

**FRUITLAND PARK FIRE SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 22, 2017**

A meeting of the Fruitland Park Fire Services Advisory Committee was held at 506 W. Berckman Street, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731 on Monday, February 13, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** James P. Logan, representing District (Group) 5, Chair  
Sydney “Dale” Arrowsmith, representing District (Group) 3  
Edgar J. “Jerry” Elton, representing District (Group) 4  
William “Bill” K. Galbreath, business owner representative,  
Steven “Steve” Whitaker, fire chief representative,  
Mr. Edward R. Cihoski, Sr., representing District (Group) 2, and  
Gary Towne, representing District (Group) 1

**Also Present:** Mayor Chris Cheshire, Vice Mayor John L. Gunter Jr., Commissioners Chris Bell, and Rick Ranize; City Manager Gary La Venia, City Treasurer Jeannine Michaud-Racine; Interim Fire Chief Don Gilpin; Deputy Fire Chief Tim Yoder, Firefighters Chris Lewis, Leary Madison, and Sean Parker, and City Clerk Esther B. Coulson.

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Logan called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Coulson called the roll and a quorum was declared present.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**On motion of Mr. Galbreath, seconded by Mr. Elton and unanimously carried, the committee approved the January 31, 2017 minutes as submitted.**

**4. COMMITTEE MEMBER QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Chair Logan referred to the revised comparison of fire assessment versus ad valorem; the Lake County’s proposal, and The Villages costs prepared by Ms. Michaud Racine and cited the questions raised in the email dated February 21, 2017 submitted by Ms. Anita Geraci-Carver, City Attorney, regarding the fire department; copies of the respective documents are filed with the supplemental papers to the minutes of this meeting.

1. *Should the city keep its fire department or contract with a third party to provide fire services within the city (whether Lake County or explore other third party options)?*

After much discussion, **a motion was made by Mr. Galbreath and seconded by Mr. Elton that the committee approve recommending to the city commission keeping the City of Fruitland Park’s Fire Department in-house.**

In recognizing the citizen's previous concerns, Mr. Cihoski concurred with Mr. Galbreath's remarks who gave reasons why the cost of having a volunteer fire department to be in the city's favor where the community would be better off and addressed the consequences if the city's ownership of its fire services were relinquished.

Chair Logan expressed concerns on the locations of the Lake County Fire Rescue Station (LCFS) 53 on Spring Lake Road; LCFS 59 on Lewis Road, and the city's volunteer fire department (station 56) in the middle. Recognized the residents within the service area of LCFSs 53 and 59 would wait longer for fire rescue service and according to the economies of scale, he believed it makes sense long term for the city's fire department to with the county. Chair Logan indicated that the committee has not held discussions on administrative costs of the fire department

Mr. Whitaker voiced his agreement with Messrs. Cihoski and Galbreath in keeping the fire department and cited the disadvantages of relinquishing control of the city's fire department to other jurisdictions.

After Mr. Elton gave comparisons on the value of a volunteer and an employee with an organization with volunteers as the city's best move, Mr. Arrowsmith expressed his preference to keep the fire department in house.

In reviewing previous studies, Mr. Cihoski, in recognizing the City of Mascotte -- a comparable municipality utilizing six fulltime firefighters, eight hours a day, five days a week and 24 hours with \$100,00 more than the City of Fruitland Park's -- questioned why the city could not implement same.

Mr. Galbreath, in addressing Chair Logan's concerns, believed that, precluding long term costs, the county could enter into an automatic aid agreement to increase emergency response times for residents.

After discussion regarding the possibility of annexing future non-contiguous parcels north of Spring Lake Road to Eller Drive, Chair Logan believed that such agreement with the county would solve the problem.

In response to Mr. Galbreath's inquiry, Mr. Whitaker recognized that the county's fire rescue firefighters/emergency management technician or paramedics designation would need to be addressed in the city's hiring process.

Subsequent to further discussion, **Chair Logan called for a roll call vote on the motion on the floor with the committee members voting as follows:**

<b>Mr. Arrowsmith</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Elton</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Galbreath</b>	<b>Yes</b>

<b>Mr. Whitaker</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Cihoski,</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Towne</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Logan</b>	<b>No</b>

**The motion carried on a six to one vote (6-1).**

2. *If the recommendation is to keep its fire department, then:*
  - a. *Should the fire department remain a volunteer fire department? OR*
  - b. *Should the fire department convert to a paid/employee fire department? OR*
  - c. *Should the fire department convert to a hybrid fire department with both paid/employee firefighters and volunteers?*

After discussion and **on motion of Mr. Elton, seconded by Mr. Galbreath and unanimously carried, the committee approve recommending to the city commission for the fire department to convert to a hybrid fire department with both fulltime paid employee firefighters and volunteers.**

3. *If the recommendation is to convert to a paid/employee fire department or a hybrid department, then what is the recommendation for transitioning (how many paid in year one, how many paid in year two, etc.)*

Following further discussion and **on motion of Mr. Towne, seconded by Mr. Galbreath and unanimously carried, the committee recommended to the city commission keeping three additional fulltime paid employees in-house 24 hours.**

4. *How should the fire department be funded,*
  - a. *Solely through a fire assessment? OR*
  - b. *Solely through ad valorem taxes? OR*
  - c. *A combination of a fire assessment and ad valorem taxes?*

*If a combination, what percentage should be funded through each source of revenues?*

1. *For example, 50/50, 60% fire assessment and 40% ad valorem taxes, etc.*
2. *Or, for example, first year 50/50, second year 60/40, third year 70/30, and each year thereafter increase the percentage paid from fire assessment until eventually fully funded through a fire assessment?*

Extensive deliberations ensued and **on motion of Mr. Elton, seconded by Mr. Galbreath, and unanimously carried, the committee recommended to the city commission to implement a combination of a fire assessment and ad valorem taxes with the ratio to be determined by the city commission.**

Later in the meeting, Chair Logan expressed, on behalf of the committee, the respect and understanding gained for the fire department staff who attended the committee meetings.

**5. STAFF COMMENTS**

Staff had no comments to submit at this time.

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business before the committee at this time.

**7. FUTURE MEETING DATES**

There was no discussion on future meeting dates.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mayor Cheshire, on behalf of the city commission, thanked the committee members for their service.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business to come before the committee

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the city commission at this time, on motion made, second and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.