Santa Rosa County
Emergency Services Advisory Committee
August 16, 2006
2:07 p.m.
MINUTES

Members present:
James Chalmers
Stephen Cozart
Joe Diamond
Werner Panchenko

Members absent:
Don Vanderryt

Staff present:
Brad Baker
Deb Grinde

Invited Guests:
Representatives of each water system within Santa Rosa County.

Agenda approved as submitted for this meeting with no exceptions.

Minutes for meeting held on July 19, 2006 approved as drafted and submitted.

Old Business
Fire Hydrants
This meeting has been dedicated to concerns of the water purveyors of the county.

The following persons were in attendance at the ESAC/Water Purveyors meeting held on Wednesday, August, 16, 2006 at 2:00 p.m.

- Boutwell, Damon Pace Water System 994-5129
- Campbell, Traci Berrydale Water System, Inc. 675-6086
- Carden, Millard Town of Jay Utilities 675-6174
- Duvall, Claude East Milton Water System 623-8750
- Dotson, Ted Pace Water System 994-5129
- Griffin, Donna Chumuckla Water System 994-3001
- Harper, Ray Berrydale Water System, Inc. 675-6086
- Helms, Dink East Milton Water System 623-8750
- Lambert, Thomas South Santa Rosa Utiliities/City of Gulf Breeze 934-5100
- Lynn, Cecil City of Milton 983-5434
- Mathis, Tony Point Baker Water System 623-4545
- McDaniel, Raymond Town of Jay Utilities 675-4556
- Price, John Bagdad-Garcon Point Water System 623-8508
- Reynolds, Pete Bagdad-Garcon Point Water System 623-8508
- Walker, Ken Holley-Navarre Water System 939-2427
- Watkins, Brian City of Milton 983-5437
- Collins, Richard Citizen
- Nelson, Deborah Santa Rosa News 981-2462

S. Cozart started discussion by stating that a RFP was issued with the intention that the water purveyors would bear the costs as a part of their mandated responsibilities. The committee's expectation was that the cost would be in the $10.00 per hydrant range. The two (2) quotes received indicated seventy-five dollars ($75.00) and one hundred dollars ($100.00) respectively. These costs would indicate an annual expense of approximately $278,000.00 to $371,000.00. This committee determined that these costs could be lowered significantly if the county hired an employee to complete the maintenance of the hydrants. These costs, then, would be passed to the water purveyor's per Florida statute mandate.

Open discussion followed.
W. Panchenko received guidelines from the State Fire Marshal which indicated that special certification is not required. Training is recommended but not mandatory.

The audience was polled for ideas or interest in the issue. The majority indicated by a show of hands that they were not in favor of the idea.

D. Boutwell, Pace Water System, presented to the Chairman of this committee, a legal opinion by the Attorney General's Office (AGO) that questioned who would be responsible for these costs associated with hydrant maintenance.

S. Cozart reviewed the document for this committee:
Dated April 5, 2006 and presented by Steven Lee, Attorney, it is AGO number 2005-21. The response briefly indicates that it is not clear as to the ownership of the hydrant.

S. Cozart stated that this committee has been moving forward as if it is the water purveyor's responsibilities.

The audience was polled again for any ideas and there was no response from them.

M. Carden, Town of Jay Utilities, approached the committee and stated that a fire tax already exists that covers this service. He stated that the county should bear the costs and not the water services. Mr. Carden stated that the county is receiving the funding through the fire tax to pay for this service and that the water customers should not be billed for the service.

K. Walker, General Manager, Holley-Navarre Water System, stated that his facility works closely with the Holley-Navarre Volunteer Fire District. The water system provides the fire department with the tools and devices to complete the testing and one (1) full time flusher. The fire department sends the water system a report and the water system sends someone to complete the repairs. They service nine hundred sixty (960) hydrants on an annual basis and the person that does the flushing also does the lawn maintenance around the hydrants.
S. Cozart said that basically one person does the flushing and testing and works full time to complete the hydrants on an annual basis.

W. Panchenko advised that many volunteer fire departments do not have enough personnel to complete these activities on an annual basis.

S. Cozart questioned B. Baker as to the costs of hiring a person to complete these tasks.

B. Baker stated that one (1) person's salary would be at about $26,192.00/annual based on an approximate wage of $8.57 per hour. This would include retirement and health benefits. It was speculated that the type of person applying for this type of job would want to work at a higher rate of pay and consequently, the county would basically be training personnel on a continual basis. The committee determined that a higher wage might be in order so that continual training could be avoided. Three (3) employees would be approximately
seventy-eight thousand six hundred dollars ($78,600.00) per year.

J. Diamond stated that the committee could speculate that it would cost one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000.00) per year to retain personnel in the position(s).

B. Baker mentioned that it would be necessary for the employee(s) to be supervised and that this would also have to be investigated.

D. Boutwell, Pace Water System, stated that he did not do any further investigating other than procuring the opinion (AGO 2005-21). Mr. Boutwell stated that we will need to consider the growth of the county.

