

# St. Tammany Fire Protection District No. 1

## Board of Commissioners

### Public Hearing/Meeting Minutes July 21, 2020

The Public hearing was called to order at 8:01 p.m.

The prayer and pledge of allegiance were given.

Roll Call: Chairman Crowley and Commissioners Brackett, Hoying, Rich and Gay were present.

- 1.) Consider levying additional increased millages without further voter approval or adopting the adjusted millage rates after reassessment and rolling forward to rates not to exceed the prior year's maximum –**

The floor was opened for public comment

**Stephanie Robertson-** Ms. Robertson stated that she attended the Citizen's Academy in 2019 and learned that St. Tammany Fire Dist. #1 is the only Internationally Accredited Fire Dept. in the State of Louisiana. She stated that she has over 25 years in budgeting and cost analysis and has never seen anything as transparent as Fire Dist. #1. She further stated that as a result of the rating, homeowner's insurance rates have been lowered- she is a proud citizen.

Ms. Robertson stated that she has set up a Facebook page to promote the 2020 Citizen's Academy.

Ms. Robertson stated that at her place of employment, they recently had a code in the parking lot- Fire Dist. #1 arrived on the scene first and began administering assistance. As other agencies arrived, they stood-by while the fire department did their best, and she stated that their efforts will never be forgotten.

Ms. Robertson requested that the fire department be given the necessary funding to continue to operate the way they do.

**Rykert Toledano-** Mr. Toledano stated that he is a resident of Covington, and Parish Councilman for Dist. #5. He stated that he came to address other issues, beyond that St. Tammany Parish has the best fire departments, and that their jobs go beyond firefighting, they also do lifesaving, which means a lot to him. He further stated that he feels that our department is an extremely well run business organization, and we do a great job.

Mr. Toledano stated that in a recent meeting with Chief Kaufmann, Chief Kaufmann stated, "Let's Invest in Ourselves", and stated that this is what he's asking us to do. He stated that Chief Moore heard their plea, and did not do a complete roll forward. He stated that we are in this together and we need to invest in ourselves jointly; we can't separate ourselves from other departments in the community (i.e. fire departments, public works, courthouse, jail, etc.) as all of these departments come together to make our community great.

Mr. Toledano stated that he is requesting that we do not roll forward; however, he recognizes the escalating costs associated with our mission statement. He further stated that the public is not interested

in tax increases, and there is a need is St. Tammany Parish to re-visit the financial structure, as the Parish Gov't. tax did not pass. Mr. Toledano stated that during a recent visit with Fire Dist. #4, he stated that it's their fault that their taxes didn't pass, the taxes were not unreasonable and should have passed. He stated that in a way, it's everyone's responsibility in the sense of trying to deliver all of the governmental services. By doing something less than we can do, he feels that it sends a message to the community that we are investing in ourselves, we are in it together, and we are going to figure out a solution.

Mr. Toledano stated that the Parish has been forced to implement several cost efficiency practices due to budget constraints.

**Paulette Barras-** Mrs. Barras stated she had a situation whereby the fire department was called for assistance, and for that she is very appreciative. She further stated that people are living conservatively, watching money, health, etc. and she feels this is a bad time to raise taxes due to the Pandemic, unemployment, and seniors are suffering and helping their families.

Mrs. Barras stated that when Katrina hit, there was a lot of money that came into the Parish, and while she feels it was well spent, she doesn't think now is a good time to raise taxes and she requests reconsideration to not raise taxes.

Chairman Crowley, for clarification, stated that after the public hearing, it will be the first time that Chief Kaufmann presents a recommendation to the Board, despite what was written in the article.

