Santa Rosa County
Emergency Services Advisory Committee
August 25, 2004
2:00 p.m.

MINUTES

**Members present:**

Joe Diamond
Gerry Goldstein
Lew Oliver
John E. Reble
Chris Rucker
Tony Simmons
Don Vanderryt

**Staff present:**

Sheryl Bracewell
Deb Grinde
Dave Ling

Agenda approved as submitted with one item added to Old Business regarding the use of the Garcon Point Bridge during emergency conditions requested by L. Oliver.

Minutes for meeting held on July 28, 2004 approved as submitted.

Persons to Appear
Presentation by Chief Stephen Demeter Midway Fire Department
The district consists of twenty-six (26) square miles. It is considered to be an Independent Fire District and provides fire, ems and hazmat services to the district. As an independent fire district they receive no funding directly from the county and are able to request increases through an ad-valorem tax system. The district consists of seventeen (17) paid personnel of which two (2) are administrative, Chief Demeter and Captain Carbonell. All paid personnel are certified emergency medical technicians. There are currently 7-8 volunteer firefighters referred to as reserve firefighters.

The current ad-valorem rate is ninety-five cents ($.95). A request is being made to the district voters on August 31, 2004 to increase the rate by forty-five cents ($.45) to one dollar forty cents ($1.40). This 47% increase would provide funds to upgrade the current manpower to ALS responder status, add another manned station to the district and would support a ten year plan to support the district.

L. Oliver questioned the need for an increase to one of the highest rates in the county when the district is already paying approximately ten (10) times more than any other district in the county. Chief Demeter responded that the district has the same problems that other districts within the county currently face. The citizens require more and more services and there are less and less people willing to volunteer. The state's requirements for those firefighters who do volunteer are becoming more and more demanding. Chief Demeter pointed out that other districts are also requesting increases to their ad-valorem tax rates.

Chief Demeter responded to questions posed by committee members. His current budget is $1.2 million dollars. J. Diamond pointed out that the Avalon Fire District has a budget of $210,000 dollars at a rate of only eighty cents ($.80).

It was noted that the Midway district is densely developed and offers many services to the citizens. The increase to the budget for the first year would be approximately $600,000 to $700,000 dollars. Impact fees account for approximately sixty thousand dollars ($60,000.00) per year. The impact fees are currently being challenged in court. The Commission hopes that the firefighters' salaries would become comparable to those in South Walton. Currently the firefighters start at approximately $23,000.00 per year compared to South Walton's starting wage of $30,000.00 per year. Escambia County firefighters starting wage is higher than those in South Walton.

Chief Demeter stated that these things are determined by the voting citizens within the district.

Discussion followed regarding what items the monies would help pay for. Those include wages and salaries, fire prevention services, fire stations and equipment. The funds derived from impact fees can only be used for new equipment, not the replacement of equipment. Some additional discussion was held regarding fire prevention services and whether it should or should not be provided by the county. Chief Demeter noted that the county has limited funds and growth in the area is rapid. He stated that it is currently a local ordinance and is enforced by the building department with opportunities for review and/or appeal.

L. Oliver questioned whether the Midway District requested any subsidizing from the county as have other districts. Chief Demeter stated that has not occurred and that a request by an independent district might be frowned upon by the county commissioners. L. Oliver questioned whether the increase was necessary to cover interest payments on the current buildings. The Chief denied that was the case and advised that manpower is the biggest concern within the district. He reiterated that the rapid growth in volume requires more services. L. Oliver questioned whether or not the Midway district was in fact covering requests for services by other districts in the area that rely upon volunteers. Chief Demeter advised that was not the case. He stated that Midway provided mutual aid to other districts just as those districts reciprocated whenever necessary. He indicated that this occurs on a nationwide basis.

C. Rucker questioned whether the number of occurrences were out of line or if it was considered. Chief Demeter advised that it is balanced and that the districts work well together.

