

BAYSHORE FIRE PROTECTION & RESCUE SERVICE DISTRICT  
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING  
May 27, 2014 (Town Hall)

**Meeting called to order** at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Ducrou

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Invocation** – Commissioner Hansen

Commissioner Ducrou – Present  
Commissioner Hansen – Present  
Commissioner Cook – Present  
Commissioner Griffin – Present  
Commissioner Klos – Present (7:07)  
Chief Larry Nisbet - Present  
Office Manager - Theresa Sharp - Present  
Attorney Ian Mann – Absent

**Others Present:** Some Staff & Much Public

**Presentation on Proposed Special Assessment – By Chief Nisbet** – Chief Nisbet introduces the Fire Department by giving our Mission Statement and Core Values. He then outlines the various types of calls to which we respond, and the approximate number of each type. He describes the District we protect and the approximate number of residents in season and off-season. He describes the number of stations, the number of apparatus, and the number of personnel both full time career and volunteers and how the shifts work. He describes the medical, physical, governmental, and safety standards we must meet. He defines the ISO rating, who ISO is, how they rate us, and where we stand in our rating as compared to other Departments in the county. (We have one of the best ratings in the County right now, because we are a very much Right-sized department for the area we protect.) He tells of our Mutual Aid Partners and how we work together. He details the number of firefighters on scene to respond to a fire, and the different functions they perform, as well as where those in excess of the four we maintain come from. He outlines the two-in/two-out mandate and why we need four firefighters on shift, as well as the consequences of not having sufficient staffing on hand to enter a burning structure. He explains how we are funded by a 3.5 Mills per \$1000 of assessed value in Ad-valorem taxes and how that generated just a fraction over 1M last year, or 67% of the budget. He explained that last year we had to come up with a half a million dollars last year in federal grants and reserves, roughly 33% of our budget. He explains that our predicament now is that the grants are drying up now as are our reserves. He explains our costs as approximately 1.2M in Personnel costs, about \$200,000 in Operational costs and about \$100,000 in Capital. He explains the personnel costs include everything from payroll, insurances, liability, and worker's comp insurance; which he notes went up a lot last year, which was beyond our control. He states ideally 80/20 split is good, and we were as high as 92% at one point with SAFER Funding, we have been able to get that down to about 84%. He explains the revenue trends for the past 5 years, the housing bubble busted, and all of unincorporated Lee County suffered decreased property values. He continues, they did not look at each little area of unincorporated Lee County, they threw us all into the

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same bucket, and the hole in the bucket was Lehigh Acres. So where we got hit was Lehigh Acres rates, so we saw a reduction of 43% in property value, so that becomes the new base assessed rate. Property tax revenue reduced our budget 40% which currently doesn't meet our funding requirements. He continues, since 2008 and after this budget year comes into effect, we will have lost over \$2M dollars in revenue from where we were in 2008. So far we have been able to utilize reserves in small amounts with the support of SAFER Funding, except for this year, with SAFER funding drying out, in effort to maintain our full time personnel level of staffing. How we have managed the deficit, Chief continues, he has been able to secure 3 SAFER Grants that have been roughly 1.5M dollars. He has also been able to secure grants for trucks; he refers to the pumper which is a grant truck that only cost the Community \$8,000, and he has been able to get equipment grants anywhere he can, 50/50 grants from Forestry, trying to keep those costs as low as possible. He continues that he and the personnel have done budget reductions everywhere from pay cuts to reductions in benefits, to giving up holidays, as well as looking at ways to reduce the budget, to where we keep everyone working. He adds, of course, we strive to be efficient in our operations. We want to keep the small reserves we have. Fortunately, he adds, every year we have allotted to use reserves to make the budget, we have been able to put back some of those reserves we planned to use, through last year, when we planned to use \$80,000 in reserves, we came in under budget. He states the challenges we are facing right now is SAFER Grant funding is expiring September 14. Our property tax revenue is volatile and insufficient. Two years ago we saw a 4% increase in Ad-valorem property values, we thought that the trend was turning. Last year, we saw a 1/4% decrease, so he has no idea what this year is going to look like. Homestead exemptions and the Save Our Homes value cap of 3% per year, indicates the new assessed value can only increase 3% per year from the 2008 low, which sadly limits us. So; he states, what is the solution; the reason why we are here tonight... He explains we are looking at implementing a fee-based funding system in lieu of a property tax. We want the cost to be distributed across all the properties in the District, the property tax of 3.5 mils will be reduced to zero mils, all tax exempt properties will also share in the funding, the revenue will be stabilized and predictable, and we will be able to plan for future growth and expenses can be planned for and funded. Chief then explains how the fee is determined. He states there has to be a specific benefit to the property, that the method must be fair and reasonable appointment, (this, he comments here, comes right out of the State Statute), has to be logical and factual driven, the method has to make sense for the service being provided, and does the legislative compliance. So, how do we propose an assessment system that meets those criteria? He explains we went with a group of historical demand methodology. We hired a company called Governmental Services Group to help us, he has a representative from that group here tonight. He continues that this is the most widely used methodology out there, and it looks at what we are truly doing out there, where are our calls going, who is using our services, and how are we being effective. We also looked at how much time is spent on those calls, at those locations. The historical demand is a driving factor, it is based on calls for service for a specific property use, and then we break it down to a one rate per single family residential structure. We took historical demands and used two years of data because last year was a very wet spring and we were afraid we wouldn't capture an average brushfire season without including a normal spring season. Based on an average year, we run about 697 calls to residential properties, roughly 100 to commercials, 5 to industrial/warehouse