***Commissioner Brackett made a motion to adjourn the public hearing. Commissioner Hoying seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.***

***The public hearing adjourned at 8:22 p.m.***

The Public meeting was called to order at 8:23 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Chairman Crowley and Commissioners Brackett, Hoying, Rich, and Gay were present.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

***Commissioner Brackett made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Rich seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.***

#### **OLD BUSINESS- (none)**

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### 1. Human Resources

##### a.) 2020-018: BOC Resolution (Adopt Official Journal)

***Commissioner Brackett made a motion to adopt Resolution 2020-018, Relating to the Selection of the Official Journal (St. Tammany Farmer) for District No.1 Commissioner Rich seconded the motion.***

The floor was open for public comment. There was no public comment.

***The motion carried unanimously.***

##### b.) 2020-019: BOC Resolution (Adopt the Adjusted Millage Rate(s)).

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 2020- 019**

Pursuant to R.S. 42:23, personal recording devices are welcome in every meeting for Fire District No. 1; however, 2 they must remain and be maintained in the possession of the individual that brings the device to remove any liability from Fire District No. 1 of any unintentional or accidental mishaps with the device during any such meeting



BE IT RESOLVED, by the St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1 of the Parish of St. Tammany, Louisiana, in a public meeting held on July 21, 2020, which meeting was conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Law and the additional requirements of Article VII, Section 23(C) of the Louisiana Constitution and R.S. 47:1705(B), that the taxing district voted to increase the millage rate(s), but not in excess of the prior year's maximum rate(s), on all taxable property shown on the official assessment roll for the year 2020, and when collected, the revenues from said taxes shall be used only for the specific purposes for which said taxes have been levied. Said millage rate(s) are:

	<u>Adjusted Rate</u>	<u>2020 Levy</u>
Acquisition and Maintenance	33.65 mills	_____mills (1069037)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Assessor of the Parish of St. Tammany, shall extend upon the assessment roll for the year 2020 the taxes herein levied, and the tax collector of said Parish shall collect and remit the same to said taxing authority in accordance with law.

The foregoing resolution was read in full, the roll was called on the adoption thereof, and the resolution was adopted by no less than two-thirds of the total membership of the taxing authority voting in favor as required by Article VII, Section 23(C) of the Louisiana Constitution and R.S. 47:1705(B). The votes were:

YEAS:  
 NAYS:  
 ABSTAINED:  
 ABSENT:

**CERTIFICATE**

*I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and exact copy of the resolution adopted at the meeting held on July 21, 2020, at which meeting at least two-thirds of the total membership was present and voting.*

Mandeville, Louisiana, this 21st day of July, 2020.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Daniel Crowley, Chairman  
 Board of Commissioners  
 St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1

***Commissioner Rich Made a motion to adopt Resolution 2020-020, Relating to Setting Forth the Adjusted Millage Rate (s) and Roll Forward to Millage Rate (s) Not to Exceed the Maximum Authorized Rate (s)). Commissioner Hoying seconded the motion.***

Chief Kaufmann thanked all that came out and drove to Koop Drive for our Board meeting, which is normally conducted at the Tower's Bldg. in Slidell. This is due to special legislation, in St. Tammany Parish, that created this process. Chief Kaufmann stated that he feels this needs to be changed, as we protect approx. 100,000 people in Slidell and they should have the opportunity, in Slidell, to attend the meetings. He further stated that he has spoken with State Rep. Mary DuBuisson and she stated that she would champion legislation, next year, to make this change.

Chief Kaufmann thanked the Commissioners for the working together, at a committee level, giving them their opportunity to cast votes. He stated that the integrity and commitment that a Board member makes to really understand the organization that they are appointed to is invaluable.

Chief Kaufmann asked that Councilmen Toledano, Stefancik and Airey have Chairman Lorino apologize, publicly, at his next Council meeting, for his conduct towards our fire districts Board, Administration, himself as well as Chief Moore, as it was a complete attack on Fire Dist. #1 and Fire Dist. # 4. He further stated that if Councilman Toledano's message was presented at the Council meeting, there wouldn't be confusion with an article in the newspaper and received so much better, instead of confrontational.

