

MAYOR
Hal J. Rose

DEPUTY MAYOR
Stephen Phrampus

COUNCIL MEMBERS
Diana Adams
Pat Bentley
John Dittmore
Daniel McDow
Andrea Young



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CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL WORKSHOP

MINUTES

March 11, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rose called the special workshop to order at 9:01 a.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENT MEDITATION

Mayor Rose led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

3. ROLL CALL

Attending: Mayor Hal Rose, Deputy Mayor Stephen Phrampus, Council Member Pat Bentley, Council member Andrea Young, Council Member John Dittmore, Council Member Daniel McDow, Council Member Diana Adams.

Also present: City Manager Tim Rhode, Assistant City Manager Tom Bradford, City Attorney John Cary, Assistant City Clerk Eric Popham, and members Brevard County Fire and Rescue.

4. DETERMINATION OF JUSTIFICATION

Council Member Adams motioned to justify the special workshop. Council Member Bentley seconded the motion, which passed with a unanimous vote.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE 2022 WEST MELBOURNE ANALYSIS OF FIRE SERVICES ALTERNATIVES

City Manager Rhode opened the discussion with background on the completion of the 2022 West Melbourne Analysis of Fire Services Alternatives report. Options which have been presented could be to establish our own fire department, remain with utilizing the fire services from the County, or enter into agreements with neighboring municipalities for fire services.

Council Member McDow clarified the reason for the pursuit of fire services options was economical and not due to the quality of services, and Council members agreed.

As discussion turned to different levels of fire services and overall costs; emphasis was made that according to the research and report, the City could provide service that is equal or improved at a lesser cost. Discussion included how best to fund a department rather than incur all the debt at one point.

Council Member McDow stated again the purpose of this meeting was to determine if providing fire services would be more beneficial to residents. According to the Fire Services study, it could be more beneficial. Council Member Adams stated consideration should be given on whether or not now was the right time to do this.
17:30

Council Member Dittmore emphasized that City was currently paying 35 percent more for fire services than we could do for ourselves. He believed the City was subsidizing fire services for other communities.

Deputy Mayor Phrampus spoke about the different options the City could pursue in regard services and facilities and suggested it may be a good option for the City to pursue the services gradually and in stages.

Council Member McDow noted that this would be a huge undertaking and would not want the cost to have a negative impact on quality.

Council discussed the percentage of cost provided for fire services from the County versus the percentage of calls provided to the City. Council Member Bentley asked the percentage of calls provided by Brevard County Fire and Rescue (BCFR) for residents or businesses in the City. Fire Chief Patrick Voltaire responded that the City calls reflect 10 percent of all calls in the County.

Council discussed if it were possible to work with the County elected officials to address costs.

City Manager Rhode compared the City's transition to self-provided water services to fire services. The difference highlighted by him, was the City had nearly all materials and personnel in place for water services and only needed to drill wells and construct a water plant. In comparison, the City has currently zero materials or personnel for fire services.

City Manager Rhode stated that most communities around West Melbourne are utilizing co-locating facilities with BCFR. He stated the City could build a new fire station and lease the property to BCFR. City Manager Rhode spoke on how the BCFR is funded, beginning with the Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU), which is based on the property value. The second portion is funded through a fire assessment fee, which is based on the use of the property. Mr. Rhode stated, if the City did pursue its own fire services, the cost would need to be folded in with the property taxes or it could be rolled

out into a similar MSTU methods with a fire assessment fee. The latter would require hiring an independent firm to set up those service. He noted that those fees could not be collected until the services are provided. To fund in the future, a pool could be established or the money could be borrowed. If the City decides to borrow money to fund the creation of fire services, the funding should go to referendum. The City could also earmark general funds for future fire services.

Council discussed the location for the calls, possible locations for a fire station, response times, and coordinating with other municipalities. Council also discussed the possibility of developing a hybrid situation where the City would own the station and lease it back to the BCFR, which could get services closer to the residents.

Council Member Dittmore highlighted that BCFR provided backup services to other communities. Assistant Fire Chief Ricky Conner clarified, if there was a support agreement in place, not only would BCFR come in to back up the City, but other communities would be expected to back up the County when necessary.

Council Member Young discussed impact fees that the City generates and how those could be utilized to help fund fire services. City Manager Rhode stated the City could add a fire impact fee but we would need to have fire services in place or a contract with another organization to provide those services.

Council discussed the challenges of staffing and the impacts on existing departments that would need to support the fire department. Fire Chief Voltaire spoke about the problems related to hiring and retention of fire services personnel which is occurring in other agencies within the County.

Council Member Bentley raised the point that there are still political related avenues which could be explored in relation to the cost for fire services. He believed that there were other things that could be done to prepare for a fire department.

Council Member Bentley asked that staff bring back information on the costs per residents for fire services in Melbourne and Palm Bay. City Manager Rhode stated that when initial numbers were received from the study, staff reached out to Rockledge, which is a similarly sized city, and found the numbers to be comparable. The cost for the County is higher because the department is bigger which requires more staff and equipment.

Council discussions from the meeting are summarized below:

- Negotiate different arrangement with County-level managers to see if they would be willing to work with us on fire service costs (political and staff level item).
- Consider building a firehouse and co-locate with BCFR or another agency (future).
- Determine how to generate revenue for fire services; i.e. levy a tax, MSTU and/or fire service fee.

- Whether we can or when we could charge impact fees to developers for safety services.
- What do our neighbor cities charge per capita for fire services (Rockledge, Melbourne, & Palm Bay)?

Follow-up information from these items will be presented at a meeting in May.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rose adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.