



St. Tammany Parish Fire Protection District No. 11
Board of Commissioners
Minutes of the Meeting on September 8, 2020
Fire Chief Jack Dockery

ROLL CALL

Russell Lindsey – Present
Michael Tassin - Present
Emile Lombard - Present
Floyd Trascher – Present
Michele Blackwell – Present

INVOCATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MINUTES

FINANCIALS

MINUTES

Mrs. Blackwell said, has everybody read and approved the minutes from August 11th?

Mr. Trascher said, yes, I had the opportunity to review the minutes. They seem to be in order and if there is no discussion, I move that we approve them with the video governing.

Mr. Lindsey said, second.

Mrs. Blackwell said, Mr. Lombard, how do you vote?

Mr. Lombard said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Lindsey, how do you vote?

Mr. Lindsey said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Tassin, how do you vote?

Mr. Tassin said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Trascher, how do you vote?

Mr. Trascher said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell said, motion carries. We will move to the Financial Report, Chief.

FINANCIAL REPORT – Chief Jack Dockery

Chief Dockery said, for the monthly of August, we are looking at a 66% target. We are running 98% ad valorem, 72% State Revenue, 93% Fire Insurance Rebate. It looks like EMS Services, we are at 71%, so we are ahead on our target on that one, which is great. The only ones that are still kind of sticking out are the ones that we need to amend. Looking to amend them probably in our November meeting. I had them move a couple of line items, or move a couple of charges out of certain line items and move them to the correct line items to help, kind of, straighten out the budget. As of EMS, it looks like we brought in \$15,965.61, for the month of August. So, close to \$6,000, more than our projected \$10,000, threshold, so that is good. As far as our re-occurring everyday cost, we are running within our budget. Like I said, Medical Supplies, is up and we will have to amend that one in November. Unfortunately, like I said, this year we have had a lot more purchases for medical supplies due to COVID and also, we had some expiration's of different supplies. It just fell within this year that a lot of stuff expired so we had to replace it.

Mr. Trascher asked, the other, Turnout Gear and Cleaning?

Chief Dockery said, that one, I did miss it.

Mr. Trascher said, it's not much.

Chief Dockery said, yeah, that one, I did miss it. I will get them to move that to another little area because, basically, what that was is we had to buy parts for our washer. here, our gear extractor. That should have come out of the station. Let me find that line item. It should come out of line item 45, which is Repairs to Equipment and Building. Somehow, it got moved there so, I will address that with them and have them move that line item.

Mr. Trascher said, okay, the Medical Equipment and Maintenance Repairs, too. Was that a gear purchase or equipment purchase?

Chief Dockery said, that was a, we got some maintenance contracts for the Lucas device and AED's, so that was it. We had it on the Lucas Device and we added to the AED's so that we can get them serviced every year and keep them up to date and calibrated. So, that will be adjusted.

Mr. Trascher said, so that was just an expense that we hadn't planned on.

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Lindsey asked, is that a yearly re-occurring expense?

Chief Dockery said, it's set for, I want to say, it's every couple of years. It's every 2 years for the contract. So, every couple of years this one will come up but, I rather pay a little money now and make sure we have it.

Mr. Trascher said, it's something that we will be able to budget for.

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Trascher said, it's a new figure that we have added to the service and we will be able budget for it.

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Trascher said, now, the supplies, is there something that we are going to try to do, Medical Supplies, to keep them more in line?

Chief Dockery said, well, we are working on that right now with a software program that we have and it's called Operative IQ. Basically, we will have a different shelf set up to where they will be able to scan whatever product they are using and the computer will keep track of it and it will automatically set up a order for when they get to a certain threshold when they need some more. That way it will keep track and make sure we don't over order on anything.

Mr. Trascher said, will it, I mean, the way we rotate the stock because, to go up that much, it must be something that we have that we are having to discard if not rotated.

Chief Dockery said, yes, this is stuff that has been, it's stuff that we have had for a while and like I said, we try to rotate. We try to use our spare truck and help rotate the inventory we have on there. That way, it's not just sitting at the station and expire. We are actually trying to rotate both trucks. So, moving with this new system, hopefully will start to control anything in the near future. Someone said, it's just one of those years that we have a lot of stuff that had expiration dates that have expired. We do get in some med's that expire every year and unfortunately, that's the nature of the beast.

Mr. Trascher said, right, everything that relates to that is going to have an expiration date.

Chief Dockery said, well with this one, like I said, unfortunately, we had to buy some more equipment also, just with all the COVID, like N95 mask and gowns, we really had to stock up while we could. So, unforeseen but it will be adjusted out of this budget.

Mr. Trascher said, okay, that's all I had. Thank you, Chief.

Mr. Lombard said, Chief, let me ask you a question. Maybe it's not the appropriate time to bring it up but, years ago we talked about going through our vehicles and turn out gear and stuff we use up and keep a record of it and to let us know when it's coming due so we don't get a big bullet in the end where we have to come up with a lot of money for it. Did we ever do that program and is it operational?

Chief Dockery said, that's what this other program that we are using, that's added in there. Any type of maintenance, any type of...

Mr. Trascher said, I believe that was that asset tracker, right?

