

# **Town of Melbourne Beach**

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

### **MINUTES**

**TOWN COMMISSION WORKSHOP  
WEDNESDAY MAY 1, 2019 @ 6:00pm  
MASNY ROOM – 507 OCEAN AVENUE**

**Commission Members:**

Mayor Jim Simmons

Vice Mayor Wyatt Hoover

Commissioner Steve Walters

Commissioner Sherrie Quarrie

Commissioner Corey Runte

**Staff Members:**

Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro

Town Clerk Nancy Wilson

Town Attorney Clifford Repperger

**I. Call to Order – Led by Mayor Simmons**  
Mayor Simmons called the meeting to order at

**II. Roll Call**

Town Clerk Wilson led the roll call.

Commissioners Present:  
Mayor Jim Simmons  
Vice Mayor Wyatt Hoover  
Commissioner Sherrie Quarrie  
Commissioner Corey Runte

Staff Present:  
Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro  
Town Clerk Nancy Wilson

Commissioner Absent  
Commissioner Walters

**III. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence**  
Led by Mayor Simmons

**V. Public Comment**  
No Public Comment

**VI. Old Business**

- A. Fire Department to continue discussion from April 3, 2019 Workshop about important FD issues

Station Manager Gavin Brown explained he would be filling in for Fire Chief Micka who had fallen ill. Station Manager Brown introduced the following members of the Fire Department:

- Assistant Chief John Miller, also the Senior Training Officer – responsible for training new recruits and selecting who joins the Fire Department as part of the Membership Committee. 20 years at the Fire Department
- Captain Jeff Boos – leads the Marine Rescue Division. 12 years at the Fire Department.
- Lieutenant Jim Turner, also President of MBVFD Inc.
- Former Chief Jim Hunter, and honorary member of the Fire Department.

Station Manager Brown handed the mic over to Assistant Chief John Miller. Assistant Chief Miller stated the goals of the meeting were to answer any questions regarding Chief Micka's last presentation, enhance the communication and coordination between the Town and the Fire Department, and chart the future direction of the Fire Department. There

needs to be open and transparent communication between the Town and the Fire Department. They also want the Town to play an active role in the Department, as well as increase the Department's budget.

Mayor Simmons said there is a constraint on how much taxes can be raised. The Town has raised the taxes at the maximum level allowed by the State each year for the past five years, which is 10% over the rollback rate. The rollback rate is dependent upon the evaluation of property taxes. When property values go down, the amount of taxes that can be collected goes down too which has happened in the past. The State of Florida has taken away the Communications Tax, collected from business such as Bright House. Taxes collected from traffic tickets are also being taken by the state, leaving the Town with only a nominal portion of the collected taxes. Fighting traffic tickets costs the Town more money than is collected. Overall, traffic tickets do not generate as much revenue for the Town as they have in the past. Subsequent legislation regarding the 10% over rollback rate has been interpreted by the Town Attorney this year to mean the Town is not required to adhere to that rule. This, paired with an increase in property values, could allow the Town to bring in more money through taxes than initially believed. The biggest killer at the moment is stormwater. Water is flooding and reaching the front doors of households on Cherry and Pine, and a collapsed storm drain cost the Town \$900,000 to replace. Everybody is fighting for the same dollars, and hard choices have to be made every year.

MBVFD Inc. President Jeff Boos said that the corporation fundraises between \$50-60,000 a year. All of that money gets donated directly to the Town to sustain the Fire Department. The mission of the Corporation is recruitment and retainment.

Mayor Simmons said the contribution of the Corporation shows and that the citizens don't always realize how much money that contribution saves them. Having a fire station within a mile of their home reduces their property insurance. When reviewing budgets there just isn't always money available, and the critically needed resources have to be prioritized.

John Miller said that they have a responsibility to bring budget issues to the Town, and that while not everything is a critical expense; some things are needed to improve the sustainability of the Department. Sustainability is directly affected by the budget. The Fire Department wants to partner



with the Town so that it is easier to prioritize what does and doesn't need to be done.

Mayor Simmons said that decisions can't be made unless they understand exactly what is being asked and why it is needed. The Fire Department needs to be able to come up during budget time to tell what is a must have, what is a need, and what is a want. Wants are the first to get scrapped. The Department has been getting better at doing this, and each year there are improvements in foreseeing what expenses will occur such as an A/C system failure. When asked about the purpose of reserves in the budget, the Mayor explained that it was more of an emergency fund in the event of a disaster so that the Town can sustain itself.

