

**MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2019 WORKSHOP**  
**HARRIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 48**

A special workshop was duly called of Harris County Emergency Services District No. 48, which was held at the District Administration Building located at 21201 Morton Road, Katy, Texas 77449 on Monday, December 2, 2019.

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND ESTABLISH A QUORUM.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by **Marshall Kramer**, President, who announced that a quorum was present. Those Commissioners present were:

<b>Marshall Kramer</b>	Present
<b>Sam Henderson</b>	Present
<b>Bret Fossum</b>	Present
<b>Russell Solomon</b>	Absent
<b>Michael Fleming</b>	Present

Also present at the meeting were Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director, Jeff Hevey, Assistant Chief of Administration, Tommy Westall, Assistant Chief of Operations, Brett Ellis, HR Office Manager, Walla Almasri, Assistant HR Office Manager, Jackie Tobar, Community Paramedic, Joe Casciotti, CRR Chief, Jason Tharp, Battalion Chiefs, Josh McCormack and Justin Pfitzner, Suppression Training Chief, Glen Trahan, District Chief, Scott Strait, Purchasing Officer, Lou Fabricant, Suppression Training Lieutenant, Chris Primrose, and Volunteer Firefighter, Steven Metzger.

**TO RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT.**

No public comment.

**TO REVIEW, DISCUSS, AND TAKE ACTION REGARDING PERSONNEL HIRING AND PERSONNEL NEEDS AND THE FUTURE OF HCESD NO. 48.**

EMS and Suppression will have the same shifts. Chief Bank has been preparing an EMS Organizational Chart providing EMS Division succession and growth. Compression would align better with EMS for the suppression. EMS does not have the rank structure as suppression, but rather it would be a clinical version of it.

Chief Ellis discussed the following:

4<sup>th</sup> Shift, Re-staffing the Rescue vehicle by Volunteers, and their main HUB would be Station 5. Volunteering has gone down and it is not the same as it used to be for all organizations. We want to focus on the “Career Volunteer” recruitment.

- We lose Volunteers when they are nicotine users. The last Cadet class, almost 50% nicotine users.
- The cushion and the overtime is pretty healthy. We always want to keep overtime down.
- The Battalion Chiefs are tracking the overtime when someone calls off sick and who can come work based on their availability.

- We have fifty-two (52) people who will be essential to up staff when we have a disaster or for TIFMAS deployment.
- TIFMAS is an event that we are looking at four (4) to five (5) times a year that last for seven (7) days, and we get reimbursed back funds.
- There will be times that we need to rely on the Part-Timers to fill in when the Volunteers cannot to maintain minimum staffing.
- The way that we are setting up our apparatus is a mixture of all three (3) workgroups.
- We invest a lot in our Officer Development.
- Our people have opportunity here, and fixing the work schedule is one of the items we are improving on. This is better for the mental health of our Employees.
- Chief wants to retain Employees for their skills and attitudes.
- Working on a rubric on recertification, based on experience, TCFP, to help map out Employee career and succession planning.
- We have a current Firefighter eligibility list in place.
- We might have another Driver assessment in the Spring.
- Everything depends what happens up in Austin.
- We are establishing a road map, a plan where we would like to be at in 5/10/15 years.
- We have been working on payroll, benefits, retirement packages, etc.
- We are working on compression, and it won't kick in until till year 2021.
- We would like to see the pension go up with a 2:1 ratio, but that won't happen till year 2021.

Chief Ellis discussed a 2020 Outlook PowerPoint presentation:

- Every staffing model contains all three (3) workgroups
  - Full-Time.
  - Part-Time.
  - Volunteer.
- 2020 Budget:
  - \$18,312,361 Total.
  - Suppression Payroll \$3,303,314 (this is strictly to pay Employees every two (2) weeks for the year).
  - This does not include benefits!
  - We are trying to focus on our people to retain them here.
- Staffing Suppression:
  - Earlier in the year conducted a Needs Assessment.
  - We recognize that you are valuable and want to keep you here.
  - The assessment showed that the number one reason for Employees leaving was the schedule and alignment with EMS crew.
  - We looked at a model to staff differently where it brought benefit to our Employees and the Department.
  - January-June:
    - 36 Part-Timers.
    - 39 Full-Timers.