Chief Kaufmann commended the Commissioners on knowing the millage process, as it is a state statute to roll back, roll forward and the voters approved 35 mills. Chief Kaufmann stated that there is no other agency that has spoken more about the millage than Fire Dist. #1.

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Chief Kaufmann stated that we can now document life saves, and he wouldn't recommend funding that wasn't valued to continue that service, as he is charged with providing the same service to all of our citizens. He further stated that we have 48,600 taxpayers, which is why the amount in the article seemed so large. When broken down incrementally, the cost per mill, per month, on an average home (\$200,000) is approx. \$17.00/yr.

Chief Kaufmann stated that we took an oath to serve the public, and the number one most important thing is to save a life. Chief Kaufmann further stated that from a taxpayer standpoint, you are getting twelve times the value with the equipment and personnel on the firetruck, as we respond to everything, as long as it doesn't involve a bullet.

Chief Kaufmann stated that from a data standpoint, we are an Internationally Accredited, Class 2 fire department, covering 122 sq. miles. We recently received Re-Accreditation for another five years. We have also received seven LWCC "Safest Company" awards, in the last ten years, out of 15,000 "like" companies.

Chief Kaufmann stated that we have received a clean annual and enhanced audit, five years in a row. He further clarified that the taxpayer money is in good hands with our department.

Chief Kaufmann stated that he puts the citizens first. He stated that he prepares a zero based budget every year, with Parish appointee Commissioner Gay and City of Slidell appointee Commissioner Rich both as part of the process. After we see the value of the budget, cuts are made within our means to provide efficient services.

Chief Kaufmann stated that after Katrina, we didn't pay taxes in our district for three years. While there was a lot of money that came into St. Tammany, it was sales tax which we are prohibited, by legislative action, to receive. He further stated that he feels like we have positioned ourselves to be one of the most efficient government agencies in St. Tammany Parish.

Chief Kaufmann stated that our budget had to be produced in May, with the amounts from the Assessor's offices ever changing, and welcomes the increase in new dollars from growth. He acknowledged that it is our job to determine how those dollars are spent to provide equal service throughout our district.

Chief Kaufmann stated that he has been on the frontline of COVID-19 since March 17, protecting not only his employees and their immediate family members, but 100,000 citizens.

Chief Kaufmann stated that his recommendation to the Board tonight is strictly toward the business community and the residential homeowners within our district. This recommendation is not politically influenced, as he is not an elected official. He thanked the Board, who are also not elected officials, for assisting him in the process.

Chief Kaufmann stated that we are in a tough situation, being stuck in Phase 2. He stated that two months ago he had his mind set, because he wants our organization to go forward. As Phase 2 went backwards, we have had a pause in the business community. He also reviewed the sales tax collections for the 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> Wards, as part of his due diligence, and reductions were nowhere close to what was projected as a decrease in sales tax.

Chief Kaufmann stated, with confidence, "we will take a small step backwards to take a large step forward to commit to our community".

Chief Kaufmann made a recommendation to the Board to roll up to 34 mills (.35 mills). This is approx. \$200,000 in roll forward revenue and its approx. \$ 630,000 that we are rolling back. He further stated that discussions will be had to fund the budget through our "Reserve" fund, in an effort to not go backwards

and to keep our strategic plan in place. He stated that he has to do what is best for the greater good of the majority of the citizens.

Chairman Crowley stated that as fire districts were called upon, during the Parish Council meeting, any districts with an increased revenue number of \$100,000 or less were not questioned further; however, Fire Dist. #4 and Fire Dist. #1 have spent a great deal of time defending a larger number, and what hasn't been talked about, until today, is the value of the dollar to each homeowner, which is an average impact of \$12.00- \$15.00/ year.

Chairman Crowley stated that he and Chief Kaufmann have worked together for 7 years, and have done greater than 20-30 presentations side by side, or individually. He further stated that each presentation is done with a purpose, and he asks Chief Kaufmann, each time, "Chief, when we do a budget every year, do you pledge to always do a zero based budget and only take the dollars that are identified as a required need, that is documented, in order to support the strategy to provide the best service required by those actual standards, every single year"? Chief Kaufmann replied, "Yes, I do".