Mr. Lombard said, yes, any equipment we use and we haven't got anything on it and it's been 3, 4 maybe 5 years since we talked about it.

Mr. Trascher asked, is that what you were referring to Mr. Lombard, I think it was the asset tracker? It had the trucks, it had everything ...

Mr. Lombard said, yes, everything, it was tracking.

Mr. Trascher said, approximate of when we had to replace it.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, when it needed to be renewed and when we had to replace it.

Chief Dockery said, yes, that's what Chief Parish is working on right now. This will show any type of maintenance records or any type of trend that is going for the vehicles and all.

Mr. Lombard asked, when will that be completed?

Chief Dockery said, I know he is working on it right now. We just purchased it at the beginning of the year so, he has been inputting everything that we had and right now we use it for tracking, maintenance and longevity of basically, the vehicles.

Mr. Lombard said, does it have the turn out gear in it and filters or anything that is used on the fire truck.

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Lindsey said, Chief, on the line item 88, Internet Service, do we have more than just the two stations with the internet on there?

Chief Dockery said, no, that's just the two stations but, when it says internet, that's Charter and that's basically the TV, the fax lines, the internet, it's the whole entire bundle in that line item. So, it's the commercial for both stations for multiple lines for both stations.

Mr. Lindsey said, I was wondering because that bill is kind of high and that's almost \$300 per station.

Chief Dockery said, yes, basically about \$300 per station but, looking at it before, with using ATT, if it wasn't that, it was a little bit higher. So, we saved a little money going with Charter and their internet and phone and fax.

Mr. Lindsey said, I was just wondering what all was in there. I didn't know if it was something else or that was accurate. Okay.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, any other questions on the financials? Chief, do you have anything else?

Chief Dockery said, no.

Mrs. Blackwell said, okay, with that being said, we will move to the Chiefs Report/EMS Report, Chief?

CHIEF'S REPORT – Chief Jack Dockery

Chief Dockery said, alright, for the month of August, we had:

EMS	56
MVA	1
STRUCTURE FIRE (Mutual Aid Fire District #7)	1
SERVICE/GOOD INTENT	8
DISPATCHED/CANCELLED IN ROUTE	6
FALSE ALARM	3
POLICE MATTER	3
DOWN POWERLINE	1
WIRING ISSUE	1
TOTAL	80

MUTUAL AID FIRE WITH A SAVE

Chief Dockery said, with that Mutual Aid Fire with District 7, we actually had a save. We had a resident that was living there and was bed bound or wheelchair bound and whenever he was talking with the dispatcher, the fire was basically, licking on his bedroom and personnel from District 11 was able to get there and make entry into the mobile home and retrieve the resident from the home so, they did a fantastic job.

Mr. Trascher asked, what area was that Chief?

Chief Dockery said, it was off of Central Avenue, off Chris Kennedy. So, I am very proud of the personnel that was there and they worked hard and was able to get in there and get this save.

Mr. Lombard said, was that within the last two weeks?

Mrs. Blackwell said, I saw something going on yesterday.

Chief Dockery said, it was a couple weeks ago.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, I heard a couple of engines a going down by the house and I thought man, they are really rolling out there.

Chief Dockery said, yes, but, I am very proud of them and the next month or two, maybe at one of the meetings, we will set something up for them and have a little ceremony for them to show our gratitude.

PUMP OPERATION CLASS STARTING SEPTEMBER 14

Chief Dockery continued, also, we have a Pump Operations class starting here on September 14th, so next Monday. We have some some personnel here that don't have it, including myself. I think we have a few from outside of the department that are going to come join us. We will take every precaution with social distancing and all that good stuff. We are looking for that class to run a week and get some more certifications for people.

Mr. Lindsey asked, is that just going to be just during the week? Like a Monday through Friday class? A 40 hour class?

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Trascher said, Chief, you mentioned personnel that you are wanting to do something for recognition. Will you be doing this at the Board meeting?

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Trascher said, so, we will put it on the agenda and maybe we can get some press out of it. I will comb my hair.

Chief Dockery said, yes, me too!

Mrs. Blackwell said, anybody have any questions? Chief, is that all you have for that?

Chief Dockery said, that's all I have.

OLD BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MILLAGE ELECTION – Chief Jack Dockery

Mrs. Blackwell said, we have no Old Business so, we will move into New New Business, Announcement of Millage Election, Chief Dockery.

Chief Dockery said, Mr. Floyd, do you want to read that into the record with your lovely voice.

Mr. Trascher said, okay.

Chief Dockery said, I believe you have a copy in front of you.

Mr. Lombard said, I am glad you gave him something to do.

Mr. Trascher said, Announcement of Public Meeting:

Notice is hereby given that at it's meeting to be held on Tuesday, October 13, 2020 at 7:00 pm., at it's regular meeting place, Station 111, 37546 Pine Street Extension, Pearl River, Louisiana, the Board of Commissioner's of Fire Protection District No. 11, of the Parish of St. Tammany State of Louisiana, plans to consider adopting a resolution ordering and calling an election to be held in Fire Protection District No. 11 of the Parish of St. Tammany to authorize the renewal of an ad valorem tax.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, it's not a new tax.

