

# LEE COUNTY

NORTH CAROLINA

*Committed Today for a Better Tomorrow*

## MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY FIRE ADVISORY BOARD

December 12, 2007

---

The Lee County Fire Advisory Board met on December 12, 2007 at Tramway Fire Department, 5900 McDaniel Drive, Sanford, North Carolina.

The following members were present:

- Donald Andrews, Jr.
- Larry Kelly
- Doc Oldham
- John Altenburger
- Linda Shook
- Shane Seagroves, Ex officio member

The following member was excused:

- Roger King

Chairman Donald Andrews called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The minutes from the September 27 meeting were read aloud by Doc Oldham; a motion was made to accept the minutes as presented by John Altenburger; seconded by Larry Kelly. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Andrews began the meeting with discussion concerning the FY 2008-09 budget forms. The issue of pay-per-call was questioned by John Altenburger. A motion was made by John Altenburger to remove the pay-per-call from the budget worksheets, since the FAB has not heard back from the Fire Chief's Council on recommendations at this point. All other budget worksheets will remain the same, with the exception of the pay-per-call. A timeline was set for the FY 2008-09 budget process as follows:

January 8, 2008	6:00 p.m.	Budget Work Session (If needed)
March 28, 2008		FY 08-09 Budget Request Submission Deadline to Fire Marshal's Office
Mid-April		Budget Recommendations from FAB to County Manager

Commissioner Linda Shook also noted that she felt that funding for the Fire Marshal's Office should not be taken from the Volunteer Fire Districts, but instead should come from the General Fund. This matter will be looked into further.

Shane gave an update on the substation at Lemon Springs and the progress made so far. Brad Simpson, of David H. Simpson Construction, came in as the lowest bidder for the project. So far, the land has been rezoned and they are waiting on getting a permit in hand before a groundbreaking ceremony takes place sometime between Christmas and New Year's Day. Chairman Andrews added that Cape Fear has not secured any land at this time, but are working with several people to locate a site by the first of the year.

Shane advised that Northview's Aerial truck has not arrived yet, after experiencing some delays in the paint shop. He expects the truck to be up for the final inspection by the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week in January. He also mentioned that Northwest Pocket has ordered their truck with an expectancy date of 300 days from when the contract was signed in November, 2007.

Discussions on the pros and cons of a county wide unified tax was begun by Chairman Andrews, stating that the Fire Advisory Board had established goals and objectives toward which a decision could be made between individual tax districts versus a county wide district. The Fire Advisory Board was tasked with the mission to decide whether to recommend staying with the current funding system or convert to a county wide tax district. John Altenburger passed out a graph depicting information for the Fire Advisory Board to have for discussion. The material posed several questions as to the departments that have funding and those who lack in funding. Larry Kelly provided examples of his department being classified as a "have not"; meaning, his department does not have the tax base needed in order to provide services and/or equipment for their volunteers in comparison to other departments that have a larger tax base. In order to meet these safety concerns, departments like Larry's would have to increase their budgets significantly, which in turn would place a heavy burden on the property owners with a much higher tax rate. Larry noted that his department does not have the funds to provide physicals for their members. The PPE and equipment provided for their members are outdated and antiquated. John questioned what the motivation for changing to county wide tax rate would be. Shane Seagroves summed it up in one word – "safety". Commissioner Linda Shook agreed that the main concerns and selling factors would be 1) "Safety" for the volunteers and 2) "Liability" to the department and the county. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided in order to make a fair decision and an attempt to level out the basic needs that each department would be tasked to: Identify the current status of their PPE, trucks, and communications. Once compiled, a dollar figure and timeline would be developed that reflected what it would cost and how long it would take to bring all the departments up to a minimum standard. With this type of information, the Fire Advisory Board could hopefully make an informed decision as to funding for the volunteer fire departments. The Fire Advisory Board would have to decide whether to leave the funding under the current system of each district taxed to meet its needs or create a county wide unified tax rate. A timeframe of 30 days was set to gather the information. With this information and the goals and objectives previously set, along with the experience knowledge obtained from two budget cycles, the Fire Advisory Board will be able to make an informed decision on the individual tax district or a county wide tax district. Chairman Andrews noted the decision will not come easily. The group has wrestled with this issue since its inception. In addition

to our own convictions, there will be the politics associated with changing how things are done.

Chairman Andrews stated that if a work session is not deemed necessary, that the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting will be put on hold. Shane will advise when the information has been completed by all fire departments; so that a meeting may be scheduled to further discuss the compiled information.

Therefore with no further business to come before the FAB, Chairman Andrews asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Doc Oldham, seconded by Linda Shook. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

---

Donald Andrews, Jr., Chairman

ATTEST:

---

Nancy Veroni, Secretary