



MINUTES
LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH &
WELFARE COMMITTEE MEETING
January 12, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Wayne McCall, Chairman, District II
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III
Mr. Reg Dexter, District V

The Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee met on Monday, January 12, 2009 at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Committee Members present [except Mr. Suarez], Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV, County Administrator Dale K. Surrett and Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council also present.

Oconee County Staff present: Mr. Rodney Burdette, Emergency Services Director

Press:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeese.com/council]. In addition it was made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Member of the press present: Ray Chandler – Anderson Independent, Peter Kent - WSNW Radio & Andrew Moore - Daily Journal.

Call to Order:

Chairman McCall called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. McCall outlined the key topics for tonight's discussion to include: Oconee County/Westminster Joint Fire Station, Fire Protection at The Cliffs, Equipment/Training & other needs within the various Fire Stations, and Station 21.

Oconee County/Westminster Joint Fire Station:

Mr. McCall recognized Mr. Chris Smith, Westminster Fire Chief, who briefly discussed the history of the joint fire station to be located within the city limits of Westminster. The building is designed to house the Westminster Fire Station, Westminster Rescue Squad and the Oconee County Emergency Management Emergency Operations Center [EOC]. He noted that the city has purchased 14.95 acres for the building, completed the bond, cleared the trees and are now awaiting action by the County. Discussion followed regarding draft floor plans for the new building had were presented previously to County Council [copy of PowerPoint presentation to be distributed to all Council members and filed with these minutes]. Mr. C. W. Richards addressed Council questioning the status of a decision on the floor plan design.

Mr. Thrift suggested that a joint workshop be held between the City of Westminster and county personnel within the next two weeks to identify which plans are desired and identify funding options / opportunities.

Fire Protection at The Cliffs:

Mr. McCall noted that presently The Cliffs has an ISO rating of 10 and that ways need to be identified to improve fire protection in this northern part of the county. He stated that two homeowners have been unable to obtain home owners insurance due to the poor ISO rating. Mr. Kevin Wilbanks, Salem Fire Chief, addressed the committee noting that there have been talks with The Cliffs developer and they are willing to pay some for increased protection but that funding needs to be worked out to accommodate their request. The Cliffs would ideally like to have a new station staffed with 8 people per shift. Mr. Wilbanks noted that he does not have money to provide this coverage. In addition, he noted that The Cliffs came to Council previously requesting funding and were turned down. Discussion followed.

Mr. Surrentt briefly discussed the pros and cons of funding fire protection for The Cliffs through a special tax district. In addition, discussion took place regarding fees versus taxes to fund fire protection.

Mr. Thrift asked Mr. Surrentt to bring to Council additional information and/or a proposal that would provide fire protection to The Cliffs.

Mr. McCall asked the two fire chiefs bordering this area to please contact Mr. Christopher Clark to discuss all options and to report back.

Equipment / Training & Other Fire Department Needs:

Mr. McCall opened the floor requesting input regarding equipment and/or training needs in the various fire stations.

Mr. Travis Nix, Corinth/Shiloh Fire Chief noted that a new roof was needed for his station and that a substation would be very beneficial in his are.

Mr. Ronnie Williams, Corinth/Shiloh, stated that the station needs to be expanded but there is no available land adjacent to the current station.

Mr. Mike Mason, South Union Chief, addressed various issues affecting his station to include condition of his building, staffing levels, assistance with issues during normal business hours, movement of EOC and the need to re-establish and fund the Fire Marshall position.

Mr. McCall asked that if needs were identified that they would be forwarded for Council review to either himself, the Clerk to Council, the Emergency Services Director or the Administrator for review.

Station #21:

Mr. McCall recognized Mr. Travis Tilson, Oconee County Sheriff’s Department / Manager of the 911 Center, to address the Committee regarding a requested study of calls for service that Station #21 and other responded to in 2008. Results follow:

<u>STATION</u>	<u># Calls for Service</u>	<u># Arrivals on Scene</u>	
21	793	207	[this number reflects fire ONLY]
21	1329	488	[this number reflects fire & medial calls]
12 / Friendship	441	133	
9 / Long Creek	96	61	
17 / Keowee	308	194	
1 / Oakway	298	163	
2 / Salem	372	188	

Mr. McCall asked Mr. Rodney Burdette, Emergency Services Director, to address the Committee. The Committee asked Mr. Burdette to elaborate on Mr. Tilson's information and to address how he feels it best to utilize staff. Mr. Burdette noted that low arrival numbers can be accounted for with various reasons to include being turned around on route as not needed, false alarm, etc. He noted that staff at Station #21 perform additional duties to include assisting each station with identification of needs, checking vehicles and equipment, assisting with inspections and if requested provide training, testing, etc. Mr. Burdette also noted that the five year plan for Emergency Services was not fully acted upon due to budget cuts. He also stated that communication had been an issue and that he would work to correct this stating that letters have been sent to very volunteer and paid employee requesting contact/email information so that information can be made available to everyone in a timely basis. Discussion followed regarding the best way to utilize staff.

Adjourn:

Chairman McCall thanked everyone for their attendance and input and again stated that any issues can be brought to any member of the Committee for follow-up and discussion. He noted that the volunteers are the backbone of Oconee County. He adjourned the meeting at 8:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council