Mr. Trascher said, no sir, it's a renewal.

Mr. Lombard said, we should put that in there.

Chief Dockery said, I have a little bit of leg work to do starting tomorrow, getting this out to the

paper and all of the Council personnel and State Senate, also, the Legislative Auditor. The election is going to be for March 20, 2021.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, okay, is there anything else on the Millage Announcement?

Mr. Lindsey said, just make sure and emphasize that it;s not a new tax.

Chief Dockery said, we will pound the pavement. Actually, I want to talk and probably get in touch with the Fireman's Union and see about ordering some signs. I understand, I know the Department can not purchase the signs but, as a union with their own private funds, I want to ask them to see if they will agree to purchase some signs for us.

Mr. Trascher said, we had some renewal millage signs.

Chief Dockery said, we do have some. We haven't got in trouble yet with them but, from what I was told, you really are not supposed to have on there "Vote Yes". You can have on there "Vote" but not "Vote Yes". These signs were made and donated to us.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, the Fire District it's self probably can't do that but, the signs can be put up by friends of Fire District 11.

Mr. Lombard said, I will put one up right by my house.

Mr. Trascher said, there's a friend right there, Mr. Lombard. There's another friend of Fire District 11, Mr. Pete Finger.

Chief Dockery said, I want to get some more made that way we are not stepping on any toes.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, and something with a fresh face, a fresh look, you know, maybe.

Chief Dockery said, but, I am going to talk with them. I don't see any issue with it but, I will talk with them to see if they are up for it and we will move forward.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, if not, maybe we can get a couple of people to form a committee and to be the Friends of Fire District 11, to support the millage. They can solicit and put what ever they want but, the Department really shouldn't do it.

Mr. Lombard asked, what would the signs cost us to have made?

Chief Dockery said, I would have to look into it.

Mr. Trascher said, the little yard signs you mean?

Mr. Lombard said, yes.

Mr. Trascher said, the little yard signs are about \$5.00 a piece.

Mr. Lombard said, I have to see how much I am going to come ask you for.

Mr. Trascher said, yeah, the yard signs are sticks are .50 cents or a dollar, the metal things, so, it's around \$5.00 a piece.

Mr. Lombard said, so we have to ask everybody to put up \$10 for them.

Mr. Trascher said, you got the bags don't you. The trick or treat bags to shake!

Mrs. Blackwell said, alright, if that's it, we will go to Public Comment. Mr. Peter Finger is here and would like to make a Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Michele Blackwell

Mr. Finger said, yes, I would. I am not here as Civil Service, but as the public, alright.

Mrs. Blackwell said, alright.

Mr. Finger said, it ties together, as you know, that they pretty much overwhelmed our Board with applications since last time. Just make an inquiry about people who used to work here and no longer work here or work here part time and something new about retirement. I have been to the meetings where you all discussed retirement for the firemen and everything. I got into a discuss it with another group that collects the millage for the firemen and they tell me 2% of our millage's goes into a retirement fund and I asked them, for the firemen? And that was the end of the conversation. So, I have been trying to get to the bottom of it. Are we paying somebody else's retirement? We are losing good men and we are not matching their retirement very well?

Chief Dockery asked, do you want the official answer? Roughly 3% of the revenue collected by Fire District 11 goes into a Sheriff's Office Pension. Also, some of it goes into the teacher's retirement and there might be another one, some type of retirement, that some part of the money goes into. So, right off the top, at least 3% gets cut from our budget, or the monies that we collect, goes into another retirement. This is a, I want to say, it's a State Statute that was started long ago and so, yes.

Mr. Finger said, okay, but now we know what the (inaudible) but, as a concerned citizen, I firmly believe that burning houses, rescuing people, you know, everything that firemen do and that seems to be one thing that is stopping your call is, what we give or add to their benefit package.

Mr. Lombard asked, can we change the State laws?

Mr. Finger said, so, is this something that you all can think about? Also, what an employer is willing to do for them. (inaudible) And also what about millage's and taxes, trying to get an audience to collect the millage's and that's what they are there for but, anyway, that's the thing

I would like to see around here. Our people are doing everything they can for our community but, we are paying retirement for, I am sure it goes out of our community. Just food for thought. I am just wondering.

Mr. Lombard said, we have discussed this before.

Mr. Finger said, this is one of the issues.

Mr. Lombard said, it would be different if the money that was collected in this area, Fire District 11, went to Fire District 11, instead of going to the police and the teachers. They got great programs for retirement, the teachers. You ever see some of the retirement programs? Even the police have a good retirement program.

