

**COMMITTEE OF THE FLORENCE COUNTY COUNCIL ON  
JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING, THURSDAY, MARCH 16,  
2023, IMMEDIATELY AFTER REGULAR COUNTY COUNCIL  
MEETING, COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM, ROOM 804,  
COUNTY COMPLEX, FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jason M. Springs, (Council District 1), Committee Chairman  
Roger M. Poston, (Council District 2), Committee Member

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:**

Jerry W. Yarborough, Jr., (Council District 4), Committee Member

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Willard Dorriety, Jr., Chairman of County Council (arrived 11:15 A.M.)  
Kevin Yokim, County Administrator  
Shannon Munoz, Deputy Administrator  
D. Malloy McEachin, Jr., County Attorney  
Samuel K. Brockington, Jr., Fire/Rescue Services Coordinator  
Chief Henry Humphries, Johnsonville Fire Department  
Chief John Delung, Windy Hill Fire Department  
Chief Billy Dillon, Howe Springs Fire Department  
Chief Howard Worrell, West Florence Fire Department  
Chief Jeff Demies- Sardis-Timmons Fire Department  
Jason Thompson, Chairman of the Unified Fire District Board  
Hope M. Jones, Clerk to Council  
Christian Smith, Florence Morning News Reporter

Copies of the meeting Agenda were posted in the lobby of the County Complex, and provided to the media and others requesting copies of meeting agendas, provided to the Florence County Library for posting at the main library as well as all branches, and on the County website at [www.florenceco.org/council](http://www.florenceco.org/council) in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act requirements for notice of meetings.

Committee Chairman Springs called the meeting to order at 10:49 A.M. Councilman Poston provided the invocation and Councilman Springs led the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag and welcomed everyone that was in attendance.

**MINUTES APPROVAL**

Councilman Poston made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 28, 2022, Committee meeting. Councilman Springs seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **INSURANCE COVERAGE:**

Sam Brockington gave an update. Mr. Brockington stated to be more efficient with the insurance coverages for all of the fire departments we developed an approach and invited representatives from the two main companies that insure the fire departments. The representatives gave a presentation and we discussed the needs and issues. The goal is to have the same insurance across the board because currently four departments use one company and three departments use another company, therefore, the limits of coverage and the amount of insured were not consistent. We will develop an RFP to be consistent across the board. One of the difficult decisions to be made is the type of insurance for fire vehicles for "agreed value" not on the basic insured value. We are seeing inflation. The new trucks have gone up approximately \$200k in one year. The question that will be posed is how much can we stand to insure. Should we insure it for what we paid for it, or insure it for what we think it might go for versus premiums or savings? Fortunately, we do have a savings account and these issues will be resolved. Mr. Brockington stated the insurance RFP is in process.

Chairman Springs inquired about what coverage liability was and if a decision was made. No decision was made.

Chief Delung stated they received draft information from two vendors. At their next meeting, they will go over the information provided.

Mr. Brockington stated that they will need Mr. Yokim and Mr. McEachin at the next meeting to cover risk management and/or to say if this is reasonable. Mr. McEachin will not be able to attend the meeting.

Chairman Springs inquired to Mr. Brockington, will this be done in time before the budget. Mr. Brockington stated yes. Chairman Springs mentioned that the third reading is in June.

Councilman Poston stated that liability insurance is not that expensive. Chairman Springs stated historically, electric cooperatives require a million-dollar liability from their contractors that work for them. We have to recognize that a million dollars is not much anymore. We now require our cooperatives to request five million dollar liability limits from contractors. You would like to say that doesn't mean you will raise your premiums. It's not a one-to-one comparison but as you go through the process reflect on it.

Chief Delung asked if you want us to have everything sent out for RFPs by June.

Mr. Yokim stated Chairman Springs's concern and referred to Mr. Brockington's statement that the value of vehicles are increasing and the property premiums will rise. The first reading is in April and the third reading is in June. We do not want to put a certain amount in the Unified Fire District's budget for insurance and then when we receive proposals back, other issues arise. We do not have an idea from the two

companies on what the premiums would at least be. Chairman Springs said ideally we need to know by June.

Mr. Yokim stated that we want to have sufficient dollars for insurance in the Unified Fire District's budget. Mr. Yokim stated he will get with Procurement on the first of the week to get that process accelerated.

Chairman Thompson stated for clarification, we need to make clear how much property insurance we will be required to carry on buildings because Sam has referenced vehicles. That was our primary concern in the past but with the transfer of deeds and land purchases to the county, we need to determine who is going to cover that part of it. Will be through this policy or the county policy agenda. That will affect which way the premiums will go up or down.