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(because we don't have a lot of those property types in this district), 31 were institutional properties and usually about 108 to governmental or vacant land without structures. So, he continues, taking these numbers here and what we need to stabilize the budget, is how we arrive at the proposed rates. Roughly 74% of our budget, under the assessment system, has to come from residential properties. 11.4 on land, and so forth & so-on. So this is how we came up with the rate you are hearing about. He states this is a 2014-2015 assessment rate. He states the reason he mentions this is when you are setting up an assessment; one of the numbers you look at is a five year average, how much you need for the next 5 years and then average the rate. When he brought that number to the board, everyone felt that number was just too high. It was well over \$600 and we felt that was not going to work. So we looked at this number, he did some additional calculations and more cuts, and he felt he could make this number work. He states the rates as published for vote, and explains that the fees based upon square footage are capped at 66,000sf and where that came from is Governmental Services Group looked at our personnel, hoses, equipment and capabilities to determine what the biggest fire we can fight. 66,000sf is it, fortunately, he adds, we only have 1 building that is a little over the 66,000sf. He states we also run a lot of calls to agricultural use; we run a lot of brush fires, and brush fires tear up our trucks, he notes as a matter-of-fact we have one being brought in by a wrecker right now. He states it is very intensive, especially when you are in an urban interface environment like we are, and also we are identified as one of the most dangerous urban interface with potential structure loss from a 2011 report from the Florida Forest Service. But we looked at the vacant agricultural at \$63.97 an acre but we capped it at ten acres. Once we cross the 10 acre mark, depending on fuel types, he's not so much worried about controlling the fire on that land, but more worried about controlling the fire in that area; protecting structures, keeping houses from burning to the ground, and making sure we don't lose any real property or structural property. So, he continues, what's the potential impact of maintaining our tax based system right now? As he alluded to earlier, our final SAFER grant expires September 14. He states the hard part for him, especially with what these people mean to him, and just as much to this community; he will be laying off 6 full time firefighters on September 14. Full daily staffing will be reduced to two per day, he will not be able to meet the two-in two-out rule, and on-duty personnel will not be sufficiently capable to fight fire suppression and rescue operations and we are going to require additional resources to get here from other communities for us to be able to initiate a fire attack. The other part about this, he states, the sad thing, just like our apparatus, our water supply, our ISO rating; ISO plays a significant role in maintaining the rate that you currently have. He continues, he had his rating looked at, because it's an informal conversation with ISO for a department that is not rated or does not have 4 full time on duty, we are looking at the possibility of going from a 3/5 to a 7/9 and the lower the number the better. Chief says the quote he received from his agent in light of such a change would translate to a \$1,700 increase per year for his home; about a 42% increase. He offers to share this information with anyone. So the Board has directed us to conduct a special election on June 24, 2014, utilize the amount outlined by the Governmental Services Group study for the 2014-2015 budget, and if the referendum passes by a majority, we are going to implement a fire based assessment system and reduce the property tax ad-valorem system from 3.500 to 0.00. He states pretty much what this comes out to is, we want to be able to do whatever you need us to do, whenever you need us, for whatever the reason, we want to do it without compromise. He thanks everyone for their time and hands the

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meeting back over to the Chairman. Chairman Ducrou thanks everyone for coming and whether they are for the referendum or against it, he is happy to see the community getting involved and becoming more aware of the situation that we are in. He states it has been a long time getting us to this point, and we have tried other avenues to avert from having to do an assessment, but for us, time has run out, it is pretty much this or nothing. He states he has some cards for some who would like to speak, he will call their names and they can speak. He requests they state their name for the record and limit their comments to 3 minutes. He calls Andrew Jamison.

**Public Input –**

Andrew Jamison – Mr. Jamison states he lives at Bay Pointe and thanks Chief Nisbet for the time he spent with him last Friday. He credits Chief as being a good manager of the resources the commissioners have provided him over these past years. His questions are addressed to the commissioners as follows: Your suggested method to obtain District funding from an assessment rather than based upon property values merely transfers the cost to the working families and to the retirees from the affluent. Under your plan, for example, the six riverfront properties adjacent to their condominium will contribute \$4,000 less to the budget. He states if you need more income, why would you allow any property to decrease their contribution. He continues to site a couple items that he feels may have some merit or they may not, but he would like to bring them up. He states he spoke with the Lee County Property Appraiser this morning and they expect your homesteaded properties to increase the full 3% and they expect your non-homesteaded property values to increase 10% this year. He states this would increase your budget capabilities by about \$65,000 if that was possible. Secondly, if you were to increase the current millage rate from \$2.50 to \$2.75 which is the maximum, which is about a 7% increase, that would give you an additional approximately \$70,000 in next years' budget. Finally, he suggests you may need to reduce one shift by two day employees (while he admits he is no manager), for a year or two until property values move higher. He thanks everyone for the opportunity to speak tonight on this matter. He thanks everyone for doing very good work all year long for them. Chairman Ducrou thanks him for his thoughts and states he will try to answer one aspect of his concerns.

Chairman Ducrou – addresses the transfer of burden from the affluent to the working class by removing the property value basis of taxation, he believes that the taxation is not based upon income, but rather what your home is worth, and the earlier you built your house and the faster you locked in the save our homes, your homes can be at a much lower assessed value than what you could rebuild them for. It is not really based on your income but when you built and how it was assessed at the time. He feels that if we had been able to even keep the 2008 rates, without any increases, we wouldn't be in this boat. The fact that the Property Appraiser devaluated everything and set that as the new benchmark for the save our homes, means we are going to take ten or eleven years of full growth to get out of this boat, and that's not feasibly possible. He continues, the Board did try to do a millage increase to get to the 3.75 state maximum millage that failed at vote. We were told no by the citizens of Bayshore. We felt like we were not going to go down that road again, they were not going to like that, so we tried to come up with something else that was substantial, that would get us through, even with the proposed 6% and 7%, if we did both

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those things together, it is still not enough money to fund your fire department. Without having 4 guys on shift, you don't have the 2-in 2-out so everybody is sitting and waiting until someone else shows up. He asks for anyone else on the Boards input. Hearing nothing he calls for:

Steve Brodtkin – Begins by stating he is not quite sure he is understanding the save our homes issue, because when property values soared, the save our homes kept the increases to 3% a year, but when the property got its (inaudible word), because of the recapture rule, I know a number of people who even though their property values were way, way, down, they were paying 3% more every year because of recapture rule, on their fire assessment. He knows of some examples where property values went from \$70,000 to \$60,000 but every year their fire assessment and their property taxes went up because of the recapture rule. He says he's not quite sure of the details of that or how it all worked out, but, it seems like the save our homes kind of evened things off as far as limiting the boom, but also as far as the bust, by the recapture rule. But, he says, he doesn't question the department's commitment to do their job, and Chief Nisbet on a daily basis, out there in the community on a daily basis, and as far as he can tell, they've done a good job, as well as the personnel, but where he sometimes has an issue is, we find that Bayshore, he says he has been in Bayshore since 1978 and everybody he talked to, people moved out here to be in a rural place. And, he continues, most everybody says "we don't want the developments following us out here." "We came out here to be in a rural place." And expectation in a rural place, because of the tax base, is that the level of service may not be as high as an urban or suburban place. And they've been kind of disappointed that the fire department is supportive and promoting higher density in order to support the fire department. They currently criticize the Bayshore Community Plan at public meetings, and the plan at this time is to keep as much as possible, the area rural. We know we are going to see development in the future, there's a lot of land not developed that's entitled to be developed, there's more commercial properties that aren't developed, and yet we keep hearing we need more development, we need more density, in order to support our fire department. After the failure several years ago for the increased millage, it seems like, he would think, that a meeting like this, that we're having today, might have been held with the general public, for the fire department to say, we need more money, here's Option A, Option B, Option C. What does the community think? What does the community think or recommend as a course of action, as opposed to one course of action, take it or leave it. For him, personally, he would be willing to pay somewhat more, but he feels this way, the lowest income people, which is generally the lowest value properties are getting hit hardest while giving a decrease to those that have the highest value properties. (Applause). He continues, he was a little bit surprised when we came to his Bayshore meeting the other week, saying that you knew that a referendum like this would not have passed in November, we're holding it now, and you would say that if the referendum failed, we're just going to shut the fire department down. That didn't sound very realistic, but he was very surprised that was stated, it sounded kind of like, it sounded to him like a threat. But you have to remember that safety is a relative thing, we all want to be as safe as possible, but if we want it to be as safe as possible, we all drive 55 on I-75, and we'd wear helmets. That's his feeling. One question he has is with regard to the millage, he knows that this fire board has committed to setting the millage to zero if this is approved, but it is his understanding that they still retain the authority for some future board to charge a millage.

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Somebody can confirm or deny whether that is correct, that going down the road whether some millage could or could not be charged, he would like an answer to that. He thanks the Board for their attention.

Chairman Ducrou thanks him and states as far as the attendance at the Bayshore Community Association the other week, it is his position that if this does not pass and the District has to lay off half the department, you cannot operate. The days of having 2 guys in a fire house and it being safe for you, or them, is long gone. So it is his personal position that if this does not work, to try and subcontract out the services of the District, so he can keep as many people employed with someone else, and maybe get 3 guys to respond to the area, but you may not have a community fire department any more. You can only do so much, and we've tried, nobody likes this, but we've tried every other avenue, but that's the cold facts, and that's his belief, and it's not a threat, it's just reality. He offers Chief Nisbet to respond to the other question on the millage.

Chief Nisbet – states the question regarding this millage change to 0.00 and the ability of future boards to increase that millage, is absolutely correct. Chief adds that he is not an idiot, and if they tried to pass the assessment and then added to the millage rate, it is going to look like double taxation, and you guys are going to find a big old tree, and he's going to be hanging from it. He states the District's intentions are honest and ethical. Their intention is to keep the Public protected. Not to bankrupt them, not to take their homes, not to tax them out of their home. It is to provide the level of service that you currently have, and to keep homeowner insurance rates low. He continues, the economic impact of this is real, regardless of whether you pay an assessment, or you take on higher insurance costs, the economic impact is real. He offers, if you don't believe him on the insurance costs, call your insurance agent, ask them to run the numbers. That's what he did and that's how he got his numbers, and those are staggering. He says Chief Cindy Dick is here from Tallahassee, he asked her to come because in Tallahassee, they went through this 15 years ago, and they currently utilize it. The reason they went to this is because of the significantly higher ISO changes they saw. But to get back to the question, the Board will always have the ability to do an ad-valorem assessment. That is a legislative requirement of the enabling act of special taxing districts. There is nothing he can do about it; he cannot do away with it, and he can't limit the ability of future Boards, but he can tell them that as long as he is the Fire Chief, and as long as this Board sits here, it is not an option for us. They want one or the other.

Commissioner Hansen – states that Mr. Brodtkin also mentioned the possibilities of options A, B, and C; and says they would give the options of B and C, if there was a B and C. He states we hold a Fire Board meeting the second Tuesday of every month, it is advertised in the newspaper, it is posted on signs out in the yard, and they as a Board covet the Public coming to those meetings and helping us with this. We discuss these things in the meetings, over and over. For the past year and a half we have discussed what we can do for the Public that will hurt them the least and help us the most. We have gone over every plan; gone over every action thing we could look at; this is where we are at. He says it again tonight, if anyone has a plan B that's out there, we'd like to hear it. We have done everything legislatively that they have given us authority to do. He continues, three of the five Board members here tonight are in the same boat that many of them are, that their

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taxes under this assessment will go up. He states it is not easy to tax himself, but this is where we are at. Again to answer the question why we are not giving A, B, and C, we do every month; and now this is where we are at. After all these meetings and all is said, this is where we are at. Please, he continues, the second Tuesday of every month, come to the meeting, come and be involved in your community. Come and help the Board do the things we need to do to run the District. Chairman Ducrou calls:

Stephanie Martin – Ms. Martin's question refers to the previous speaker who stated that those homes on the river paying the same amount and then decreasing the ad-valorem, why couldn't we use a tiered system, like per the square footage of the home? That way you wouldn't hurt those people living in Suncoast, and those people who don't have the larger homes. And maybe try a tier system as a way to get the financing. She asks if we are planning to reduce the ad-valorem from 3.500 to 0.00 how do we intend to collect this for the infrastructure.