Mr. Trascher said, well, if I may, there is something that we are working on. I am going to say we are working on it now because, financial constraints is what holds us back from doing anything right now. This department has come a long way in benefit packages and retirement. At one time, they didn't do anything and we hopefully, as we get our equipment and our budget back in line, are going to be able to move forward on a program to increase the deferred comp. Contributions by this department to our employees. That would be in addition to Social Security. The advantage to that for them would be, they are paying Social Security so, when they do come for retirement, they will be able to draw their full Social Security as well as the deferred comp pension. We can't afford to move this department into the Firefighters Retirement. That is probably about 38-40% of the salary budget and quite frankly, we would have to cut our staff, which is going to severely curtail services to the public. It is something that we are working on and we had some major budget deficits that we had to deal with and hopefully we are getting on track with that and you see us at every meeting we review the budget, we scrutinize it. We've discussed this and we even had someone come in from the company come in and make a presentation to the Board. So, as soon as we, the Chief is able, to bring the budget in line where we can identify funds that we can do this with. We don't want to start something and then have it go off next year, next month or something like that, that we can set aside each year, as a rolling fund that can help with the retirement. We will never be able to compete with Departments like New Orleans, even like District 1, for benefits and retirement and things like that. We just don't have the funds that are available.

Mr. Finger said, I understand.

Mr. Trascher asked, did that help out?

Mr. Finger said, the feedback I have been getting is been benefits packages.

Mr. Lombard asked, did Fire District 1 get any of the money we put in?

Mr. Trascher said, I don't know, I can't answer that. Just like I can't say who gets the money that we contribute. Basically, what happens is, the State set this up. The Sheriff is the tax collector for the Parish. The Sheriff collects all of our funds and they skim the pot and the State Legislature set that up.

Mr. Lindsey said, why can't we find out what we are putting in. At least, find out how much is coming off.

Mr. Trascher said, 3%.

Chief Dockery said, I can show you that.

Mr. Trascher said, he can show you that.

Mr. Lombard asked, where does it go, do you know?

Chief Dockery said, it goes into the retirement system.

Mr. Trascher said, basically, no he doesn't.

Mr. Lombard asked, what?

Chief Dockery said, the Sheriff's Department. It goes to their retirement system, I want to say it goes for the school, the teacher's retirement and maybe the State Police but don't...

Mr. Lombard asked, can we get a number on that?

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Lombard said, get us a number on that. That way when we talk to people, we can't put it our own people in it, but this is where it's going.

Mr. Trascher said, that is something that the State Legislator set up with it's infinite wisdom set up for the Sheriff's Office for part of their pay for collecting for these departments.

Chief Dockery said, yes. So, in a nut shell, how we figure out our budget for the next year is, we get a grand recap of what they project that we get and this is off our millage. We adjust our millage up but we are still projected to bring in \$140,000, more than we did last year. With that being said, you have to take into consideration they take 3% for the pension plan, and you have to take another 3 to 4% off of that for nonpayments. So, when we do our budget, we take that number and we subtract 67% off of it.

Mr. Lombard said, I just need a comprehensive report on how much we put into it and what fund does it go into and who benefits from that fund and to what amount they benefit. I want to ask somebody. I mean, laws are made but laws can be changed too. I mean, we let people know where your money is going. Well, this is where it is going and our men are not benefiting from it. We want to be put in the benefits system. Even if they give it to us and we put it in the deferred comp plan. I don't care.

Mr. Trascher said, my understanding is that, it is set up and that is part of the compensation for the Sheriff's office for collecting our taxes.

Mr. Lombard said, that's bullshit.

Mr. Trascher said, that is what they are going to tell you.

Mr. Lombard said, and I am going to tell the same thing I just told you.

Mr. Trascher said, the Sheriff has one of the strongest lobby's in the Legislature.

Mr. Lombard said, well, I know the teachers are strong too. The only one that isn't strong is Fire District 11.

Mr. Trascher said, I think they just throw the teachers a bone.

Chief Dockery said, all the Fire Districts get hit the same.

Mr. Trascher said, it's not just us. Fire District 1 pays it.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, I know but, why couldn't we all benefit from it too. I mean, we are paying it, you can shrug your shoulders but, right is right.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, all I am saying is, what they are telling you is that the Sheriff has to get paid for handling your taxes. You have to pay the Sheriff to collect your taxes and that's part of his pay.

Mr. Lombard said, he doesn't have to do anything because I bring him a check every year. They don't have to come to my house and knock on my door and say "where's your money". I bring it to them, they got it. It's a good check.

Chief Dockery said, that's your property taxes but, he collects the taxes for this District too.

Mr. Lombard said, I understand, but we are paying too. He doesn't have to come here and beg for it. I understand he collects it. That's what everybody says, but everybody brings it to him and he figures out where it's going to but, some of it's going to the Sheriff's Department, the State Police, the teachers.

Mr. Trascher said, it is more complicated because he has to disburse all the millage's to all the different departments.

Mr. Lombard said, listen, he knew that when he took the job.

Mr. Lindsey said, that would seem like it would be built into his millage. This is your tax money because this is your responsibility.

Mr. Trascher said, they got a good lobbyist in the Legislature.

Mr. Lombard said, nobody has really pushed the issue is what happened for all these years they got along with it.

Mr. Lindsey said, the only problem, the tax payer...

Mr. Lombard said, do you think anybody has pushed the issue?

Mr. Trascher asked, what's that, with the taxes?

Mr. Lombard said, yes.

Mr. Trascher said, I think that they tried, yes.

Mr. Lombard asked, who?

Mr. Trascher said, different departments, different areas but the fire, you are going up against a very powerful lobbyist.

Mr. Lombard said, I went up against odds all my life. I won some of them.

