

**CALHOUN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
WORKSHOP – VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS (LOCATION – NEAL CIVIC CENTER)  
JUNE 19, 2017**

**PRESENT AND ACTING:**

**DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN  
GENE BAILEY, VICE-CHAIRMAN  
DARRELL MCDOUGALD**

**CARLA A. HAND, CLERK OF COURT AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER  
SARAH WILLIAMS, CLERK ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**

The workshop was called to order by Chairman Wise at 7:06 p.m., CT.

Commissioner Wise stated Attorney Fuqua is researching the Sales Tax for Emergency Services. Chairman Wise stated the volunteer fire departments would need to educate the public if the Sales Tax for Emergency Services is placed on the ballot for voter approval. Chairman Wise stated when the sales tax was discussed initially there was an issue of losing advalorem funds, but this may not be the case. In addition, Chairman Wise stated there are grant funds available for volunteer fire departments, and there is no excuse not to apply for the grants. Chairman Wise thanked Mr. Ben Hall for meeting with the volunteer fire departments to explain to them how to apply for grants and fill out the applications.

Commissioner McDougald stated the Calhoun County government could not operate without the aid of grants. Commissioner McDougald stated if there is grant money available it is imperative to apply for the grants, and grants should be applied for before the Fire Departments request additional funds from the County.

Stacy Varnum with the Florida Forest Service stated many of the volunteer fire departments apply for and receive the 50/50 Florida Forest Service grant. Mr. Varnum stated in the mock hurricane exercise Emergency Management had a couple months ago, nearly every situation involved the volunteer fire departments, which shows they are a needed service provider.

Commissioner McDougald stated he believes most people understand how much the volunteer fire departments do for the county. Commissioner McDougald stated most volunteer fire fighters have full time jobs, and never hesitate to come out in the middle of the night no matter what the conditions. Commissioner McDougald stated he realizes it is a lot to ask of the volunteer firefighters to write grants on top of all they do already.

Greg Burkett from Nettle Ridge Volunteer Fire Department stated they applied for two (2) grants, paid a grant writer \$1,800, and still did not receive a fire truck. Mr. Burkett stated it takes more than just applying for a grant; they need someone in the county who knows the process to help them with their grants.

Fire Chief Ben Hall stated a fire apparatus is the single hardest item to receive from a grant. Chief Hall stated Nettle Ridge received an apparatus from a grant once before, and it is almost impossible to receive two apparatus grants.

Ms. Chelsea Snowden stated she is the grants coordinator for the county and is more than willing to help the volunteer fire departments with their grant writing, but cannot do this without the volunteer fire departments providing the necessary information. Ms. Snowden stated she can help to write the narratives for the grants, but cannot answer questions about equipment in the volunteer fire departments. Ms. Angie Smith stated narratives can be very hard, and asked Charlie Frank, the State Volunteer Coordinator for the State Fire Marshal's Office if he could provide a successful grant application and narrative to be used as an example.

Commissioner Bailey stated all the volunteer fire departments need to have proper documentation of all their certifications on their profiles with the state. This information needs to be correct when applying for a grant. Commissioner Bailey stated everyone needs to start working together as a team to get these grants. Commissioner Bailey stated he is quite sure the county could find funding for a match on a fire truck if one of the volunteer fire departments is successful in obtaining a grant for a truck. Commissioner Bailey stated the Board is working hard to help the volunteer fire departments. Ms. Snowden stated the county does not want the volunteer fire departments to have to pay \$1,800 for a grant writer, she is here to help and Mr. Frank with the State Fire Marshal's Office has stated he will help the fire departments with grant writing as well.

Mr. Micah John Martin, Westside Volunteer Fire Department, stated the volunteer fire departments need someone experienced in grant writing for fire departments who has applied for grants in the past.

There was further discussion about applying for grants.

Mr. Charlie Frank discussed grant writing. Mr. Frank stated the volunteer fire departments need to put all information possible into the grant application and narrative. Chief Hall stated any department who has applied for a fire truck grant should call and find out what their score was, find where the application was deficient, make some changes and reapply for the grant. There was further discussion about grant writing.

A representative (Greg Burkett) from Nettle Ridge stated he was appreciative of the Board for budgeting for a match for a fire truck each time they have applied for a grant.

Chairman Wise stated there are some upcoming budget meetings, and he hopes to increase the fire department's budget from \$7,500 to \$10,000, and place \$15,000 in the budget for matching funds. Commissioner McDougald stated there would be many other budget requests, and depending on funding these increases are not guaranteed. Chairman Wise stated he hopes to see some participation from the community in the budget hearings.

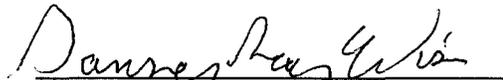
Commissioner Bailey stated being a volunteer firefighter is a passion. Commissioner Bailey stated he is glad to see there are volunteers willing to serve the community as volunteer fire fighters and appreciates the volunteer fire departments.

Commissioner McDougald stated he too appreciates the volunteer fire departments, and thinks the county is on the right track to get the volunteer fire departments the help they need.

Mr. Martin with Westside Volunteer Fire Department asked if the Road Department has hired any other employees who would be able to help with debris removal during the coming storms. Commissioner Bailey stated the Road Department is down two (2) employees at this time. Mr. Martin asked what is done with the money saved by calling the volunteer fire departments instead of a Road Department employee to remove trees from the roadways. Commissioner Bailey stated the money would be non-existent, and that the Road and Bridge budget is just as tight as the volunteer fire department budget. Commissioner Bailey stated the Road Superintendent, Cliff Edenfield, would be more than happy to help and provide whatever is needed if the volunteer fire departments call him and ask. There was further discussion about the Road Department.

Chairman Wise asked if the Board would like to schedule another workshop in three (3) months. Mr. Daniels stated the meeting date is Monday September 18 and will be held at the Sheriff's Office. There was a consensus to schedule a BOCC workshop at this meeting.

There being no further business the workshop adjourned at 7:38 p.m., CT

  
DANNY RAY WISE, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

  
CARLA A. HAND, CLERK