

**JOINT BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS MEETING
BETWEEN
GREATER NAPLES FIRE RESCUE DISTRICT &
IMMOKALEE FIRE CONTROL DISTRICT &
NORTH COLLIER FIRE CONTROL AND RESCUE DISTRICT**

**Tuesday, August 16, 2016 · 6:00 p.m.
University of Florida IFAS Extension Office
14700 Immokalee Road · Naples, FL 34120**

MINUTES (FINAL)

Approved at the September 8, 2016 North Collier Fire Control and Rescue District Board of Fire Commissioners' meeting.

Present from North Collier Fire:

Commissioners: James Burke, Ramon Chao, Christopher Crossan, Norman Feder (Chairman), Margaret Hanson, Richard Hoffman and John McGowan, J. Christopher Lombardo); *Staff:* Chief James Cunningham, Deputy Chief Rita Greenberg, CFO Becky Bronsdon, Assistant Chief Jorge Aguilera and Executive Assistant Lori Freiburg

Present from Immokalee Fire Control:

Commissioners: Ann Goodnight (Chairwoman), Robert Halman, Bonnie Keen and Ed Olesky; *Staff:* Chief Paul Anderson, Deputy Chief Michael Choate, District Attorney Ken Thompson, Administrative Aide Alma Valladares, IT Specialist Jason Burr

Present from Greater Naples Fire Control:

Commissioners: Charlie Cottiers, Brian Cross, Kevin Gerrity, Chuck McMahon, Jeff Page (Chairman), David Stedman *Staff:* None Present

1. Call to Order (Recording #1 - 1:29)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Feder at 6:00 p.m. Commissioner introductions followed.

2. Pledge of Allegiance (Recording #1 - 3:43)

A moment of silence was held for past Immokalee Fire District Commissioner and Firefighter Terry Heath.

No changes were noted for the agenda.

3. Discussion of Status and Lessons Learned from Current Mergers for Greater Naples Fire & North Collier Fire (Recording #1 - 6:10)

Chairman Feder gave a summary of highlights of the North Naples Fire/Big Corkscrew Island Fire merger. Chief Cunningham followed up with details of the merger benefits. Chairman Page and Commissioner Gerrity gave a summary of highlights of the Golden Gate Fire/East Naples Fire merger as well as lessons learned including the importance of public input and participation in the process. Discussion included the differing approaches to merger utilized by North Collier and Greater Naples.

4. Discussion of Ongoing Efforts Related to Interoperability Including North Collier Fire & Immokalee Fire Interlocal Agreements (Recording #1 - 17:47)

Chairwoman Goodnight gave a summary of ongoing interoperability efforts between Immokalee Fire and North Collier Fire via interlocal agreements.

5. Discussion of Future Opportunities for Interoperability and/or Merger (Recording #1 - 20:21)

Commissioner Gerrity distributed a handout to the other Commissioners outlining questions regarding merger for the Commissioners to consider. Discussion ensued regarding each of the questions. Answers to the questions were discussed by the Boards:

1. Are you interested in developing a plan to merge, or do you prefer to remain independent?

Immokalee Fire indicated that they are willing to discuss continued operability between Districts, however, they did not wish to enter into merger discussions with any District as they wished to retain control as a local government. Greater Naples Fire and North Collier Fire both indicated a willingness to discuss future consolidation, however, both agencies felt that their current mergers demanded their full attention to ensure strong foundations and successful merger outcomes. Noted were other issues that the Districts are facing and which pull focus away from additional consolidation efforts included closest unit response (for all Districts) and Isles of Capri/Ochopee fire service delivery (for Greater Naples).

2. Should merging efforts wait until November election results?

General consensus was that merging efforts should wait until after the November elections.

3. Should merging efforts wait until NCFD and GNFD finalize current merger and consolidation matters?

General consensus was that merging efforts should wait until NCFD and GNFD finalize current merger and consolidation matters as the success of the current

mergers was needed prior to further consolidation efforts....the two Districts need to ensure a strong foundation before proceeding with further mergers.

4. What method would best facilitate a merger?

- a. Effort directed by staffs working together
 - b. Effort directed by commissioners working together
 - c. Hiring independent 'Consolidation Director' to oversee consolidation process and direct implementation of interlocal agreement
 - d. Hiring independent consultant to implement consolidation process
- Pros and cons of all were discussed with differing opinions and approaches being noted. A general consensus of the Boards was not met on items a-d.*

5. Future meeting date?

North Collier and Greater Naples Boards indicated a willingness to continue discussions and keep communication open. Immokalee Board indicated a willingness to continue in discussions for interoperability efforts, but not merger efforts. A suggestion was made to meet again after the first of the year, but that those wishing to continue discussions in the interim could attend the monthly Emergency Services Task Force meetings which were already publicly noticed for Commissioner participation, being held the first Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at North Collier Fire Station 45.

6. **Comments by Commissioners or Public (Recording #1 – 1:11:05)**

General themes of discussion included the need for one millage rate for all of Collier County, the importance of public participation in consolidation efforts, the concept that mergers are more successful with two willing and voluntary parties and the question of the role of increased property values being the reason for merger benefits vs. the merger itself.

Public comments included discussion that mergers should include public input and participation, a goal of merger should be one millage rate, the importance of keeping lines of communication open between the Boards until they were prepared to begin concerted efforts for consolidation, true cost savings associated with merger and how would a merged fire district handle Immokalee's affordable housing with no associated tax revenue and the need for just one Fire Chief countywide.

7. **Adjournment (Recording #1 – 1:29:38)**

Commissioner Stedman moved for the meeting to adjourn. Commissioner Lombardo seconded. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Margaret Hanson

Margaret Hanson, Secretary-Treasurer
North Collier Fire Control and Rescue District

9-8-16

Date

Approval: Initials: BB Date: 9-8-16

Audio Available Upon Request