Mr. Trascher said, well, they tried this one and nobody wanted to pay it.

Mr. Lombard said, now, once we get the report from Chief, we can form a committee to go find out about it. Even if we go to Baton Rouge and raise hell with them.

Mr. Trascher said, that's where it is, it's in Baton Rouge.

Chief Dockery said, so, I hope we addressed or answered your question or your concern on it. I would love to have our personnel. Lombard into the Fireman's Retirement System but, unfortunately, right now we cannot.

Mr. Lombard said, why don't we add some of ours and take away from the rest of the for the Fireman dollars.

Chief Dockery said, the best I can do is to help bump up their deferred comp. That way it's basically controllable from year to year. If we have a financial bind, we can adjust it. But to make it comparable to what the department would contribute into the Fireman's Retirement System, if we can help and put that into their deferred comp.

Mr. Lombard asked, do any of the other Fire Departments benefit from the money they collect?

Chief Dockery said, no, I mean, they take the money from every fire department for their pension.

Mr. Lombard said, in the State?

Chief Dockery said, in the District or in St. Tammany for sure. I don't know State wide. That I do not know. I would have to do some research on that.

Mr. Lombard said, can you find that out?

Chief Dockery said, yes.

Mr. Lombard said, good.

Mr. Finger said, you loose good people, not saying you don't have good people but, I am just saying I would like to...

Chief Dockery said, I totally agree with you. We lose so many young people that come in and unfortunately, when they are young and nobody wants them, they come here and get some experience and all of a sudden, another department will come in and scoop them up because they already have a trained person. They don't have to train them and all of that. Unfortunately, we are a revolving door right now and we have been for years. That is what we are trying to mitigate with, with this, yeah, it's not as perfect as the State Retirement System but, truthfully, the State Retirement System is in a bind right now because they haven't brought in what they were suppose to bring in in the past 5 to 10 years. They are actually at works right now. They are under a microscope with some companies looking at them, auditing them to help them out and get them out of this hole. So, it's not a great system per say as, this year, I want to say they had an increase, next year they will have an increase. The following year they will have an increase and years on end they will have the mandatory increases and the only tax or have the employee cover so much of it so, the employer has to take a big chunk out of that. Right now, it would be 150,000. We checked on it 5 or 6 years ago when me and Chief Leos went to Baton Rouge and talked to them and it was roughly \$110,000, for the departments contribution. Now, it's probably around \$160,000, for our contribution. The year after it could be \$200,000, and once you get into that system you don't get out. You flip the bill and what happens when it gets to half a million for this? So, what we are looking at for the deferred comp is, the limit is \$19,000 and some change, per year. That's the employee and the employer contribution together. If we could look at something of the employer's, say the employer's contribution to the State Retirement System was \$10,000, and we had it in the budget where we would give the employee \$10,000, to put in their deferred comp that year year, great. We are basically matching what the State Retirement would match. But, the following year we were in a bind and we could only do \$5,000, still \$5,000 is better than zero. It's something we can control it every year and that's what we are working on right now. To get something comparable to State retirement. It's not perfect but, it's something for this small district that will help try to hold on to some young blood. So it is in the works.

Mr. Trascher said, let me say this too, because I know this for a fact. All the State retirement systems right now are having financial difficulties. I know the Parish, Parochial, the one that

they participate in is really having a lot of difficulties because their investments, the interest rates and everything are really down and a lot of the State retirements were Golden parachutes, if you might call it, because you worked 30 years or 33 years and you retire with 100% of your salary. You can retire in 30 years at any age. All of that has changed. They changed the retirement systems. I think with the Parish, now you have to work to age 70 before you are eligible to retire. So, they are all having difficulties and the only way these retirement systems can continue to function is from higher contributions from the employees that are working and the agency's that they are working for. Somewhere, they are going to have to get a handle on it because they are not (inaudible).

Mr. Lombard said, yeah, they don't benefit from it though.

Mr. Trascher asked, what's that?

Mr. Lombard said, whoever...

Mr. Trascher said, they are talking about cutting some of the retirements because they can't afford to pay the benefits.

Mr. Lombard said, all that time, make a monkey eat black pepper too. I mean, what ever happens, happens.

Mr. Trascher said, so everybody is paddling that same boat right now.

Mr. Lombard said, they didn't ask us to give more than our share than we are giving now.

Mr. Trascher said, on what, do you mean for the department?

Mr. Lombard said, yes. To go to the 3% we are sharing now that they all benefit from.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, somebody, I don't know who all benefits from that.

Mr. Lombard said, well, Jack is going to find out for us.

Mr. Trascher said, I know the Sheriff is with their retirement system. It is what it is there. Social Security is in the same boat right now. They are paying out benefits and I know when I was a young chap, Social Security was paid in full by maybe what, May, March.

Mr. Lombard said, well, you paid it yourself.

Mr. Trascher said, you paid and your employer contributed and you had a cap on it.

Mr. Lombard said, you didn't have all these other programs on it.

Mr. Trascher said, I don't think you have a cap on it now. You have to make \$300,000, before you get payment.

Mr. Lombard said, well, you know now all your social programs, your food stamps and WIC and Mother's Against Drunk Drivers, all that comes out of it.

