

# **Brevard County Board of County Commissioners**

*2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way  
Viera, FL 32940*



## **Minutes**

**Tuesday, December 17, 2024**

**9:00 AM**

**Regular**

**Commission Chambers**

**A. CALL TO ORDER 9:00 AM**

**Present:** Commissioner District 1 Katie Delaney, Commissioner District 2 Tom Goodson, Commissioner District 3 Kim Adkinson, Commissioner District 4 Rob Feltner, and Commissioner District 5 Thad Altman

**C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Commissioner Adkinson led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**D. MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

The Board approved the minutes for the November 19, 2024, Organizational meeting.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Katie Delaney

**Second:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**E.2. Presentation of Fire Assessment Report Addressing the Timeline and Actions Needed Should the Board Plan to Consider an Adjustment for the Fire Service Non-Ad Valorem Assessment (Fire Assessment)**

Chairman Feltner mentioned there is a resolution for Fire Assessment on the Agenda as Item E.2., and he would suggest that it be combined with the J.3. discussion; and he asked the pleasure of the Board.

Commissioner Delaney replied she is fine with that.

Chairman Feltner noted he feels it would be more efficient just ahead of Item J.3.

Commissioners Altman, Goodson, and Adkinson agreed to move Item E.2. to just before Item J.3.

**E.1. Resolution Honoring and Memorializing Mayor Del Yonts**

Commissioner Adkinson read aloud, and the Board adopted Resolution No. 24-133, honoring and memorializing Mayor Del Yonts' unrivaled dedication and service to the community.

Lizette Kohler, member of Town of Valkaria Town Council, stated she appreciates the Resolution remembering the Mayor; Council and staff were devastated by his loss; he was not only the face of the Town of Valkaria, but the heart of it; he loved being Mayor and the people loved having him as Mayor; he was not a politician, he was a neighbor helping to keep the town the way the residents wanted it; they will miss his steady leadership and his witty sense of humor; and he leaves this thriving small town that will never forget him. She continued by saying in accordance with the Town Charter, they will be appointing a Mayor and Council member; she welcomed Commissioner Adkinson to the Commission for District 3; and she introduced Mayor Yonts' family members that were in attendance.

**Result:** Adopted  
**Mover:** Kim Adkinson  
**Second:** Tom Goodson  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**E.3. Resolution Recognizing December 21st as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day**

Commissioner Adkinson read aloud, and the Board adopted Resolution No. 24-134, recognizing December 17, 2024, as National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day.

Amber Carroll, Executive Director of The Brevard Homeless Coalition, stated the Brevard Homeless Coalition is the lead agency for Brevard County's continuum of care for homeless services; she is representing about 190 organizations and members of this community; joining her today are the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Liz Alward, Secretary Yvonne Minus, Teresa Gimison, Linda Graham Chair of the COC Advisory Council who oversees that leadership group of 35 elected and appointed individuals; her staff is there as well, Leanne, Sarah, and James; and she expressed her appreciation to the Board for its support in declaring December 21, as Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. She continued by saying it is the Coalition's hope to bring awareness for the need for more permanent housing with supportive services and the need for emergency low-barrier drop in shelters, for the unsheltered residents; with the enforcement for House Bill 1365, beginning on January 1, 2025, providing a safe place to sleep has never been more critical; in 2024, the point in time count, which is the homeless census in Brevard County, revealed that it was the highest since 2016, with 1,116 people; the unsheltered population, those who did not have access to an emergency shelter, was 779 residents up 17 percent from the year before; and if anyone is curious what that means in relation to Homeless Persons' Memorial, as of today they have 65 names of people in Brevard County who passed away due to their causes, but were unsheltered, and is about a nine (9) percent death rate for the unsheltered residents. She stated those who are chronically homeless, meaning those who have a disabling condition and have been unsheltered for a year, or longer, rose 72 percent from last year; nationally, Brevard County is being recognized for its homeless numbers and not in a positive way; in the most recent Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) given to Congress, Brevard County is in the top five nationwide for the largely suburban COC's with the highest percentage of individuals experiencing chronic homeless patterns; in Florida, Brevard County ranks sixth in the State for both unsheltered and chronic homeless persons and third in the state for homeless veterans; this is a growing problem and one that as a community people need to come together to solve; and together everyone can make homelessness rare, brief, and non-reoccurring for Brevard residents through a regional coordinated approach, which the Coalition has been working on. She added during this holiday season the Coalition will memorialize the lives of those who died on the streets and in the shelters from conditions directly related to their homelessness; in many cases these services will be the only commemoration of their lives; she invited the Board to one of the services that is going to be held on Thursday, December 19; and there will be a service in Melbourne, one in Cocoa, and one in Titusville in the evening. She mentioned the point in time count for 2025 will be on January 23, 2025; there are many ways to be involved; one can come out with one of the experienced outreach workers, to see the state of homelessness in this County; and all the information is included in the booklet she has provided.

**Result:** Adopted  
**Mover:** Kim Adkinson  
**Second:** Thad Altman  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**E.4. Resolution, Re: Recognize the Retirement of Mary Ellen Donner, Parks and Recreation Department Director**

Chairman Feltner read aloud, and the Board adopted Resolution No. 24-135, recognizing the retirement of Mary Ellen Donner, Brevard County Parks and Recreation Director.

Mary Ellen Donner, Parks and Recreation Director, stated first of all she would like to thank her mom and her dad for instilling in her good ethics, knowing right and wrong, and that hard work and dedication actually does pay off; in all the places that she has worked, she has never ever had a better County Manager to work for, city or county, than Frank Abbate; he really does believe in doing the right thing and that is important to the Directors; she is sure being a County Manager is a tough job as he has five bosses; and she thinks Mr. Abbate has balanced that wonderfully. She mentioned she actually reports to Jim Liesenfelt, Assistant County Manager, and without a doubt, he is the best boss she has ever worked for; he has patience down pat and there are many times where he needs that; he is always fair and seeks to understand before he jumps in; John Denninghoff, Assistant County Manager, is a fountain of youth and good advice; however, never make the mistake of going to a meeting at 4:45 p.m. because one will be late for dinner. She went on to say there is no Director in this room who is not successful with the staff; the Parks and Recreation staff in Brevard County are caring, passionate, dedicated, hardworking, and the best; she thanked her immediate staff in building B, Diana the best Administrative Assistant ever, Lee, Bethany, Steve, Michael Butcher, Construction Manager extraordinaire, and of course, Michelle the best finance person in the County, and Rich, Jen S., Tammy, Andrea, Jen B., Rebecca, and the managers in the fields, Mike Knight, Jeff, Terry, and Richard; and she mentioned she would also like to thank Morris Richardson, County Attorney, Justin Caron, and of course Abby, and all the Directors, Deputy Directors, and Assistant Directors for all of their support. She commented she has to thank her husband Donald, he chased her until she caught him, or maybe it was the other way around; he has always been behind her, as he is today, supporting, cheerleading, and giving good sound advice; over the years she cannot even count the number of groundbreaking, special events, and grand openings that he has been by her side; he is forever patient and she could not have done it without him; she would like to thank the Commissioners who in the past eight years have supported her in the Parks and Recreation Department; and it is great that the alphabetical order today works because Chair Feltner, Tom Goodson, Brian Lober, Rita Pritchett, Curt Smith, Jason Steele, John Tobia, and definitely and not least, Kristine Zonka; the staff of the Commissioners she just named have been absolutely fabulous to work with; she expressed her thanks to them and to Sheriff Wayne Ivey for all of the support he has shown her; and having worked in other places, she has observed and learned a thing or two, 1.) because they say it does not mean it is true, just because they repeat it does not mean it is true, and just because they post it does not make it true, and 2.) it is great that you want to listen but please do not just listen to the loudest voice, the lobbyist voice, or the voice closest to her or she, listen to the voices that will not talk for whatever reason or the voices that cannot talk, like Scrub Jays. She mentioned to do the right thing, it often takes courage and sometimes it does not make someone popular; and in closing, she believes she left the Parks and Recreation Department in a better place; she has thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful opportunity given to her by Brevard County; and so she will end where she was taught to begin.

