

Pleasant Hill Goshen Fire & Rescue
Pleasant Hill Rural Fire Protection District
Goshen Rural Fire Protection District

Joint Board Work Session

August 10, 2021

Call to Order

The Joint Board Work Session was called to order at 5:46 p.m. by Fire Authority Board President Willie Bronson.

Attendance:

Pleasant Hill Board Members: Vice President Todd Anderson, Secretary/Treasurer Rhett Green, Board Members Darrell Shoemaker and Kevin Flory. **Absent:** President Terry McDiarmid

Goshen Board Members: President Willie Bronson, Vice President Rose Reinertson, Secretary/Treasurer Cameron Saxon, and Board Members Tom McClellan and Steve Lovely.

Pleasant Hill Goshen Fire & Rescue Board Members: President Willie Bronson, Secretary/Treasurer Tom McClellan, and Board Member Darrell Shoemaker. **Absent:** Vice President Terry McDiarmid

Staff:

Fire Chief Andrew Smith, Division Chief Matt Barnhart, Administrative Assistant Bonnie Graham, Executive Assistant Haley Meshnik.

Chief Smith presented to the Board background information and stats on the two districts.

Four big topics in Strategic Plan that are still needing to be addressed.

- Consolidation of the organizations: Annexation verse Merger
- Fire Station in Pleasant Hill
- Short-term and long-term Capital needs
- Short-term and long-term staffing needs

Todd Anderson appreciated the history that Chief Smith provided to the Board.

**The Board reviewed the side-by-side comparison charts, tables, and brief history of previous Board discussions and decisions, provided by Chief Smith. These were attached as addendums and are available on file.*

Chief Smith explained the increase of in district call volumes. This month, a 48-hour shift had 16 calls. Our “normal” call volume is a little less than 100 per month, but in the last couple of months we have had a call volume of 120. An arson, brush fires, many car crashes, and medical calls. Things are

changing and Covid-19 is getting bad again. We are facing a call volume of 1,200 a year versus 15 years ago the call volume was only 300 a year. There is value in updating the Strategic Planning. The remaining big-ticket items left on the table are the same challenges we are facing today.

Chief explained the need for 2 fire engines, one for each district. But the power of merging reduces the number of apparatuses we are required to have. We bought a fire engine, paid it off quickly, and both districts were able to become debt free and still have money set aside. Chief Smith wanted the information he provided to help start discussions, fuel questions, and help get the four new Board Members up to speed on the history and current topics.

Chief Smith explained how Measure 50, in 1995, locked us into what our tax rates are today. The concern now is making sure we are forecasting future district needs as call volumes and staffing needs increase. To make sure we are laying successful foundations for both fire districts.

Kevin Flory says he has spoken with a number of property owners in Pleasant Hill, and they are concerned about their fixed income and the jump in the tax rate. Kevin was wondering if there could be a way to do this in 2 or 3 stages so people could adjust to this over a few years. Chief Smith explained that there are limited things we can do with the tax rates due to Measure 50. He explained that the Levy/Bond options are short term limited duration. Bonds and Levy's help fund fire station constructions and in addition, some communities need the Bond/Levy to keep a fire station from shutting down. The board is the one who establishes the tax rate. Annexation would be \$1.72 per thousand or lower across both districts. The other option would be to merge at \$1.38 per thousand, which would not generate very much additional funds. If we choose merger, annexation is off the table, because we would be merged. The only way to increase revenue after that would be from Bonds or a Levy.

Kevin Flory suggested that we earmark certain funds in the next three years to save for the station construction instead of having to take out a loan.

We are not gaining any additional money out of merger. With annexation it generates an additional \$23,000 per year. There is no truly perfect option. We will need to convince both Goshen and Pleasant Hill that they want to pay more and pay for a fire station. If we are annexed, have a Bond or Levy for the Station, and in 30 years pay it off with a completed station. That extra \$23,000 a year will be a huge boost in assisting with future needs.

Todd Anderson says a hurdle we have to get by is why would Goshen want to pay for a new fire station for Pleasant Hill. Todd felt there wasn't enough information provided about the annexation in the 2020 November election. Kevin Flory agreed that it is really important to educate the people about how

dollar for dollar it will help them and their children. He felt there was just too much going on last year with the Holiday Farm Fire/Covid-19 and it was really poor timing. We need to spell it out so that Pleasant Hill residents understand the big picture of what 20 years down the road will look like and in a way, so they have time to ask questions. They will be looking for what the value is per dollar, as a landowner, for their fire department protection.

Chief Smith clarified some confusion that neither district has volunteers reporting. Between the two communities there are 4-5 who report like the traditional volunteer model/respond from home. But that model is locally and nationally dying, and we have a 24-hour staffing model.

Todd Anderson asked what our bond rating will be, is there a bond rating, and what will it cost the district? Todd says that has a big impact of what it will cost. It might be favorable in this market right now. Chief Smith will look into this question for the next board meeting.

It's important that we have rescue available on both sides of the river if we ever have an earthquake and the bridge goes down.

Willie Bronson mentioned that we could continue with the IGA, but we would not get some of the cost savings that we could get working as one. Todd Anderson says that Pleasant Hill voters have a bad taste in their mouth from the last election. He thinks it will be a chore for us to educate and sway the voters to vote for it. Willie Bronson said if we can't convince them and we stay in an IGA, then he thinks it's only fair that down the road both districts pay equal amounts for the cost of service. Currently Pleasant Hill is paying 44% and Goshen is paying 66%.

Darrell Shoemaker commented that the Pleasant Hill residents had information in front of them, but he didn't get calls about it until the day before it was due. We can provide information, but people have to read it and ask questions. Ideas that were suggested: Reach out to the community with the information and then circle back to remind them in a timely manner, a couple times a year, that this is important and to please read it. Have a workshop, have a town hall community meeting called the "future of the Pleasant Hill Fire Station". Have two meetings, one soon and then one closer to the May 2022 election. Kevin thinks it is valuable to keep the topic in front of people to get them thinking and talking about it. We would promote it as a "Strategic Plan" and include the fire station within it. Covid-19 and the fires last year, prevented the planned town hall meetings from happening, before the November 2020 election.

Can we do this before the May election? Thoughts are that if we can have masked meetings, we could plan one in November and one in March. But the emphasis on spreading the information to the public to help get them in agreement that this is important for their future and their kids' future.

Chief Smith asked what they would like for the next work session? They would like bond ratings, how many taxpayers are in each district, and how much the funds transmit into per residents' use. Chief Smith will ask Lt. Riley Moore and the GIS interns to help get us some of those numbers. What is the concept of the Fire Station? 2,000 Square feet or 14,000 Square feet. That will help us understand why the bond didn't pass in the previous elections. Chief Smith will help get further data on that question. He mentioned that the previous bond request for a new station, proposing to move the station was what shot them in the foot. What does a station look like? What will it need? How many bays and sleeper stations are needed? Find out what our bond rating is/would be.

We will plan 5:30 p.m. work session before next the joint board meeting for further discussion. Dinner will be provided again. Dinner was provided generously by Pizza-Cue at Public House. Thank you Pizza-Cue, everyone thought the BBQ chicken was delicious.

Willie Bronson adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Haley Meshnik

Recording Secretary