S. Cozart stated that our RFP covered three thousand seven hundred thirteen (3,713) and would include unique identifying number for each hydrant.

B. Baker stated that at this time we have three thousand nine hundred twenty- nine (3,929) plus seven hundred sixty-five (765) flushing hydrants for a total of four thousand six hundred ninety-four (4,694) hydrants.

S. Cozart explained the purpose of the ESAC, including the fact that this committee makes recommendations to the BOCC based on information gathered. B. Baker stated that the information is collected because citizens call regarding these issues. In addition, the information is gathered to update fire services, insurance companies, etc.

C. Lynn, City of Milton, stated that the City of Milton Fire Department maintains four hundred fifty-five (455) hydrants. The City does not want to share any of these costs. Their belief is that they only have to get a water line to the residence and not necessarily a hydrant. T. Lambert, City of Gulf Breeze, pointed out that the testing is required only every ten (10) years and the flushing is required on an annual basis.

J. Diamond indicated that the county has no control over the determination of responsibility on this issue. It would seem that if the state statute was not clear the Attorney General will have to make that determination. We will need to continue to document the location of the hydrants; we have located hundreds in the last few months alone. Mr. Diamond said that would indicate that they probably have not been maintained in many years.

J. Chalmers questioned how we would be able to measure which hydrants have been maintained or even know that it has been completed.

S. Cozart said that the primary concern is that it is completed in some manner and that we need to assure that the hydrants have, in fact, been flushed.

J. Diamond suggested that the information regarding the flow testing, flushing, etc is made available to the county and probably through B. Baker. S. Cozart addressed the attendees and asked if the information could easily be made available for everyone to review.

J. Diamond stated that we all have to remember how important the information is to different departments within the county. All agencies can be remiss in documenting records when necessary and in making sure the proper agencies receive the appropriate information for their purposes.

B. Baker questioned how often the flow testing is completed. T. Lambert, Gulf Breeze, stated they complete their testing on an annual basis. Pace Water System indicated that theirs is completed approximately every seven (7) years in conjunction with the ISO ratings. City of Milton completes theirs on an annual basis also. B. Baker stated if the testing is completed in conjunction with the ISO rating schedule the flow testing would occur within the required ten (10) year timetable. B. Baker clarified that the county does not want to get into the water
business. They merely need the information from the water purveyors who are completing these tasks.

S. Cozart agreed and stated that the purpose was to provide assistance to those water purveyors who needed help in completing these tasks.

D. Boutwell, Pace Water System, advised this committee that it will be necessary to track the reclaim water system that does exist within the Pace system and other systems throughout the county. There are both fire hydrants and flushing hydrants on the reclaim water system and those hydrants a light purple color.

J. Diamond stated that he assumes that the water purveyors would prefer to keep these tasks in-house. He suggested that if this committee provided a list of objectives, it may be possible that the water purveyors act upon the suggestions on an as-needed basis.

B. Baker stated that one of the biggest concerns is cleaning out the area of weed, brush, etc in order to locate a hydrant whenever necessary.

S. Cozart asked if there is a way to ensure that the required maintenance is completed. It is essential for the emergency responders to know where they are located; they need to know if they are working correctly and that they are easily accessible.

J. Diamond reiterated the need to determine who is responsible for these tasks. We need to determine if, in fact, the water purveyors are going to complete the tasks. Knowing whether or not a hydrant is functioning is absolutely critical to a fire department. His fire district responded to a burning mobile home and learned that the hydrant was not working! He stressed the fact that if the department is aware of the information other arrangements can be made and they can determine what is necessary to handle the fire, e.g., requesting a tanker truck.
S. Cozart stated that he would follow up on the issue pertaining to any litigation regarding the Attorney General's Opinion. In referring to 'property' being properly maintained by the owner of the property it seems that the definition of 'property' will need to be clarified. Hopefully there has been a ruling issued regarding this issue by the courts and/or the legislature. S. Cozart will contact T. Dannheisser, County Attorney, prior to the next meeting regarding this issue and will bring the information to the next meeting. This should provide us with a better insight into the situation.

S. Cozart asked for any further comments from the attendees and J. Diamond thanked all for attending the meeting.

S. Cozart stated that each time we hold a meeting the committee and he, as an individual, continue to learn and continue to make further strides regarding all types of issues within a small county. Because we have been such a small county, some issues have been easy to solve. As the county continues to grow at a rapid rate growing pains may slow down our methods of solving issues. We need to look to the future and everyone's input assists us in understanding their needs. This is extremely helpful in assisting this committee in making proper recommendations to the BOCC.

Thanks to the water purveyors and please continue to be involved and to provide this committee with your insight.

Public Comments

Richard Collins, Pace, FL
Pointed out that Florida Administrative Code (FAC) #62-555-330 is the driving force behind this discussion. Stated that the FAC indicated that where a conflict might exist…owners of the
property should 'comply with any one of the publications'; this referenced the AWWA standards in effect as of January, 2003 which can be located in Manual 17.

No further discussion and meeting adjourned at 3:06 p.m.

Next meeting will be held on September 20, 2006 at 2:00 p.m.