Commissioner Goodson stated he is going to miss her; every year there is a Christmas Party at District 2 and someone wins a mug for the ugliest Christmas t-shirt; and she has done it twice; with her leaving, someone else might win it; but she says she is coming back and that is scary. He thanked Ms. Donner for everything she has done.

**Result:** Adopted

**Mover:** Tom Goodson

**Secunder:** Katie Delaney

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.8. Confirmation of Ian J. Golden as Parks and Recreation Department Director**

Sandra Sullivan stated the first Item is the confirmation of Ian Golden for the Parks and Recreation Department Director; she has two concerns; she would have preferred to see someone promoted from within the Department that knows that Department; she is also concerned because under Senate Bill 102, the Bill she calls, "you will own nothing and be happy law," there is a provision in there for the transfer of accelerated of conservation or non-conservation from the State, any State-owned and Brevard has a lot under save the coast and other programs, to be transferred to the County to be sold for affordable housing; having the affordable housing Director be put into Parks and Recreation is very much a concern to her and what that means to the parks; and she just wanted to place that on the record. She mentioned she did a records request a couple of months ago; she was at an affordable housing meeting where a grant got approved for a project and then she did a records request because she had heard it changed; it took two months to get a one page records request; it was obstructed and only half of the request was provided; and that does not sit well with her.

**F.12. Appointment(s) / Reappointment(s)**

Sandra Sullivan stated she would like to say briefly, as the Board does its appointments and reappointments, to look at the people who have been on boards for, in some cases, close to 20 years; the Policy is eight years for term limits; she would ask that for any current appointments out there, which are many, that have been there for 15 or 20 years, that this Board do its due diligence with of its districts in advertising those positions; Merritt Island Redevelopment Agency (MIRA) is an example that has two there; and the Affordable Housing Advisory Board has two people that are approaching 20 years and other boards as well.

**F.14. Brevard Renaissance Fair, Inc. Requests Approval for an Additional Event at Sarno Leased Site**

Sandra Sullivan stated while she appreciates the events that he is hosting, the bond-funded utility land has to be leased for fair market value; she does not see in what has been uploaded, a charge for this additional event; she would like to request that the Board amend that agreement to ensure that there is a charge for that; specifically, the vote this Board took was Renaissance Fair only with a fee for the Renaissance for the rent; it was only for that charge; and there should be an additional charge for this.

Peter Moolhuizen stated he signed a Contract with the County to do an event at the Sarno site; it was for six months and an additional six months if he wanted to do that; he paid for the six months and it is out there contractually and it has already been published on the web by Sandra; they paid \$62,000 for the six months; and paying \$62,000 for the next six months; he is paying over \$10,000 month; and part of the condition was he would be able to hold some other events there with Board approval, so that is what he is asking for today. He mentioned he wants to do another event out there that was dear to the community for many years; and he wants to bring it back.

Commissioner Goodson asked what the truth is, Mr. Moolhuizen or Ms. Sullivan.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, stated staff negotiated for the Renaissance Fair and that

Contract was specific to the fair, but included the six month Lease for \$60,000 with one opportunity to renew for \$60,000; when staff was asked whether or not he could have additional fairs, he was told that would not be consistent with the current Contract and he would have to go before the Board and seek Board approval; that is why Mr. Moolhuizen is in attendance today; and whether there are additional costs for it, that is really a factor for the Board. He added he is paying a little over \$10,000 per month for each of the months; he thinks it is divided into three \$20,000 installments that started in October.

Commissioner Goodson asked if what Mr. Abbate is saying is that he paid for 12 months or if the Board approves it, he is paying for 12 months.

Mr. Abbate advised he is paying for six; and at the end of six months, he gets a six-month renewal opportunity.

Commissioner Goodson asked if that is at the same price.

Mr. Abbate responded affirmatively. He noted it is covering the fair grounds for the purpose of the Renaissance Fair, which was specified in the Contract.

Morris Richardson, County Attorney, added the first six months ends March 31 and he can renew it for six months beyond that; as Mr. Abbate has stated, the price is the same \$62,000 for the additional six months just like it was for the first six months; and that was set by the lease.

Commissioner Goodson continued by saying the fair amount that the County is charging for the first six months rolls over for another six months, is a fair amount, because the Board or the County Manager set the amount.

Mr. Abbate explained that is what staff thought when it brought it back to the Board for approval.

Chairman Feltner commented he thinks what is being talked about is the Strawberry Festival; and for what it is worth, when that was in Wickham Park there was certainly a lot of traffic and he thinks it has outgrown Wickham Park; therefore he thinks it is a good fit for both what Mr. Moolhuizen is doing and for the Strawberry Festival, in his opinion.

Mr. Moolhuizen stated the Renaissance Fair and the Strawberry Festival both outgrew Wickham Park not only because of growth and population in Brevard County, but as business people they work hard to build quality events; and that is what may have forced them out, their own good work; he would like to try to bring this back; the Strawberry Festival had been there for seven years; and he would like to bring them back into Brevard County.

#### **F.1. Approval RE: Disbursement of Educational Facilities Impact Fees**

The Board authorized the disbursement of Educational Impact fees in the amount of \$5,418,567.35 to the School Board of Brevard County in accordance with the terms of an Interlocal Agreement; and authorized the Budget Office to execute necessary Budget Change Requests to implement this disbursement.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Secunder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.2. Approval, Re: Lease Agreement and Resolution for Office Space for Mike Haridopolos Congressman Elect, 8th District**

The Board executed and approved the Lease Agreement; and adopted Resolution No. 24-136, allowing the non-competitive lease of County property (office space) at the Brevard County Government Center Viera to Congressman Elect Mike Haridopolos, 8th District.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Seconder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.3. Request Permission to Enter into a Utility Work by Highway Contractor Agreement (UWHCA) with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to Bid Out the Installation of a Sanitary Force Main at the Intersection of South Patrick Drive and Banana River Drive as Part of Their South Patrick Drive Improvements Resurfacing Project**

The Board authorized the County Manager to execute all contracts, Contract Amendments, and any Contract Extensions, Budget Change Requests, Change Orders, amend the Five-year Capital Improvements Plan as it relates to this project, and any documents, reimbursement requests, or other administrative actions related to this UWHCA, upon review and approval by the County Attorney's Office, Risk Management, and Purchasing Services.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Seconder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.5. Approval, Re: Advertisement for Applicants to the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program Selection and Management Committee**

The Board approved the Parks and Recreation staff to publicly advertise to fill all membership positions with qualified citizen volunteer applicants for the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program, Selection and Management Committee; approved the Parks and Recreation Department, through the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program, to publicly advertise all future membership expirations and vacancies; and approved bringing the list of qualified applicants back to the Board for final ranking and appointment as needed.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Seconder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.6. Conveyance of Property Acquired by Escheatment Tax Deed to the City of Palm Bay**

The Board adopted Resolution No. 24-137, authorizing the conveyance of property acquired by Escheatment Tax Deed that is located within the boundaries of the incorporated City of Palm Bay, Florida, pursuant to Section 197.592(3), Florida Statutes; and authorized the Chairman to execute a County Deed to convey the property acquired by the Escheatment Tax Deed to the City of Palm Bay, Florida, pursuant to Section 197.592(3), Florida Statutes, upon review and approval by the County Attorney's Office.

**Result:** Adopted  
**Mover:** Thad Altman  
**Second:** Tom Goodson  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.7. Resolution Approving the Issuance by the Orange County Health Facilities Authority of Hospital Revenue Bonds (Orlando Health Obligated Group), in One or More Series in an Aggregate Principal Amount Not Exceeding \$325,000,000**

The Board executed and adopted Resolution No. 24-138, allowing the issuance by the Orange County Health Facilities Authority of tax-exempt revenue bonds (Orlando Health Obligated Group), in one or more series to refinance the acquisition of hospital facilities in Brevard County.

