

St. Tammany Fire Protection District No. 1

Board of Commissioners

Special Meeting Minutes July 30, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:13 p.m.

The pledge of allegiance and prayer were given

Roll Call: Chairman Crowley and Commissioners Risley, Kingston and Brackett were present.
Commissioner McDonald was absent.

- 1.) To levy additional or increased millage rates without further voter approval or to adopt the adjusted millage rate and to roll forward to a millage rate not to exceed the prior year's maximum-** Chief Kaufmann stated that the voters approved up to 35 mills for fire protection. He further stated that the value of the 2015 budget that was presented is a little over 35 mills.

Chief Kaufmann stated that he recommended using some of the "Capitol" money to balance the draft of the 2015 budget, in addition to rolling the millage up to at least 33.5.

Chief Kaufmann stated that we've budgeted a deficit for the past five out of six years and we can't continue to operate this way.

Chief Kaufmann stated that the budget proposal has manpower for Station 18.

Chief Kaufmann requested the Board's consideration, in the millage vote, that allows us to be able to provide fire protection for our district, as recommended to the Board.

Chairman Crowley stated that the vote is on a millage number, based on the draft of the 2015 budget, not approval of the 2015 budget. He further stated that no millage amount has been pre-determined.

Chairman Crowley stated that the Board's goal is to put the Fire Dist. in a sustainable place.

Chairman Crowley inquired as to whether any of the Commissioners would be willing to entertain a motion for 35 mills- no motion.

Chairman Crowley inquired as to whether any of the Commissioners would be willing to entertain a motion for 34.5 mills- no motion.

Chairman Crowley inquired as to whether any of the Commissioners would be willing to entertain a motion for 34 mills- no motion.

Chairman Crowley inquired as to whether any of the Commissioners would be willing to entertain a motion for 33.5.

Commissioner Kingston made a motion to set the millage at 33.5. Commissioner Brackett seconded the motion.

Chairman Crowley requested that the Commissioners comment on their recommendation for 33.5 mills. After hearing the comments, the floor would be open for public comment.

Commissioner Kingston: Commissioner Kingston stated that after all of the hard work, from the Board and Administration, the administration was challenged, and will continue to be, into doing more with less. He further stated that we have to look at the “one time” Capitol monies that we’ve used to balance the budget in the past; it is going to run out. He stated that he was confident with the Chief’s recommendation of 33.5 mills.

Commissioner Brackett: Commissioner Brackett stated that he supports 33.5 for the reason of having room for growth. He further stated that we need to not continue doing business as we have been. He stated that he does not support going with the full 35 mills at this time, and he would like to see us be able to sustain ourselves at 33.5.

Chairman Crowley stated that there were many discussions that took place regarding the “sticker shock” of going to 35 mills and the Board has been very mindful of that. He further stated that if the millage wasn’t increased, a decision would have to be made to either take away purchases of fire trucks, or the purchase of a new station. He stated that he is personally not willing to tell the Chief to diminish services.

Commissioner Risley: Commissioner Risley stated that she has no comments on the 33.5; as she does not support it. She stated that she feels that rolling up to 35 mills is irresponsible, as well as presenting a budget above 35 mills. Commissioner Risley further stated that her position, on some of the departments, hasn’t changed over the past three years and she feels that there are areas that can be trimmed. She stated that she has never heard that we didn’t have what was necessary to get the job done. She further stated that she does not feel the need for a Chief, Chief of Operations, and Chief of Administration; she feels we need someone from Suppression, and someone from Administration. Commissioner Risley stated that she does not support 33.5 mills, but she could agree with 33.

Chairman Crowley opened the floor for public comment

Leisa Smith: Ms. Smith stated that she has been paying taxes to Fire Dist. 11., when her neighborhood (approx. 117 homes) should have been paying to Fire Dist. 1. She further stated that when the Assessor made this correction, her insurance bill was reduced and even with the parcel fee, it is still a reduction.

Chief Kaufmann stated that the Assessor continues to locate properties that are not on the tax roll; which is the only reason he is recommending 33.5 mills. He further stated that we have reduced the PIAL rating in the unincorporated area, which has reduced homeowner’s insurance. Chief Kaufmann stated that we’ve rolled millages back, over 30 mills, over the past six years. He further stated that he is hoping the 33.5 mills will sustain the budget. He stated that the entire parcel fee is in the Operating Budget.

Chief Kaufmann stated that when factoring in the million dollar deficit that we funded and the tax certificate, the value is 3 mills.

Commissioner Kingston stated that he got on the Board in 2008. He stated the previous year’s millages:

2005	35 mills
2006	35 mills
2007	35 mills
2008	35 mills
2009	30 mills

2010	31 mills
2011	29 mills
2012	30 mills
2013	29.7 mills

Chief Kaufmann stated that for 2005, 2006 and 2007, a third of the tax district did not pay property tax, due to Hurricane Katrina.

Councilman TJ Smith inquired into the percentage of the budget that is comprised of administrative costs. Chief Kaufmann stated that he doesn't have a percentage due to some of the administration having dual roles. He further stated that we are not "heavy" on administrative personnel.

Council TJ Smith inquired as to whether we have a long term capital projects list. Chairman Crowley stated that we have a three to five year list, depending on the project. Chief Kauffman stated that the strategic plan goes out ten years in some areas.

The motion carried with Commissioner Risley voting "nay".

Chairman Crowley called for the vote:

Kingston: aye

Brackett: aye

Risley: nay

The motion carried.

Chairman Crowley stated that Commissioner McDonald sent an e-mail on his position on the millage and it is available if anyone would like to see it. Councilman Bellasario inquired into what his millage recommendation was, Chairman Crowley stated 33 mills.

Commissioner Brackett made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kingston seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.