### **CONTRACTS:**

Chairman Springs discussed the contracts between Unified Fire District Departments and the County and Maintenance Contract.

Mr. Brockington stated the contract between the nonprofits and the county to provide operation of the fire district has had several drafts. Mr. McEachin met with Mr. Yokim and Mr. Brockington and made a couple of changes. There is a meeting on March 21, 2023, with the chiefs and Mr. Yokim.

Mr. Yokim stated that he met with Mr. Brockington and Mr. McEachin several weeks ago. Mr. Yokim stated he knew the issue was important to them and that is when Mr. Brockington scheduled a meeting with the chiefs. Mr. Yokim stated he has read the contract but wanted to hear from the chiefs.

Mr. Brockington stated that the maintenance RFP is out for bid. The RFP is due back on April 4, 2023, per Chief Delung. Mr. Brockington said that Council appointed a member to the review committee. Mr. Brockington stated he would like to have Jeff Dennis added to the committee. On the committee are Mr. Brockington, Councilman Poston, Chief Delung, Shannon Munoz, and Councilman Yarborough.

Mr. Brockington stated this is a significant advance in the way we are approaching the maintenance of the fleet. There are 100 fire apparatus and 50 support vehicles. The chiefs will have the final say. They will have the option to have a vendor make repairs and/or service vehicles. They will also have the option to use a local vendor if it is more advantageous than operational. Also, the RFP will require certified techs to work on the vehicle which protects the County.

### **PROPERTY TRANSFERS:**

Mr. Yokim stated everything is transferred except for two properties. Mr. Brockington stated he received another transfer and that the Johnsonville property has always been in Florence County's name. West Florence, Sardis-Timmons ville, and Howe Springs transferred over to be in the County's name. Johnsonville's three stations are owned by

Florence County. We have two conflicts: (1) Olanta Fire Department President of the nonprofit stated that he will not sign anything. (2) Hannah-Salem Fire Department- the document was reviewed but it will not be signed until Councilman Poston speaks with the original owners that donated the land to the fire stations and have their approval.

Mr. Brockington referred to Mr. McEachin and asked if he could advise them. The property is in the name of the Hannah-Salem Fire District. Mr. Brockington stated he does not have the deed and inquired if there are restrictions or reversion clauses. Mr. Yokim stated that it can still be used for fire operations. Mr. McEachin stated it is regardless if you're not using it for fire prevention.

Councilman Poston stated he would be glad to speak with the owners. Mr. Yokim stated to inform the property owners as a courtesy that the Hannah-Salem property is being transferred to the County and still will be used as a fire station.

Mr. McEachin gave the status update on Windy Hill. Mr. McEachin stated he spoke with the AT&T representatives and they put him in touch with the attorneys two weeks ago. The lawyer that represents AT&T and Cingular said he understood what the County was trying to do and didn't think that it would be a problem but he had to speak with management. Mr. McEachin stated he hasn't heard back from the attorney since the conversation.

#### **WINDY HILL AND WEST FLORENCE FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING:**

Mr. Brockington, Shannon Munoz, and Johnathan Atkinson met at Windy Hill Fire Station 3 to develop a plan for the living quarters. Mr. Brockington stated we are moving forward with the plans and obtaining prices. Mr. Brockington stated that he and Mr. Yokim will figure out the funding.

Chief Worrell stated that if he could stop the revolving door, he could get full-time people. On Hoffmeyer Road, he has two out of three shifts and one out of three shifts filled at the fifth busiest fire station in the county, Station 2. Chief Worrell stated that he was waiting until he filled all shifts but if he waits he will never be able to get Hoffmeyer Road fully staffed. Chief Worrell stated that he's trying to split the shifts to cover Hoffmeyer Road and hopefully the citizens are seeing an effort. As of now, two out of three shifts are covering Hoffmeyer Road.

Mr. Yokim asked Chief Worrell if he has had any discussion with the City of Florence in regards to the new DR Horton subdivision. DR Horton, the builder from Myrtle Beach, has bought 325 Acres and they plan to build 900 homes. Chief Worrell said he was aware and stated that he has a good working relationship with Chief Tanner and the City of Florence Fire Department. A portion of the properties are across the county line.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### **SHORT/ LONG-TERM PLAN**

Chairman Thompson referenced the handout of the Unified Fire District's accomplished



goals. Chairman Thompson stated that the fire district has standardized many things.