**Result:** Adopted  
**Mover:** Thad Altman  
**Second:** Tom Goodson  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.8. Confirmation of Ian J. Golden as Parks and Recreation Department Director**

The Board confirmed the appointment of Ian J. Golden as the Parks and Recreation Department Director.

**Result:** Approved  
**Mover:** Thad Altman  
**Second:** Tom Goodson  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.9. Proposed Revisions to Board Policy BCC-47, "Purchasing Cards for County Commissioners"**

The Board adopted the proposed revisions to Board Policy BCC-47, "Purchasing Cards for County Commissioners."

**Result:** Approved  
**Mover:** Thad Altman  
**Second:** Tom Goodson  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.10. Proposed Revisions to Board Policy BCC-59, "Tangible Personal Property (County Commissioner Offices)"**

The Board adopted the proposed revisions to Board Policy BCC-59, "Tangible Personal Property (County Commissioner Offices)."

**Result:** Approved  
**Mover:** Thad Altman  
**Second:** Tom Goodson  
**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.11. Confirmation of Juanita D. Jackson as Housing and Human Services Department Director**

The Board confirmed the appointment of Juanita D. Jackson as the Housing and Human Services Department Director.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Seconder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.12. Appointment(s) / Reappointment(s)**

The Board appointed/reappointed **David Foley**, **Bud Crisafulli**, and **Roger Drabyk** to the Contractor's Licensing Board, with said terms to expire December 31, 2026; **Kika Golan** and **Janette Gianella** to the Employee Benefits Insurance Advisory Committee, with said terms to expire December 31, 2025; **Dr. Joanna Bass** and **William Huffman** to the Board of Adjustment, with said terms to expire December 31, 2026; **Cindy Forstall** and **Jack Ratterman**, to the Historical Commission, with said terms to expire December 31, 2026; **Josiah Gattle** and **Anne Conroy Baiter** to the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast, with said terms to expire December 31, 2025; **Bill Volmer** and **Jennifer Thompson**, as alternate, to the Transportation Planning Organization Citizens Advisory Committee, with said terms to expire December 31, 2025; **Kamran Sarkarati** to the Housing Finance Authority, with said term to expire December 31, 2028; Rick Cofer to the Building and Construction Advisory Committee, with said term to expire December 31, 2026; **James Underwood** to the Marine Advisory Council, with said term to expire December 31, 2026; **Nancy Mitts** to the Art in Public Places Advisory Committee with said term to expire December 31, 2026; **Andrew M. Rothstein** to the North Brevard Public Library Advisory Board, with said term to expire December 31, 2026; and **Jane Thorn** to the South/Central Brevard Public Library Advisory Board, with said term to expire December 31, 2026.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Seconder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.13. Bill Folder**

The Board acknowledged receipt of the Bill Folder.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Seconder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**F.14. Brevard Renaissance Fair, Inc. Requests Approval for an Additional Event at Sarno Leased Site**

The Board approved Peter Moolhuizen's, on behalf of Brevard Renaissance Fair, Inc., request for an additional event at leased premises located at the County's Sarno Road Solid Waste Disposal Facility.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Secunder:** Tom Goodson

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

## **G. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Sandra Sullivan stated the other day she was in Titusville at the North Brevard Economic Development Zone (NBEDZ) meeting and she was very surprised to see how dilapidated the County buildings were up there; there was paint peeling and it looked deplorable; she was at Commissioner Goodson's Christmas Party the other day and that building looks like it has not been updated since 1960; this building when coming in here, there have been times when all three of the elevators have been broken; and the toilets back up all the time. She commented there is carpet in this building and it is decades old; it seems like Brevard County should be a very prosperous County; this is the Space Coast and yet the County is struggling with things like over \$1 billion in transportation deficit, failing infrastructure, a main that broke in South Patrick Shores that could not be repaired and they had to run a line through the school yard; there are all these issues and fiscal issues; Brevard County cannot pay its firefighters, and that is public safety; and when she starts digging, she asks why is Space Florida not really monetarily prosperous. She went on to say she was really shocked to find out that there is a law called the Military Leasing Act which says if it is Federal land and it is leased to a private entity they are required to pay taxes; but looking up these entities whether it is SpaceX, a private company owned by the richest man in the world, and Jeff Bezos, they do not pay any property tax; yes, Brevard County gets the economic stimulation with people buying homes and spending money here, but as a taxing agency, the County is entitled by law to tax these people; just because it is Federal land, she does not know where this narrative came from that if it is Federal lands then to not collect taxes; she has been digging into some of the deals that have been done and even some lands that involve Space Florida, which are not in the State jurisdiction of where Space Florida is, where one company received a tax break for \$500 million over 40 years; and she asked why as they are not even in the Space Florida area. She stated the Board needs to really look at this from a fiscal standpoint and be responsible to Brevard County residents.

Lois McManus stated in front of the Board members there should be a red packet with information on her presentation; a new landmark is rising in Grant/Valkaria to honor the brave men and women who have served the country; on December 12, 2024, construction began on the Veterans Memorial Park, a 4,900 square foot space dedicated to recognizing veteran sacrifices; the Mayor Del Yonts was a strong advocate and instrumental in designing and developing the Veterans Memorial Park; the project is headed up by herself and fellow volunteers of Grant/Valkaria Community Association, a 501(c)3, non-profit organization with the guidance of Grant/Valkaria's town administrator Jason Mahany and town staff; and the Veterans Memorial Park is entirely funded by generous donations and sponsorships from the community, with contributions being tax deductible. She mentioned this project is 100 percent dependent on raising money through various events, sales of veterans Commemorative bricks, veterans Memorial Park t-shirts, donations, and sponsorships; the park will be located on the west side of Grant/Valkaria town hall, 1449 Valkaria Road under a majestic heritage oak tree named, Freedom, and next to the beautiful pond and fountain; and as she has mentioned, construction began with installing a handicap ramp this past Thursday. She continued by saying once the ramp is complete, the grounds will be prepared for concrete, the first part of January, weather permitting; the Memorial Park promises a space for quiet reflection and appreciation; it will include statues, monuments, benches, and an educational area with picnic tables; if residents would like to sponsor for the park or make a donation or purchase a commemorative brick or t-shirt please visit the official website

www.veteransmemorial@grantvalkaria.org or email info.vetsmemorial@yahoo.com; and she thanked the Board for its time and interest.

## **H.1. Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program**

Chairman Feltner called for a public hearing on the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program.

Karen Conde, Assistant to the County Manager, stated this is a public hearing on the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program; it is requested that the Board review and consider the attached ordinance; the County's Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Abatement Program sunset in November 2024; an anticipation of this program sunsetting, on July 23, 2024, the Board adopted Resolution No. 2024-068, calling for a referendum election on November 5, 2024; as a result, 71 percent of the voters were in favor or for the authority to grant economic development ad valorem tax exemptions; and this draft ordinance would provide the Board the ability to continue to offer the economic development ad valorem tax exemptions to eligible businesses. She noted each application for the economic development ad valorem tax abatement program would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; previous Commissioner Curt Smith a member of the Ad Valorem Tax (AVT) referendum task force is in attendance today to address this item, as well as Edgar Campa-Palafox, vice-president of Business Development with the Economic Development Council (EDC); and he is available to answer any questions.

Commissioner Delaney stated she was wondering about the extension; she thinks the previous policy stated something like 10 years and now it is 20 years; she is wondering why that change was made; and she asked if it was statutory or due to the language on the referendum.

Ms. Conde advised the extension would be for 10 years; it is for the abatements for regular businesses; and it is up to 20 years for data centers.

Chairman Feltner stated he thinks the Board is largely accepting the results of the election, on a referendum item.

