

*Minutes*  
**VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday, August 28, 2024, 6:00 P.M.**

A regular monthly Village Fire Commission Board Meeting was held on August 28, 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	Commissioner Keith Brown, Chair
City of Piney Point Village	Commissioner Henry Kollenberg, Vice Chair
City of Spring Valley Village	Commissioner Allen Carpenter, Treasurer
City of Hunters Creek Village	Commissioner Rob Adams, Secretary
City of Hedwig Village	Commissioner Matt Woodruff, Member

Present:

City of Bunker Hill Village	Alternate Clara Towsley
City of Piney Point Village	Alternate Aliza Dutt
City of Spring Valley Village	Alternate John Lisenby
City of Hedwig Village	Alternate Patrick Breckon
Village Fire Department	Howard Miller, Fire Chief
Village Fire Department	Katherine Stuart, Administrative Specialist
Randle Law Firm	Brandon Morris, Attorney

Not present:

City of Hunters Creek Village	Alternate Fidel Sapien
City of Hilshire Village	Commissioner Mike Garofalo, Member
City of Hilshire Village	Alternate Robert (Bob) Buesinger

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

Andrea Herman asked what size chainsaws VFD was used on the tree on Magdalene Drive. Chief Miller stated that he didn't recall what size was used on that particular tree, and he stated that we have 20". Chief Miller asked Captain Sandifer what other sizes we have; Captain Sandifer answered that we have 20", 18", and 16" chainsaws.

**3. EXECUTIVE SESSION - Executive session pursuant to Section 551.074 authorizing a governmental body to deliberate the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of the following:**

1. Administrator/Finance Director
2. Administrative Specialist

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

**5. 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 July 24, 2024**

Commissioner Adams made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Carpenter. All members voted yes.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**B. Approval of Bills Paid – July 2024**

Commissioner Kollenberg made a motion to approve the consent agenda [including bills paid in June 2024]; seconded by Commissioner Woodruff. All members voted yes.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**6. REPORTS**

**A. Treasurer’s Financial Reports and possible action – July 2024**

Commissioner Carpenter stated that the financial reports were provided in the board package and asked Chief Miller to discuss the line items with large numbers. Chief Miller stated that we are under budget in the Capital Expenditures section because we still have computers and gear to purchase later this year. He stated that Salaries is \$160,000 under budget due to personnel turnover/shortage. Being under budget in salaries will help us to cover the overage in the Overtime line item. Chief Miller stated we are overbudget in Overtime due to Derecho and Hurricane Beryl, and we will get some reimbursement (applied for through FEMA). Another reason we’re running over budget is due to a shortage in dispatchers, as one is out on FMLA and one terminated. VFD is also down one firefighter on shift, which is incurring overtime. We are under budget by \$221,000 on Health Insurance line item due to the savings in health insurance rates going down by switching from BCBS to UHC; however, we expect rates to increase next year. We are \$25,000 over budget on Legal Services and Professional Services. We expect to adjust at the end of the year, and next year have fewer categories to avail intra-budgetary transfers. Commissioner Carpenter asked Chief Miller to explain the Fuel line item; Chief Miller deferred to Katherine Stuart. Katherine stated that we have not made a purchase for July to fill the underground tanks, and usage is decreasing. Alternate Lisenby stated that Spring Valley has stopped purchasing fuel from VFD.

Commissioner Woodruff expressed that the Legal Services line item has already been exceeded by \$10,000, so we are in violation of the interlocal agreement. Woodruff stated that the commission should have been made aware before busting the budget on this line item so that we could seek a budget amendment to have the authority to pay these bills. Commissioner Woodruff stated that you (and we as a commission) can’t pay those bills, as you have no authority to exceed the budget by \$10,000 in a category. Commissioner Kollenberg stated that last month, the financials showed that we were \$3,000 over in July. Commissioner Woodruff said that someone needs to be ringing a bell to tell us that we are going to bust the budget before we bust it so we can fix it. Commissioner Woodruff said that we should have a budget amendment ready to go the next time we meet so it can go to the cities.

**NO ACTION**

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

Staffing updates – Chief Miller stated that we are preparing to hire one firemedic to fill the open position. We have hired a part-time and a full-time dispatcher to reduce overtime. Chief Miller stated that he would like to make one of the full-time dispatchers a supervisor. One full-time dispatcher is still out on FMLA and will return to work in October. We will hire a new administrator/finance director, Amy Buckert. Deputy Chief Wyatt is retiring; his last day on duty is 9/16/2024 and will ride out his remaining benefit time through the end of the year. Chief Miller will do some shift transfers during that time to cover his spot. Deputy Chief Tim Miller will move to B-Shift, and Captain DePaul will ride up to Deputy Chief on A-Shift until January when he, or someone, will be made permanent Deputy Chief and a new firefighter will be hired to backfill.