- Self-contained breathing apparatus, emergency reporting software, automatic aid, common pay scales.
- We worked internally and with accounting and finance for our payroll and also with personnel for the distribution of their checks and benefits on a bi-weekly basis.
- Fire Chiefs have standardized operating guidelines. The volunteer incentive program was brought to a good summarization at the first of the year and we will be able to make the first volunteer incentive program for our volunteers this year. We paid per call since inception and we went back to update that policy this year. Due to inflation, it wasn't right for our volunteers to be out of pocket for a service that we could have been compensating them for.
- Physical and wellness screenings are standardized. Our goal is to keep the firefighters healthier. The NFPA compliance and the overall schedule, when new personnel is brought on board personnel, do not have to wait a year to get a physical.
- CPST III purchase three engine pump rescue trucks, drive trains, and water pumps.
- Standardized engine pumps all carry very similar parts and we do not have to wait for the supply chain.
- The last thing, we will use the Smart Plan or Smart Goal setting techniques to develop goals.

Chairman Thompson referenced the handouts that have each goal listed. Chairman Thompson stated that he will read the titles only and if clarification is needed then there can be a discussion. The document was created by the fire chiefs, fire rescue coordinator, and the Unified Fire District board. Due to circumstances out of their control, the board didn't have a quorum to vote on the document but the document will be presented at the next meeting. Listed are the goals for the Unified Fire District:

- 1) Build a staffing model that supports safe and effective service to the community.
- 2) Establish and implement a division within the Unified Fire District that assures that Community Risk Reduction and Community Outreach are being performed across the district.
- 3) Develop an effective and achievable Consolidation Plan that will take the seven fire districts and move them toward consolidated versus unified.
- 4) Develop a succession plan that prepares internal candidates, develops employees based on strengths, encourages advancement, and allows personnel the ability to grow within the fire service in Florence County.
- 5) Operations. (day-to-day operations of every department)
- 6) Identify, procure, and maintain the most optimal equipment and infrastructure to carry out the mission of the Florence Unified Fire District. (documents are attached as referenced)

### **STAFFING PLAN**

Chairman Thompson stated the document is for information only. They were not able to

finalize the plan. Chairman Thompson stated that volunteerism is decreasing and Florence County cannot afford to hire full-time staff. Unfortunately, we will have to add some staff. Whether it's to cover while people are at work or to roll over to a 24-hour shift. Staffing would require 24 employees per department and will have a large financial impact. Chairman Thompson referenced the document titled "The Florence County Unified Fire District Paid Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan". The document addresses some of the shortfalls as far as staffing, monetary, and financial impacts. We did have some impacts from PEBA and insurance.

Chairman Thompson stated there were some increases. A 9% increase in some of the fees and this is the last year for the increase of 1% in retirement funds. Chairman Thompson stated that Mr. Goff mentioned that their budget is in the preliminary stage at \$7.74 million. Chairman Thompson said that there was a final audit today. When we receive the new numbers we can adjust the budgets accordingly. There is still a need for some increases for entry-level firefighters. Other adjacent counties and municipalities start at \$41k. Some of our departments' pay scales range is down (\$34k/ \$35k). That's only entry-level not including the rest of the staff or promoting staff that is taking educational courses. As we move forward, we will need around \$900k and that is money not in the budget. We have several ways of funding this. Grants are one way to assist. There are S.A.F.E.R. grants out there. Chairman Thompson stated he doesn't know if they are going after the grants hard enough. Last year, we dropped a half million to a million of our fire debt service. Now, we look at how to get it back. Chairman Thompson spoke with the administrator about a couple of funds that are in place like the reserve funds of 25%. Do we use the reserve funds in a short-term manner to assist with the pay increases? Our focus is to have a recurring source. Chairman Thompson stated that he would like to see all the departments be able to promote within and encourage the individuals to stay. It hurts to lose an employee to another department for fifty cents more in hourly rates.

Chairman Springs inquired if everyone is on equal pay grade now. Chairman Thompson responded yes and it was implemented about two years ago. Chairman Springs asked about the \$900k and it is simply a salary increase and not additional boots on the ground. Chairman Thompson's response was yes.

Chairman Thompson stated as we move forward with these additional pay equities that are needed and comparisons to keep the firefighters moving up through the ranks we need to keep a separation. In this plan, it is noted, the chiefs did not get a raise. Chairman Thompson stated that they are looking forward to working with whomever they need to help find this additional million. He stated he has stressed to the board and the chiefs the budget will remain flat; but with the new industries coming into the county, a different level of service will be expected and we need additional revenues. Mr. Yokim asked Chairman Thompson if full-time employees received an increase while the budget did not. Chairman Thompson responded "Yes".