Mr. Trascher said, anyway, I am sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt with that.

Mr. Lombard said, thanks for bringing it to our attention. We will work on that.

Mr. Finger said, like I said, it is ya'll's assets that are being spent to train young people and they aren't being retained. That's all I had to say.

Mr. Lombard said, if we train somebody, can we demand that we get a certain amount of service?

Mr. Trascher said, that's slavery.

Mr. Lombard said, we don't know yet, maybe it can be done.

Chief Dockery said, I would have to look. We would have to do some type of contract to where, if we spent X amount of dollars to train them, that we would at least get X amount of time for service. I would have to look into the legality of it. But, of course, it definitely something we would have to look at.

Mr. Lombard said, that's the first thing we can look at. Part A is the first one and part B is to see if we can do something with the longevity of this Department.

Mr. Lindsey said, you can put in there a "No Compete" within, you know, for 3 years or 5 years, or whatever. Where, if they decide to quit, they still...

Mr. Trascher said, they have to wait for the training.

Mr. Lombard asked, a what?

Mr. Lindsey said, a No Compete where at least they can't go to another fire district and do the same type of work for a certain time.

Mr. Trascher said, I think the only thing you can do is you can offer the training for nothing and they would give you, like the Chief is saying, say 3 years of service for the cost of the training and if they left before then they would have to reimburse you.

Mr. Lombard said, well, look, if you went to LSU and got training it would cost you a lot more than what we are charging here.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, and if they left ahead of time they would have to pay you for the training.

Chief Dockery said, yes, LSU, to go through the whole Fire 1, Fire 2, Pump Ops, is roughly \$10,000.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, at least \$10,000, but they can get that training here if they stay long enough. Maybe we would have to put a scale to do it on. If you don't want to pay and sign the contract, well, we don't have to train you. Go to LSU and pay the \$10,000, or come here. It seems a little harsh but you have to draw the line in the sand someplace. You can't keep bleeding and not try and stop the bleeding. I mean, I know we charge but, the little bit we charge and what they get out of it, it isn't much.

Chief Dockery said, I mean, we charge them, that's one thing. But, whenever they work here they don't get charged. They get the training for free. So, that's where the issue comes in, is they come start working here and get the training and once they get the training and some experience under their belt...

Mr. Trascher said, they go get another job.

Chief Dockery said, other departments...

Mr. Lombard said, what would happen is you tell them before you come work here, you have to have training.

Mr. Trascher said, you wouldn't have any firemen.

Mr. Lombard said, you don't know. That's the easiest option.

Mr. Trascher said, you can't pay it, they have to train and find other employment.

Mr. Lombard said, that's an easy out. You can say if you want to come work here you will have to guarantee us a certain number of years for the training we give you.

Chief Dockery said, I can tell you that the three guys that were just hired on, all three of them paid for their Fire One class whenever we taught it here. They weren't even volunteers yet. They paid for their class and now they work here full time.

Mr. Lombard said, that's a start then. We are not going to train you and you get a knotch on you and work here for a week and then go to another department.

Chief Dockery said, so, that's something we can look into. There of course, we have to look into the legality of it.

Mr. Lombard said, I hate to give you a lot of work to do. I didn't say your not busy but, you know. Let us know if we can do something, you know where we want to go.

Chief Dockery said, there of course, it's an ongoing subject. We like to retain people and of course we would like to retain people. I have lost a lot of good young blood that had years of training.

Mr. Lombard said, sure, that's the training you put into them.

Chief Dockery said, this has been a problem for years, unfortunately. Like we said, we cannot commit to that one retirement system and if we cannot get out of it and you have no choice. Even the bigger districts, District 1, they had issues with it. Every Tuesday we have a meeting with all the Chief's. This gets brought up every week of having committees for the Fire Retirement System. They had a company come in and actually did an audit on them to find out where they are at and what they can do to help boost their system. Right now, I think they are taking in 5%, when I think they should be taking in 7%. 7% was the bare minimum and they are taking in 5%, so they have been bleeding for years and years. So, it is in shambles and basically, they are pushing the cost off to the departments to cover this and basically, to the new employees that come in. I want to say, they are pushing it to where, there's further retirement dates.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, the 20 years is out.

Chief Dockery said, they have to go further into their career before they can retire. I mean, truthfully, that's what keep sit afloat. It's the young guys that go in are paying for the older ones that are getting out. That's how it has always worked but, with the investments they made with the, the bad investments they have made over the years, it's coming to catch them now. Like I said, that cost is being pushed to the employer, not the employee. The employee is set at 10%. That's the max and that's how much the employee has to pay. The employer covers the rest. It went from 25 and I think, to 29 and it's still looking to go to 32. So, that amount each year is creeping up higher. Like I said before, what will you do when it gets to half a million.

Mr. Trascher said, when you look at your payroll and you take 30% for retirement, it's got to come off of hospitalization or it's got to come off somewhere.

