

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Harris County Emergency Services District No. 7**

The Board of Commissioners of **HARRIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 7** held a meeting on **October 17, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.** at the following location in the District, **Spring Fire Department Administration Building, 656 East Louetta Road, Spring, Texas 77373.**

<b>Melanie Gander</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>(Present)</b>
<b>Gayle Fuller</b>	<b>Vice-President</b>	<b>(Absent)</b>
<b>Keith Willingham</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>(Present)</b>
<b>David Mills</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>(Present)</b>
<b>Bob Schmanski</b>	<b>Assistant Treasurer</b>	<b>(Present)</b>

**Also in attendance:**

Scott Seifert, Fire Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Landon Churchill, Deputy Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Michelle Jahr, Finance Director, Spring Fire Department  
Scott Schoonover, Deputy Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Jerod Davenport, Deputy Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Kevin Wiseman, District Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Donald May, Facilities Manager, Spring Fire Department  
Shannon Taylor, Administrative Specialist, Spring Fire Department  
James Singleton, IT Director, Spring Fire Department  
John Peeler, Coveler & Peeler, District Legal Counsel  
Jessica Adkins, Coveler & Peeler

**1. Call meeting to order.**

Commissioner Melanie Gander called the meeting to **ORDER** at 6:30 p.m.

**2. To receive public comment.**

No public comment was made.

**3. To meet in Closed Session under Government Code §551.071 to consult with legal counsel regarding pending or contemplated litigation, settlement offers or on matters which require confidentiality under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas and Tax Code §323.3022 to discuss sales tax matters.**

No closed session was held under Item 3 of the agenda.

- 4. To meet in Closed Session under Government Code §551.072 to deliberate on real estate matters.**

No closed session was held under Item 4 of the agenda.

- 5. To meet in Closed Session under Government Code §551.074 to discuss personnel matters.**

No closed session was held under Item 5 of the agenda.

- 6. To recognize a vacancy on the Board of Commissioners due to the passing of Commissioner Gayle Fuller and discuss procedures to fill the vacancy under Health and Safety Code §775.0445.**

The Board had discussions on procedures for filling the vacancy. District Counsel stated that the Board has 90 days to fill the vacancy. The Board noted that there were already interested candidates, and Commissioner Gander asked to bring them in for a meeting. The Board discussed procedures on interviews and selecting an appointee. There will be a special meeting on October 29, 2024, at 6:30 pm to meet with the candidates.

- 7. To review and take any action regarding construction, improvements, repairs, renovations maintenance of/to real property, and improvements, buildings, facilities and stations, including change orders, permits, engaging architects(s) or engineers(s), and contractors.**

Chief Seifert and Donald May presented the updates on current construction projects:

Training Field

The remaining half of the slab was poured at the Training Center. The retention pond has been finished, and the hydro mulch is complete.

Station 72

The framing is taking place at Station 72 as well as roof decking. The structural steel has been inspected and passed.

There is an application for water service to Station 72 from Northampton MUD for \$70,000. The Board stated concern regarding the requirement to pay a new tap fee when there was already previous service there. Donald May noted that new vaults must get 2 services when it used to be just 1 service connection. Commissioner Gander made a motion, Commissioner Schmanski seconded, to approve the application and approve the related service fee. The vote passed 4-0. It was also noted that the Station 72 construction project did not have an item budgeted for the MUD tap fee.

Station 77

The dirt is in place and compacted at Station 77, and electrical and plumbing has started. Concrete to start soon. The piers will be bridged in the living quarters. There was extensive discussion of Station 77 construction defects and the work being done now to correct the defects.

Chief Churchill presented information regarding an offered donation of Safe Haven Baby Boxes for installation at 3 fire stations, and the District would pay \$500/box annually for maintenance fees. District Counsel stated that there seems to be no downside to this project. The boxes would be at

Station 71, Station 74, and Station 75. Commissioner Gander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Willingham, to approve the project and move to the next steps. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

- 8. To review and act on agreement(s) with Harris County Municipal Utility District (“MUD 249”) regarding possible annexation of Harris County Emergency Services District No. 7 (“ESD 7”) training facility property into MUD 249 and provision of utility services to ESD 7 facilities by MUD 249.**

Chief Seifert reminded the Board that revisions to water estimates are being developed to call for the provision of less needed water capacity than originally estimated. The District is waiting for more information, and the District’s and MUD’s engineers are working together on the issue. It was noted that it could cost \$6.7 million for our own well. The Board dismissed that option and proceeded to discuss the next steps with MUD 249. Chief Seifert reported that there is a \$50,000 pending to MUD 249 so that the MUD will continue with the steps to provide water to the Training Field, including the MUD’s legal and engineering fees. Chief Seifert also noted that the MUD team has stated that MUD 249 does not want to approve supplying water to Training Field Phase I if they couldn’t also provide water capacity for Phase II. Commissioner Schmanski made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Willingham, to approve the \$50,000 fee pending CCN release which is still ongoing in Austin. The motion was approved 4-0.

- 9. To review and act on financial matters including, financial report, investments, depository institutions, depository security agreements, audits, Investment Policy, District bills, access to investment accounts and designation of bookkeeping and accounting duties and services.**

Finance Director Michelle Jahr presented the monthly update information: The District is becoming more consistent month to month. The funds coming in are up, and the expenditures are down. It was noted that restricted funds are funds that can only be used for a specific purpose.

