

**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 **December 19, 2024, at 6:30 PM** at the following location in the District, **Spring Fire Department Administration Building, 656 East Louetta Road, Spring, Texas 77373.**

|                  |                     |           |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Melanie Gander   | President           | (Present) |
| Vacant           | Vice-President      |           |
| Keith Willingham | Secretary           | (Present) |
| David Mills      | Treasurer           | (Present) |
| Bob Schmanski    | Assistant Treasurer | (Present) |

**Also in attendance:**

Scott Seifert, Fire Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Robert Logan, Assistant Fire Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Jeff King, Deputy Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Michelle Jahr, Finance Director, Spring Fire Department  
Steve Kiebzak, Human Resources Director, Spring Fire Department  
Scott Schoonover, Deputy Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Jimmy Stewart, District Chief, Spring Fire Department  
Hamilton Ledkins, Captain, Spring Fire Department  
Steve Schoonover, Quality Assurance Analyst, Spring Fire Department  
Donald May, Facilities Director, Spring Fire Department  
Jerod Davenport, Deputy Chief, Spring Fire Department  
James Singleton, IT Director, Spring Fire Department  
Tracee Evans, Public Information Officer, Spring Fire Department  
Shannon Taylor, Administrative Specialist, Spring Fire Department  
John Peeler, Coveler & Peeler, District Legal Counsel  
Jessica Adkins, Coveler & Peeler  
Landon Newton, Government Capital Corporation  
Shannon Stryk, VFIS of Texas  
Andrew Vincent, Martinez Architects, LP

**Item 1 – Call meeting to order.**

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

**Item 2 – To receive public comment.**

VFIS representative Shannon Stryk presented the Platinum Safety Award from Texas Mutual highlighting the Spring Fire Department’s work to lead in decreasing workers compensation claims.

**Item 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.

**Item 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.

**Item 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.

**Item 6c To review and act on matters related to acquisition, payment, and financing of capital items, including equipment, vehicles, real estate and construction projects, including retiring or incurring obligations and approving loan documents.**

Commissioner Gander requested that the Board address Item 6c regarding authorization and signature of loan documents so that Mr. Landon Newton from Government Capital could submit the executed documents as soon as possible. Mr. Newton presented a new addendum with a date revision of December 27, 2024 due to the Board not being able to approve the loan documents by the initially proposed closing date, but no other changes to the terms of the loan from JPMorgan Chase which was previously selected by the Board. It was noted that District Counsel had reviewed this new document, and it was acceptable. Commissioner Schmanski made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mills, to approve the proposal addendum as presented. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. There was a brief discussion on the Loan Issuance Payment to Government Capital as placement agent and how that fee was a negotiated term of the loan. A motion was made by Commissioner Schmanski, seconded by Commissioner Mills, to approve the Loan Issuance Payment of \$113,500. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. Commissioner Schmanski then made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Mills, to approve the resolution and loan documents to close the \$10,000,000 loan with JPMorgan Chase and authorize signature of the same by applicable Board officers. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried.

**Item 6 – Consent Agenda – the following items are considered routine by the Board and will be enacted by one motion. No separate discussion will occur on these items unless a commissioner so requests, in which event, the item will be removed and placed on the Non-Consent Agenda:**

- a. **Approve minutes of prior meeting**
  - i. **October 29, 2024**
  - ii. **November 21, 2024**
- b. **Fire Department Report on activities, including current and long-range information exchange, and action on requests for Department purchases.**
  - i. **Payment of District Bills**
  - ii. **Payroll Disbursements**
  - iii. **Budget to Actual reports on Maintenance and Operations, Capital Projects and Debt Service**
  - iv. **Bank and Investment Summary including details of cash and investments**
  - v. **Audits**

- c. **To review and act on matters related to acquisition, payment, and financing of capital items, including equipment, vehicles, real estate and construction projects, including retiring or incurring obligations and approving loan documents.**

This item was addressed separately, above.

- d. **Approval of agreements and software**
- e. **To review and act regarding insurance**
- f. **To review and act regarding the disposition of surplus and salvage property.**

A motion was made by Commissioner Gander, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve items 6a-f on the Consent agenda, except for Items Item 6.b which was moved to the Non-Consent agenda, and item 6.c. which was addressed separately. With a vote of 4 to 0, the motion carried.

