

**Pinellas Assembly – Fire/EMS Task Force
Meeting minutes – December 11, 2003, 3 pm
Largo Training Center**

Present: Ed Hooper/ chair, Sally Foote, Tim Schuler , Sally Israel, Joe Calio, Jerry Knight, (Kathleen Litton absent)

Staff: Chuck Kearns (county representative), James Callahan (city representative), Cindy Goodson (scribe), (Gay Lancaster absent)

Others: Dwaine Booth, Mike Cooksey, Craig Hare (PC), Laurie Romig (OMD), Jim Lanier (AMR), Kevin Bowman (TS), James Angle (PH), Caroll Williams (LA), William Naylor (S. PA), Jay Stout (SH)

Mr. Hooper called the meeting to order. It was noted that the minutes of the December 9 meeting were not completed as yet for consideration. It was indicated this would most likely be the final meeting of the task force in order to meet the tentative deadline established for filing the task force's recommendations.

Handouts were provided at the beginning of the meeting:

- Revised Task Force Executive Summary Report dated December 9.
- Draft Task Force Implementation and Ramifications
- Letter from Chief Assistant County Administrator Gay Lancaster in response to discussions related to EMS transport on December 9.

The committee began reviewing the executive summary report that was essentially divided into four major categories of Savings, Service Improvement, Equitable Assignment of Costs and EMS Transport.

Findings and Facts: In the area of consolidation and/or regionalization, the committee added that it strongly supports voluntary regionalization efforts that would improve service and cost efficiencies. In the area of contracts for services as it relates to automatic aid, the committee added that the charges for such services should be appropriate rather than reflecting actual costs. This was in response to concerns that agencies could enter into contracts and be paid to provide fire protection services even though they would have to rely on automatic aid to provide the service.

In the area of Service Improvement, there was discussion about equipment compatibility. It was strongly felt that firefighting equipment should be interchangeable and compatible. It was noted that the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) among the various departments is not compatible. It was noted by the fire chiefs that there are methods and procedures in place to minimize these concerns through the use of RIG (rapid rescue intervention) bags that provide a complete set of SCBA in the event a firefighter rescue is necessary at an emergency scene. There was further discussion on whether cooperative purchasing should be mandated or not. It was generally agreed that it would be difficult for the task force to mandate cooperative

purchasing, but that the implications and ramifications of not utilizing cooperative purchasing would result in not realizing maximum potential savings. In the area of insurance, the task force further defined the term non-traditional programs, to include insurance items as EAP, sick, disability, etc.

In the recommendation on ISO, the task force amended the section to be more clear and concise. It was generally agreed that the county, as the Fire Protection Authority, would be the appropriate agency to complete a feasibility study of improving the countywide ISO rating. The task force added language that specified no fire district's ISO classification should be reduced.

There was discussion on the Florida Fire Prevention Code. The final recommendation was that amendments should go through the established process rather than through legislative action.

There was discussion on water systems and minimum hydrant standards. This is primarily related to fire flow and hydrant spacing.

In the area of assignment of costs, there was significant discussion on the ad valorem adjustment for dependent fire districts and fire fees. It was generally agreed that implementing a fire fee on a countywide basis would be preferred, but at a minimum, that the dependent fire district millages should be equalized.

There was discussion on funding for specialty teams. It was generally agreed that an alternative funding source (surcharge or fee) should be developed to provide financial support for the hazardous materials and technical rescue teams. It was stated that the county is already providing some financial support for the specialty teams, but that the other non-participating fire departments utilize the services and are not providing any financial support.

The task force discussed the implementations and ramifications of the various recommendations.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the county representative discussed the procedures for finalizing the report. The redraft of the report will be emailed to the committee members for review and discussion. After conclusions are reached and a final draft is submitted, a form will be provided to each task force member to vote for or against each recommendation for the record.

Meeting adjourned 8:30 pm.