Chief Dockery said, and that's where Slidell, I mean, where we benefit, we have a very, very rich health care plan. Basically, the employee's are covered 100%. I mean, there's still co-pays but, there's a lot of things they can do with their insurance that other, for instance, District 1, they basically are their own healthcare brokers. You can pick your plan like, for a young guy that never gets sick you can get something that is the bare minimum liability insurance for medical insurance or if you have a family, you get something a little bit richer but, there again, the employee is paying that amount. Eventually, it may fall down to that with this department. It's getting to the point to where the employee has to start paying a little bit into there. It hasn't yet, we have been able to keep it afloat. I would like to keep it afloat as long as we can but if it ever comes to that, that's a bridge we will cross.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, the cost of the premium.

Chief Dockery said, there again, money has to come from somewhere. They only give you X amount per year.

Mr. Lombard said, listen, if they only getting 3% from us and we have a million and a half budget, roughly, we can do a lot with that 3% coming in. Give it to the men in their system.

Mr. Lindsey said, Chief, about how many residents do we have in this Fire District? That would include like, every resident, like trailers. What I am getting at is, what if at some point we went to a parcel fee to help, you know like Slidell does a \$39 fee for everybody. No matter if you live in a trailer or tent or what ever. It's a \$39 fee for everybody so, it's not just strictly on the home owners that have the nice homes, everybody pays a little bit and if we can get a little bit from everybody and put the money towards... I am not for increasing peoples property tax. People pay enough.

Chief Dockery said, well, I can tell you how many people are paying. I don't have a number of people not paying.

Mr. Lindsey said, but there's a lot of people not paying.

Chief Dockery said, there's a lot that are exempt too.

Mr. Lombard said, yes, anybody under \$75,000, are not paying.

Mr. Lindsey said, you got a lot that is exempt.

Chief Dockery said, every mobile home park that we have is exempt.

Mr. Lombard said, why can't we try to do something, and another way of thinking, that it doesn't put it on every home owner, put it on the ones that are tax exempt.

Mr. Trascher said, we'd have a hard time trying to pass a parcel fee in this political climate.

Mr. Lombard said, not if you get everybody to vote on it. Even the homeowners that don't have to pay it, would vote on it though.

Mr. Trascher said, you would have to get it through the Parish Council first and that is going to be a major hurdle.

Chief Dockery said, and every department that has tried lately, has been struck down by the Parish Council. I know District 3 has tried.

Mr. Lindsey said, I know right at this moment, anything now a days is going to be. I am just kind of thinking, maybe in the future.

Mr. Trascher said, maybe when we solidify this part, this millage, because if we lose this millage it's going to be a third of our income. We need to get that passed and then we can build a budget I think and see what is available and then we can move forward from there. And then, certainly, a parcel fee is a fairer way to tax because there's no body that doesn't pay anything.

Mr. Lindsey said, yes, in Slidell they do a \$39 fee and then even in the Ponderosa, we cover this part of the Ponderosa and they cover this part. So, this guy on this side of the street pays \$39 and the neighbor across the street pays \$0. So, the street that divides it, Slidell gets their \$39 for covering their side of the street and we are getting \$0 for covering our side of the street.

Mr. Trascher said, it is a fairer tax.

Mr. Lindsey said, so, how many people, what was the number for the paying amount?

Chief Dockery said, 2,983.

Mr. Lindsey said, so about 3,000.

Chief Dockery said, about 3,000 tax payers that pay.

Mr. Lombard said, it's not 5,000.

Mr. Trascher said, at least that many, at least 3,000.

Chief Dockery said, so, basically, what I will have to get with Mr. Dugas and get the tax roll for this District and that's every tax.

Mr. Trascher said, you see, one of the things they ran into in Slidell, when they started that parcel fee, is you got a lot of lots that are 25ft wide and each one of those lots are a parcel. So, if you have a 75 x 120 ft. lot, you've actually got 3 parcels of property.

Chief Dockery said, I have seen it done with meters, electrical meters to where, if you have an electric meter, it's a parcel.

Mr. Trascher said, considered that would be a parcel, right.

Chief Dockery said, so that would be any type of big land, which they consider that farm land.

Mr. Trascher said, right, if you have 7 acres and you have one meter, that's one parcel. If you have a 25ft lot with a tent, that's another meter, that's another parcel.

Mr. Lindsey said, I totally agree with that, it would be per meter or per resident or per home.

Chief Dockery said, right now, a parcel tax right now in this atmosphere, would be political

suicide.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, because we have to beg to get our millage.

Chief Dockery said, but, the Chief's association has been talking about just for a while now, have come up with a power point to give to the Parish Council to show them where the millage goes and how and what we do as departments in conjunction with training and trying to combined...

Mr. Lombard asked, you will have a copy of that so you can show it to us?

Chief Dockery said, I will ask them for a copy for you.

Mr. Lindsey said, I wouldn't even propose doing anything before the next millage.

Chief Dockery said, no.

Mr. Lombard said, just have the information at the next meeting and just look at it.

Mr. Lindsey said, I was just thinking that, if everybody paid a little it may help get us to where we need to be.

Mr. Trascher said, well, they told us that Mandeville and was it Lacombe?

Chief Dockery said, yes Lacombe.

Mr. Lindsey said, because right now everybody is being taxed to death. My property tax went up like \$1,100.

Mr. Trascher said, this is a reappraisal year.