Chief Nisbet – First of all, our District does not cover Suncoast. Suncoast is in North Fort Myers Fire District. He states we stop right about Raymond Lumber. He describes our District as going from Raymond Lumber East to right about the first bend in North River Road and from the river North right to the Charlotte County Line. He states the fair aspect of the collection; we utilize the County TRIM notice. We use the Tax bill and instead of the bill reading Ad-valorem tax for the fire department, it will show it as a fire assessment fee. He states as far as the fairness aspect, he asks Jeff Rackley from GSG to come up to explain the rates and why it is better to be a fixed rate regardless of the structure.

Jeff Rackley – explains there are different requirements as far as special assessments and one of those is that it be fair and equitable. He states that we know this methodology is both fair and equitable, and it has been court tested and approved, so the District is on solid legal footing with this approach. A per square foot approach or a tiered approach has not been, as far as he knows, court tested nor approved anywhere in the state, so it's not something he can say would or would not hold up. It is something they have looked at in other places, but he not aware of any City, County, or Special District that has a methodology that is set up that way.

Chairman Ducrou – adds that another thing they looked at as a Board is that for a residential fire, no matter what type of residence it is, we have the same response to it, whether it is a 1,000sf or a 2,500sf, we have the same manpower exposure and the same expense on the District no matter what size structure it is. But that was one of the things, that your house may have less square feet than your neighbor, you will still get the same response from the District. He calls:

Holly Marth – wishes to clarify what we are going to be doing. She gives the scenario if she and her husband own 10 acres, and they have 2 single family residences on that property, would it be \$588.78 per home and then \$639.70 for the ten acres and that would be their total bill? She receives multiple replies from Chief and Board that only the two residences would be charged, not the acreage in addition to them. She asks Chief, as he knows her property, what about their big shop, what about that, since it is bigger than most homes. Chief states they looked at her property together on the PA website and that only reflects

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two single family residences, and he believes when they looked it up, there is no improvement shown for that and it is just the primary use of the 2 structures. So she asks then her bill would only be the \$588.78 times two. Chairman Ducrou confirms. She then asks what the idea is behind capping it at the 10 acres. She says her city mind tells her that if someone owns more land, they are richer. So why would someone who has 10 acres pay the same as someone who has 100 acres since they are being capped at 10. Chairman Ducrou confirms, that it is capped at the 10 acres if it is on a single parcel, because that is what we can respond to by ourselves, and that was the basis and why it was per square footage for the industrial capped at 66,000, because that is what we can deal with at Bayshore. The 10 acres is what we can deal with at Bayshore with the equipment that we have. She asks Chief, she believes she is correct that she is not currently being charged for both those structures, is that correct. Chairman Ducrou responds that he would say they are being assessed for both of those since it is included in the property value. She states the property value for the one would only be maybe a few thousand dollars as it is only a single wide trailer. She assumes that herself, but some people happen to live in it. Commissioner Cook responds, but it is included in the whole property value. She agrees but says that LEEPA has them as 2 separate tracts with 2 addresses, so she would be assessed for each with the assessment, so that would kind of suck. She thanks the Board for their attention. Chairman Ducrou calls:

Chad Jorgensen - Thanks the Board for allowing him to speak tonight. He says he is sitting here listening to the various people's perspective on this, and he did some math. He spoke to Chief a couple weeks ago and what he found out is this...not everyone receives an increase, but the average increase would be \$225 per year. That works out to be 63 cents per day. He asks them to remember that in their mind as he continues; that Chief fought to get the ISO rating to its current 3/5, he actually inquires based upon a 4, but it actually works, he spoke with his insurance company which is USAA, and he has been with them 35 years. He explained to them that his fire department ISO rating was going to go from a 4 to a 7, and he asked for them to quote what his insurance rates would go to. This is the part he is not hearing tonight, it seems that people aren't getting this part. He states his insurance would go up \$562, that's \$1.56 a day. Now remember, he continues, that if you get your assessment, it is on average, 63 cents a day. So he does not understand how people keep saying increase, increase, increase...he understands people see this very myopically, if you are on a fixed income and you're being told you're going to have to pay this amount of money, that could potentially be a lot of money for you, he gets that, and maybe for you, you don't have it, he understands. But to have, and we talked about being in a rural area, he gets it, he has a full grown son, he has a wife, his mother just moved in with him, she's old, God love her. (Chuckles from audience) He states he looked it up, the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death and trauma in the US, is fire. The sixth leading cause of death is trauma from fire in the United States. He personally feels, you can have his 63 cents per day, if six people are going to come and save his family and himself. He appreciate it, he knows not everyone agrees with this, he appreciate that we have volunteers, but he asked ISO, and they told him you have to have 5 volunteers to make up for 1 paid person. He states, he is a simple minded guy; the numbers to him are simply the numbers, he is not willing to pay \$562 more, he asks for Chief's number again, he believes Chief said \$1,700 more. Chief says yes, he has an older house; Mr. Jorgensen has a newer house. He thanks the Board for allowing him to speak. (Applause) Chairman Ducrou calls:

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Carol Burdge – She states she is so glad Mr. Jorgensen brought up the insurance, because she worked in insurance for 30 plus years, until she retired 2 years ago, and she knows that the property insurance industry in Florida is very fragile. It became very fragile after Hurricane Andrew and became even more fragile in 2004 and 2005, so what she is saying is, we are one hurricane away from major breakdown of what we have now. And she is thinking that with some of the older wood frame homes, if we lose our ISO rating, we might not be able to get coverage at all. That's her concern. She thanks the Board. (Applause) Chairman Ducrou thanks her and calls:

Michelle (only first name is given) – Michelle asks exactly how many properties or residences is contained in the 42 miles of District. Chairman Ducrou says he couldn't say. Chief states it is approximately 2,600. She asks if we get this money, are we going to be able to hire enough people that we can guarantee that we will get to her house before it burns down. Chairman Ducrou states that with this money, they will guarantee that they are not going to lay anyone off. He states that this is not to enhance the service; it is, in his belief, to prevent the doors from shutting, because without it, half the fire department goes away. She asks if we had considered adding more volunteers. Chairman Ducrou states that we have an outstanding volunteer core, but they have day jobs. She states that where she comes from, the call goes out to all the volunteers, and if you're on your day job and you can't get there, fine, but the people that aren't on their day jobs, you jump in your truck and if you can't get to the fire station, you go to the fire itself. Chairman Ducrou states, sure, and that's how he started his career out, he used to volunteer, and it is an enhancement of the service, but it is not your base service. When he had the chart up that showed 15 firefighters on scene within 480 seconds, we've got 4 that are going to get there. We still need supplemental, but we are able to do 2-in 2-out. We can do search and rescue; to try to save someone that is down inside the structure, because without a known life hazard, if we don't have 4 guys on scene, our guys have to by law stand outside. They can not go inside. She asks if we have asked the community for more volunteers. That if we have something like this that a call goes out to every volunteer on the list. Chief Nisbet states that we accept volunteer applications continually. She asks if we have spoken to the community about this. Chief states we have, it is always up on our website, the problem is our volunteer core, most of our volunteers, Chief states what he does is recruit the kids out of the fire academy, they come out of the academy and they're looking for a place to hang their hat 'til they get hired at a job, but a majority of our volunteers don't live in the area, we continually try to get volunteers that live in the area, but most of them live in the San Carlos Park area, Cape Coral, stuff like that, She interrupts and states "no sir, that's not the kind of volunteers I'm talking about, I'm talking about this lady, when she's off work, she gets the call, she can jump in her car and meet you there." Chairman Ducrou responds that they have to be baseline certified. We can't just... She interrupts again and can't we do that, have we asked the community for that, not just volunteers that people volunteer at fire departments. Chief responds that those that are considered volunteers have to be able to complete a physical, 160 hours of training, the wildland fire training, stuff like that, just to take someone off the street, and commit ourselves, it would take 6 months to get them up and running and it would be expensive. Ok, she says, then they're not on the fire, they are driving a truck for you, do you have a lower standard? Chief replies they have to qualify as a volunteer through the previous description, they have to at least meet the 160 hours firefighter training required by the state. That is what the state fire marshal's office has set

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as standard. She states she still feels we need to talk to the volunteers about that and put a call out to everyone and see who would be willing to commit themselves to that. Finally she asks if we get this money, how many years is it going to be before we want more money. Is it going to be a year, two years, three years before you want more money?

Chairman Ducrou states the amount we are limited to is regulated by the State, based on the average family income. Chief Nisbet states he's figuring at least three years, without any new construction, before we would have to look at any adjustment whatsoever, and if we get some new construction, we may even be able to reduce it. We have to reevaluate every five years. Chairman Ducrou states that if the family income goes up five percent, the Board doesn't take that next year, it's not like the year after that you get that plus whatever the new average family income goes up, you waive your right to ever go back to that so it is not like as a District we can say we're not going to take it for three years, but we are actually banking to take it on the fourth year that it's going to be a big hit. You can't do that, the State doesn't allow that. She thanks the Board for their time. Chairman Ducrou calls:

Kent Oliver – States his question has been answered but he would like a better description of the categories. He understands for a house, you're only going to be charging one fee, but the rest of the categories; he would like a better explanation. Chairman Ducrou asks Jeff Rackley of GSG to come back up.

Jeff Rackley – explains the categories are based upon the Property Appraiser's Use Codes, and basically, the residential properties includes all the residential structures, single family homes, mobile homes. The non-residential categories; Commercial would include anything from office space to gas stations to a bank, any type of commercial use determined by the Property Appraiser. Industrial/Warehouse space, he's not familiar with all the possibilities we have here in the District, could be something like a power plant, or some kind of heavy machine shop, or even self-storage facility or something along those lines. Institutional Use properties are churches, some not-for-profit organizations, hospitals, clinics, to government owned property. And the land is just what it says, vacant or agricultural land without a primary structure to determine its use by the property appraiser. He thanks all for listening. Mr. Oliver thanks him for the clarification. Chairman Ducrou calls for:

Roy Lietz – thanks the Board for their time and makes an inaudible remark but I can discern the term "self-serving". He states he and Chief Nisbet have had a couple conversations about this dating back to two or three months ago. He states that he doesn't think it's any secret that since 2001 fire departments wages and benefits, their salaries have outpaced the private sector by about some 350% if you take into consideration, He says he understands a lot of firemen died in New York, he understands that, But he also understands that we don't have any World Trade Center Towers in Bayshore Fire District. He states he's lived here a lot of years, he remembers when we ran from the other side of the road, and he states we had just as many house fires then as we have now. We didn't lose any more then than what we lose now. He has never heard anybody take into consideration of how we've been supporting it, he said this to Chief Nisbet, with all the development we've had here in the last ten years, that's a lot of income and a lot of money come and went through this. As near as he can tell, and he may be wrong, but there's

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eleven new houses under construction in this District at this time. Nobody mentioned that here and the tax revenue that will be coming from them. He states Charlotte County went through this same thing. He states he owns some commercial property in Charlotte County, they got the same thing. In 2001 he was assessed 18 cents a square foot; in 2013 he was assessed 41 cents. He states once that is given, it never seems to end. He says it is kind of like signing a blank check. And once that happens it's out of the tax payers control. He says he understands what can happen, if in fact this does not pass, but he makes the same conclusion he made earlier. The ISO, He says when Chief Nisbet told him 2 ½ years ago to make sure to call his insurance, his ISO dropped a full point; his fire insurance went up \$70. He says he made the call today, and he knows a lot of the people in here use the same insurance; he never did get an answer on what would happen. He says he finds the \$1,700 increase in relation to fire insurance, Chief Nisbet spoke of very, very hard to believe. He doesn't know how much insurance someone is carrying on that house to have a \$1,700 increase; it must be a whole lot more than his. He doesn't know the answer other than to cut corners, he thinks that's what needs to be done, out-growing ourselves is what we've done. The economy is rebounding, like we said, we are up for a 3% increase in our tax on our homestead this year, that's a lot of money, like someone said \$55,000, you add that to the new homes that are going to be taxed next year, that's a lot of money. That's a lot of money. He thinks we all need to be tightening our belts. If we've got to make some cuts, we've got to make some cuts. He says nobody in this place is going to be more apt to lose a home with 4 less firefighters, whatever it is, than they are now. There ain't nobody gonna' convince him of that. Because he has seen over the years how it's happened, anyway, that's just his side of it and he appreciates everyone's time. (Applause) Chairman Ducrou responds:

Chairman Ducrou – states with regard to the new home construction, with the save our homes portability, of the new home construction, there's no idea what kind of tax base you're going to get even on new home construction if they are coming from the area; if they are not coming from out of state, you are not going to get the full tax base on that because the portability. Mr. Lietz responds for \$587 dollars a year you will. Chairman Ducrou agrees, with the assessment you will, without a doubt; but not without the assessment. As far as tightening our belts, he states the guys have given up a lot; and they've had to because there were no other choices. Mr. Lietz says so has everyone else. Chairman Ducrou agrees, everyone has. The market has been terrible, everybody is down, but the value on most people's house has reduced far more for the Property Appraiser, than the actual value of the house. Most houses the value is so low, you couldn't come close to rebuilding it, it's an artificially low number. It's not realistic, and it's not realistic to have a tax based on it. As far as going back to payroll, the employees that we have here in the District are the lowest paid in three counties. They are not living high on the hog. They make a decent living, but they are the lowest paid fire personnel on average for three counties, so is the Chief. But they do everything they can to try and make this work and that's why the Board is up here trying to do everything they can to make this work too. He calls:

Biffle Davis – states he doesn't want to pay more taxes, but he has something he would like everybody to realize, he lived in a place out west where you had a choice to either pay \$2,500 a year and if you didn't join and your house burned up, they didn't come. Now

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that's private fire departments, right there; or you can have volunteers, I might be drinking beer on Friday night when your house catches on fire, and you might not want me to come, or I might be at a rodeo, or I might be out chasing arson, you can't guarantee that volunteers will show up, and do it in a steady manner. Now having said that, there's a couple things about cost he doesn't understand; one, he thinks we should look at, he doesn't need and answer right now, but why commercial rates are different than private rates, he thinks the same rate for everybody is the American way; he doesn't know about anyone else. (Applause) He knows some people have million dollar homes and some have \$80,000 homes, but you've got to look at what your life and the stuff in your house is worth. Are they going to come and save you? He doesn't know, but just this last year, four guys showed up at his house, he has no idea how that fire started, but they came and they about beat him there. So, yeah, I'm gonna' pay more, I'm gonna' pay about \$180 more, he says, based on his loose numbers; but he does have a couple questions about money other than that break, they way he sees it, vacant land up to 10 acres is \$63, the guy next to me has 2 acres of vacant land of solid dry brush, he pays \$64? Chairman Ducrou states that's per acre. Understanding this now, he says so if there's a house on it, it's capped at the \$580. He states, because he has 5 acres. So he asks, if you go out of District, like you did today, and you tear yours up, and you use your gas, and we're paying our guy's their salaries, do you get reimbursed for that? Chief Nisbet responds that we help them out and they help us out, unless there's a state catastrophe assigned to it like a state of emergency, we incur our own costs, and it evens out. Mr. Davis resumes, I would like to think that, you know, I come by here twice a day, basically, and I've been here and talked to people, and I've been to more than this meeting, not a whole lot, shamefully said, but I don't think the guys are sitting around here smoking cigars and eating all the time, but I know some of you people are going to see your taxes go up twice what they have been, I know, I see the numbers, I deal in numbers with the Property Appraiser almost every day, looking at somebody's property. But there is one last thing, and I'm going try to keep it down to my three minutes, that you guys asked for at the front, was it, we said about 7,500 people live in this District, maybe it's 12,000 if you go well past highway 31 and up into the edge of the County and over to the wood place that builds trusses and such, but you don't know how many properties are here? But you can't tell me there's 917 that are going to be \$587, and there's 47 that are going to be \$63.97 for a hundred acres; you guys don't know the number of properties? Chief states he just doesn't have it here in front of him right now, and he doesn't want to give inaccurate numbers. Mr. Davis has just one more question, are we going to be doing the voting at our regular voting place? He states, that has not come up in any of the meetings, and if you want people to vote, whether they are against it or for it, whether you're for it, or you're for it, or I'm against it, or whatever, he would like to know, where it is he's supposed to go to vote. Commissioner Cook states that at our last meeting we didn't know yet. Mr. Davis says he appreciates that, and he thanks the Board for their time. Chief Nisbet responds he is very happy Mr. Davis brought that up, and apologizes that we did not mention this in his presentation, District 67, that the Fire District runs in, we typically vote at Temple Baptist Church. For the Special Election on June 24, Temple Baptist Church, he was just told by the Supervisor of Elections, that their facility would not be available, so the vote will be held at the Church of the Nazarene, which is just the other side of I-75 across from the Publix there. They already have the sign up; they did offer to let us have the election here, but Chief chose not to because the election is a ballot on us, and he didn't think that was fair to ask you to come here to vote about us, at our

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facility, no matter how you stand. So they told us we could do it at the Church of the Nazarene, so that's where it is going to be. He again thanks Mr. Davis for bringing that up, and apologizes again for not mentioning that. Someone asks who votes. Chief responds all residents of the District registered to vote in this District. Chairman Ducrou calls:

Debbie Jackow – Thanks everyone for their service; and states; I started finding out about this when we had the two different meetings with the Government Services Group. I was in one of the first meetings going back because I had questions; and I was kind of concerned on the way that this is the only way you were looking at this, you were looking at two different amounts of money, this is only a \$40 a year difference, and the next meeting it was decided, and that was the way to go. And no one knew what was in this tax roll. So I requested the tax roll, and she shows the tax roll and says and this is what I got, you had not seen this or looked at the amounts in this, prior to making your vote. And today, she continues, I finally finished; I went through every person, and every parcel, and I actually stayed up until 2:00 in the morning after working a ten hour shift at the hospital, numerous nights, and I finally finished this today. And I can't tell you how many people, there's been an estimate that 50% of the people are saving money, 50% are going to be a wash or are going to be paying more; that's really not true; there's some people who pay, out off Palm Creek, and other areas, Sedgfield, that are going to be paying 30 times what they are presently paying. There are people that have been paying less than \$100 and now they are going to be paying \$587. So, I'm not even finished with this yet, the building, the amount of building that are on this tax roll are not the same if you're matching it up with the Property Appraiser, some of the amounts that some people are paying, are just so much more. People that are paying \$27 are going to \$587 and they couldn't even pay their taxes the last two years, so what do you think is going to happen to them? I have a problem also with the parcel, this paying for parcel where you pay the \$639.70, this needs to be per parcel, this has gone back and forth numerous times about it's going to be per parcel, and people own a bunch of parcels that are contiguous or touch each other then they're maybe gonna' cut some kind of deal, after you vote, and to me you shouldn't cut any kind of deals after you vote. You should know what you put on that ballot, before you put it on the ballot, and you didn't know. You didn't know that Echo's going to be paying \$17,000 that they're paying nothing, or that Temple Baptist is going to be paying \$24,000, Upriver Campground is like \$170 some thousand; didn't have a clue until I requested, as a citizen. I requested this document which you should have had, and which you should've gone through to see what people are truly going to pay before you decided whether you were going to go with this. You have 8 different industrial parcels, mostly on East St., all of them are going to be paying less; some of them have paintings and all kinds of things in them, solvents and things, that are going to be a big major fire if they ever go up, but yet all of their parcels are going down. Chief Jorgensen doesn't really need to worry because his taxes are going from \$1,408 to \$587; so he doesn't really need to worry about paying more because he's really not, he's paying a lot less. Years ago, she continues, when the Chief came to the Bayshore meeting and talked about the savings on this ISO, he had State Farm Insurance, and I have State Farm Insurance, so I figured, hey this is great, I'm gonna' come and get a letter, which I did, went to State Farm and they said "I'm sorry, but you don't save any money with this", and I said, well I have to, because the Chief did. No. So now when the story is coming out about how much more you're going to pay. You know, I'm an analytical person, I will go and prove it, right or wrong, (inaudible phrase). So, I got on the phone,

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and I decided I was going to call a bunch of insurance companies, I called State Farm (inaudible statement), I called Allstate; these are all local places, Nationwide, Clark & Bell, and I also called Tower Hill, which is also your insurance company (referring to an unknown person), today; and I explained the whole situation to them, and every company said they go by two things, if you're within 5 miles of the fire station, and if you are within 1000 feet of a fire hydrant where you've got a water source; I explained what you explained today, that you were possibly going to let go of six firefighters, and, it didn't matter, it's not going to change. They said as long as we have a responding fire house and this fire house is open, then your insurance is not going to change. Because according to the way I think, if my insurance is going to go up this much, it may be worth it for me, for my \$250 more, to say ok, I gotta' pay this \$250 than pay the original fee was \$1,500 to \$2,500 is what we were told is what our insurance was going to go up. So, you know, which way would I like to go, I wanna' go the cheaper route. Well, after, every insurance company, I called even more than 5 that I wrote down, I have the people I talked to, I have the phone numbers that I called, I explained situations; Chairman Ducrou advises she is at 5 minutes and requests she wrap it up. She continues, I want to know who is the next card, she states , it took me 2 months to do everybody's taxes, let me tell you how many hours, let me tell you how many hours because it wasn't on the board, you didn't have a clue what you were putting on the ballot. Chairman Ducrou asks her please not to put words into their mouths as to what they knew and didn't know; that is her assumption. She argues, you did not have this, you told me that, that's why you got this for me; and I'm trying to explain what I've found out since I did these taxes. And, she continues, if you wanted another idea, I did have another idea, I have two other ideas, consolidation would be an idea, which you said you had discussed years ago and it didn't work; but the fact that you would take this millage and you can raise it, once it goes zero, we have nothing to say about that; and that scares me. I would rather keep it at 3.5 and pay an extra fee; and then everybody's going to pay extra, because that's not the case, a lot of people are going to be saving money, and the people who are saving money are the people who have the most; and I think everybody should be paying a little more if you need the money to do this, I think everybody should be paying a little more. So if you keep that capped tax, that 3.5% so you can't keep going and adding to this; without, we don't even have to vote for this, you have to understand that once this goes in; they can add, either you or a different Board, they can add millage on and we have nothing whatsoever to say about it. So we'll be paying the \$587 and maybe another half a millage point, in another couple years, and maybe in another couple years you need some more money, and maybe it's another half that gets added, and you can say nothing; absolutely nothing; so I would rather, my plan would be one of the two. Either you consolidate with other companies and try to cut costs in that respect, or you keep this millage at 3.5% and we come to some kind of a figure; 10%, 20%, added to everyone. Some people pay \$27 so 20% is not going to be all that much. For me, she continues, I'd be willing to give the \$250, I just don't like the way that you're getting it. That's what bothers me more than anything. (Applause) She continues, I think you need to tax the agricultural parcels, these 10 acre parcels, these people who own 300 and 400 acres, and just because they (inaudible word), you're gonna' give them a break. She continues, if they can afford so many pieces of land; Babcock has 4 square miles, and they're only going to be paying \$1,300. I mean, really, then you have people in North Olga and they own all these multiple parcels of land, you shouldn't be giving them a break, if they have 20 acres, they should be paying \$639 for those 20 acres, if they have

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60 acres next to that, they should be paying \$639 for that, it should be each parcel; and you're losing a ton of money by doing people a favor and having all these contiguous parcels added together to add to what, I don't know, but they really need to be taxed individually, and you will have your money. (Applause) She continues, and I can tell you that for a fact, I went through this whole entire thing and I can tell you what every parcel in this District is going for. So, she continues, I would like to know how I can find out what my insurance is going to go up, because, I have already talked to two State Farm people and they both tell me it's not; and I called all these insurance companies, just so I could inform people, and say this is how much your insurance is going to go up, and they all tell me no, it's not even going to affect it. She thanks the Board. Chairman Ducrou calls:

Doug Bedell – he starts: a couple questions, I want to thank you first of all for all the hard work you've done trying to cut back, I'm just wondering if there might be more, to be cut. Chief Nisbet responds, he's at the edge, it's now personnel. Mr. Bedell continues, for example, do you have procedures in place that the vehicles are they only used for emergencies, Chief Nisbet responds, Yes, Sir. Mr. Bedell asks if there's no unauthorized use. Chief Nisbet responds, No, Sir. Mr. Bedell asks how we are publicizing this issue on the ballot, so that, at least most of the people in the Bayshore District will be aware of it before the election.

