

Minutes
VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT
REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, July 24, 2024, 6:00 P.M.

A regular monthly Village Fire Commission Board Meeting was held on July 24, 2024, at 901 Corbindale Road, Hedwig Village, Texas 77024, beginning at 6:00 p.m. and was presided over by the Chair, Keith Brown.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Present & voting:

City of Bunker Hill Village
City of Piney Point Village
City of Spring Valley Village
City of Hunters Creek Village
City of Hilshire Village
City of Hedwig Village

Commissioner Keith Brown, Chair
Commissioner Henry Kollenberg, Vice Chair
Alternate John Lisenby
Commissioner Rob Adams, Secretary
Commissioner Mike Garofalo, Member
Commissioner Matt Woodruff, Member

Present:

City of Bunker Hill Village
City of Piney Point Village
City of Hunters Creek Village
City of Hilshire Village
Village Fire Department
Village Fire Department
Randle Law Firm

Alternate Clara Towsley
Alternate Aliza Dutt
Alternate Fidel Sapien
Alternate Robert (Bob) Buesinger
Howard Miller, Fire Chief
Katherine Stuart, Administrative Specialist
Heather Cook, Attorney

Not present:

City of Spring Valley Village
City of Hedwig Village

Commissioner Allen Carpenter, Treasurer
Alternate Patrick Breckon

2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC – Comments are limited to 3 minutes each.

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 requests, in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Monthly Board Meeting Minutes June 26, 2024

Commissioner Kollenberg presented his edits for June 26, 2024, board meeting minutes to expand on his comments in item 7B. Commissioner Woodruff made a motion to approve the drafted minutes with Commissioner Kollenberg's edits; seconded by Commissioner Lisenby.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

B. Approval of Bills Paid – June 2024

Commissioner Woodruff made a motion to approve the bills paid in June 2024; seconded by Commissioner Lisenby.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. REPORTS

A. Treasurer's Financial Reports and possible action – June 2024

Katherine Stuart stated that the final financials for June are not back from the accountant yet. Commissioner Brown stated that, with the consent of the commission, we would defer until the July meeting for the item.

B. Fire Chief's Report and possible action – Events of June 2024, Monthly Performance; Incidents, Record of Calls, Projects, Response Times, etc.

For staffing updates, Chief Miller provided a status update on current employee medical issues. He provided a status update on pre-employment process for a candidate to potentially start in August. He stated that one position would remain open and would be advertised for firefighter or firemedic. Chief Miller stated that Village Fire Department has recently hired two part-time dispatchers and are in progress of pre-employment screening for a third. The department has hired one full-time dispatcher to start August 5, 2024. The department will post an advertisement with TML for the open administrator position and begin taking applications soon.

For apparatus and equipment, Chief Miller stated that everything is really good. He stated that Ladder 1 was sent out for striping Monday and got it back today, Wednesday. Commissioner Brown asked Chief to provide an update on the chainsaw issues. Chief Miller said the department would like to purchase two 20" and four 16" chainsaws commercial grade chainsaws that cost about \$1,200 each. The four 16" chainsaws would go on the apparatus, and the two 20" chainsaws would be put on reserve for disasters. Chief Miller stated the total cost would be about \$7,200.

For major incidents, Chief Miller mentioned that Hurricane Beryl was a major incident. Chief Miller stated that the after-action report was simple because changes were made due to the windstorm earlier in the year. Village Fire Department was prepared with a hotspot for internet for cable/internet outage. The station was without electricity for only two days. The contacts made with Comcast and CenterPoint were beneficial. Chief Miller thanked the City of Piney Point Village for providing each shift with cheesecakes after the storm. Chief Miller said they set up an EOC with an administrator and extra dispatchers working. Responses were stopped during the storm when winds reached above 55-60mph constant, then resumed when safe. VFD first responders along with police helped to clear trees from the roads. The only hiccup was a duplication of efforts – police would take care of a downed tree at the address of a call, so it was already taken care of when VFD personnel arrived. Better coordination in the future would alleviate duplication of efforts. Chief Miller stated that VFD generators worked well. Chief Miller said his maintenance guy is getting an estimate on how much it would cost to replace the 30+ year old generator. Chief Miller stated that there were 130 calls within the first 24 hours of the storm on July 9th. Looking out for 10 days, up to when 90% power was restored, VFD received 243 calls. Most calls were for carbon monoxide - some with symptoms, fire alarms, gas leaks, two house fires, 64 objects down on roadways, 61 powerlines down, and 11 non-emergency service calls. One of the house fires was in Spring Vally and was caused by a can light. The other house fire was in Hunters Creek and was caused by an electrical wiring error on the home generator connecting to the house. Only the wire was melted. Houston was cancelled because it wasn't that bad.

For June incidents, Chief Miller stated VFD had less than May and July: 116 fire incidents, 79 EMS incidents, 13 non-emergency service calls, 5 HFD calls, for a total of 213 calls with an average response time of 4 minutes and 21 seconds.

Chief Miller said the contract with PCI regarding the roof was executed on June 27th, and we are waiting for an update.

Commissioner Brown asked about the required generator distances from house. Chief Miller said that building officials could give an answer, and the Fire Marshal could give more specifics. Commissioner Woodruff said that the distance is generator specific. Commissioner Lisenby gave specific details on different size generators and distances as well.