Jeff Boos said that the purpose of the presentation was to explain to the new Commission the history and purpose of the Fire Department and the MBVFD Inc. There are issues the Department is facing as well. Local residents are submitting volunteer applications; many come from over the bridge. They had to update their policies to allow that and even still it is questioned whether volunteers with pagers over the bridge can respond in time. He believes in order to sustain the Department long term it will have to become a combination department. Chief Micka has been working to keep the Department in compliance, but State statutes make the process of recruitment even more difficult than it has been in the past. Mayor Simmons added that keeping volunteers is difficult and this Department is used by some as a stepping stone to paid positions.

Station Manager Gavin Brown said that another issue is finding and retaining people with enough experience to lead and train other firefighters. Mayor Simmons asked if these higher positions are what the Department might want to be paid positions. Jeff Boos said that is still being discussed. Former Chief Jim Hunter suggested that the Chief position be among the first to become a paid position since they are responsible for putting the department together. A consensus has not been reached, but regardless there will need to be an increase in the budget in order to support paid positions. Balancing a department with both paid and volunteer position will be difficult since volunteers will be less likely to commit long term. Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro asked if the leadership of the department would affect the amount of volunteers retained. Many fire department members answered yes.

Commissioner Sherri Quarrie said that in the presentation she noted there are 4 administrative and 3 combat positions. Are the combat positions the

volunteers? Station Manager Gavin Brown explained that “combat firefighter” refers to those individuals who are state certified and trained to go directly into a fire. Noncombat firefighters do not have the state certification, so they cannot perform firefighting activities but can assist with other nonhazardous tasks. The cost of paid firefighters would be about \$50,000 a year per person. They would need at least three of these paid firefighters, one for each shift. This would allow at least one person to be in the station 24/7. Chief Micka’s proposed model would have four total administrative paid positions, the chief or chief’s aid and three firefighters. His estimated budget was between \$280,000 and \$300,000. Paid positions are expected to increase firefighter retention. The goal would be having someone at the station who can do all aspects of the job 24/7. The Department is still discussing the options. They are looking at models from three chiefs to three firefighters.

Mayor Simmons asked if it would be more beneficial to have a paid chief leading volunteer firefighters or paid firefighters making it easier for a chief to do their job in a volunteer capacity. Commissioner Quarrie said she does not know enough about the dynamics of a fire department to make a decision without seeing a presentation on the different models and the advantages of each. The Department is not ready to present a final vision but wanted the Commission to know what they are working on. Commissioner Runte said he appreciates all that the Fire Department does. He thinks the Commission needs to be taught more about the department and increase transparent communication. He suggested creating a five year budget forecast to include what they believe the Town can and should contribute to ensure the longevity of the department.

Former Chief Jim Hunter said he wishes there was this much communication when he was Chief, and that more meetings with the Commission before budget time will improve things on both ends. Mayor Simmons said the department should feel free to meet with Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro as she can answer questions about how the budget works and if certain things can be done with it. Jim Hunter said past town managers have not been as receptive to discussing five year plans. Mayor Simmons said that they were more focused on dollar signs and the limited taxes the Town could bring in so cutting costs was the priority but that the Town is now paying for that in the form of unexpected expenses.



Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said that the Fire Department does a lot more for the Town than just fighting fires. She thinks that the group does not always consider all the ways the Department contributes to the Town. Station Manager Gavin Brown said that since many of the volunteers live locally, they have a vested interest in the community and will do things for it that other fire departments don't do.

Mayor Simmons said the Town Budget is 2.8 million, and 1 million of that goes to the Police Department. Assistant Chief Miller said that the cost of equipment is rising substantially. Commissioner Runte said how the Town relies heavily on grants, and previous commissions did not put enough focus on writing and applying for grants. He said how the commission has tossed around the idea of hiring an independent consultant to write grants, and then suggested that in exchange for administrative time from the Fire Department, they could work together to get grants written to benefit the Department as well.

Vice Mayor Hoover asked that the Fire Department include recurring line items in their budget proposal to avoid a buildup of large expenses, such as how the Commission plans out roads that will need to be repaved in the future to avoid having ten miles of roads in need of repaving and not having enough money to complete the project. He also asked if the Department could meet with Elizabeth Mascaro to get a quantitative figure on how much residents are saving by having a fire station in town. Vice Mayor Hoover also proposed a resident education program or presentation to inform the residents of the roles the Department plays in the community.

There was discussion on recruitment strategies and ways the Department was communicating to the community. Mayor Simmons asked if they had a booth set up at Founder's Day. Station Manager Gavin Brown said they set up in front of the station with fire prevention information and handed out the Department brochures.

Commissioner Quarrie said that these days people question the need for a volunteer fire department over the county's fire services. She said that people aren't aware of all the services the department provides and all they do for the Town. If they knew the importance of the department to the community, they would be more supportive of whatever decision is made in regards to restructuring or increasing the budget.

Commissioner Runte said that it is important to be looking ahead in terms of budgeting. He referenced the recently implemented “infrastructure” line item in the Town’s budget. A member of the Department said that their equipment is something that can be planned ahead for because fire equipment tends to have set expiration dates.

Mayor Simmons said he likes the idea of a volunteer department with paid staff and that he believes the Town likes the idea as well. Assistant Chief John Miller said this dialogue is refreshing and that it will improve morale within the Department. The Mayor said that the Town does not have taxes as high as other communities, and that the residents see that there is room to fund more than what is currently being funded.

Commission Quarrie said she hopes to increase incentives for Fire Department staff to stay with the department. She also asked for a further explanation, in reference to the question sheet given to the Commission by the Fire Department as part of the presentation, on why the fire department does not provide medical services. The Department said it is something that is being reevaluated. In the past it was seen as a liability and can be very time consuming. The Department also does not currently meet the requirements to provide medical assistance but they are looking into what would have to be done to become qualified. Currently, the Police are the established first responders for the Town and can provide more medical assistance than the fire department can. Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said she supports increasing the level of medical care that the firefighters can provide, as it will take some of the burden off of the Police Department in the event of an accident that also requires the police to take on their investigative role.

Commissioner Quarrie said she looks forward to seeing what the Fire Department comes up with. The Commission thanked the Department for coming to the meeting.

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Discussion and possible action about recognizing Town volunteers.**

Mayor Simmons said he wants to do something special for town volunteers and was inspired by the History Center Board and how they have an event to recognize the volunteers that help at the Old Town Hall Museum. His main concern is the amount of people that volunteer for the Town. The History Center Board event only has to accommodate around 20 people,



whereas the Town can have upwards of 200 people to be recognized. Some ideas that were brought up while speaking to Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro include ice cream at Founder's Day, a spaghetti dinner, or a cookout by the Commission.

Commissioner Quarrie suggested some special recognition during Founder's Day like a VIP area with refreshments and indoor restrooms, similar to something done at a local art show she has visited. Mayor Simmons said his only concern with something like this is that someone would need to be there willing to turn away residents who are not part of this volunteer group with access to the area. Vice Mayor Hoover suggested having it be an outside area in the shade and renting out the trailer bathrooms for them to use. Commissioner Runte said renting an air conditioned bathroom trailer would be pricey, but he likes the idea of having something special for the volunteers during Founder's Day. He suggested maybe a free beer for each volunteer or grilling some hamburgers and hotdogs for them. Mayor Simmons voiced a concern that other residents could get upset at seeing the volunteers get special privileges in town facilities during the town sponsored event.

Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro suggested hosting a potluck, separate from Founder's Day, where the volunteers could bring their families and have it be something more casual.

Vice Mayor Hoover said that there isn't enough time to get a complete list of volunteers prepared before Founder's Day. He also doesn't like the idea of using a public area for volunteers and excluding other residents from it. Mayor Simmons agreed that this year's Founder's Day is too soon to organize something for the volunteers.

Town Clerk Nancy Wilson suggested an ice cream social. Mayor Simmons said it shouldn't be too hard to get 20 gallons of ice cream and some syrup and host the event separate from Founder's Day.

Public Works Supervisor Tom Davis suggested hosting a clam bake. Mayor Simmons said this could become very expensive, and the ice cream social would be more affordable.

Vice Mayor Hoover said that he believes for now it should be something small and private, just for the volunteers. In the future, once they have more time to plan, they could do something to recognize the volunteers at



Founder's Day. This would give people an incentive to continue volunteering and attract new volunteers. Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro suggested having a poster or board up with the names of the volunteers. Commissioner Quarrie likes the idea of having their names posted on a public notice board, and suggested having the ice cream social at the July Commission Meeting. Mayor Simmons said he thinks the event should be more private and separate from other Town events. He suggested having it in October, followed by a public movie in the park afterwards with VIP seating for the volunteers. The Commission agreed that this would be more feasible than other ideas.

Mayor Simmons asked for an update on gathering the names of the past years' Citizen of the Year recipients. Interim Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said Public Works Supervisor Tom Davis found the vendor to order a new plaque to fit all the names. Commissioner Runte asked Town Clerk Nancy Wilson to check the UF football schedule before determining a weekend to present the Citizen of the Year award.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

**Vice Mayor Hoover made a motion to adjourn; Commissioner Quarrie seconded. Motion carried 4-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm

**ATTEST:**

  
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**James D. Simmons, Mayor**

  
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**Maddison Mercer, Deputy Town Clerk**