Chief Dockery said, yes, reassessment year and the biggest thing...

Mr. Finger said, mine went up 400% and last time it went up it doubled so, that means 800% since Katrina.

Mr. Lindsey said, yes, I think we pay too much property tax in this Parish.

Mr. Lombard said, well every time they need something they just add the property tax to it, you know, and people vote for it. The school needs money...

Mr. Lindsey said, that's why I like a parcel fee.

Chief Dockery said, and the biggest argument from the fire departments to the Parish Council was, how or who gives you the right to dictate what is in our district. Let the voters decide if this is acceptable or not because they are the ultimate (inaudible).

Mr. Trascher said, the biggest argument is, he is paying \$1,100, more than what you were paying last year for fire protection services and somebody with, maybe a mobile home on an acre of land that is less than \$75,000, is getting the very same fire services and paying nothing.

Mr. Lindsey said, that's what I am saying, I mean...

Chief Dockery said, our friend down the road, I am not going to name his name but, our friend down the road pays \$3.50 to the Parish.

Mr. Trascher said, that's the biggest argument, the fire districts are compelled to provide fire services virtually for nothing on properties that are \$75,000, or less, or senior frozen exemptions, you know you have a lot of those that come in.

Mr. Lombard said, you can't put that one on there.

Mr. Trascher said, I knew that one would hit home.

Mr. Lombard said, I don't mind paying more. I would be glad to pay more if it helped other people.

Mr. Trascher said, I know.

Mr. Lombard said, but I don't want you to take it and give it to the Sheriff's Departments some other company.

Chief Dockery said, but, there's a lot of talking among the Fire Chief's on trying to correct some of these issues. Look at, I forget what they call themselves now, the land improvement, I can't think of the name of it now.

Mr. Trascher said, your not old enough to have senior moments, Chief.

Chief Dockery said, you know what I am talking about...

Mr. Lindsey said, the impact fee?

Chief Dockery said, not the impact fee, you know, Rooms To Go has that tax exemption.

Mr. Trascher said, the split, yes the tax split.

Mr. Lombard said, Economic Development.

Mr. Trascher said, yes, Economic Development.

Mr. Lombard said, I knew you were going there.

Mr. Trascher said, we needed a senior moment there.

Chief Dockery said, you know, we get \$50,000, from Rooms to Go. We get \$50,000 from AWG. That's \$100,000, a year.

Mr. Trascher said, that's a lot of money the first year.

Chief Dockery said, for the first year, yeah.

Mr. Trascher said, the second year it's a little less and if you give 2% raises, which is mandated by Civil Service, and your fuel cost goes up and everything else goes up, by the 10th year, you are losing money providing fire protection to those places.

Chief Dockery said, and if you would let me, just just look at what they should be paying you.

Mr. Trascher said, what they would be paying you had the exemption be phased out earlier or maybe taken in consideration the percentages that, just 10% per year or something.

Chief Dockery said, just to omit the fire and police out of that tax to begin with.

Mr. Trascher said, and that's a deal that is made with none of the departments involved. They just come to you and say guess what guys, your getting a new building and this is what you get.

Chief Dockery said, yep. So, there is a lot of little areas that, we as a Chief's Association, are looking at, not to buck the system but, to inform everyone, to educate.

Mr. Trascher said, improve the operations.

Chief Dockery said, improve the operations.

Mr. Lombard said, well, they should be equitable. Listen, you go to Baton Rouge and they didn't miss a pay raise. I don't even know if they pay taxes on property tax. Nobody has ever checked that. I guarantee you that most of them are Senior Freeze or less.

Mr. Trascher asked, who?

Mr. Lombard said, the Representatives, the Senators, the Governor, the Assistant Governor, Lieutenant Governor, any of them. All the parts of the administration, do you think they pay the same tax you and I pay? I don't think so

Mr. Trascher said, well, anybody that is elected, you can go on line and look at what they filed every year on their reports.

Mr. Lombard said, well, what they file and what they own are two different things. You and I both know how the system works.

Mr. Trascher said, I can tell you what they file.

Chief Dockery said, Mr. Finger, you got the majority of our meeting

Mr. Lombard said, thank you for bringing it up. You know it did not fall on deaf ears.

Mr. Finger said, I think it's good to have a meeting that would actually have a good discussion going

Mrs. Blackwell said, I think it's just time to adjourn. Anybody got a motion?

Mr. Trascher said, excuse me Madam Chair, do you want to call for public comments? It was on the agenda.

Mrs. Blackwell said, I did call for public comment.

Mr. Trascher said, I didn't hear it.

Mrs. Blackwell said, that's how we got into the discussion.

Mr. Finger said, that's how I did.

Mr. Trascher said, okay, thank you and excuse me.

Mr. Lombard said, your doing your job, don't let him bully you.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, motion?

Mr. Trascher said, motion to adjourn.

Mr. Lombard and Mr. Lindsey said, second.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Lombard, how do you vote?

Mr. Lombard said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Lindsey, how do you vote?

Mr. Lindsey said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Tassin, how do you vote?

Mr. Tassin said, yes.

Mrs. Blackwell asked, Mr. Trascher, how do you vote?

Mr. Trascher said, yes.