Sandra Sullivan stated one of the things she has come to the Board meetings for many times is about accountability and transparency; that will be her emphasis today; based on the presentation that was done by former Commissioner Tobia, 85 percent of these projects failed to deliver and their presentations made to get this passed made return on dollars from \$1 to \$7 return; but that was based on their applications, not on actual performance. She continued by saying in coming to meetings here she had made a records request for some previous projects; this was an email in 2023 that she had done this, and she read, "When it comes to EDC, tax abatements are given for the creation of jobs, but there is no performance tracking or accountability, on whether the entity fulfills the creation of jobs or not. Promise the moon and whether you deliver or not, Brevard gives you a tax break." She continued by saying the Board has talked about these issues in Brevard County; this Board needs to be fiscally conservative; when people make promises, it needs to be followed through on; consequently, these abatements were removed after being identified; what she would like to see is a change to the Ordinance; the intent was for 10 years; the people were not told the County was going to do an exception for data centers; keep it the 10 years tax abatement; and former Commissioner Curt Smith emphasized that point when he was on this Commission for; and she wants this Board to respect that. She noted she would like the Board to add some language to the ordinance for accountability, which means that every year staff brings back the list, the effective they received it and to ensure that it sunsets after 10; secondly, that there is in the first quarter of the County Commission Meeting each year there is a review from staff to ensure whether they

are meeting their commitments to receive this tax benefit of a tax abatement; and that is all she would ask for is transparency and accountability. She mentioned there is a room full of firefighters right now that the County cannot pay for public safety; she thinks this Board owes the people the due diligence.

Curt Smith stated it is nice to be back and see all the folks; this is very self-explanatory; he does not know that he can add anything that this Board does not already know; if the Board has any questions, he can maybe answer those; it is a good program; he thinks the horse has been beaten to the fact that it is probably dead now; the main complaint he would hear when he was on the Board was that it is a giveaway; he explained it is not a giveaway, people have to earn it; people do not get any of the benefits until they can produce; there are parameters that they have to meet to produce; and there is countless companies that did not produce, but they did not receive a penny. He added this being passed by 71 percent, it is a good program that brings companies to Brevard County to improve communities; and he would urge the Board to vote for it.

Chairman Feltner stated when the prior Board voted to put the Item ultimately on the ballot, he noted that each thing that comes before this Board stands on its own; each project that comes this Board will decide on whether it is good for Brevard County or not; the prior Board had voted against Items and passed others; the Board's vote today does not mean all Items will be approved in the future; and he wants to make that distinction.

There being no further comments or objections, the Board adopted Ordinance No. 24-32, Continuing an exemption from certain ad valorem taxation for certain new and expanding business properties to encourage economic development in the County; providing for enactment authority; providing for intent and declaration; amending Chapter 102, Taxation, Article IV Ad Valorem Property Taxation, Division 3, Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption Ordinance, Brevard County Code of Ordinances; amending Section 102-182, Enactment Authority; amending Section 102-184, Definition of Terms; amending Section 102-185, Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption Established; amending Section 102-186, Application for Exemption; amending Section 102-187, Board of County Commissioners' Consideration of Application; amending Section 102-189, Revocation of Exemption/Recovery of Funds; amending Section 102-192, Sunset Repealer; providing for applicability; providing for inclusion in the Code of Laws and Ordinances; providing for severability; providing for repeal of laws of conflict; and providing for an effective date. .

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Thad Altman

**Secunder:** Katie Delaney

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**J.1. Approval, Re: Tourist Development Council's Recommended Funding for Brevard Cultural Alliance Professional Services Contract for FY 2024-25**

Peter Cranis, Tourist Development Office Director, stated this is a request from the Brevard Cultural Alliance (BCA) to the Tourist Development Council (TDC) for renewal of their Contract this year in the amount of \$202,000; the TDC approved that unanimously to come to the Board for its review; and he believes the BCA is in attendance if there are any questions about their proposal.

Catherine Esrock stated she is the Executive Director for Brevard Cultural Alliance; and she is just there for any questions and to thank the Board for hearing this today.

The Board granted the Tourist Development Council's recommendation to approve funding for one year for the FY 2024-2025 Brevard Cultural Alliance Professional Services Contract; further, based on the programs outlined, by approving this Agenda Item, the Board has made the Legislative finding that the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) funds are authorized for the cultural programs pursuant to Section 125.0104(5)9(a)3., Florida Statutes and Section 102-119(3)d, of the Brevard County Code of Ordinances; additionally, once the Contract is developed and approved by Purchasing, Risk Management, and the County Attorney's Office, authorized the Chair to sign the necessary Contract and related documents; and authorized the County Manager to execute any necessary Budget Change Requests.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Tom Goodson

**Second:** Thad Altman

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

## **J.2. Brevard County 2025 Legislative Program**

Frank Abbate, County Manager, stated this Item deals with the 2025 Legislative Program; staff is requesting the Board discuss and provide direction concerning this program and to identify priorities for the upcoming legislative delegation meeting in January; the attached document includes items that were submitted by Natural Resources, Public Works, Utility Services, the Merritt Island Redevelopment Agency, Mosquito Control, and Transit Services; once the Board has an opportunity to discuss and review it, if there are priorities that would be good, staff will be listening intently to what they may be; and finally, when staff has that package ready to go, the Board may want to designate a Commissioner to present these priorities to the Legislative Delegation at the meeting scheduled for January 29, 2025.

Commissioner Delaney stated she has a question about the Port St. John Wastewater Treatment Facility; and she asked just for clarification, if this is for the regional plant that is in discussion or is it for the new Port St. John plant that the County also needs to build.

Mr. Abbate noted it depends on what happens; when this was put together, staff was initially looking at each of the facilities, that is why there are multiple facilities there; Port St. John is one of three facilities; staff would need the funding for either; but it is primarily, since staff knows there would have to be significant other funding opportunities, before looking at it as regional; however, it is needed on a localized level, therefore, staff placed it in there, for that purpose.

Commissioner Delaney asked if during this portion the Board is simply discussing what is on the list or is this discussion on what the Board would also like to place on the list.

Mr. Abbate explained what was provided to the Board was a document that various departments put out there for Board consideration; each of those items are up for discussion because if the Board decides that certain items should be prioritized, staff will be listening to that; and if there are any items the Board wants staff to pull off the list, staff will be happy to do that as well.

Commissioner Delaney advised she has a couple of things she would love to see on the list for the Board to talk to the delegation about as well.

Mr. Abbate noted if there is anything the Board would like to give staff direction on, they would be happy to add that as well.

Chairman Feltner stated he thinks the Board would be happy to do that in the discussion part; he thinks he understands the delegation meeting is January 29; and he asked if that is correct.

Mr. Abbate responded affirmatively.

Chairman Feltner stated certainly appropriation requests the Board would like to have that together prior to that, but certainly the Board has as late as January 14, 2025, to add anything; Commissioner Delaney could sleep on it over Christmas and when it comes back, if she has some items she wants to add, the Board could certainly amend it at that time before anyone goes to the delegation; and he asked if that is fair.

Mr. Abbate replied, absolutely.

Commissioner Adkinson asked if the County has already put money aside for the South Brevard Water and Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Mr. Abbate stated he would have to ask the Utilities Director to discuss it for that particular one; the County put money aside for different facilities where the County is seeking land; and the South one is to bring it up to Advanced Wastewater Treatment Standards.

Commissioner Adkinson asked if money has already been put aside for the South Brevard Wastewater Treatment Facility.

John Denninghoff, Assistant County Manager, advised that there is money set aside for that; staff has been working on both plans and land for that purpose; and staff is well into that process, but there is a long way to go.

Sandra Sullivan stated when she looks at the crisis' this County currently has, like the room full of Fire EMS people, she thinks two of the most important ones that the Board should be looking at as legislatives is, to amend the Tourism Development Tax (TDT), Section Florida Statute 125.0104 to Section on 218.67; Brevard County is a constrained County by the Charter cap on taxes; it is recognized that for funding public safety for constrained counties, but do not include as a definition one constrained by a Charter cap; it is a simple modification that would give the County immediate funding with this change to legislation to be able to legally fund the lifeguards and public safety; the second one of very paramount importance is one to do with impact fees because looking at fire assessment, that is a year off and it does not solve an immediate problem; and impact fees have not been updated in nearly 35 years. She continued by saying the County is handcuffed in what it can do to increase them because the State has restricted the County's ability to do that; with all the growth and mandates like Senate Bill 102, it is fair and reasonable for the State to remove that constraint so the County can address that; just by comparison, what the County is charging for fire and EMS, EMS right now is \$38 when one builds a property; she wants to point out that in a study that was done in 1997, it was recommended for a \$350 fee for EMS to bring the County into alignment with other surrounding counties; when looking at the number one growth issue, that is where the crisis is because by the County's own budget, and this is missing from the EMS assessment, the cost for growth was \$620,000 in 2022 and it is over \$30 million now; and it comes down to how to pay for cost of growth, it is developers paying their fair share. She went on to say these two things, an amendment to legislative priority for amending the TDT and also impact fees, and are very important to have funding sooner than a year out, that does not solve the crisis the County is in now.

