

Minutes
**VILLAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT
REGULAR MONTHLY BOARD
MEETING**
Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 6:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER

A regular fire commission meeting of the Village Fire Department was held on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at 901 Corbindale, Houston, Texas 77024. It began at 6:00 p.m. and was presided over by Keith Brown. The secretary was present.

Present & Voting Were:

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

Commissioner Keith Brown, Chair
Commissioner Matt Woodruff
Mayor Robert (Bob) Buesinger
Commissioner Rob Adams, Secretary
Commissioner Henry Kollenberg, Vice Chair
Commissioner John Lisenby, Treasurer

Present Were:

City of Hedwig Village
City of Hunters Creek
City of Piney Point Village
City of Spring Valley Village

Alternate Patrick Breckon
Alternate John DeWitt
Alternate Dan Ramey
Alternate Steve Bass

Village Fire Department
Administrative Staff

Fire Chief, Howard Miller
Amy Buckert, Administrator/Finance Director
Katherine Stuart, Administrative Specialist

Randle Law Firm

Attorney Brandon Morris

Not Present Were:

City of Bunker Hill Village
City of Hilshire Village

Alternate Clara Towsley
Commissioner Mike Garofalo

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

None

3. CONSENT AGENDA – All Consent Agenda items listed are 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 February 26, 2025
- B.** Approval of Bills Paid – January 2025, February 2025

Motion: Woodruff

Second: Buesinger

Unanimously approved

4. REPORTS

- A.** Treasurer's Financial Reports and possible action – restated December 2024, January 2025, and February 2025
- B.** Administrator's Report and possible action – February 2025 (attached)
- C.** Investment Report – February 2025 (attached)
- D.** Budget Committee Meeting Report (deferred to agenda item #10)
- E.** Audit Committee Meeting Report (deferred to agenda item # 9)
- F.** Fire Chief's Report and possible action – February 2025

The department is fully staffed. Captain Ekblaw is undergoing physical therapy for his knee. Engine 1 had a pump leak repaired and annual preventative maintenance. Rescue tool bi-annual maintenance was performed on March 6. There were no major incidents. There were 58 Fire Incidents, 63 EMS type Incidents, 8 Service Calls Non-Emergency and 129 total incidents. The Average Response Time was 4 Minutes, 20 Seconds, and the National Standard is 6:30. Fire hydrant inspections are underway. A Safety Committee was created to reduce accidents and injuries. The committee will review tactical guidelines; policies; and procedures, investigate accidents, investigate injuries, department training, and make reports and recommendations to the Fire Chief. Deputy Chief Tim Miller, the department's training officer, is working with Alternate Commissioner Dewitt to come up with a health and fitness program. Katherine is working on the on-the-job time loss from injuries.

Motion: No Action Taken

Second:

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

- A.** Temporary Aerial Apparatus

Chief Miller informed the Board that Deputy Chiefs DePaul and Witt were reviewing options for a leased fire truck, and the cost is approximately \$395 per month. There was discussion regarding how to best secure the funding for the truck, and the length of the lease. It would require the consent of the cities, and the preparation of a budget amendment to approve the use of the interest and other funds.

There was a motion to lease a vehicle, an interim quint, pending the new one being delivered.

Motion: Woodruff

Second: Lisenby

Unanimously approved

The second motion was preparation and submission of a budget amendment for the Cities approval, authorizing the expenditure of up to \$400 per day.

Motion: Woodruff

Second: Lisenby

Unanimously approved

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

- A.** Resolution 2025-01 amending the authorized key executives on Village Fire Department's Wells Fargo account

The Administrator informed the Board that there is one Wells Fargo account still active, and that is one of the Ambulance Billing Accounts. It has been left open because a few of the insurance companies have that routing number, and they can deposit funds there. There have been no deposits since the Administrator's arrival in October. The fees for that account, since they're not our main depository anymore, are approximately \$80 a month. Staff is recommending closure of that account. Unfortunately, nobody is still employed here that was on that account.

Wells Fargo requires minutes to appoint key executives, and the Department Attorney Brandon Morris prepared a resolution so that the action could be taken tonight and get that account closed. The resolution authorizes Amy and Katherine to be the key executives on the account, which is what the bank.

With the resolution in place, staff can close the account. Mr. Kollenberg made a motion to appoint Amy Buckert and Katherine Stuart as key executives on the Wells Fargo account, and further authorized Amy Buckert, as Secretary, to execute such certificates as the bank may require on its forms to effectuate the purposes of the foregoing. Mr. Woodruff seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the resolution.

Motion: Kollenberg

Second: Woodruff

Unanimously approved

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

A. QuickBooks Conversion Update

B. Tipalti Project Update

Staff gave an update on the two financial projects. The Administrator/Finance Director previously circulated a report on the items. Staff sought guidance on the approval chain of workflow within the Tipalti system. Currently checks require two Commissioner signatures, so in trying to stay consistent with that, the workflow will be set up to have two Board-level approvals. Staff explained that the workflow would route approvals through the chain and then up to Amy (and/or Katherine) for payment. Once a month, the Board would receive a check register/payment report for approval rather than a 40-page General Ledger.

