



Municipal Service District of Ponte Vedra Beach
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MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

The Trustees of the Municipal Service District held their annual final budget meeting on Wednesday September 22nd at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library at 6:00 PM.

TRUSTEES PRESENT

Brad Wester – Chairman
Al Hollon – Vice Chairman
Gary Jurenovich - Treasurer
John Cellucci – on phone
Holly Kartsonis
Mack McCuller
Kitty Switkes

Wayne Flowers – Attorney

Chairman Wester called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. He explained that Trustee Cellucci has an excused absence, however is on the phone tonight because we have a quorum.

Trustee Switkes introduced Anthony Richard from The Recorder.

APPROVAL OF THE SHERIFF’S CONTRACT

Chairman Wester asked everyone to introduce themselves. Director Scott Beaver, Director Skip Cole, Director Hagaman, Matthew Cline, General Counsel for the Sheriff’s Office. Chairman Wester reported that Deputy Tedder is also in attendance.

Chairman Wester reported that we tabled at the last meeting and asked for comments which he received some and Trustee Cellucci reported that he would like to address his comments at the meeting and Chairman Wester gave him the floor. Trustee Cellucci reported that he is most concerned about the length of the contract and the prior contract had the rate of increase for each subsequent year and he would like to see that in this contract. He also reported that in the contract he does not see accountability, would prefer a four-year contract and is not sure why we are talking about this as we all received a letter from Director Beaver stating that they were not going to renew the contract.

Trustee Kartsonis reported that on her neighboring streets they have a group text message and she asked them what they thought about the visibility of deputies. Everyone seemed to know Deputy Tedder, but they do not know anyone except one person knew Nate Datsko. Chairman Wester reported that Deputy Tedder has been around the longest. Trustee Switkes reported that we have had

some turnover in the past year. Chairman Wester reported that we do not have our own police force and we have a lot of deputies to draw from and not worried about who is on who is not on and go about my life knowing they are there. We are lucky to have Deputy Tedder in our neighborhood and we are lucky and privileged to live in Ponte Vedra Beach. Trustee Kartsonis reported that it goes back to our discussion that we have had over several meetings that there has not been the visibility in the past years.

Vice Chairman Hollon reported that you can do a multiple year contract with escalators. This is a one-year contract with three additional years that must be mutually agreed upon. The contract shows that they are an independent contractor and we do not have any liability and it is there discretion how they want to patrol the district. Vice Chairman Hollon reported that he believes this is a good contract and should be approved.

Matt Cline reported that he should have led with this so we did not waste time talking about the contract and that everyone had a chance to read the letter from Director Beaver, but it is the intent of the Sheriff to not renew the contract. The reason we are all hear is to answer any questions how this will pertain to the MSD.

Director Beaver reported that we have had the honor and privilege to be in a contract with the MSD since the early 80's and we value that relationship however we all know that St. Johns County is growing at an enormous rate, and it is almost unsustainable for us in law enforcement. The leadership team here have been talking about this and we sat today with the Sheriff for two hours and discussed the MSD, the relationship, and the contract the pros the cons and how do we handle all this. Based on the growth today, we are not fully staffed and have to look at safety for the county as a whole. As we discussed today, it was a hard decision, but we feel that based on the growth, calls for service, response times and crimes throughout the county that leaving five deputies contractually in a three plus or minus mile radius area is not the best way to use our deputies in St. Johns County. We answered to you contractually and there will always be disagreement but the only place we ever get questioned is in the MSD. To be quite honest with you, you are still \$200,000 to the negative of what it cost the citizens of St. Johns County to put those five deputies in your area. We are going to redeploy those assets where they are needed more. Your crime statistics are nonexistent and as for service, we provide the same service for every citizen in the county. If you call 911 or have an issue, we will come and provide the same service as if you were in a contract with us and you already pay taxes for this. You will still have three deputy sheriffs in the area and Deputy Tedder will still be assigned to the Ponte Vedra area for traffic. Unfortunately, this is the best thing to do for the county as a whole and maybe when we are fully staffed, we can look into this again. This is a business decision and not a personal decision.

Chairman Wester reported that you mentioned there is a \$200,000 delta but we met in the middle. Director Beaver reported that there is still a delta and that we personally came here to tell you and answer any questions you might have. Director Beaver reported that this is the leadership and out of respect to the Board the Sheriff wanted to send his top staff. Not one service we provide will change. To be completely honest with you, it is hard as supervisors to hear the comments and how the sheriff's office is being talked about. Chairman Wester reported that it is a few and not the majority. Director Beaver reported that everyone has an opinion and we appreciate those opinions and it is important that we get the good and the bad feedback so that we can make the best decisions.