Commissioner Delaney stated a couple of things she would really like to see this Board talk about is making some kind of amendment or even the repeal of SB102; she thinks this was a

gross overreach by the State government; if the State is going to hand out mandates like that on the local government, she thinks the State needs to be sending a lot more money to help the County deal with all of that; and if the State is not able, or willing, then it needs to remove this mandate on the County. She mentioned from what she has seen of these projects over the past two years, is it pushes perpetual rentals, no public input for these projects, and she would really like to ask how many people do these properties actually help; a great example of this is an apartment complex that is going up in District 2, and there are only three apartments that are actually affordable housing out of 300-plus.

Commissioner Goodson asked where that is.

Commissioner Delaney advised it is in the City of Cocoa; she stated that is also taking over the industrial and commercial lands which are needed for industrial and commercial businesses; another thing she would like to see on this list is something that helps with the County's transportation needs, with both capacity and maintenance; and there are a few little things for her own District that she would love to see on there, like a stop light in Mims at the post office. She added everyone knows how much Satellite Boulevard is going to cost to pave it and she really does not see the County being able to do that on its own; that is just a few things off the top of her head with a few weeks to think of things; and she wanted to float that out to the other Commissioners.

Chairman Feltner stated that was sort of the idea with the Board coming back, because he is going to do that too, think of other things. He inquired if Commissioner Delaney had met with Representative Chase Tramont on some of these needs in the north end of the County.

Commissioner Delaney commented it is on her list.

Chairman Feltner stated he would strongly encourage that because he certainly petitioned legislators having worked in the process; he is always talking to them about items; it does not mean that they all make it in there; but it does not hurt to ask; and he would encourage her to engage him directly.

Commissioner Goodson asked Commissioner Delaney to talk to him about industrial lands going residential, as she made a comment about that.

Commissioner Delaney stated with the Live Local Act, it is allowing industrial and commercial lands to be used for affordable housing.

Commissioner Goodson stated he does not know if that is true, but if she says it is then he believes it; if Commissioner Delaney knows anything about property values on industrial lands, it is four or five times higher in Brevard County than residential; but why would anybody want to rezone their residential land to build affordable housing.

Commissioner Delaney corrected Commissioner Goodson by asking if he means rezone industrial or commercial land.

Commissioner Goodson confirmed he meant industrial/commercial to affordable housing.

Commissioner Delaney stated there are lots of different reasons; there was someone in the community at the last zoning meeting who wanted to change commercial land to build nine townhomes.

Commissioner Goodson pointed out those were not affordable housing.

Commissioner Delaney agreed, stating she understands that.

Commissioner Goodson asked where this apartment building in Cocoa is that she was referring to.

Commissioner Delaney advised it is on State Road (SR) 524.

Commissioner Goodson asked which one, noting there are four.

Commissioner Delaney replied, Allegra.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if it is not a homeless family rental.

Commissioner Delaney stated she knows there are three affordable housing units in 300-plus apartments.

Commissioner Goodson asked if there was one on Dixon that is affordable housing. He asked what it is called when one has low rent on his or her income.

Commissioner Delaney responded by saying low income.

Commissioner Goodson asked if that one is on Dixon Boulevard is lower income.

Commissioner Delaney answered of course, but that is not the norm of what is being seen.

Commissioner Goodson commented he wishes Commissioner Delaney would really help him in Cocoa; he asked if that was her District; Commissioner Delaney is doing a good job; and if she keeps it up, he will not have...

Chairman Feltner stated he would like to request that Commissioner Altman present this on the Board's behalf at the delegation meeting; he graciously accepted that; he mentioned Commissioner Altman has been up there many, many times and knows the constraints; and he asked if there were any objections from the Board members.

The Board discussed the 2025 Legislative Program; and reviewed and accepted the draft 2025 Legislative Initiatives recommended by staff, for the upcoming 2025 Legislative Delegation meeting.

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Tom Goodson

**Secunder:** Katie Delaney

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

## **E.2. Presentation of Fire Assessment Report Addressing the Timeline and Actions Needed Should the Board Plan to Consider an Adjustment for the Fire Service Non-Ad Valorem Assessment (Fire Assessment)**

Commissioner Delaney thanked staff for putting this together and being willing to present this to the public.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, stated at the December 3, 2024, Board meeting, the Board directed staff to present the fire assessment study that was provided to the Board and to the public today; previously, at the September 17, 2024, Budget hearing, the Board directed staff to

prepare a report addressing the timeline and the actions needed, should the Board plan to consider an increase for the fire service non-ad valorem assessment; and that is what this report is about. He continued by saying several senior staff members, with specific areas of knowledge and familiarity, contributed in writing this and several areas of the report; they will be joining him in the presentation today and going to be covering the areas of the report that they and their staff members have helped prepare; these will include County Attorney Morris Richardson, who will be covering the background, history, and evolution of the fire assessment and the potential fire assessment increases; Jill Hayes, Budget Office Director, will be covering financial overview, fire assessment increases, and General Fund impact, and personnel costs related to any fire assessment increases the Board may wish to consider; Tom Klein, Deputy Fire Chief, will be covering the cost distribution model that is currently in place with shared expenses between Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and the comparable Fire assessment rates that exist elsewhere; and Fire Chief Patrick Voltaire is going to cover utilization of funding, inflation impacts, and the timeline process that is applicable for any potential fire assessment increase. He added he will be covering the fire assessment adjustments that have occurred, how the County deals with contracted municipalities; and additional considerations that the Board may want to think about.

Morris Richardson, County Attorney, stated Brevard County Fire Rescue's fire operation provides fire services to unincorporated Brevard County and the municipalities of Grant, Valkaria, Melbourne Village, Palm Shores, and West Melbourne; fire operations can only be funded with revenues that are generated within this service area; Brevard County Fire Rescue's (BCFR) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) operations provides emergency medical and transport services countywide, including unincorporated and all municipalities; EMS operations must be funded by Countywide Revenue sources; historically fire operations were funded by an ad valorem tax levied in the unincorporated County and participating municipalities known as the Fire Control Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU); ad valorem taxes are based on property values and determined by a millage rate; and people sometimes refer to ad valorem as above the line because of where they appear on the tax bill. He continued by saying EMS operations were funded by ambulance billing and by a special assessment; special assessments, also called non-ad valorem assessments, are charges used to cover the cost of providing a service, they are not based on property value; and special assessments are sometimes referred to as below the line because of where they appear on the tax bill; and the EMS assessment, because EMS services are Countywide, apply Countywide. He went on to say in the early 2000s, a Florida court case held EMS services cannot be funded by special assessments; the court determined that those services do not provide a benefit to real property, which is one of the requirements of an assessment; this prompted the City of Palm Bay to challenge the County's EMS assessment; although the ability to fund EMS services by special assessment was in question, funding fire services by special assessment was clearly lawful; and in 2006, the Board of County Commissioners adopted a fire service special assessment to fund the majority of fire operations, unlike the EMS assessment which had been Countywide, fire services special assessment only applies in unincorporated County and in those four municipalities where BCFR provides primary fire service. He stated the Board retained a portion of the Fire Control MSTU representing a millage that had been approved by voters in a 1999 referendum; at the same time the Board did away with the EMS assessment; going forward EMS operations would be funded by continuing ambulance billing and by a new transfer from the General Fund; basically, the revenue sources for fire operations and EMS operations largely flipped, where fire operations had previously been funded above the line by ad valorem taxes and EMS was funded by special assessment, that was almost reversed with the exception of Fire Control MSTU; what is on the screen now is an example of a tax bill to show what he means of above the line and below the line, all the things above the dark line in the lower third of the tax bill are the ad valorem taxes and are calculated by applying a millage rate to the non-exempt taxable value of real property; and up there currently is the County

General Fund which funds EMS through a transfer, the Fire Control MSTU is above the line and also a millage rate, and then there is the fire assessment.

