

TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 8

MINUTES

July 29, 2023

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 8 was held on **Saturday July 29, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.**, at Station 801, located at 801 Bee Creek Road, Spicewood, Texas 78669, for the following purposes:

1. Call meeting to order; Meeting called to order at 8:40 a.m.

Board Present in Person:

Debra Opdahl – President, Becky Wynn – Vice President, – Charles Valadez – Asst. Secretary/Treasurer

Board Absent

Treasurer, Matt Coffel and Secretary, Bruce Mills

Also present in person:

Tony Haden, Lynnette Courtney, Cody Fojtk, Bruce Perkins

2. Public Comment: Members of the public may speak for up to three (3) minutes regarding general topics or specific agenda items. In accordance with the Texas Attorney General's opinion, any public comment that is made on an item that is not on the published final agenda will only be heard by the Board of Commissioners. No formal action, discussion, deliberation, nor comment will be made by the Board of Commissioners;

None.

3. Public Comment on Agenda items: Individual members of the public may address the Board for a maximum of three minutes per person per agenda item. Individuals may address the Board once per item. Members of the public will speak on agenda items before Board consideration of item. Members of the public who wish to speak on agenda items or make a public comment must complete speaker cards prior to the beginning of the Board meeting.

None.

Discussion/Action Items

3. Discuss and consider taking action on approval of hiring process for the position of Assistant Chief.

Chief Haden reported that he received two quotes from consultants for hiring an Asst. Fire Chief. A third option would be for the District to compose a list of high level candidates and then use one of the vendors to validate the candidates. Becky Wynn suggested we table this item until after the budget presentation.

4. Discuss and consider taking action on reallocating budgeted funds for Command 801 to purchase a new Command vehicle.

\$100,000 was allocated for Command 801 in the F.Y. 2022-2023 budget for a skid unit insert to make Command 801 function as a brush truck. Chief Haden requested that the Board use that money to purchase and outfit a new more appropriate command vehicle and redeploying current Command 801 as Support 801.

Chief Haden also asked the Board to approve the reallocation of the \$200,000 approved in F.Y. 2022-2023 for Boat 801 intended for new motors and fuel cells. In place of those items, the Department will update the sonar, provide climate control, perform annual PM, and address general upkeep and maintenance. This would cost less than the approved \$200,000. With these savings, and Board approval, the Department will order a cab and chassis for a new brush truck to replace BT803.

Debra Opdahl made a motion to allocate \$80,000 of funds originally allocated in the FY 22/23 budget for boat upgrades. Money will be allocated for a new brush truck cab and chassis. Becky Wynn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Debra Opdahl made a motion to reallocate up to \$100,000 of funds originally allocated in the FY 22/23 budget for a skid unit for current Command 801 to purchase and outfit of a new command vehicle. Charles Valadez second the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board discussed the posting of the new and reclassified positions discussed in the budget presentation. Chief Haden stated that he would prefer to use an internal candidate for the EMS coordinator based on a recommendation from the Medical Director. If there is not an internal applicant, Chief Haden would post externally and work on filling this position. Debra Opdahl would also like to make sure that the District is prepared to fund the HR consultant and the Staff Battalion Chief in the current budget.

Debra Opdahl made a motion to make an amendment to the FY 22/23 budget to reclassify the second Assistant Chief position to a Staff Battalion Chief. Charles Valadez seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

Debra Opdahl made a motion for the posting of the position of Assistant Fire Chief using department personnel while utilizing vendors for, but not limited to, vetting and background checks of candidates. The motion was seconded by Charles Valadez. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Discuss and consider F.Y. 2023 - 2024 budget presentations;

Chief Haden stated the department's top priority needs, which are: Financial stewardship- accurate reporting, Payroll- adjustments for retention, Fleet- changes to existing, Administration- additional positions and contracts.

2 options for tax rate planning were presented:

Option 1- Proposed tax rates- ESD8 from .079 to .081; ESD16 from .074 to .076. New ad valorem revenue - ESD 8 from \$3,310,000 to \$3,790,000, ESD 16 from \$2,636,000 to \$3,134,000.

These options are less than the \$500,000 increase and would let us follow the BLUE options on the tax planning calendar.

Option 2:

Proposed tax rates: - ESD8 from .079 to .081; ESD16 from .074 to .070. New ad valorem revenue - ESD 8 from \$3,310,000 to \$3,790,000, ESD 16 stays \$2,636,000. \$500,000 would come from reserves for the budget deficit.

Chief Haden stated that the Board has given direction not to create a problem for future Boards or chiefs. In addition, the Department needs to make sure that we are working within our means financially. Becky Wynn asked what the difference was in the tax rate in the options. Lynnette Courtney stated that this is an increase of .002. Charles Valadez stated that we are looking to add at least one if not 2 stations and we need to make sure that we are capturing everything we can to make those impacts less now.

Chief Haden stated that for the next budget workshop we will prepare a 5- and 10-year plan to look at needs for the future. This will include more stations, increasing staffing to help with overtime costs and to help our response with more staff per station. Chief Haden recommended option 1 to save district reserves for needs in the future.