#### **Item 7 – Non-Consent Agenda**

- a. **Items removed from the Consent Agenda.**

**Item 6.b was moved from the Consent Agenda to the Non-Consent Agenda for separate review and action.**

During review of item 6.b., Commissioner Mills noted his concerns about information on bills and finances not being presented to the Board with enough notice prior to the meeting. He also requested that the Construction update agenda item be presented separately from the Consent Agenda in order to allow enough time to review construction matters before approving construction related payments. There was general discussion on how bills are presented to the Board, and that there were no construction updates available prior to today's meeting. Director Jahr presented information to the Board regarding expenses and general financial matters. After discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Gander, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the payment of District Bills as presented. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. Commissioner Mills abstained from the vote.

- b. **To approve a Request for Proposals for Pre-Incident Planning.**

There was a brief discussion on what Pre-Incident Planning entailed. It was noted that companies come out to review and identify potential hazards with buildings. It was discussed that the request for proposal will be sent to three qualifying companies as well as be published in the local newspaper. It was also noted that it is expected for service to exceed \$50,000. A motion was made by Commissioner Gander, seconded by Commissioner Willingham, to authorize publication and mailing the Request for Proposals. With a vote of 4 to 0, the motion carried.

#### **Item 8 – To review and act on amendments to the District 2024 Budget (Operating and Capital Funds).**

Finance Director Jahr presented the Budget amendments for the Maintenance and Operation Fund. She noted that some of the reasons for the discrepancy is how the accounting was being done, especially on payroll as "gross" versus "cash" from the previous accounting reports. There are some changes to how State and Federal grants were previously booked. Also, there was an approximately \$900,000 increase over what was budgeted for employee health insurance. She also noted that revenue was higher than expected and that they would not be pulling from reserve funds in order to cover the unexpected expenses. A motion was made by Commissioner Schmanski, seconded by Commissioner Gander, to approve the Maintenance and Operation Budget amendment as presented

by staff. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. Commissioner Mills abstained from the vote. Finance Director Jahr then presented the budget amendments for the Capital Fund. She noted that there was a budget shortfall of about \$9 million for construction projects. A motion was made by Commissioner Gander, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the Capital Budget amendment as presented. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. Commissioner Mills abstained from the vote.

**Item 9-12 – To review and take action on the ratification of a continuing contract with a private law firm for the collection of delinquent District ad valorem property taxes and, providing for the payment of up to 20% of the delinquent taxes, penalties, and interest which are collected by the attorney. And to discuss and take action on the imposition of additional penalty on delinquent taxes pursuant to 33.07, 33.08 and 33.11 of the tax code and adoption of a resolution regarding the same.** District Counsel presented the information and a resolution to ratify the continuation of the delinquent tax collections with Linebarger and to impose the penalties under Tax Code sections 33.07, 33.08 and 33.11. A motion was made by Commissioner Willingham, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the resolution of the delinquent attorney and additional penalties as presented. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. Commissioner Mills abstained from the vote.

**Item 13 – To review and act to engage the firm Locke Lord for governmental relations services for the 2025 Legislative Session.**

District Counsel presented the information and noted that it would be \$55,000 for the District which would cover activities in 2024 and 2025 by Locke Lord on behalf of the group of districts engaging them for services for the upcoming session. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Mills, seconded by Commissioner Willingham, to approve the engagement with Locke Lord and funding of same. With a vote of 4 to 0, the motion carried.

**Item 14 – To review and act to appoint a governmental relations committee to prepare District concerns and priorities for the 2025 Legislative Session.**

Chief Seifert noted that he has been more active on the topics approaching the upcoming 2025 Legislative Session. After discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Schmanski, seconded by Commissioner Gander, to appoint Commissioner Schmanski, Commissioner Mills, and Chief Seifert as the governmental relations committee, with others to be added if necessary. With a vote of 4 to 0, the motion carried. Chief Seifert noted that District staff Tracee Evans and Assistant Chief Logan would consult on items with the Committee.

**Item 15 – Receive ESD committee reports, including Legislative and Governmental Relations matters.**

Chief Seifert discussed that among the biggest topics for the upcoming Legislative Session are Defunding the District's tax revenues, and protecting District boundaries/territorial integrity.

**Item 16 – To review and act on sales tax matters, including sales tax reports.**

The Board noted receipt of the monthly report on sales tax collections. There was no action taken on Item 16.