Mr. Abbate stated the next slide deals with when the fire assessment was created in 2006 for Fiscal Year 2007; in 2008, the Board voted to reduce that assessment by 15 percent and directed staff to reduce revenues that were needed for fire operations by drawing down on reserves over time; that happened over a number of years; in 2018, staff came before the Board and requested a six percent increase and that was because those reserves had been reduced from \$14 million down to \$2 million, and running out of the reserves; staff had asked for the six percent increase along with annual inflation adjustment and the Board granted that in 2018; then in 2021, staff came back to the Board and presented a variety of options and a seven year plan for increasing the assessment, to address salary as well as capital and infrastructure concerns that they had; and the Board at that time was looking at a 33 percent increase in the fire assessment. He continued by saying the Board approved a particular plan that would have required that 33 percent increase, but decided at that point that the increase would be 29 percent because it had allocated \$8.4 million of ARPA funding to Fire Rescue that would be spread over seven years; therefore, they were able to reduce for the seven year plan, to a 29 percent increase; on the next slide, as Attorney Richardson had mentioned, the County contracts with various municipalities, and that is the case, West Melbourne, Grant Valkaria, Palm Shores, and Melbourne Village; one can see on the slide the municipalities contract with the County for fire service protection; the County collects both MSTU and fire assessment revenue from these jurisdictions; far and away the most significant contributor is West Melbourne; West Melbourne pays approximately \$5.8 million annually in fire assessment and Fire MSTU assessments. He went on to say when the Board raised the assessment in 2021, West Melbourne raised some concerns; they had a study commission to look at implementing their own fire service, as several other municipalities have; staff advised West Melbourne it did not think that was cost effective for them over time; he believes West Melbourne came to that conclusion as well, especially when staff told them they pay the same rate that they pay all the other unincorporated residents that the service pays for; staff tries to keep it unified for all; at that point West Melbourne had moved away from considering their own fire service; and that is important to note because they had thought that the fire assessment, from their perspective, they could provide a better service depending on what the cost was. He noted if in fact they had chosen to do that and the County lost that revenue, the Board needs to know the County would still maintain those fire services and fire stations because they serve not only the City, but they serve as transport, ambulance service, ALS, as well as all the unincorporated needs in the surrounding area; he does not really see the County reducing the force by such; that would be an approximate if they left, but there is no reason to believe that they would; but if they did, that would be about a 12 percent increase; the only reason he is sharing that information is as the Board considers what increases might be appropriate, that may be one the Board wants to consider just so it has those resources; of course the money could always be placed in reserves, or utilized elsewhere when that is done.

Jill Hayes, Budget Office Director, stated as Attorney Richardson stated Fire Rescue is comprised of two primary divisions or functions, fire operations and EMS; fire operations provides fire services to unincorporated Brevard, as well as the cities that were mentioned in the previous slide; these services are funded through the fire assessment which accounts for approximately 69 percent of their revenue and the Fire Control MSTU which is approximately 28 percent of funding; EMS represents ambulance transport services and those are provided Countywide in unincorporated Brevard and in all of the cities; and these services are funded through approximately 59 percent ambulance billings and 37 percent General Fund.

Tom Klein, Deputy Fire Chief, stated the allocation of shared expenses between fire operations and EMS is established to ensure that personnel, operations, and capital expenses associated

with these divisions are equitably funded by appropriate revenue sources; this cost distribution model was developed through the collaboration of the County Manager's Office, Brevard County Fire Rescue, Brevard County Budget Office, and the Brevard County Clerk of Court's Finance Office and is based on the daily staffing profile assigned to operate each Fire Rescue Unit and includes baseline number of personnel assigned per unit, including fire engines, ambulances, and rescue squads for an 24-hour operational period; currently the cost distribution is 55.5 percent for fire-related, funded by the fire assessment and Fire Control MSTU; and 44.5 percent for EMS-related, funded by General Fund and ambulance billings; and capital outlay solely related to EMS or fire functions including fire trucks, ambulances, and their equipment do not carry a shared cost distribution.

Ms. Hayes continued by saying this slide represents the fiscal impact if the fire assessment rate were increased; for example, looking at the second line on the chart, if the rates were to increase by five percent, the average annual increase for residential property would be just under \$14 per year and would generate an additional \$1.9 million in revenue for fire operations; Chief Klein just discussed the shared expenses and that methodology, therefore, staff wanted to provide the amount of revenue that would be required to fund the EMS portion of expenses; and since the majority of ambulance billing revenue is associated with Medicaid and Medicare claims, those rates are limited by Federal and State regulations and cannot be increased. She explained as expenditure levels increase on the fire operations side, additional General Funds will be required to fund EMS portion; and using that same example of the five percent increase on the fire assessment, and additional \$1.5 million would be needed from the General Fund, which would be about a 10 percent increase to the current funding level.

Commissioner Altman inquired if what is being said is that as the assessment increases it is necessary to increase the General Revenue Fund.

Ms. Hayes responded affirmatively. She continued by saying personnel costs are also distributed based on that same 55/45 percent split that Chief Klein discussed; this chart illustrated the fiscal impact of a one percent increase to all field job classes above the most recent offer proposed by the County; each additional one percent increase is approximately \$580,000 annually; one can see the breakout there of the fire operations side versus the EMS General Fund side; it is important to note that the fringe benefit rate for these employees is approximately 48 percent; that is primarily the Florida Retirement System contribution rate for the special risk class, which is about 33 percent; and worker's compensation rates are also higher for these field positions. She continued by saying for every dollar in salary it is costing approximately \$1.48 in total compensation and benefits; this is exclusive of the health insurance premiums paid by the County; that was not included in the financial impact because those do not change proportionately, it is a flat rate for all County employees; and she will turn it over to Chief Voltaire.

Chief Patrick Voltaire, Fire Rescue Director, explained a portion of the current fire assessment funding provides for necessary equipment replacement and new purchases to address the Department's immediate annual needs; these acquisitions include replacements in new fire engines, multi-use vehicles, pick-up trucks, PPE which would be the bunker gear, pants, coats, helmets, and things like that, the technology upgrades, the mobile data terminals that work in the trucks, and communications like radios; and there is also hazardous materials equipment, as they are the only hazardous materials team throughout the entire County. He went on to say this slide highlights the utilization of funding in the Department's seven-year plan for infrastructure projects related to Fire and EMS facilities, detailing completed, budgeted, and project initiatives from Fiscal Years 2023 through Fiscal Years 2029; projects completed in Fiscal year 2023-2024, a total of \$9.7 million was including, but limited to, station 88 and station 67, EMS stations in the south part of the County; Fiscal Year 2025 they have allocated almost

\$17 million in repairs which includes station 86 in Barefoot Bay, the slab is being poured on Thursday, and station 23 in Titusville; in Fiscal Years 2026 through 2029, the capital infrastructure projects, a significant \$43.5 million are earmarked and includes a new West Port St. John station 27; a major renovation or total remodel to Station 64 in the Spessard Holland area of South Melbourne Beach; and it is important to note in the next slide he will talk about the increase in pricing, because that station itself saw a 186 percent increase from the projected in 2021, it was \$2.63 million, and the projected budget for that station now is \$7.5 million. He added in that proposal there is a station 100 that will need to be built down in the south County area in the new Sunterra Subdivision. He continued by saying this slide outlines the significant impacts of the inflation that he spoke of like station 86; the fire engines in 2017 were \$545,000 and today they are \$900,000, approaching \$1 million, which represents almost a 93 percent increase; same as for the ambulances, at one time, in 2017 they were \$165,000 and now they are approaching \$300,000 which calculates to be about a 66 percent increase in the price in just a few years; when the Department first started that plan in 2021, the anticipated Consumer Price Index (CPI) was between two and three percent; and one can see on the graph the great curves of the price increases and how it really affected them in staying aggressive in what they do with purchases. He stated this slide focuses on the impacts of inflation on the fire rescue apparatus and equipment and costs from 2020 to 2024; some of the things talked about with technology was \$3,600 to \$4,800 for the radios, Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)s that he is looking to purchase this year, what was initially thought to be about \$4,500 in the seven-year plan are now coming in over \$10,000, closer to \$11,000 per pack; and bunker gear rose from \$2,200 to \$3,500, and that is just a pant and coat, it does not include a helmet, hood, mask, boots, or gloves to fill out the whole ensemble for everyone the Board sees here in a yellow shirt.