C. Rucker questioned where the balance of the initial funds would flow if five or six new firefighters at a starting wage of up to $30,000.00 would only expend approximately $180,000.00 to $200,000.00. Chief Demeter explained that with insurances and benefits a working number would average approximately $50,000.00. He also advised that in addition there were two administrative employees included in the plans. These would account for approximately $400,000.00.

A tour of the facility will be schedule for Wednesday, September 22, 2004.

**Review of Reports and Statistics**

Reviewed Analysis of Emergency Calls for the month of July. Noted that Average Response Times have been added to this report. Special attention given to those calls labeled "No Response."

Requested that time frame for "No Response" calls be included in report. The time frame would specify those calls received from 6AM to 6PM and also the day of the week.

Discussion ensued regarding the parameters used to determine whether or not a response was timely and/or necessary. Discussed which type of unit is listed as first unit on scene; determined that we have a well-developed group of First Responder volunteers and that their being on scene first is advantageous to the county; also reiterated that compliance standards necessitate utilizing "Received" to "On Scene" in order to determine the response time.

Chief Reble emphasized that some discussion was held previously regarding the fact that maybe all calls should not be measured; that only Emergency Response calls be considered.

S. Bracewell and D. Grinde will attempt to generate an additional report that will include subject parameters and will bring to this committee for review.

Chief Reble suggests that we continue to monitor the lack of response to these calls and recapped the necessity to address, correct and reduce these incidents.

Fire Hydrant Reports

Received one additional fire hydrant survey from Bagdad VFD.

**Correspondence and Additional Information**
None

**Old Business**
Utilizing inmate work crews for station maintenance
Suggestion had been made that this committee investigate whether county jail inmates would be available to perform lawn maintenance duties at each of the fire district stations. A. Whitfield, Director of Public Works, responded to an email he had received from S. Bracewell regarding this suggestion. He indicated that he was not very receptive to the idea. His feeling was that the work crew was larger than the project; he felt that the needs would be fairly minimal and preferred not to split a work crew for this purpose and opposes the idea.

C. Rucker suggested that persons required to perform community service may be available to the fire districts for this purpose. Discussion led by Chief Reble regarding the inmate program ensued. Chief Reble acknowledged that the volunteers are not paid to fight fires and are not paid to perform lawn maintenance. Chief Reble suggested that it may be necessary for the fire districts to pay for this service from their budgets. C. Rucker suggested that the districts pay a non-profit group to complete the tasks. L. Oliver suggested that this committee approach H. Walker, County Administrator, regarding the subject.

Chief Reble will get Mr. Walker's opinion regarding this matter.

MCI Grant Status Update
MCI equipment supply cache has been received and inventoried. The south end received their portion this date.

The equipment for the different areas of the county were recommended this date and approximately 20-30% has been designated for the north end of the county. The balance of that equipment will be housed at Rural Metro and will be available for use in any area of the county.

C. Rucker advised that the equipment will be labeled specifically for MCI incidents. Rural Metro will rotate the stock according to the shelf life of the products. He advised that it would not be feasible to vacuum pack the products because of the volume of product.

Garcon Point Bridge

Discussion held regarding access to the bridge during emergencies and extenuating circumstances. The issue being that a request is made to lift the toll during these incidents in order to enhance the flow of traffic. D. Ling stated that he was unable to contact the key people regarding this type of use of the bridge but will have the information available for the next meeting. D. Ling indicated that an order may have to come from Governor Bush because according to statute lifting the toll can only be ordered at a state level, not a local level. L. Oliver indicated that simply opening a second toll booth to collect the fees would help alleviate the problem.

**New Business**

City of Jay Station 28 request to be consolidated with County Station 27
Station 27 Chief T. Simmons advised that Station 27 will be contracted by the City of Jay. The buildings and equipment will be leased by Station 27. The station in the city will become a sub-station for Station 27. The contracts and legal issues should be completed by October 1, 2004.

**Public Forum**
None

Next meeting is September 22, 2004 at 2:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Submitted by: D. A. Grinde