

The Liberty Volunteer Fire Department held its regular meeting on April 1, 2024, at 3278 Hwy 90 DeFuniak Springs. Tony Roy, who had served on the board as commissioner and as treasurer, wasn't present and had decided not to continue serving as a board member. He will continue to serve as a volunteer fire fighter, however. He had resigned at the March meeting.

Staff member James Odom read the treasury report. He said that they had about \$43k in their checking account. They expect \$93k from the County on April 11th. This is the fiscal year 2023 money that was due them but wasn't received because of the recent issues. The request for fiscal year 2024 has been sent to the BCC which should be on their next agenda for approval.

Commissioner Randi Lightner asked about a check for \$498.67 paid to Chairman Mike Engel for a door lock and mailbox. He said they were put up at the Central Station. She also asked whether the lock codes had been changed and was told they had been after they resumed occupancy after the county had left.

### **Old Business**

- **Grant reimbursements** - We finally got the money from the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant, \$19,154.96 reimbursement from the last part of 2022. Because they were given via direct deposit, it took several months to get the banking information changed. The current amounts have been resubmitted and are expecting to be reimbursed. Donna Dunham was paid \$7160 from this grant for a 4-month period. Commissioner Philip Canterbury said that the SAFER grant needs to be modified to change the digital sign from the proposed north station to the central station where there is an actual fire station. He also said there weren't any funds in the grant to recruit new volunteers into the department. Odom said there was money in there to pay for the training by the Training Coordinator Mr. Sweet, but none to purchase materials, however. He believed they would provide funds to purchase flyers and so forth for fire safety training. He continued that the SAFER grant for the next time period is closing in a week or two, but they don't have a grant writer to prepare anything.
- **Insurance** – Chairman Mike Engel said they wanted to pay off all the insurance premiums for the year. The County money has stipulation on what it can be spent on, so receipts need to be turned in. The \$125k for the next year is given in quarters and the money has to be spent before the next quarter can be issued. If we don't spend it, we lose it. James Odom said that the insurance should be paid out of the 2024 money, and that it's about \$15k.
- **SLERS Radio System** – Commissioner Philip Canterbury said that he'd done some figuring and they're approximately \$16,500 for one mobile radio and approximately \$15k for one handheld radio. That includes parts and programming but doesn't include someone to install a mobile radio. Most would just need to be swapped out in the vehicles. He discovered that they have 17 radios including 2 radios, one in each station. His suggestion would be for 3 small trucks, 4 in the big trucks, and one in the station totaling 8 mobile radios to be purchased first. James Odom said that the County had an appointment towards the middle of this month to reprogram about 10 of the existing handheld radios that will work once the upgrade goes through. There is a grant for this and will need to talk

to the County about this. Board Attorney Rene Youell asked if they'd looked into grants with Homeland Security. She believed there may be funds available. She said she'd look into it.

- **FY2023 BCC Funds** - Will be electronically deposited on the 11<sup>th</sup>.
- **FY2024 BCC Funds** - It will be added to the BCC agenda, but Chairman Mike Engel didn't see any issues with that.
- **FPL/BCC Funds – Solar Farm.** Chairman Mike Engel said that he'd gone to the latest BCC meeting and discussion was made about the Solar Farm. It was suggested by someone at that meeting that \$50k could be spent on a well. Engel visited the Solar Farm and discovered that one of the big problems was a source of water there. James Odom had figured out that it would take 21 minutes round trip with a tanker to the nearest water source. Engel was skeptical that \$50k well could continuously fill up tankers. He and James Odom believe that they can use the money on equipment instead. They aren't sure how much of that money they will actually get because only about ¾'s of the farm is Liberty; the rest is the County. James Odom said he believed a portion of the money should be spent on a skid unit for a brush truck. He said the County would also purchase a skid unit. He said he'd spoken with Jackson County Fire Department who told him about the Solar Farm fires they had to deal with and that they were strictly brush fires. He was told that the wire connectors were overheating and melting onto the brush underneath the solar panels causing a fire. At our Solar Farm, they're spraying weed killer underneath the panels and eliminating the brush. He was quoted about \$25k for a skid unit. The motion was made by Commissioner Randi Lightner and seconded by Commissioner Philip Canterbury to let Mr. Odom and Chief Dunham submit a list of things they would spend the money on. Motion was approved 4-0.