Deputy Fire Chief Klein stated at the direction of County leadership, staff researched other agencies that utilize non-ad valorem fire assessments; it was noted that the agencies may utilize both non-ad valorem fire assessments and ad valorem taxes, or above the line taxes; additionally, the methodologies utilized to develop the fire assessment fee structures varied from agency to agency; currently, Brevard County's average residential property is assessed at \$279.59 for Fiscal Year 2024-2025; in comparison, the average rate obtained by multiple vetting methods yielded an average fire assessment of \$307.12 for Fiscal Year 2023-2024; and limitations of the study did not analyze any additional funding sources such as MSTUs or General Funds. He continued by saying the required timeline for the Board to potentially increase the fire assessment is approximately 120 days and must be approved and certified prior to September 15, for the increase to be effective the subsequent Fiscal Year; a general timeline is at the bottom of this slide; in 2021 it took 104 days to accomplish the task beginning on January 7 with the issues, invitation to bid on public notice; on March 9 was Board direction and discussion not to exceed; notices were mailed about 10 days later; and final Board hearing was April 20, 2021.

Mr. Abbate went on to say he has a few other considerations he wants to leave the Board with to end the presentation; first, the non-reoccurring ARPA funding is going to be exhausted in 2028; to replace that \$8.4 million, or \$1.2 million or so per year, is going to require a five percent increase in fire assessment, and that is just keeping the bar flat; the Board needs to consider that in addition to anything else the Board wishes to consider; secondly, as was mentioned a couple of times, the current capital and infrastructure seven-year plan needs to be updated; when the report was first submitted, it was suggested that if the Board moved forward on this that it would like 30 day period to update it; basically, it is to recreate a new seven-year plan, now four years into the current plan and give the Board options in terms of what it decides to do at that point; and he has already asked Chief Voltaire to undertake that update and he knows that he and staff have already started working on it, so they will not need additional time to do it. He mentioned the assessment and MSTU relationship; while the Board direction was

focused on directing the fire assessment report on the timeline and the process that is associated with the potential increase, substituting or supplementing a fire assessment increase with an increase in the fire MSTU is also an option that the Board may wish to consider; and he can provide the Board information; that option was beyond the scope of what the Board had asked staff to do; staff wanted to make sure the Board was aware that is a combined fire side of the house ,combined fire assessment and the MSTU, who is put on notice, how it affects a property is different in both of those; but that is an option that the Board will want to keep in mind moving forward. He noted that concludes the presentation.

Commissioner Altman asked as the assessment increases the General Fund will need to increase; and he asked if the same would have to happen with the MSTU, and if not, why not.

Mr. Abbate explained it is whatever the total amount of money that is added to the fire operations side of the house, that can be done either exclusively with the fire assessment or it can be done exclusively, depending on how much the Board wants to do with the funding it can do with the MSTU, or a combination of both; when adding those two numbers together, when it comes to personnel costs, that is going to be 55 percent of the costs; the other 45 percent, as Ms. Hayes was saying, it really cannot come out of additional ambulance billings, that is a very limited amount, the rest would have to come from a General Fund appropriation because that is how the County takes care of it; and he believes that answers Commissioner Altman's question.

\*The Board recessed at 10:30 a.m. and reconvened at 10:39 a.m.

Ryan Barrack stated the employer employee relationship is a profoundly deeper than a mere exchange of money for services provided; relationship is intimate in many ways; for the relationship to be a long-lasting and successful one, the employer must treat their internal customer with the same respect as their external ones; Maslow's hierarchy of needs is often studied and applied to the workforce as a baseline guide to ensure that the basic human needs of an employee are being met; the success and failures of this relationship can be hard to quantify; but he asked is it the opinion of the elected officials that the policymakers of yesterday successfully and adequately cared for their employees; and he noted Maslow says that the most basic human needs are physiological. He asked are the employees granted access to affordable healthcare to ensure that they remain healthy enough to be effective on the job; he noted the benefits for 2025 were slashed, employee contributions increased a small amount, while out-of-pocket maximums increased by thousands for a family; single-income employees are forced to work hundreds and sometimes thousands of hours of overtime to split the rental of a house three or four ways; safety, their job is incredibly dangerous by nature and the employees acknowledge and accept the inherent risks when they take the call; he asked is it appropriate for the policymakers of the past to delay CIP projects when the projects often involved the replacement of six stations; some of the Board's predecessors were okay with this concept; love and belonging, the constant appetite of employees leaves the remaining ones empty, angry, and confused wondering if there is something wrong with themselves and questioning why he or she stays while everyone else is applying for employment elsewhere; and they commonly refer to the bonds that they make in this job as brotherhood. He noted they hurt when a brother is sick or injured, and are equally saddened when nearly 100 of their brothers and sisters resign in less than 12 months; esteem, they are blessed with the opportunity to help and serve; being empowered to accomplish a common goal or vision that results in helping a resident is unique and fulfilling; this alone builds their esteem; and most employees will say this calling is like no other, however the esteem has been hurt; and it is not uncommon for employees to perceive their value and worth to an organization according to their compensation and benefits, and how they align to the industry standards. He continued by saying self-actualization, employees yearn to feel successful in their position; he asked are

Brevard employees even given the tools to be successful, does the Board feel the brain drain of 100 employees puts them in a position to be successful; he mentioned unfortunately, their plight has been advertised on a very public stage, and it stings personally and professionally; he looks forward to the day when it stops; the exposure has left scars on all parties involved; and he asked if this new Board will show more concern than the previous one or will the state of apathy continue. He commented he senses that some of the Board Members have read Steven Covey's, *The Speed of Trust*; the pages of this book suggest that once a breach of trust occurs between an employer and employee, it is incredibly difficult to rebuild; despite the current state of the Department's workforce, he remains optimistic that the County is on the verge of accomplishing something great; and his team looks forward to working with the Board and the Administrative team to get to a better place and restore the trust.

Michael Bramson stated he would like to first congratulate the Board on their winnings and the appointment of the Chair; it has been a challenging road to get to this place they are all in; as a steward for the Union, he can absolutely appreciate the time and energy going towards Fire Rescue at this time from both the staff and Commissioners; there are a lot of meetings and Workshops coming up, and a lot of other things to be done moving into the beginning of 2025; he is very much aware that there needs to be communication and the do-so in this particular manner it takes meetings and sessions; and everyone understands that. He advised he would like to take the time to talk about another layer to the firefighters engagement, as well as add another component to considerations during those meetings, that is of morale; not specifically morale as a good or bad thing, but morale is a metric; these continued displays that the Board is going to continue to hear, or has heard in the past, are made and are said out of love and compassion for Brevard County, the Brevard County citizens, residents, and visitors, and the cities within; there was once a calling; at one point people came to that calling to become public safety; there was a need, a need by the County, that these men and women answered and that were heard; but at one point Brevard County stopped providing, it no longer provides their side of the deal and many are taking a calculated, but no less difficult, decision to separate. He continued by saying others are waiting to see what the change will be; in the end engagement is important, even if some of the comments are more vivid than others; it is the silence that indicates apathy; when the first responders are forced to no longer engage, out of the necessity of their own health, then it will have reached an irreversible depressed workforce; and good luck, but keep in mind what the Board is about to hear and what it will continue to hear is a component of morale and it truly is sincere.

