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

5A. Auditor- 12-31-2022 Belt Harris Engagement Letter

Commissioner Woodruff asked for a motion to accept the proposal submitted last month to sign a contract for 1 year at the \$22,000 annual cost per proposal. Alternate Dutt moved.

Commissioner(s) Carpenter, Adams, and Alternate(s) Copper and Towsley “Aye”, “Noes” none.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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:

- **None**

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

8A. Discussion of options to reduce “wall time” after delivering patients to a hospital.

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The Fire Chief stated he included the letter received (*article 1*) from the “Memorial Hermann Hospital Systems” (MHHS) hospital system EMS liaison. He also stated that he met with the hospital liaison from Memorial Hermann, (VFD EMS Director) Jason Kendall, and Marlo to review the data chart. The data chart provides information on “wall time” from three different hospitals. Possible solutions from the VFD include MMHS hiring one of our EMS crew to stay with the Village Fire Department’s patient until the patient is treated, possibly using the “8” rooms that were designated for covid patients for waiting. The staffing is limited, or EMS continues to remind the nurses that they are waiting. The challenge stated by the liaison is staffing is a significant issue and they just do not have enough staff.

Commission Carpenter asked what is the Protocol for taking patients to the hospital. Chief Foster said Houston Fire Department (HFD) does provide patients that are not necessarily in “emergency case” a bus or taxi tokens to get to the hospital. The Village fire department does not do this and will usually take the patient where they have requested unless it is critical and the VFD will take the patient to the nearest hospital.

Commission Woodruff stated there is a law that states if the patient is in the parking lot of the hospital it is the responsibility of the hospital.

Chief Foster stated he understands the statement, however, he just cannot justify leaving a patient or patients in the “waiting room” hallway and assuming the staff will remember.

the patient is in this EMS – hallway. The “wall time” stems from the hospitals being short-staffed. He also stated he would continue to manage the “wall time” report and keep the commission updated. A “good wall time” would be about 30 minutes. He also asked if the “wall time” is reduced is there a chance the second ambulance (R2) will no longer be staffed?

All commissioners stated no, staffing R2 is greatly needed for the call volume.

Commissioner Carpenter stated there are multiple factors in staffing a second ambulance and possibly a third. There have been several times when three simultaneous calls have come in.

8B. Discussion of EMS (ambulance) revenue

Chief Foster stated a comment was made at a Hilshire Village council meeting. Scott Bounds, the city attorney mentioned that “it takes a unanimous vote to do a budget amendment and it is clear in the interlocal. He also said the fire department has unaccounted for money in the department that is not in the budget.”

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Commissioner Carpenter stated a change to the interlocal allowed the fire department to collect funds for ambulance services. But it does not state in the amendment where the money is supposed to be spent on.

Attorney Brandon Morris stated there is no language that states whom the money belongs to, and it is not an asset of the fire department.

Chief Foster stated there has been some discussion on how to manage the funds.

Commissioner Carpenter stated the commission took the statement a step further by not changing the resident "out of pocket" for the services. Historically, assume from 1995 to about 2011 the money that was received from the EMS revenue was sent back to the cities. There is no language that says that is what should happen, but that is what has happened. 10 years ago a question was asked, why are we sending that money while at the same time, we are asking for some additional monies for things that we did not account for in the budget. Because our budget historically for about 15 years has been razor thin. So, eventually, the City of Spring Valley about 9 years ago removed it from the budget. During budget workshops, there have been many discussions on where the EMS revenue should go. In the past few years, the consensus has been to leave the money with the fire department, but it just has not been done.

Chief Foster stated that from the discussion it seems that the cities would like to see it in our budget. It has never been in our operating budget; however, it is accounted for monthly in our Taber and Burnett, quarterly to the cities, and annually in the audit. The discussion with Grady stated that the auditor is affirming you are following the law because Belt Harris has never said otherwise.

Commissioner Carpenter stated the money that is spent from EMS revenue has always been spent on things the commission and cities approve. This has become an amendment to the budget.

Commission Woodruff stated that as the resolution is going forward, the fire department is a cost not revenue, and will never provide revenue to the cities. Therefore, at most, the EMS revenue can help offset some of the costs from the cities towards the fire department.

Chief Foster stated that if the department had the EMS revenue reserve fund offsetting the budget. The challenge becomes; if Medicare shuts down, the government will stop paying. Then, we do not have funds.

Commissioner Woodruff asked that this item be a discussion and action on the next agenda. A budget amendment for 2023 would take the EMS revenue and allocate it to the expense side of the budget so that there is no question that all the cities agree that

the ambulance revenue that is currently in the bank will roll in and offset the cost of operating the fire department.

Commissioner Carpenter asked that another agenda should be a contingency line item. He also stated that the commission and the cities have kept the budget lean and if the department needed any additional funds to just come back to the cities. The cities have requested the budget to be lean.

8C. Roof and Annex possible funding

Commissioner Carpenter stated that the roof needs to be fixed and we need to fund the roof.

Mr. Robert Byrne, the subcommittee for the facility, stated the new roof for the annex and tower would cost approximately \$181,000. The bids were read aloud on August 3, 2022.

Chief Foster stated there is \$40,000 in this year's budget for the roof to help defray that cost.

Commissioner Woodruff asked what the balance is in fund 4, the facility fund.

Chief Foster stated the facility fund has about \$35,000.

Commissioner Carpenter stated the annex roof and tower was not part of the original construction budget.

8D. VMIG- BCBSTX – rates

(Article 3) – Marlo Longoria stated the insurance rates for 2023 increase by 4% and the Village Mutual Insurance Group (VMIG) will continue with Blue cross/Blue shield. The only agreement is the VMIG will move the life insurance to BC/BS.

Commissioner Woodruff stated the commission is approving the insurance rates pending the water authority's approval. Alternate Cooper moved; seconded by Commissioner Carpenter.

Commissioner Adams, and Alternate(s) Dutt and Towsley "Aye", "Noes" none.

8E Follow-up Insurance Property and Casualty and possible action- email sent to the commission.

Marlo Longoria stated there was a question last meeting about the deductible. If the deductible was increased to \$5000 the approximate saving would be \$1800 annually.

Commissioner Woodruff asked, how often does the fire department have a claim?

Chief Foster stated we have one to two a year, therefore, the saving would not provide a saving to the department.

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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

None

11. **FUTURE TOPICS**

EMS- revenue
Contingency
“Wall time”
Budget amendments
Roof Annex and tower
2023 EMS Revenue

12. **NEXT MEETING DATE**

November 30, 2022

13. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Carpenter moved to adjourn at 7:54:56 p.m. seconded by Commissioner.

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Respectfully submitted.

Commissioner Ron Presswood, Chair

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Attest:

Commissioner Zeb Nash, Secretary