Director Jahr also presented a proposal to change auditors for the next 3 years. After reviewing proposals from three CPA firms, she recommends Clifton, Larson, and Allen based on their governmental accounting experience. She stated they will also perform a thorough risk assessment. She noted that she received a quote for auditing for Spring Volunteer Fire Association, but we are not recommending that. Commissioner Schmanski expressed a concern that the new auditors must understand emergency services operations. Director Jahr explained that there would be no problems in this regard. Commissioner Willingham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve CLA for the 3-year audit. The motion was approved 4-0.

The Board and staff then discussed the use of credit cards and Amazon orders and how Director Jahr has reduced those purchases. There was also discussion on how the Fire Department approves operational expenditures with budgeted amounts and the Board review and approval of monthly expenditures. Commissioner Willingham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gander, to approve the financial reports as presented and pay the monthly bills. The motion was approved 3-0 with Commissioner Schmanski abstaining.

- 10. To review and act on administrative matters related to meeting documents, including approval of agreements and costs for software.**

Finance Director Michelle Jahr presented information on the draft consent agenda and staff's recommendation to change to this format. Commissioner Gander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the new consent agenda format for future meetings. The vote passed 4-0.

- 11. To review and take any action regarding real estate, including sale, purchase, lease, platting, utilities, encumbrances, maintenance and legal actions related to real estate.**

District Counsel presented the training center plat updates noting that everything seems to be moving forward. John Peeler and Greg Thrower will have information in November about the next steps to finalize the transfer of property from SVFA to the ESD.

- 12. To review and act on interlocal agreements with other emergency services districts regarding the use or lease of facilities and maintenance of the same.**

No action taken by the Board.

- 13. To review and act on matters related to financing, payment and acquisition of capital items, including equipment and vehicles, and action on acquisition/construction financing of same, including retiring or incurring financing for the construction of District facilities or acquisition of vehicles and equipment.**

Deputy Chief Churchill presented information on a fire safety trailer purchase through Sourcewell cooperative purchasing program for 2025 because they are asking for a down payment so that the trailer can be completed by the start of the school year. The entire purchase was previously approved. Commissioner Willingham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mills, to approve the down payment amount of \$37,443.07 for the trailer.

The Board and staff then discussed the SAFER grant that was submitted and approved. Even though there was some incorrect information, since the district self-reported and corrected it, they can keep the grant. The grant is \$2.9 million over 3 years for 9 firefighters.

There was discussion on the need for \$10 million in additional funding for the Training Field project. Chief Seifert recommended a loan solicitation through Government Capital as placement agent. The Board and staff generally discussed estimates for additional funding needs for multiple projects moving forward. Chief Seifert mentioned possible bond issuance. Commissioner Mills made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the solicitation of a \$10 million loan with Government Capital acting as placement agent with their fee to be negotiated if the Board selects a lender proposal proffered by Government Capital. The motion was approved 4-0.

The Board and staff then discussed the cost of the remainder of the Training Field project needs to be determined, as well as the funding for same. Commissioner Gander made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mills, to appoint Chief Seifert, Director Jahr, and District Counsel to a committee to present cost estimates to the Board and develop funding options for the project. The motion was approved 4-0.

**14. To review and act on sales tax matters.**

The sales tax report was presented by Michelle Jahr noting that sales tax was up 3% for the year.

**15. To review and act regarding insurance.**

No action taken by the Board.

**16. Fire Department report on activities, including current and long-range information exchange.**

The report was presented. Commissioner Schmanski made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Willingham, to approve the report as presented. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

**17. To review and act regarding the disposition of surplus and salvage property.**

No action taken by the Board.

**18. To review and act on matters related to communications, dispatching, or traffic preemption, including interlocal agreements, contracts or purchasing equipment.**

Deputy Chief Churchill updated the Board on the ESD 11 ILA on limited data service for accident tracking and community risk reduction. He also reported there were 3 significant house fires, and there has been an uptick in grass fires.

**19. To review and act to approve the Covered Application and Prohibited Technology Policy based upon the model policy developed by the Texas Department of Information Resources.**

District Counsel presented information on the policy. Commissioner Mills made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the policy as presented. The motion was approved 4-0.

**20. Receive ESD committee reports, including Legislative and Governmental Relations matters.**

Chief Seifert discussed efforts underway to coordinate with other area ESDs to prepare for the upcoming legislative session. Mr. Peeler also briefly mentioned the plans to coordinate with the same governmental relations attorneys who have worked with ESD 7 and Coveler & Peeler over the last several sessions. There was also discussion on the upcoming SAFE-D meeting and legislative updates.

**21. To review and act on personnel matters, including policies, scheduling, evaluations, benefits, compensation, hiring, retention and evaluation of District employees, including District Fire Chief, command staff, administrative staff, and suppression personnel.**

No action taken by the Board.

**22. To review and approve minutes of prior meetings.**

Commissioner Mills made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Gander, to approve the September 19, 2024, meeting minutes as presented. The motion was approved 3-0 with Commissioner Willingham abstaining.

- 23. To review and act to schedule the next regular monthly meeting date and discuss the addition of items to place on the next meeting agenda.**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 21, 2024.

There being no further business brought before the Board, or any further public comment. Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Gander. The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

  
District Secretary

  
Jessica Adkins, Coveler & Peeler P.C., Preparer