Chief Nisbet responds, we have, of course, the News Press articles, and of course, the postings on this. He states, as a special taxing district, we are not allowed to give all the political advertising, we are not allowed to use tax dollars for that, so we have a Fire Pac group that's going to help us out, there'll be mailers coming out in the next couple weeks, and there will probably be some distribution materials that will be going out, you'll probably see some signs going out, but the District is not allowed to incur any of those costs, they are not allowed to participate in any of those costs, I'm not even allowed to tell you how I think you should vote; I'm not allowed. I can tell you what I need, and you all need to make the decision on that.

An unidentified person asks to ask a question. Chairman Ducrou asks him to please sign a card if he wishes to be heard, just so we have one on record.

Doug Bedell – continues, on this issue, is there going to be some kind of effort to break this down in to layman's language, where the average person can understand this tax issue, and get an idea as to what, approximately, they are going to end up paying if they vote yes? Chairman Ducrou states the breakdown and all the costs are on the ballot. Mr. Bedell states he hasn't looked at the ballot, so...Chief Nisbet confirms that all the breakdowns are on the ballot. Mr. Bedell continues – On the issue of the Agricultural exemptions, for those who own larger pieces of land, if you have cattle on the land, let's say you have 10 acres with cattle. Chairman Ducrou responds, it doesn't matter, no exemptions. Mr. Bedell states that is what he was wondering; does that just go away? Chief Nisbet clarifies that it is a flat \$63.97 per acre. Mr. Bedell asks how many acres that goes up to. Chief responds 10 acres. He thanks the Board. Chairman Ducrou calls:

David Burdge – Thanks everyone for their time and their service. He states – My question is, if this assessment is passed, who has control as to whether it goes up, or goes down, or

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is eliminated; is there any kind of voter input? And to the future assessment, does the assessment go on forever? Chairman Ducrou states this is a replacement for the millage fire tax that you would have on your taxable assessed values. This replaces that. This can only go up the amount of the median household income based on the Florida household median income. The percentage amount. If it goes up. If we don't raise it, we lose it for that year, whatever it might be. The saving grace for any organization was when the market crashed and everyone's properties went to heck, as far as the values, it reset the save our homes at a much lower, artificially lower rate. At least with this, it would stay at zero; we wouldn't see a decrease, we wouldn't see an increase. You would have at least a baseline with which to continue the service that we are trying to provide. Mr. Burdge asks what kind of voter control would voters have in the community. Commissioner Cook responds, the elected Board. Chairman Ducrou states the rates, would be passed by you; the increases would be minimal based on the median household income in the state. He continues, just like with the property tax, it is up to 3% for save our homes property and if somebody builds a new house, you are assessed at the full value. The Board has the ability to either take that or not take that, so I don't see a potential for a big change with the year to year. Mr. Burdge asks if once the assessment is in place, it stays there. Chairman Ducrou affirms. Mr. Burdge thanks the Board. Chairman Ducrou calls:

Denis O'Connell – The question I had was regarding the votes, how is it going to pass? If only 50 people show up, does a 26/24 pass? Or do you have to have a certain percentage of the population? Chairman Ducrou states he understands 50% plus one is all that's required; of the voter turnout. Commissioner Hansen states in the last special election, 715 people voted. Mr. O'Connell asks what the population is. Commissioner Cook states it depends on what time of year it is. Chief Nisbet states we have about 2200 registered voters. Mr. O'Connell states he is one of those people who will benefit from this tax alternative, he disagrees with it. He continues, I feel this shouldn't happen, making people who have less money pay more, so I am very much against this. But I am very much against tax sale.

Chairman Ducrou states that is all the public input cards that we have. He states he hopes that as many questions that we could answer, we did. Whether you liked the answers or not; that's what we have; we don't like many of the answers that we have either, but that's kind of what we are stuck with.

Chief Nisbet - I Thank everyone for being here tonight. I know this is a tough discussion to have. It is an exception, as Fire Chief I really do hate this part of the job; I'm trying to keep you protected, that's it, I love this community, I lead a great group of people, and I want to keep them here for you. I want to be able to handle your emergencies when we can, I want to handle them without compromise, and be there when you call. How you choose to go, is strictly your decision, but, we will be there when you need us; that is what we are here to do, and we want to provide you our highest level of service. I would like to make one comment on the number of fires we've had, and the buildings that we've lost or the buildings we haven't saved; Since I've been Fire Chief for the last 6 years, I just had my 6 year anniversary, every fire that we've been able to get in the front door on, we've put it out. We've stopped it and we've made the house livable again. Since I became Chief we have had 2 houses that were lost, and they were gone long before we got there. Since I've

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been here, we haven't got the highest paid firefighters in the county, we have the lowest, but they are dedicated to this community, and they want to be here, they know your community, they know who lives out here, and they want to be here for whatever you need; whether it's to get a horse out of a ditch, or to get mom out of a tree from trying to get the cat out of the tree, which we had a few weeks ago, (Chuckles from audience) He continues, Oh yeah, you see some funny stuff; we don't run junk out here. If you call us, nine times out of ten, it's a true emergency, we are not dealing with a lot of the problems other departments are. We just want to get there, make sure that you're protected, and make sure that my people are protected. Thank you for your time. I appreciate you coming out. (Applause) With that Chairman Ducrou entertains a motion to adjourn.

**Motion to Adjourn** – Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Griffin and seconded by Commissioner Klos. With none opposed, meeting adjourned 8:30pm.