Payroll- New pay scale. This will address longevity, cost of living adjustments, and incentive planning. Debra Opdahl asked if our pay scale was comparable with the Westside 5 departments? She stated that she wants to make sure we are paying our employees for all the things we are demanding them to do. Chief Haden stated that we are working on that need, and we are looking at those items to make sure we are developing our leaders for the future and paying them accordingly.

Fleet- New Command 802 vehicle. Rebrand our fleet. Begin brush truck replacement plan, tender replacement ordering plan.

Administration- New position- EMS coordinator, Reclassification of 2nd Asst. Chief to Staff Chief as a professional development tool and to manage workload management. Unmet needs- Address HR specialist, increase legal involvement. Re-work the organizational chart. Create a department training plan, ISO preparation. This is a huge project that needs additional staff in order to support it. ISO is a 2-year project that demands a large time commitment. The Department has credentialing that needs to be addressed and maintained and we do not currently have the staff to complete those tasks.

Debra Opdahl asked if we have money in the budget this fiscal year to get some temporary help for administrative support. Chief Haden stated the budget could support it. Debra Opdahl stated that we can do this today in order to get some help now.

Debra Opdal asked what the rank of the EMS coordinator would be. Chief Haden stated that there would be no rank. This would be an administrative position. We are the largest department in Travis County without this position.

Charles Valadez asked if the Staff Chief would be internal. Chief Haden reported that this new position would be a place for us to develop our personnel to make them prepared to become executive Chiefs.

Becky Wynn asked if the contract increase is to \$400,000 to help our medical mission and reflect that higher level of care. Chief Haden said that is correct.

HR is the biggest portion of our budget. Even though we do not have pay finalized, we feel this will be well within this budget. This includes a 15% increase in healthcare.

HR admin fees- Added the HR contract to this line item. Charles Valadez asked how much we have spent in legal fees this year. Lynnette Courtney stated \$85,000. Debra Opdahl stated that we need to have that relationship and involvement for our legal team to reduce our vulnerability.

Becky Wynn stated that we need to capitalize on grants and people to help assist Lynnette with grant writing.

Public Relations- This category reflects the Board's desire for more public outreach. We want to make sure that we have enough money to complete these missions. Debra Opdahl asked where those items live in the budget. Lynnette Courtney stated that line is prevention. Debra Opdahl asked that that line item be renamed to Prevention/Public Relations.

Facilities- Debra Opdahl asked about the septic upgrade to 801. Chief Haden stated that we have planned for that in the remodel of station 801.

Training- Course fees is the flexibility to training and professional development of our staff. Becky Wynn stated that anything we can do to develop our Department is worth every penny.

Fleet- We feel that the fuel cost is reflective of our current increases. As a result of the new agreement with Lake Travis Fire Rescue Fleet Maintenance, our repair costs are coming down

and we expect to see them to continue to decrease by selling the older apparatus.

Budget Summary- Proposed budget \$9,587,878.40. Chief Haden stated if the Board decides to go with option 2, the budget would be altered to show the ESD 16 contract of \$2,500,000, and \$500,000 would be added from reserves. The Board stated that they would prefer to use reserves for equipment needs.

Capital expenses: Geoff Tumlin Training, rebrand and upgrade support vehicles, new command 802, brush trucks, Cookware/kitchen supplies, fitness equipment, covered parking for all stations and decks, station 802 remodel.

The Board expressed concern for the future needs of the Department, to include new stations, personnel, and equipment. There is a desire to hold a strategic planning meeting with the Board to make sure that we have these items laid out for budgeting purposes. Chief Haden stated the staff will start working on that request. Staff will also be working with developers to help assist with these new costs to the District driven by development.

Chief Haden stated that the total on all capital items would be \$471,000. In addition to the 6-month reserve, the District would still have a little over \$500,000 in the bank.

Chief Haden advised the Board that the \$600,000 approved for the Station 801 remodel is not enough to cover design and construction costs. The total new cost would be \$3,000,000.

Lynnette Courtney explained that we have been working on an option to pay off the existing loan for Station 801 through refinancing and issue a new note using the appraised value of Station 801 as collateral.

6. Discuss and consider adoption of the tax and budget planning calendar for 2023, and take any related reaction.

The Board wants to continue forward with option 1. The Board will have a special meeting on August 7th at 10am.

Debra Opdahl asked for a motion to approve the tax and budget calendar for 2023 for Tax Exceeds No-New Revenue Rate but not the Voter approval rate. Charles Valadez moved to approve the budget planning calendar, the motion was seconded by Becky Wynn. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Discuss agenda, time, and date for next meeting.

A Special Board meeting will be held at 801 Bee Creek Road, Briarcliff Texas on Monday, August 7, 2023, at 10 am.

The next regular Board meeting be held at 801 Bee Creek Road, Briarcliff Texas on Monday, August 14, 2023, at 7pm.

8. Adjourned at 12:04pm


Secretary
Travis County ESD #8