Trustee McCuller asked Director Beaver about the comments in his letter where you referenced the comments made and why you were going to not sign the agreement but tonight, we are hearing that it is a business decision. Which one is it? Attorney Cline reported that the comments did not really help as it set a tone that there is an unhappiness at this table. Attorney Cline reported that the \$200,000 delta is what the Sheriff's office has to kick in to make this contract work. That money is coming from the whole county and not just the MSD. Chairman Wester reported that we are changing the liaison with the Sheriff and letting you know that we are not here to micromanage you

moving forward and would like to put this to vote and sign this contract tonight. Trustee Cellucci reported that if they are not going to sign the contract why have a vote. Trustee Switkes reported that the newspaper is here for the first time, and she wanted to make sure that they understand it was the minority of this board that spoke about the Sheriff's office not doing their job and the majority are very pro for having the Sheriff's office and the community will be very disappointed. Director Beaver reported that there are people on this board that would get in this uniform and work hand in hand and honestly believes that everyone would. He reported that he does not hold any comments personally or to any deputies that work here but what Attorney Cline said some of the comments hurt and made us look at the whole county where we need manpower, and it is irresponsible of us to leave five people in the MSD. Chairman Wester asked Director Beaver to name the Trustees who made the comments. Director Beaver reported that we received the audio from the last meeting, and we listened to it and did some investigation of our own and received a phone call from one and a letter sent via e-mail from another disputing everything that was said against us. Director Beaver reported that he is not going to call out names. Treasurer Jurenovich reported that you are talking about me and what he said in the letter in that the MSD resident, for what they pay, do not deserve subpar service, and did not say the Sheriff is providing subpar services. Treasurer Jurenovich reported with our property value we are sending 16 million to the county and 20% of every dollar is going to the Sheriff for \$3.3 million dollars coming from 1,200 homes. There was a vote for the \$400,000 sheriff's contract and my vote was for it not against. We want the visual of the deputies in our area. Chairman Wester reported that we need to move on.

Trustee McCuller asked if there is anything we can do to get the car back on the track. Director Beaver reported no as it is a business decision for the whole county at the end of the day. Director Beaver reported that he understands this is a very rich area, but we need to provide the same services to Hastings as we do the MSD no matter how much taxes you pay. Trustee McCuller reported that our charter is from 1982 and our people love and respect the deputies and when they see that they are not covered, Director Beaver reported that they are covered, and Trustee McCuller reported but not in the same way. Director Beaver reported that they are going to send out literature to every resident and they had planned on going door to door and not sure if the Sheriff is still going to do that, but if you really think about what was said tonight it has nothing to do with the relationship with the MSD Board and the Sheriff's office it has everything to do with providing safety to every citizen in St. Johns County and five deputies is a lot.

Attorney Cline reported that the car is not off the track without a contract. If you want that extra presence, you can hire us off duty which could be a significant savings to the MSD and it would be a uniformed deputy with full law enforcement powers. Chairman Wester reported that as a matter of principle he wants you leaving her with a signed contract. Vice Chairman Hollon made a motion to approve the Sheriff's contract, it was seconded and carried with a vote of 6-1 with Trustee Cellucci voting no. Director Beaver appreciates Chairman Wester and all the members of the Board as we know you support law enforcement.

Treasurer Jurenovich reported that we have a financial responsible to the residents and we can hire them to work private duty which would be less than the contract. Chairman Wester reported that we will put this on the next agenda. Attorney Flowers reported that you still need to approve the budget. Chairman Wester reported that we are obligated to leave the money as we have signed the contract and they still could accept it but we have the option to move it later in the year. Attorney Flowers reported that if you do not use it this year you will have to substantially reduce ad valorem taxes next year.

Treasurer Jurenovich reported that people before us had vision and in the early 70's they set up the MSD as a special taxing district. We need to be a city and have our own police department. If Nocatee becomes a city, they are going to swallow us. Chairman Wester reported we will table this discussion and move on.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Carl Bloesing - 12 La Vista Drive – Mr. Bloesing reported that he has been a resident of this community for 46 years. Several years ago, there was a very serious group to incorporate Ponte Vedra. He suggested that you form a group to look at this as we are going to get increased pressure from other parts of the county but encouraged the Board to form a committee and do some research on the advantage and disadvantages of incorporating

APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

Vice Chairman Hollon made a motion to approve the millage rate at .375 for fiscal year 2021-2022. It was seconded, and unanimously carried.

Vice Chairman Hollon made a motion to approve the budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 as presented. It was seconded and carried with a vote of 6-1 with Trustee McCuller voting no.

NO PARKING SIGNAGE COST

Chairman Wester reported that Rodney Cooper said we need to call our vendor to get the signs. Chairman Wester asked Treasurer Jurenovich how much he thinks. Treasurer Jurenovich reported that they need to be reskinned and all we need are the measurements. Chairman Wester asked Treasurer Jurenovich if he can get these done. Treasurer Jurenovich reported that he will call Addresses of Distinction and get a cost or a draft. Trustee Kartsonis asked if he can get more than one cost. Treasurer Jurenovich will get in touch with Buchanan too. We will need the ordinance on the website for people to have the ability to look it up. Trustee Switkes suggest having a scan bar on the sign for pedestrians. Chairman Wester thinks it is a good idea but not for what we are doing with the no parking. Trustee McCuller reported that he gave the secretary the seven poles that will be replaced with Eric Jurenovich doing the work and this was passed out for the record.

Trustee Cellucci asked who the current liaison with the Sheriff department is. Chairman Wester reported that he is. Trustee Cellucci asked what is your next step. Chairman Wester reported we will discuss hiring off duty deputies. Trustee Switkes asked if we have any liability and Attorney Flowers reported that he believes they would be hired as independent contractors.

Trustee Kartsonis asked if we could put on the agenda for next meeting incorporating.

ADJOURN

A motion was made to adjourn; it was seconded and unanimously carried.
Submitted, Ann Jurenovich, MSD Secretary