

VIRGINIA: At a Special Meeting of the Board of Supervisors for the County of Accomack

held in the Board Chambers on the 1st day of May, A.D., 2008.

Members Present: Ron S. Wolff, Chair
Steve D. Mallette, Vice Chair
Wanda J. Thornton
Grayson Chesser
John C. Gray
Sandra Hart Mears
Laura Belle Gordy
E. Philip McCaleb

Member Absent: Donald I. Hart, Jr.

Others Present: Steven B. Miner, County Administrator
Linda Martin Warner, Assistant County Administrator
Yvonne N. Pennell, Administrative Assistant

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman and opened with a prayer by Mrs. Gordy.

Chair's Comments

Chairman Wolff offered the following comments:

This meeting was called due to a request coming on the Board's regular April agenda. That request was from the Onancock Volunteer Fire Co. and it presented the Board with an important decision regarding its contract for services with that company. That contract, referred to as the "Lee District Fire and Rescue Services Agreement" was initiated by that company and allows County paid and managed staff the use of Volunteer funded facilities and equipment in the Lee and surrounding districts.

We will hear more history on this later this evening, and hopefully, will resolve the specific matter which brought us here (the Onancock Agreement) in a manner which can allow the continued use of these facilities by County staff, and hopefully also, will honor this board's commitment to fair and respectful relationships with our volunteer emergency services community.

Thus, the meeting is limited to that one action tonight. As a special called meeting, it cannot be expanded to act on any other matter, except for those things incidental to the issue at hand. However, it is my hope that this discussion, inevitably connected as it is to larger issues before the Board, can also be used as a springboard into future discussions between representatives of the Volunteer community and the members of this Board.

This dialogue should be intended, I believe, toward various ends. It should: 1) improve relations between us, 2) improve services to our mutual clients, the citizens of Accomack County, 3) improve volunteerism -especially among the youth of our communities, 4) recognize the pride of community in their volunteer organizations, and 5) develop respect and understanding on both sides of the issue for the needs and limitations of the other.

In short, we must recognize that we are mutually engaged in service to our fellow man. Some are paid and some are not -there are different management structures and different funding streams; however, the goal remains the same as it was when the first volunteer company picked up buckets and ran to a fire -the preservation of life and property from avoidable loss. We should be unified in that endeavor and I would hope that leaders on both sides should not allow or certainly encourage divisiveness to drive

wedges between us so as to limit our ability to do what we are called to do for our fellow man.

How are we to do this, you ask? Tonight will be but a start, but an important one, I hope. The County Administrator has engaged the services of a professional facilitator from Salisbury University. With his assistance, when the immediate matter before us is resolved, I ask that we begin a discussion around a process which might be used to address the various issues of importance to all of us.

Last year, the Board voted unanimously to pay for a study of our emergency services system. When we did so, we knew that it was needed. Yet when the study was returned, there was a great amount of concern raised by its recommendations, concerns which have not abated nor been resolved. Unfortunately, the conditions leading to those recommendations have not been resolved either. I propose to this board that those studies and those recommendations be accepted for the purpose of assisting us in a structured dialogue between this board, community members and our volunteer leaders, towards the goal of acknowledging the issues we jointly face and adopting goals and solutions around which we can develop consensus. Those documents can help inform us, but should not limit us in our efforts to achieve consensus.

The County hasn't got unlimited resources as we have just seen first hand in the budget struggle. Moreover, we have other issues which press for attention: Social services will press us with a declining economy, police protection, jail costs, schools, the list goes on, but all of these are needs as well which compete for public dollars and we must recognize that there are balances that must be struck. Our volunteers know this. They are fathers and mothers too. They too want schools and a clean and safe community. I ask the volunteers for their assistance in this endeavor and thank them for their past work and for all they do today. Our county would be a far less desirable place to live were it not for their contributions.