## **New Business**

- **Vacant Board Member and Position (Board Action)** – Tony Roy has relinquished his position on the board. Commissioner Randi Lightner asked who would be doing the treasury report. It was suggested that Commissioner John Bottoms, who had been treasurer before, might consider doing it again. It was recommended that they wait until they have another board member before they appoint a treasurer because they would need to change the signature at the bank.
- **Spending Freeze (Board Action)** – Chairman Mike Engel recommended the spending freeze be lifted 100% because of necessary purchases that need to be made.
- **Amending the FY2024 Budget for unexpected FY2023 BCC money (Board Action)** – Commissioner Randi Lightner made the motion and Commissioner Philip Canterbury seconded to table. The motion passed 4 – 0. Chief John Dunham came in later on in the meeting. Randi Lightner made a motion to pay up to \$4500 for tires, \$1500 for the pump test, and \$2000 to recertify the air pumps. Motion passed 4 – 0.
  - \$1900 for tires on the engine #7
  - \$600 for tires on a truck
  - \$1300 for tires on truck squad #7
  - \$3200 Submarine truck flat bed
  - Use Skid from existing truck that's inoperable
  - Air Compressor

- \$1200 to repair 4 Air Packs
- \$1100 Pump test (4)
- Primer pump
- **Maintenance and Spending Priority Plan** – Tabled

#### **Fire Chief Report** (Chief was not present, read by Mr. James Odom)

There were 102 calls for the month of March, 317 calls for the year so far. In March, there were 28 fire calls, 64 medical, 4 motor vehicle accidents, one service call, and 3 cancelled calls. We received mutual aid 6 times: 2 times from District 11, one time from District 2, 2 from the City of DeFuniak, and one from Argyle. We provided mutual aid for a total of 20 times, 6 times for fire support for District 11 (Mossy Head), 5 times for Mossy Head for medical calls, one time for District 2, one time for Paxton, 6 times for the City of DeFuniak, and one time for Argyle.

#### **Comments from the Board Attorney**

She said she supported Healing Tools for Warriors, a charity designed to assist all first responders with their needs. They meet at Heroes Bar once or twice a month and even provide occupational therapy.

*Their mission is to provide Warriors, both Veterans & First Responders alike, who battle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) as well as their Battle Buddies (spouses), a safe place to gather with other PTSD/TBI Warriors, connect the Warriors with local businesses and community organizations that are dedicated to supporting and aiding in the healing process of the Warrior with an emphasis on enhancing their ability to perform daily activities, and to improve their quality of life; as well as to educate the Warrior on local programs, jobs and volunteer opportunities that enable the warrior to regain their sense of purpose and move past their medical restrictions.*

#### **Comments from the Board**

Commissioner Philip Canterbury said he believed the attorney should be paid. She said she'd work up a bill and had wanted to wait until there was funding available.

Donna Dunham said the board needed to pay Joshua. Chairman Mike Engel said he can be paid on the 11<sup>th</sup> once they receive their money. They agreed to pay Joshua the \$150 out of the maintenance budget.

#### **Comments from the Public**

Adrienne Walline Campbell volunteered to be on the board. Commissioner Randi Lightner made the motion and Commissioner Philip Canterbury seconded. The vote was 4 – 0. She was also appointed board secretary, Commissioner Philip Canterbury, treasurer, and Commissioner Randi Lightner as Vice-Chair.

Dan Curry spoke and said he wanted to be familiar with each group in the County. He's running for District 1 County Commissioner.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