Chief Kaufmann stated, with regards to Councilman Toledano's statement to invest in ourselves, "I challenge our entire Parish to do, not just as a Parish- we did that, and it worked". Chief Kaufmann offered his assistance; however, he does not want it to be a political decision- this is truly for our taxpayers and business community. He stated that we are here to serve our public and they are the number one reason we do what we do.

(Based on Chief Kaufmann's recommendation, the following was presented)

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-020

<u>Adjusted Rate</u>	<u>2020 Levy</u>
33.65 mills	34 mills (1069037)

The floor was open for public comment. There was no public comment.

*Chairman Crowley called for the vote:*

- Commissioner Gay: Yea**
- Commissioner Hoying: Yea**
- Chairman Crowley: Yea**
- Commissioner Brackett: Yea**
- Commissioner Rich: Yea**

*The motion carried unanimously.*

d.) 2020-021: BOC Resolution (Approve Levy of Parcel Fee on Tax Roll)

RESOLUTION 2020-021

**BE IT RESOLVED**, by the St. Tammany Fire Protection District, in a public meeting held on July 21, 2020, which meeting was conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Law, whereupon the taxing district voted to approve and to levy the parcel fee on all taxable property shown on the official assessment roll for the year 2020, and when collected, the revenues for said taxes shall be used for the purposes for which said taxes have been levied. (See Exhibit "A")

PARCEL FEE	MAXIMUM	2019 LEVY	2020 LEVY
	\$39.00	\$39.00	\$39.00

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Assessor of the Parish of St. Tammany, shall extend upon the assessment roll for the year 2020 the parcel fee herein levied, and the tax collector of said Parish shall collect and remit the same to said taxing authority in accordance with law.

7/21/2020

The foregoing resolution was read in full, the roll was called on the adoption thereof, and the resolution was adopted by simple majority of the total membership of the taxing authority voting in favor. The votes were:

**YEAS:**  
**NAYS:**  
**ABSTAINED:**  
**ABSENT:**

THIS RESOLUTION WAS DECLARED ADOPTED ON THE 21ST DAY OF JULY, 2020, AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ST. TAMMANY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT, A QUORUM OF THE MEMBERS BEING PRESENT AND VOTING.

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and exact copy of the resolution adopted at the meeting held on July 21, 2020, at which meeting a quorum was present and voting.

Mandeville, Louisiana, this 21st day of July, 2020.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daniel Crowley, Chairman  
Board of Commissioners  
St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cheryl Gross, Secretary, Board of Commissioners  
St. Tammany Fire Protection District No. 1

***Commissioner Brackett made a motion to adopt Resolution 2020-021, Relating to the Approval to Levy the Parcel Fee on the Tax Roll. Commissioner Hoying seconded the motion.***

Chief Kaufmann stated that this is procedural and the parcel fee is a ten year vote of the public and this levy is done on an annual basis.

The floor was opened to the public. There was no public comment.

***Chairman Crowley called for the vote:***

***Commissioner Gay: Yea***  
***Commissioner Hoying: Yea***  
***Chairman Crowley: Yea***  
***Commissioner Brackett: Yea***  
***Commissioner Rich: Yea***

***The motion carried unanimously.***

- e.) FRS (General Comments) - Chief Kaufmann stated that he attended the FRS Board meeting and the Wilshire Group made their presentation, presenting FRS a plan with four options to give them the 7% return which would prevent the employer contributions rates from rising in the future; however, it is all market driven.

Chief Kaufmann stated that he made a recommendation to consider keeping Wilshire as financial advisors. He further stated that this process has been seven months, and as any hope to fire districts, the FRS Board is aware that the Louisiana and St. Tammany Fire Chief's Associations are involved and want to be part of the process to change the future.

***Commissioner Gay made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Brackett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.***

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

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