Commissioner Brown asked about an Assistant Chief [Deputy Chief] position opening up in the near future due to retirement, and if the commission may want to consider identifying the 2026 Fire Chief sooner to fill that position. Chief Miller stated that he likes the idea of creating an Assistant Chief position to prepare for the transition to new Fire Chief in the future and would consider hiring from inside or outside the department. Commissioner Woodruff is concerned that this strategy would eliminate qualified candidates who may already be a chief who may not want to come in as an assistant rather than a chief; they may want to make a lateral move directly from one chief position to another. Commissioner Kollenberg asked for clarification on Assistant Chief or Deputy Chief, as the retirement of a Deputy Chief would open a position for someone to be promoted to a "shift commander" position called Deputy Chief. Chief Miller said that he would want to add an additional position called Assistant Chief like in the past for the current chief to "groom" the person for the fire chief position. Commissioner Woodruff stated that his city would not like adding to the current headcount, especially at the executive level. Perhaps a month or so from the transition but not a year. The consensus is to fill the deputy chief position when it's opened and consider both internal and external candidates for fire chief after. Commissioner Woodruff suggested that a process and

timeline needs to be determined and followed to make sure there is enough time and consideration given to fill the fire chief position with a quality candidate.

NO ACTION

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:

A. Financial management policy draft

Commissioner Brown stated that a committee worked with Clair Bogard to develop a financial management policy draft, included in board package, and asked Claire to present a run through of the draft. Claire Bogard presented highlights of the draft document. Commissioner Brown suggested the commissioners take time to review the draft document and take possible action at the August meeting. Commissioner Woodruff stated that he would like more time to review and consider the details of the written draft.

NO ACTION

B. Payroll

Commissioner Kollenberg presented the current pay scale, promotion process, and step progression. Recent firemedics have been hired at step 4. He presented data showing the distribution of current employees at each step, showing that most employees are “maxed out”. He showed the career path and explained some of the course training requirements. He explained the payroll schedule of semi-monthly base pay and when overtime is paid. Commissioner Kollenberg stated that it’s good to know when we talk about salary and compensation in the future, if it’s a problem that needs to be solved or not.

Commissioner Brown said that we need to consider if it’s actually a problem or not. He has not heard any complaints from any of the firefighters, but we could also consider the impact on budgeting and if it’s objectively fair and if we need to address it or not.

Commissioner Woodruff said that the pay scale doesn’t do anything in certain grades like captain, so we need to consider if that’s a problem; when you get to be a captain, there’s no room for growth in “steps” to incentivize people to work hard, improve and do better. If we are trying to have an incentive pay structure, the current scale doesn’t provide incentives in some cases. The overarching goal of a pay structure is to make sure you’re adequately and fairly compensating employees competitive with competition. If we are competitive and fair, then we meet the basic requirements, but if we want to get something out of having steps, then we don’t have a structure that gets us there.

Commissioner Kollenberg pointed out that captains can be promoted to deputy chief and if qualified can “ride up” to deputy chief. He also said that we need to evaluate the survey data and make sure we’re comparing accurately. Commissioner Woodruff agreed.

Commissioner Brown stated that it was good discussion, good content for the commission to be thinking about for future discussions.

NO ACTION

8. **DISCUSSION OF AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING** - The Board will discuss and consider possible action on the following:

A. Generator

Chief Miller stated that this topic was mostly covered in 4B. A question was raised to the life span, certain amount of hours, of the current generator(s). Chief Miller stated that he does not know the hours on the generator and we have never looked at the hours on it. He said the first generator was replaced after it was 10 years old, and the current generator is over 30 years old now and has long hours on it. Chief Miller said it’s done a great job considering the main problem was it being housed in a small space needing additional ventilation to keep cool along with mechanical seals needing to be replaced, and last year leaking oil.

Commissioner Woodruff stated the main thing we need to look at is how to be able to fail over from one to the other, even if we must shed some loads. It's unlikely that both generators will fail at the same time, so it would be beneficial to be able to transfer loads between the generators to run the critical functions of the fire department on either generator.

Chief Miller added that the old generator runs the main part of the station, and the new generator runs the "annex" building (EOC & Dispatch). He stated that one area is not covered by the generators and would cost \$5,000 to connect it. Another idea would be to have a place to hook up a mobile or rental generator if needed. Matt Woodruff agreed and said it would be a good idea to have a transfer switch to be able to bring in a trailer generator, such as a guaranteed rental generator, for an additional cost, set aside for our use during hurricane season.

Commissioner Brown and Commissioner Woodruff agreed that redundancy is beneficial, especially in times of disaster, if one goes out then the second can be used.

NO ACTION

B. Emergency Communications

Chief Miller stated that this topic was covered in 4B.

NO ACTION

C. Budgeting on consulting/inspector on capital projects

Commissioner Brown stated this was referring to roof update and was addressed in 4B as well.

NO ACTION

9. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** - The Board of Commissioners will retire into Executive Session as authorized by Chapter 551; Texas Government Code, to seek legal advice related to the following matters:
None

10. **FUTURE TOPICS**

11. **NEXT MEETING DATE**
August 28, 2024

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:20p.m.