A couple of notes:

- 1) I know that some of you have issues which you have been trying to discuss with the Board. The process we will discuss later this evening is intended to resolve those issues with you. This meeting is not intended to address those issues.*
- 2) I expect the process which is intended to address these issues to extend over a period of time and a series of meetings. You will be heard on all concerns at a later time, at a meeting or meeting set up specifically for the purpose and which your input and our dialogue will be an integral and critical component. Comment tonight will be limited to the Onancock matter and comments on the process we choose to follow to address matters of concern, as we discuss that later on. While we are not here tonight to hear or resolve those important issues, we will make every attempt to do so as promptly as time and participation allows.*
- 3) I know that there are concerns over the County (quote) "taking over" (unquote) volunteer stations or shutting them down. I know of no such plans and the studies performed for us have not called for that. There certainly are things in the studies that are sensitive -we know that already. However, those items are not for tonight's discussion either. They are not on the agenda and will not be addressed -only the means to address those questions at a later time will be discussed. You are welcome to address that process, but I ask for brevity sake that any comments refrain from matters not up for discussion tonight.*
- 4) I ask that comment which is received tonight, if any, be limited to leaders from the various companies. We have only a limited time, as the meeting must be ended by 9:00.*
- 5) All are welcome to stay and participate within the agenda items, or to listen; however, there will be a formal process to be scheduled later on. Leadership will be invited to that and facilitation services will be provided. So, if you came tonight out of concern that the Board might take some action which would be harmful to your*

interest, please know that we are acting only on the Onancock matter and will not take any action beyond that -other than to (hopefully) derive consensus around a process to work on our mutual needs in service to our communities.

- 6) *Ground Rules -As chair, I am obliged to keep order. I would appreciate it if we can stay on the agenda, as I have outlined it above. In particular I ask that, 1) comment be limited to the Onancock agreement, and 2) the process desired to achieve the Board's larger strategic goals I have outlined above.*

Thank you.

Onancock Fire and EMS Funding Notification

County Administrator Steven B. Miner reviewed with the Board the Agenda for the meeting which encompassed the following:

- The Purpose
 - To resolve the Lee District Volunteer Fire & Rescue Agreement
 - Discuss the process towards working on the (draft) Strategic Goal Regarding Provision of EMS and Fire Services
 - Initiating Dialogue with Volunteer Fire & EMS officials
 - General comments
- Ground rules
 - Goals
 - History of the issue before the Board
 - Presentation of Fiscal information and Fiscal impacts
 - Focus on process intended to establish a set of Strategic Goals and Actions

Jason Loftus, Public Safety Director, gave a historical overview of the Career Fire Medic Staffing in Accomack County and responded to questions.

Finance Director Reed M. Ennis gave a financial overview of fire and rescue services spending comparisons, projected statement of sources, uses and changes in fund balances and responded to questions.

Mr. Miner introduced Dr. Brian Pokenhorn, Executive Director of the Center for Conflict Resolution at Salisbury University, who he hoped would have the opportunity to assist Accomack County work out goals for its overall fire and EMS services.

Dr. Pokenhorn gave a brief background of services he would provide, after studying the background of a generalized plan to the County.

A general discussion took place.

Mr. Mallette made a motion to consider for action at the May 21, 2008, meeting on the Consent Agenda, the termination of the Lee District Agreement executed in August, 2000, and allow volunteer stations in Lee District to take over any ambulance billing effective July 1, 2008, (with the condition that any billing revenue with a service date up to June 30, 2007, be payable to Accomack County) and that Onley Volunteer Fire & Rescue

and Onancock Volunteer Fire Department enter into the Diminish Funding Plan for current staff (2 employees each) at Year 4 FY09 with a payment of 40% of the total employee costs for these additional staff and continuing with the Plan through FY11. Mrs. Gordy seconded the motion. Ayes: Mr. Wolff, Mr. Chesser, Mr. Gray, Mrs. Mears, Mr. Mallette, Mrs. Gordy, Mr. Hart, Mr. McCaleb. Nays: None. Abstentions: Mrs. Thornton.

Mr. Rob LaChance, Center for Conflict Resolutions, gave background information on his work with the firm as had Mr. Pokenhorn.

It was suggested that Mr. Miner present the concept of engaging the assistance of the Center for Conflict Resolutions to address current fire and EMS issues to the Accomack County Fire and Rescue Commission at its next meeting.

Adjournment

Mrs. Thornton made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Mrs. Gordy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair