

**WEST MANATEE FIRE & RESCUE DISTRICT COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING**

*Minutes of August 20, 2024  
Administration Building*

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Billy Burke, Larry Jennis, David Bishop, Robert Bennett, and Derrick Warner. The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silence.

Commissioner Jennis motioned to approve the excused absence of Commissioner Bennett from the July 16, 2024, Commission Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Bishop. Motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC HEARING 2023-2024 BUDGET AMENDMENT:** Administrative Assistant (AA) Wright verified that public notice was advertised in The Bradenton Herald on Sunday, August 11, 2024, and read the resolution summary. A resolution of the West Manatee Fire & Rescue District of Manatee County, Florida, adopting and amending a final budget for fiscal year 2023-2024, and providing for an effective date. Finance Clerk Larson summarized the need to amend the budget including increased FEMA reimbursements, removing the engine costs from capital purchases to move to a future budget year, and adjusting expenses to the current operational needs. Chairman Warner opened the public hearing for public comments; there were none. Commissioner Bennett motioned to close the public hearing; seconded by Commissioner Burke. There was no discussion from the Board. Commissioner Jennis motioned to approve the 2023-2024 Budget Amendment - Resolution 2024-07 as presented. Commissioner Burke seconded. Roll call vote was taken. Commissioner Bishop – yes, Commissioner Burke – yes, Commissioner Bennett - yes, Commissioner Jennis – yes, Chairman Warner – yes. Motion passed 5-0.

**1<sup>st</sup> PUBLIC HEARING 2024-2025 BUDGET:** AA Wright verified that public notice was advertised in The Bradenton Herald on Sunday, August 11, 2024, and read the resolution summary. A resolution of the West Manatee Fire & Rescue District of Manatee County, Florida, adopting a final budget for fiscal year 2024-2025, and providing for an effective date. Chief Rigney gave a detailed summary of the proposed 2024-2025 Budget Packet presented. Chairman Warner opened the public hearing for public comments; there were none. Commissioner Bishop asked why the budget shows use of unassigned funds even though the capital purchases are assigned. Chief Rigney explained that the auditor directed this, but he would be happy to adjust it to reflect what it is for the 2<sup>nd</sup> budget reading. Chairman Warner asked Chief Rigney to explain Impact Fees. Chief Rigney explained that anytime a new structure is built, the District gets an Impact Fee. He then moved on to say that these funds can only be used for purchases of new apparatus or structures but not replacements and gave examples of uses. Chief Rigney stated that the current plan is to use the fund for a new structure behind the Administrative Building. Chairman Warner adjourned the public hearing.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA:** Chairman Warner added “Unit Citation” to New Business B.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

**CONSENT AGENDA:** Commissioner Burke motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented; seconded by Commissioner Bennett; motion passed unanimously.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** None

**CARRIED FROM CONSENT AGENDA:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. Emergency Preparedness Assets: Lt. Stump gave a presentation on the equipment donated to us from the Florida Forest Service that provides emergency preparedness to the community. Lt. Stump described details and planned uses of the M1083 5 Ton and three M1078 2.5 Ton vehicles the District will soon have, with the biggest use being people movers in flooded situations where flood waters are 2 to 4 ft high. Skid Units can also be added to these high-water vehicles to add portable pumps and respond to brush fire incidents. Lt. Stump then explained the two light towers. Lt. Stump then spoke

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on the tents that are displayed on the Administration Building lawn, one being a living or mobile command quarters and the other, a lightweight maintenance enclosure, that can house and protect apparatus from the elements. The last preparedness item Lt. Stump explained was the 20kw generator that is more than large enough to power the entire mobile command unit. Lt. Stump explained that all of these preparedness assets came at no cost to the District. Chief Rigney added that it is the District's responsibility to maintain and repair the high water vehicles and equipment. Chief Rigney recognized John Longbach of the Florida Forest Service as he has assisted every step of the way with getting WMFR these assets. Chief Rigney presented Mr. Longbach with an Above and Beyond award for his help to WMFR and other Districts in Manatee County. Mr. Longbach explained that this is a program set with the State of Florida and stated other districts in the county are also benefiting from the acquisition of high-water vehicles. Commissioner Burke asked if there is an abundance of these vehicles. Mr. Longbach explained how they locate the vehicles from the federal level and the military. Commissioner Bishop commended the program and asked how much it is to maintain the high-water vehicles. Deputy Chief (DC) Johnson spoke on maintenance costs being very low considering most repairs can be made by the Florida Forest Service. DC Johnson also stated that the District gets a 50/50 grant from the State of Florida due to having a volunteer which means any maintenance costs on any of these assets will be cut in half. Mr. Longbach then mentioned that they have vehicles with spare parts that they are able to utilize which cuts costs as well.

- B. Unit Citation: Chairman Warner presented a summary to the Board explaining the extensive response from the District to Hurricane Debby on August 4th. Chairman Warner listed the personnel by position who were on shift that day as well as the individuals working overtime from the WMFR, EMS, and Marine Rescue. Chairman Warner stated the shift personnel ran at least 50 calls in a 24-hour period. Chairman Warner said that without the coordinated effort and sacrifice from all involved that day, the losses of life and property would have been far worse. Chairman Warner stated that for these reasons, he recommends giving a Unit Citation to A-Shift at the next Commission meeting. Commissioner Burke motioned to approve Chairman Warner's recommendation; seconded by Commissioner Bennett; motion passed unanimously.

**CHIEF'S REPORT:** Chief Rigney stated that on September 12th at the Manatee Technical College at 5pm, Retired Chief Ed Cleveland and Chairman Warner will be given Career Service Awards from Congressman Buchanan. Chief Rigney stated that AA Wright was accepted into the Certified District Manager program with the Florida Association of Special Districts and will be attending in March.

DC Johnson went into a detailed report of how the District responded to Hurricane Debby. He noted that only one employee was hired back for overtime for the purpose of driving the high-water vehicle which housed a Manatee County EMS EMT and paramedic to continue the level of service once flood waters increased. DC Johnson then spoke on the response from all the Chiefs. Training Chief Tuttle and Fire Marshal (FM) Kwiatkowski as WMFR liaisons while he and Chief Rigney reported to the Manatee County EOC ESF 4-9-10 desk to which Chief Rigney was the lead. DC Johnson summarized his and Chief Rigney's roles on the county level with a heavy focus on the response to the flooding and swift water situations that occurred in the Ft. Hamer area. DC Johnson expressed that the Manatee County Emergency Management team, comprised of 8 separate agencies, was very successful and did not need any out of county assistance. DC Johnson stated that 200 people were evacuated following the storm. DC Johnson listed the agencies involved, MSO, FWC, Bradenton Fire, North River Fire, Parrish Fire, East Manatee Fire, Beach Rescue, and the partnership with the Florida Forest Service for the high-water vehicles provided. Chairman Warner asked DC Johnson what his role was to which DC Johnson stated he was the Emergency Service Branch Director and explained his duties as more of logistics looking at utilities, shelters, and where evacuees are taken versus the emergency response side of things.

FM Kwiatkowski informed the Board that WMFR is partnering with Palma Sola Elementary and Big Brothers Big Sisters to create a "Bigs with Badges" program which will pair personnel with students in need of mentorship. FM Kwiatkowski noted that 2 inspector trucks have been wrapped with educational and safety materials with the goal of always advocating for and educating the community even at a traffic light. FM Kwiatkowski then recognized Inspector Kiernan for earning her master's degree in Fire & Emergency Services.

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**OTHER REPORTS:** None

**COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS:** Commissioner Burke thanked the Florida Forest Service for their support. Commissioner Bennett thanked Staff and commended the Bigs with Badges program. Chairman Warner stated he was impressed with WMFR's response to Hurricane Debby.

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, September 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Administration building.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Warner adjourned the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

  
Chairman

  
Secretary

