

MINUTES FOR THE BOARD MEETING OF OCTOBER 23, 2024
FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE ENGLEWOOD AREA FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT

Wednesday, October 23, 2024, 9:00 A.M.
Meeting held at
Englewood Fire Administration Office
516 Paul Morris Drive, Englewood, FL 34223

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 A.M. by Chairman, Mr. Davison. Those present were: Mr. Benedetti, Mr. Kimberlin, Mr. Loisell, Mr. Knauf, Lori Wellbaum, and Chief Easton.

CONSENT AGENDA FROM LAST MONTHS MEETING

Mr. Davison asked if there were any questions, corrections, or additions to the consent agenda from the 08/28/2024 and 09/10/2024 Board Meetings. Mr. Benedetti made a motion to accept the consent agenda and financials from 08/28/2024 and 09/10/2024 subject to audit. It was seconded by Mr. Loisell and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comment

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chief Easton introduced Reverend Scott Andrews to the Board, announcing that he has been selected as the new department Chaplin. Chief Easton went onto explain his background and experience. Chief Easton mentioned he will be introducing him to the staff and touring the stations over the next couple of weeks. He confirmed that Mr. Andrews is currently on-call for any staff needs. A short discussion ensued.

Chief Easton informed the Board of his intention to hire a Public Relations/Public Information Officer (PIO). He provided a copy of the job description and reviewed the responsibilities associated with the position. He confirmed that the starting annual salary will be \$70,000. Chief Easton has already received applications and is prepared to extend an offer. Mr. Kimberlin made a motion to approve the position, which was seconded by Mr. Knauf. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Chief Easton spoke to the Board about the Pension Trust Fund Board of Trustees, reappointing Jonathan Varner. He went on to explain that Mr. Varner was appointed last year to fulfill the remaining term for Mr. Hinck who had resigned unexpectedly. Mr. Varner has expressed his desire to remain on the Board and serve a full term. Mr. Knauf made a motion to re-appoint Mr. Jonathan Varner seat on the Pension Trust Fund Board of Trustees. It was seconded by Mr. Kimberlin and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton presented the Board with Resolution 2024-1423 provided by Foster and Foster. Chief Easton explained the changes to the pension enhancements. A short discussion ensued. Mr. Knauf made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-1423. It was seconded by Mr. Kimberlin and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton spoke to the Board about a change to the Fire Prevention Code Ordinance 2023-01. He explained that a late fee has been added; Page 20, 2023 Fire Prevention Code, Table 17.3, Note 2. A short discussion ensued. Mr. Benedetti made a motion to approve the change. It was seconded by Mr. Knauf and the motion passed unanimously.

Chief Easton spoke to the Board about a new rate study. He went onto explain that he contacted Sandi Neubarth at Anser Advisory, and she confirmed the last study was in 2016. Sandi also explained that a new study would not be necessary unless the district would be adopting any new assessment referendum. Chief Easton confirmed he would not be imposing any new referendums at this time therefore, cancelled the rate study.

Chief Easton spoke to the Board about his recent grant submissions. He went onto explain that he hadn't received an official rejection but feels confident both applications were denied. Chief Easton has since hired a grant writer to assist in securing funding for new equipment and staffing. He expressed his hope to obtain funding for replacing the SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus) equipment. Initially, he considered making the purchase from the equipment reserve but has decided to wait and apply again for funding before making any final decisions. A short discussion ensued.

Chief Easton addressed the Board regarding the challenges posed by high water during Hurricanes Helene and Milton. He explained that they used the Brush Truck for rescues during that period, but the heavy equipment and skid units on the truck created significant obstacles. Since then, Chief Easton has acquired two additional Brush Trucks from Florida Forestry. He clarified that one unit will be dedicated to fire operations, while the other will be used for high-water rescues. Modifications will be made to enhance the ease of boarding and to improve storage for necessary supplies. A short discussion ensued.

Chief Easton provided the Board with an update on the new hires. Initially, he planned to hire three (3) new firefighters but ultimately decided to hire five (5) instead. He explained that the additional two firefighters would replace the two who are set to retire in March 2025. After careful consideration, he also noted that this decision would help reduce overtime costs for those attending paramedic school. A short discussion ensued.

Chief Easton addressed the Board regarding the performance of the station generators following Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton. He noted that most of the units operated successfully, with the exception of Station 72, which failed during Hurricane Milton. Chief Easton explained that the unit is over 20 years old and will need to be replaced. He has requested pricing information for a new generator and costs to install one at the new building located at 579 S. Indiana Avenue, in anticipation of the Administration office's move there. A short discussion ensued.

Chief Easton addressed the Board regarding a recent conversation with the administrator at Englewood Water District. He and Mr. Collard discussed the possibility of partnering on a private fuel site, which would provide benefits to both fleets during pre- and post-storm situations, especially considering the difficulties experienced this year. They plan to continue their discussions and develop a proposal to present to the Board at a later date. Additionally, Chief Easton mentioned his discussion with Mr. Collard about the need for a department mechanic. It was agreed that this arrangement would be advantageous for both departments and would also provide an additional source of income for the East Area Fire Control District (EAFCD). A short discussion ensued.

Chief Easton addressed the Board regarding the current state of the District. He presented statistics on storm incidents for the Englewood area. During Hurricane Helene, there were 385 incidents reported, including 2 house fires and approximately 70 rescues. In the case of Hurricane Milton, 304 incidents were recorded, with 7 of those being structure fires. Chief Easton also noted that Charlotte County reported the destruction of 161 structures, and he is still awaiting a final report from Sarasota County. He concluded by stating that the department was fortunate to have sustained only minor damage, which allowed for ongoing rescues and work.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

No public comment.

DVP COMMENT :

No DVP comment.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Mr. Benedetti announced that he will be resigning in 3-6 months. He went onto explain that he and wife are preparing to move out of the area therefore, he will not continue his term as Commissioner.

Mr. Kimberlin thanked everyone for all their hard work before, during and after the hurricanes.

Mr. Davison also expressed his appreciation and thanked everyone for their hard work the last few weeks.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:16am.



Ronald Davison, Chairman DATED: 11/20/2024



Attest DATED: 11/20/2024