

NORTH FORT MYERS FIRE CONTROL AND RESCUE
SERVICE DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Budget Workshop
September 12, 2013

Chairman Leroy Nottingham called the North Fort Myers Fire Control and Rescue Service District Board of Commissioners to order at 5:05 p.m.

Present were:

Commissioners: Leroy Nottingham Mike Gatewood
 Robert Hoke Danny Ballard

Chief Chris Noble Assistant Chief John Meredith
Assistant Chief David Rice Office Manager Monique Brooks

Absent:

Commissioner Tom Mere

Invocation: Chief Noble

Pledge of Allegiance: Commissioner Ballard

Presentation:

By Chief Noble:

- Discussion of State of District letter: We will be using reserves again this year, while costs are still increasing. This upcoming fiscal year, we are looking at a loss of \$503,000. We need to come up with a way to increase revenue, or decrease cost. He feels the only way to accomplish this, is to reduce personnel.

- Fire Assessment Fees:
 1. Feels we should do a study on the feasibility of the fire assessment fee, but, thinks we would be initially looking at assessing Ad-Valorem taxes, as well as fire fees. In his opinion, he does not feel this will ever pass.
 2. Waiting to hear on an Attorney General's opinion of how our current Ad Valorem taxes are calculated
 3. Lehigh, Tice, Bayshore, Alva, Pine Island and us met today, and are leaning towards GSG, to conduct the fire assessment fee study. Fort Myers Shores has backed out. GSG has a strong background, have a local employee on staff, provided an excellent presentation and are much cheaper. They will give a discount for 2 or more departments that choose them.

Commissioner Ballard noted that he likes GSG, they have been to court 3 times, and have won. They have a great track record and excellent ideas. For example, get approved to assess fire fees, then the next year, go back to the public and reduce ad-valorem taxes. The other company Burton & Associates makes you cover yourself with a large bond.

Chief Noble also added that we will be broke within 3 years, if we continue on the track that we are on. He also noted that we do not want to go away from ad-valorem assessment, because our commercial properties pay the most. GSG looks at the valuation of all methods, they look at our budget and needs and go from there.

Chief Noble discussed the issue of retiree insurance. We need to look at this issue in the future, and look at different ideas, for example: stop the policy for all future employees, cap the current amount that we pay, or reduce our overall healthcare plan. It is sad that all we have done for the last 5 years is take away.

Commissioner Nottingham asked where we were in numbers of call volume, in the county? Chief Noble responded that we are approximately 4th.

Commissioner Ballard asked what a half percent increase in our millage rate would equal? Chief Noble responded possibly \$1 million.

He added that we should wait on the Attorney General's opinion, before we consider a millage increase.

Commissioner Nottingham asked what our current millage rate is? Chief Noble responded 2.5 mills.

Commissioner Ballard asked what is our millage rate maximum? Chief Noble responded 3.75 mills, per state statute.

Commissioner Ballard stated that he does not like Chief Noble's 3rd option – the Chief's retirement. Chief Noble thanked him for his confidence, however, he will not lay off 6 people to save his job.

Commissioner Nottingham asked who was the future administration? Chief Noble said we are not there yet.

Commissioner Nottingham asked what is the process for going in to reserves? Chief Noble responded it takes the Board's approval, and we have been doing this. Chief Noble added that we are currently working with a budget that is equivalent to the 2004/2005 budget.

Chief Noble commended the personnel for working with us.

Commissioner Ballard asked what was the approximate cost for GSG to conduct their fire assessment fee study? Chief Noble responded approximately \$22,500. He also added that GSG look at the long term picture, usually 10+ years.

Lightning struck, and we lost power. Meeting was adjourned at 6:01 pm