After some discussion, it was decided that the Treasurer and the Secretary would be the two Commissioners on the workflow and would approve after the Chief and before the payment of the bills (Amy, Katherine).

Mr. Woodruff moved that the Tipalti bill pay workflow be set up so that after it's approved by the staff that it be approved by the treasurer, and in the absence of the treasurer, the Commissioner next designated to be the treasurer. Mr. Lisenby seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

Motion: Woodruff

Second: Lisenby

Unanimously approved

8. **DISCUSSION OF AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING PAST FINANCIAL MATTERS** - The Board of Commissioners will discuss and take any action necessary related to past financial matters, the resulting forensic audit, and steps toward resolution.

There was no discussion for this item.

Motion: No Action Taken
Second:

9. **DISCUSSION OF AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING TIMING AND PAYMENT OF 2024 AUDIT**

The Administrator advised the Board that Mr. Belt is working to pull the scope down a bit. He's going to draft a letter for our review of the actions taken as a remedy to the documents that Brandon and Schwartz sent over. He wants a letter from the Department saying the improvements that we've made and what processes we've implemented to prevent this from happening again. The Administrator provided Mr. Belt with a list of items completed to date. The PBC list was to be received by the end of February; however, staff has not yet received it.

The Administrator did inform the Board that Mr. Belt said he would ask us to call a meeting of the audit committee once he had everything pinned down. The Board reiterated that the amounts in question in the forensic audit were immaterial.

There was some discussion among the Board about issuing an RFQ for audit services for next year. There was discussion about the fact that the Department has had the same auditor for a number of years is good and demonstrates stability; however, there are also best practices that recommend firms be reviewed every 5-7 years.

After the discussion, no action was taken.

Motion: No Action Taken
Second:

10. **FY 2026 BUDGET DISCUSSION #2** – The Board of Commissioners will conduct Budget Discuss #2 to include discussion and possible action.

The Chair asked the Administrator to review the changes since the last Budget Discussion.

The Administrator first spoke of the proposed TMRS scenarios that were included in the packet and showed how those effected the Budget. She explained that the Department currently has a 2% 457 plan to enhance benefits in lieu of the previous TMRS cuts, but that only one other department does that. All of the TMRS scenarios presented take away the \$110,000 line item for the 457 plan. The salary survey showed that VFD is behind on TMRS benefits compared to many other departments competing for the same talent pool.

There was some discussion about whether the TMRS benefits should be increased, and the associated unfunded liabilities that come with that, or whether there should be a wholesale increase in compensation to allow employees to use that money at their discretion, whether that be as a salary increase or placing into their own retirement accounts.

The Chief was asked how many years of experience the people we just hired have. One is right out of fire school. And the other two came with four or five years of experience. The Department has two people that are in the age band of 20 to 29, and 36 between 30 and 39. There are 16 between 40 to 49, which includes the recently hired and quit employees. There are nine between 50 to 59, and one between 60 to 69..

The Administrator reminded the Commission that if they make a change, it would not be effective until January. She also reminded everyone what Kenneth Oliver said when he came from TMRS to the virtual meeting a couple months ago: these are the percentages for this year. The Commission would need to

build in a bit of a cushion, maybe half a percent or so when taking this budget forward. These are the current percentages, but they'll change in June and they will not be known before the passage of the budget.

And picking a new plan, he's given us an estimate based on it. And so there's a little more flexibility in it, because I think that's why he said half a percent. But I think that's actually quite conservative.

The Commission asked the Administrator to update the summary sheet slide and send it out to the cities. She then asked if it would be helpful to break out each City's portion of costs for each of the scenarios so that the City Administrators could understand their own situations and the costs associated. They asked her to put together a packet outlining the logic of the request and get that out prior to the cities' first April meetings, which begin April 10.

Moving on to the budget discussion, the Administrator outlined the latest changes in the budget document since the last meeting. The Commission asked her to revisit the Office Software line item, the EMS Revenue, and the Interest Earnings.

The Chair expressed his desire to get through this budget process without having an extra budget workshop, but that he believes there may need to be one more between the April and May meetings.

The Administrator informed the Commission that she would be returning to Little Rock at the end of May and would not be in attendance at the May Commission meeting. She did offer the option of attending virtually or wrapping up the budget in advance and passing it off to the Administrative Specialist to present to the Commission.

Motion: No Action Taken

Second:

11. **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:

- A. Executive session pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.074 authorizing a governmental body to deliberate the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee; Fire Chief
- B. Executive session pursuant to Section 551.071 consultation with attorney regarding pending or contemplated litigation

The Board convened in Executive Session at 8:10 pm.

Motion: No Action Taken

Second:

The Board reconvened in Regular Session at 8:30 pm. No action was taken.

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

Motion: No Action Taken

Second:

13. **FUTURE TOPICS**

- A. Auditor RFQ
- B. Amendment to Bylaws removing authorization of Chair to appoint Committees (ILA 5.03)
- C. Reappointment of all Committees

14. **NEXT MEETING DATE**

April 23, 2025

15. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

DRAFT