Apparatus and Equipment – Chief Miller stated that Ladder 1 is back in the shop for preventative maintenance. While in the shop the pump transfer case was found to be cracked, so will have to be replaced.

Major Incidents – Chief Miller stated that the fire department costs for Hurricane Beryl were not high, but we should be getting 75% reimbursement back for Hurricane Beryl. The total cost for Hurricane Beryl was \$28,927 that we submitted to FEMA for reimbursement. FEMA’s share that they’ll pay back is \$21,695, which leaves us \$7,231 that we must pay. Derecho total cost submitted was \$14,421; FEMA’s payback will be \$10,816, which leaves our cost at \$3,000. These two disasters will cost us about \$10,000. We had a house fire in Spring Valley caused by rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. We have had quite a few of them lately so we have put a public service announcement on our website. The Spring Valley fire was contained to the garage where the sprinkler system extinguished it and kept it in check there. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, we responded to a motorcycle accident on Piney Point Road with a 1:45 minute response time. The victim was life-flighted from the scene. The motorcyclist sustained a head injury and was not wearing a helmet. July incident numbers were high, total 402 calls: 223 fire incidents, 83 EMS calls, 84 non-emergency service calls, and 11 Houston calls. The average response time was 5:02.

Projects & Events – Chief Miller stated that Pyramid Waterproofing came out to the site and did pull testing for fasteners on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Their start date will be September 16<sup>th</sup> to start work on the roof.

Communications – Chief Miller stated that we are still waiting for our Starlink satellite to arrive. Commissioner Woodruff showed an example of a slightly smaller model of the satellite. Chief Miller said the satellite would be attached with a building-mount type system. Chief Miller stated that once we have Starlink on board, we'll have cell phone, satellite, and internet for dispatch to receive calls and transmit over the radio.

Other – Cost to replace the station 80kw generator that is three years old with an upgraded 100kw generator with installation is \$77,771. The cost to replace chainsaws (4 for fire trucks & 2 for reserve) is \$6,085. We will consider when putting together the budget amendment.

Commissioner Brown said that some dissatisfaction was expressed at the Bunker Hill city council meeting concerning the operations of the EOC during Hurricane Beryl. He suggested that we look at that again and set up quarterly drills instead of annually. The bulk of the criticism was towards lack of communication with the department. Chief Miller stated that it was a MVPD issue. Chief Miller stated that we had MVPD officers and a dispatcher here (at VFD). Chief Miller said the biggest communication issue was duplication of efforts by responding to the same calls. Chief Miller said the EOC went really good during Hurricane Beryl, better than Derecho. We contacted administrators and several came in. Drills would be beneficial to improve efficiency.

**NO ACTION**

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

**None**

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

**None**

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

A. New Administrator/Finance Director

Commissioner Brown stated that this was taken care of in the executive session and will take no action.

**NO ACTION**

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

A. Department guidelines

Commissioner Brown stated that the entire department guidelines were circulated some time ago. Before Chief Miller implements them, with the exception of the financial management policies, Commissioner Brown asked that two sections be brought to the attention of the commission. Section 300 and 900. Section 300 is about vehicle lease and use by personnel and wanted to be sure it was reviewed. Chapter 1 – Administrative section 901, Commissioner Brown wants to clarify that records should be provided to cities at no charge. In Section 902, Commissioner Woodruff would like to change the wording of the requirement of completing a specific form, since a written request can be made on a cocktail napkin. The new wording should be “written request”. Commissioner Brown stated that Chief Miller may proceed to implement the guidelines with those changes, as the commission does not need to approve them as an official policy.

**NO ACTION**

B. Financial management policy draft

Commissioner Brown stated that we need to get this approved to implement it. Claire Bogard stated that she would fill in the blanks on the surety policy and will fix the small typo issues. Commissioner Adams made a motion to approve the financial management policy; Commissioner Carpenter seconded the motion. All members voted yes.

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

C. Finance Committee

Commissioner Brown appointed Alternate Lisenby and Alternate Towsley to be on the finance committee, which includes budget considerations and preparations.

**NO ACTION**

**D. Audit Committee**

Commissioner Brown stated that the audit committee will work with auditors to get our audits focused on what we want to learn about from the next audit(s). Commissioner Brown asked Commissioner Kollenberg to be on the committee even though he has check signing authority, so there may be a conflict of interest. Commissioner Brown appointed Alternate Businger to also be on the committee.

**NO ACTION**

**11. FUTURE TOPICS**

Budget amendment

**12. NEXT MEETING DATE**

**September 25, 2024**

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:45p.m.