**Item 17 – To review and take any action regarding construction, improvements, repairs, renovations, maintenance of/to any District real property and improvements, buildings, facilities and stations, including change orders, permits, engaging architect(s) or engineer(s), and contractor(s).**

Andrew Vincent with Martinez Architects presented the construction updates noting the following: Station 72 – steel framing, roof trusses and deck, and site paving have all been completed. The exterior CMU and metal studs and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing rough in is currently being worked on. Station 77 – slab and subgrade have been removed and new subgrade has been installed and compacted. The driveways into Apparatus Bay have been installed. They are waiting for approval of RFI 5 CPR-Grade beam for unsupported columns, and waiting for response and approval of RFI 8 CPR-GC to provide pricing based on engineers' response and ESD Board approval. The Board reviewed foundation repair changes due to weather penetration issues. The repairs will add 2 more months to completion, so the new estimated date of completion is mid-August. The change orders are approximately \$81,000 for civil and \$17,720 for contractors, for a total of \$98,720. The Board agreed to use the contingency allowances already within the project.

Training Center – The site has ongoing structure steel placement, pavement placement around the Logistics building, installation of headwalls is ongoing, and they are finishing fly ash in pavement. In Building B, the steel columns and trusses are ongoing, construction is continuing with the east CMU wall, and work is commencing on the south CMU wall. They have started the CMU layout and installation for the Burn Buildings and Outdoor Classroom.

Chief Seifert also noted that he is working with SpawGlass to address potential cost increases to the Training Field project related to permit delays. He expects a Change Order to be presented to the Board at an upcoming meeting.

Regarding district facility maintenance, it was also noted by Facilities Director Donald May that there are some AC issues, but nothing major.

Chief Seifert also discussed the lawn care contract and proposed the Board take no action and just let the contract renew itself and go into effect as of January 2025. A motion was made by Commissioner Gander, seconded by Commissioner Schmanski, to approve the construction reports and pay applications as presented. With a vote of 3 to 0, the motion carried. Commissioner Mills abstained from the vote.

Chief Seifert also noted some items related to the Training Center project were being addressed, including the provision of water to the site and plans to remove the property from the NextEra CCN which could require approval of expenses prior to the next meeting. He asked the Board to renew the full \$50,000 aggregate to costs related to the Training Center project which fall under his discretion per prior resolution adoption in order to address the issues in a timely manner. Motion by Commissioner Schmanski, seconded by Commissioner Gander to renew the full \$50,000 aggregate authority to Chief Seifert as requested. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0, with Commissioner Mills abstaining.

**Item 18 – 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 the provision of utility services to ESD 7 facilities by MUD 249.**

Chief Seifert gave an update. Chief Logan and Chief King met with MUD 249 to discuss realistic water needs. They are moving forward with the temporary agreement but there could be significant changes from the original proposal. Chief Seifert noted that he expects new proposals from MUD 249 soon.

**Item 19 – To review and act on interlocal agreement with other Emergency Services District regarding the use or lease of facilities and maintenance of the same.**

There was no action taken on Item 19.

**Item 20 – To review and take any action regarding real estate, including sale, purchase, lease, platting, utilities, encumbrances, maintenance and legal actions related to real estate.**

Chief Seifert presented a platting update for the Training Center property with a review of plat history. The District will need to do the cul-de-sac, but it will be cheaper than the original estimate. The Chief also stated that they are asking permission to negotiate with NextEra on the payment for release of the CCN. The Board generally noted that the Nexterra issue falls within Chief Seifert's delegated authority on the Training Center project.

**Item 21 – To review and act on matters related to communications, dispatching, or traffic preemption, including interlocal agreements, contracts, or purchasing equipment.**

There was no action taken on Item 21.

**Item 22 – To review and act to fill the Board vacancy under Health and Safety Code 775.0445.**

The Board discussed the vacancy and the candidates they interviewed. The Board engaged in discussion regarding the timing for interviews and action on potential candidates to fill the vacancy. Commissioner Gander stressed the need for action on this issue to include all four current members of the Board due to the importance of the matter. A motion was made by Commissioner Gander, seconded by Commissioner Willingham, to interview more candidates for the Board vacancy. With a vote of 4 to 0, the motion carried.

**Item 23 – Fire Department report on activities, including current and long-range information exchange, and action on requests for Department purchases.**

Chief Seifert gave an update. There were discussions about the SAFE-D Conference, and the lawn maintenance contract. Chief Seifert also reported on recent media covering positive Fire Department community interactions.

**Item 24 – 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.**

There was no action taken on Item 24.

**Item 25 – To review and act to schedule the next meeting and discussion of items to place on the next meeting agenda.**

The Board unanimously agreed to move the next meeting from January 16, 2025 to January 23, 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

[Redacted signature]

District Secretary

[Redacted signature]

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