Chief Delung made the statement that no one will move to Florence County for \$34k a year. He has been trying to hire people for a year and he has had a couple of people hired

but they stayed for a couple of pay periods and left because of the pay. Other counties and cities such as Lake City start to pay at \$41k, Kershaw County at \$42k, and the City of Florence within the last two months increased pay by 12%. Chairman Springs asked if anyone was fully staffed. Everyone has vacancies. Chief Dillon clarified the reference to the paid side. He stated the only two departments that work shifts are Windy Hill and West Florence. The rest of the departments have some part-time sporadically and a few full-time during the week. Chairman Springs stated that Mr. Yokim was to work with them to help figure out a viable option to see what we can do. (handouts are attached as referenced)

### **FY 2023/24 BUDGET**

Chairman Thompson stated that Mr. Goff informed him to keep the budget flat. The final numbers come out today. Fund 37 is what we receive so whatever that number is will be reflected in the budget. As of the moment, we are working with the \$7.74 million number. Chairman Thompson stated that we will work with Mr. Brockington, Mr. Yokim, and Chairman Springs to come up with a plan to somehow make it happen.

Mr. Yokim stated there is not a lot of work to be done to the budget. Chairman Thompson said that if any additional money will be available on the revenue side. Mr. Yokim said that we will need the budget two weeks before April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Chief Dillon stated another thing to consider from Fund 37 is that \$37k or \$40k comes out of the budget and goes to the finance department. If that continues, we will continue to have shortfalls. Chairman Thompson stated that the position was discussed in the last meeting. Chairman Thompson said he has had conversations with Mr. Yokim about why they did not support it. Chairman Springs said he was aware there have been some issues with the process. Mr. Yokim stated if we move forward that would fund the full position. Mr. Yokim stated when the finance department was asked to absorb the AP payroll for the fire departments it increase their level of processing and the finance department staff did not increase. Mr. Yokim stated it will be an ongoing discussion.

### **CDBG FIRE TRUCK/JFD**

Chairman Thompson stated that going back three years ago, when the CPST III was in place, we discussed the prepayment options on some fire trucks. Looking back three years and what we are seeing now, the price we paid for the Pierce engine about nine years ago (2015), has doubled. Going back to the prepayment options what we are seeing in the grant trucks is currently a \$500k program. They have changed it to \$750k just because of the impact on prices. This will be the last truck at \$500k. The board voted on the last engine which was a slight increase. It was over the bid but the board voted to move forward with the grant. The bids are as follows: the high bid is \$993k, the middle bid is \$845k and the low bid is \$763k. Chairman Thompson stated that he and Chief Humphries are fine with the Rosenbauer bid. We have a new ladder truck and a service truck at the facility. Rosenbauer has been very responsive to any changes or mechanical issues that occurred. By the end of the year, there will be six to eight new trucks in the fleet.



Chairman Springs asked if the body of the truck were stainless steel or aluminum. The truck has an aluminum body except for the Olanta truck. Chairman Springs asked what is the cost difference. Mr. Brockington stated they needed an additional \$370k.

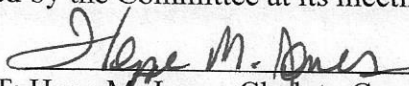
Mr. Brockington explained the process of the grant. He stated the grant is \$500k, the County has to give a 10% match (\$50k), and the COG charges \$20k for administration fees. The money is in the reserve savings. Mr. Yokim stated the bid is \$845k plus the COG's \$20k totals \$865k, the grant pays \$500k and the total left is \$365k. Chairman Springs asked if the total includes taking out the travel part (\$13k or \$14k). Chairman Thompson said to leave the travel part in for now. Mr. Yokim stated to leave it in there and if it is not needed then we won't spend it. Mr. Yokim stated that he thinks it is prudent to leave the 25% for cash flow in Fund 37. They have sufficient funds above the 25% to pay the difference. Mr. Brockington said that the Department of Commerce has to be notified by April 10<sup>th</sup> on the bid. Ms. Shannon Munoz stated sometimes the Department of Commerce will increase the grant award based on high bids. Ms. Munoz suggested that they request an increase as they move forward. Mr. Yokim said that he and Ms. Munoz will work with Commerce on additional funds.

Chairman Springs said if we place the item on the agenda for the Special Called meeting on April 6, does it need to have the board's approval first? Chairman Thompson said that he will have a teleconference meeting.

There being no further business before the Committee, Councilman Poston made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Springs seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

#### **THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:12 P. M.**

Approved by the Committee at its meeting on April 20, 2023

  
ATTEST: Hope M. Jones, Clerk to Council