- 36 Volunteers.
- 24 Rehab Volunteers.
- July-December 31 (4<sup>th</sup> Shift addition):
  - 36 Part-Timers.
  - 52 Full-Timers.
  - Volunteer (recruit, retain, replicate).
  - Rehab Volunteers.
- This will help and allow us to call in employees when there is a natural disaster and give rest when needed.
- E1 Staffing
  - FT LT, FT DO, FT FF, PT FF, VOL FF-PROB 5.
- L3 Staffing
  - FT CAPT, FT DO, FT FF, FT FF, VOL FF PROB 5.
- E5 Staffing
  - FT LT, FT DO, FT FF, VOL FF.
- TW4 Staffing
  - PT OIC, FT DO, FT FF, PTF, VOL FF PROB 5.
- R5 Staffing
  - Staffed by Volunteers.
- BC 3
  
- Cadet Academy has been moved to once a year (October-April).
- Opportunities for Volunteers to move to career if desired by participating in hiring opportunities with addition of the 4<sup>th</sup> Shift.
- Volunteers assist with lowering our costs!!!
- It is not a guarantee if you are a Volunteer that we are going to hire you Full-Time, but we do when needed.
- Volunteer's home station will always be Station 5.
- We put a lot of money in training, so how do we recruit and retain? We cannot compete with other Departments to starting Firefighter pay at \$62,000.00, but we offset that by providing benefits to you that other Departments do not.
- Our Part-Time pay was the highest pay in Harris County based on the survey.
- Workgroup impact-Full-Time:
  - Addition of 4<sup>th</sup> shift to align with EMS starting in July.
  - EMS does not have FLSA; the law has this for Firefighters and Police Officers.
  - If you take a sick or vacation day, you lose your FLSA pay for that cycle.
  - Promotional opportunities.
  - Fifty-three (53) hour work week.
  - Hourly rate.
  - FLSA

- Vacation:
  - We currently carry over twenty-four (24) hours of vacation.
  - We only allow two (2) people off per day based on seniority.
  - There are only forty-eight (48) shifts scheduled July-December.
  - The days you put in for you may not get based seniority.
  - Would encourage you in the first six (6) months to use your vacation days.
  - Our Part-Timers backfill during this time.
- Overtime:
  - HCESD No. 48 has provides overtime if you come to work from your scheduled time. We are the only Department that does this! If a person comes into work, you are disrupting their day and we pay when you come in for Trainings, meetings, etc.
- Workgroup impact-Part-Time:
  - Employment/promotional opportunities to test for Full-Time positions.
  - Fifty-three (53) hour work week.
  - Training Division, CRR, Cadet Class.
  - Decreased hours per month-average sixty (60) hours. per month based on thirty-six (36) Part-Timers.
  - Fills Full-Time pre-scheduled vacation spots.
  - Updating availability for Call-Ins.
  - New Pay Rates:
    - FF/DO- \$18.00.
    - LT- \$22.00.
    - CAPT- \$23.00.
- We are the number one Department paying the highest rate for Part-Timers in Harris County. We can no longer sustain this. Starting December 29, 2019 in iSolved, the Part-Time rates will change to show effective the first pay period in January 2020.
- We made a transition in 2015 from West-I10 that made a boost in pay for Part-Timers, and then the ESD gave a 5% raise that was not sustainable. We made a decision to make a reduction in pay but it still puts us way above average from other neighboring Departments.
- There are other ways for Part-Timers to make more money by attending trainings, CRR events, etc.
- We are focused on taking care of our people.

- We are reacting to requests that were made from a survey. One of the questions was what keeps you from coming on Full-Time. A lot of people were not comfortable with the current work schedule.
- We have to maintain a fiscal amount of funds available to us.
- We are still below 70% of the 2020 payroll up staffing model.
- In 2020, we have on order a new Battalion Chief Vehicle and Division Chief of EMS Vehicle.
- We operate day to day, and we have no built-in reserve of Employees for use.
- We are approaching \$1M in benefits.
- CRR is growing on both the EMS and Suppression side with the babysitting class, matter of balance, CPR classes, and Smoke Alarm Blitz, etc.

**ADJOURNMENT.**

Mr. **Henderson** made a motion to adjourn the workshop. Mr. **Fossum** seconded the motion. The motion passed 4 to 0. The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

The foregoing minutes were passed and approved by the Board of Commissioners on February 18, 2020.

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**Russell Solomon**  
District Secretary