Kent Fey stated there is so much for him to say; he has been retired from Brevard County Fire Rescue for nine years; the reason he is there is he is tired of hearing and seeing his brothers and sisters literally suffering at times; he knows not all of the Board is part of the past Commission; they were requesting a \$40,000 increase and the line for reasoning was that they wanted to keep up with other counties; he gets that; he did not get from the past Commission the full impact of why they did not want to give the money other than like, what Commissioner Delaney had said, the cap on taxes; the Board can get past that but the Fire Department has to ask for it; and he is asking now with the underpaid and understaffing. He mentioned he is still a current Union member, an original founding member of the Union from back in 1984; he started working for Brevard County in 1980 as a lifeguard; they were doing away with full-time positions so he requested a lateral transfer and went to fire school; he started to work for Brevard County in 1985 and worked until the end of 2015; and since then because of exposures, he is part of two class-action lawsuits. He noted he had stage 4 colon cancer in 2022 and zero thyroid, which caused extreme weight gain; these are the risks of high risks; it is a real thing, not just to the risk of fires; he was on a hazardous materials team for several years; there are other things that probably preempted that from back in the day when they were the leather lung unit, as people would say; and Mr. Abbate knows him, he has had many jobs. He stated to support his family, besides working with the Fire Department, he worked doing

charters and commercial fishing, and overtime; he hopes the Board will consider and put forth the effort to get these people what they deserve.

John Dacko stated that was a nice presentation, but he thinks all he heard was to keep kicking the can down the road; a few weeks ago he spoke about how Mr. Abbate systematically dismantled Brevard County Fire Rescue; today he will provide more evidence and statistics; there is still a condemned fire station; there are two fire stations that are designed to hold five personnel, that are now holding seven to eight; this past Friday, three of the Department's valued employees graduated from Seminole County Fire Rescue's new hire class 2402; one of them was a legacy hire whose father dedicated 30 years to BCFR, retiring as a District Chief; and another was one of his own employees with a high probability of advancing far within his Department. He went on to say during the graduation ceremony, the Seminole County Fire Chief proudly shared some details about his department; they serve 485,000 citizens and employ 515 personnel, operating in 19 stations, with a new one opening next year, and they run 54,000 calls annually; putting that into perspective for BCFR, it serves 644,000 citizens and employs 480 personnel operating 31 functional fire stations, one is now condemned, and to date BCFR has run 93,000 calls; for the past three negotiation cycles spanning more than 10 years, the County negotiators have asked the Union to compare wages to Seminole County Fire Rescue; the Union has presented wage proposals based on these comparisons, but the County's negotiation team has rejected them every time; and Mr. Abbate has been running these negotiations. He continued by saying fast forward to today, he has been a lieutenant with BCFR for 10 years and he earns \$76,000 annually; a lieutenant in Seminole County Fire Rescue with the same years of services earns \$120,000; personnel are leaving BCFR because of low wage, low pay, and poor work-life balance; Mr. Abbate has kicked this can so far down the road that the wage gap and quality of life disparity have become nearly impossible to address; a properly funded department 10 to 12 years ago could have easily prevented the crisis that is being faced today; and this year alone BCFR has lost 108 personnel. He stated every one of the members in attendance today loves what he or she does and loves helping the community; it is time to let Chief Voltaire create a budget that fully funds his Fire Department and stop imposing budgets that are essentially dictated by a want-to-be fire chief, Frank Abbate.

Christina Fleming stated she has been a firefighter in Brevard County since 1998 and retired for one year; when she started the Department was operating with two-man engines; in 1999 through the referendum they were able to move to three-man engines, a crucial step that allowed them to better serve this community; going back to 2005, the County did a wonderful study called the Cody Study and showed that every department in Brevard County, including Parks and Recreation, everybody, was underpaid; during 2007, the housing crisis, the Commission came to the Department recognizing their dedication and commitment to this community and asked for their help; in the spirit of service, the Department agreed to freeze its pay for three years, trusting that everyone was in this together, being told if they did this for the County, it will have their backs and make sure they are taken care of next time; unfortunately, next time never came; and instead of seeing the promise of support the Department has watched as critical CIP projects were delayed, they have seen stations left in disrepair, trucks and rescues left undelivered, while the employees continue to work in conditions that fall further behind. She noted the Department is still running calls in outdated equipment, with a reduced workforce, and relying on the same commitment to service they had in 1998; in 2011 and 2012 the Charter Cap was voted in, and furthermore, excused why Fire Rescue was always neglected; now, as negotiations are at a standstill, she would ask this Board to consider the message it needs to send to the men and women of this Department, that Brevard County is where they should stay, and that this is their destination; she knows many of the firefighters are questioning whether their future lies in Brevard County, a County that they faithfully served; if this County were to retain the best, it needs to show them there is light at the end of the tunnel,

a path forward, not just for the Department, but for the families who depend on them; and the County needs to demonstrate it is committed to ensuring safety and well-being of its First Responders, just as much as it values the well-being of the residents the BCFR protects. She added this is not just about a pay raise or benefit, it is about showing that the work the Department has done, and continues to do, is valued and that their future in Brevard County is secure and truly a team working the same goal. She thanked the Board for its time and for considering the future of the Department; and she mentioned the updated list of attrition levels shows they are now at 101 field firefighters, fire medics, and single cert paramedics that have left as of about 15 minutes ago.

Joshua Madsen stated the Board does not have to experience management's failures, but BCFR does; every day when looking at the citizens, while trying to provide service, but the failures above result in the Department having to fail the citizens; the care that could be given to the citizens and provide, the experience, the knowledge, it is all gone; about 20 percent of the Department has 17 years or more, that truly have a lot of knowledge and experience in this job, everyone else has less than six years; and 18 and 19 year old kids are who is replacing them, with zero experience and zero life skills, and zero abilities; and that is who is on call with him. He mentioned two of his guys just resigned last week; what they were waiting for was this past October to see what the Board would do and what negotiations would come; he has seen it for 24 years; he has been there for 24 years in February and his wife has over 25; she comes home after running a serious call, upset, and when he asks her what is going on she says she could not do what she needed to do because she does not have experienced partners; he tells her she can only do what she can do because that is what the County wants; and he asked is it truly what the citizens and the County citizens want or is it what County management wants. He stated Mr. Abbate only cares that there is a person in that seat that has a pulse; he does not care what kind of liability they bring to the people or even the Board's family; one day the Board will be sitting behind it; he knows Mr. Abbate's health, he worked with him on calls back when he did the fire teams thing that he went through; he said to please look after him; he is going to be relying on this Department and the kids that are running these calls; who is he going to get to replace the two experienced guys that just left, two 19-year old kids next month, so it is a liability for him looking after them and trying to look after the citizens; he is sick of it; and the blood is on whose hands, not his because he has done everything he can. He asked if it is on the Board prior to this one or the County Manager, he only knows it is not on him because he does everything he can; he commented he hopes Alpizar Law and Morgan and Morgan are paying attention because maybe that is what it takes; he wonders whose name is going to be at the top of the list of who is being negligent; it is not the Department's employees, they are tired; he has worked over 1,000 hours of overtime this year to be able to make a living; he already works 3,000 hours per year as a normal schedule, normal employees work 2,080; and they do not get overtime until have 106 hours in two weeks because they are firefighters and a lot of people do not know that. He reiterated overtime does not even count until after 106 hours in two weeks, someone should take that into consideration; he advised the new guys make \$15 per hour for the first five years, with no raise; he is at \$24.98 and he has been with the Department for 24 years and a lieutenant fire medic; that is \$40,000 to \$50,000 less than his counter-part everywhere else. He stated he knows this County has a challenge with it being 72 miles long, but the Board can increase the fire assessment fee, MSTU, and by a super majority vote it can be done with the General Fund also; and that is what is being asked for.

Alejandro Campillo stated he stands before this Board to share a deeply personal concern that affects many families in Fire Rescue; in Florida, the income threshold for a family of four to qualify for State assistance is \$57,000 for 2024; many firefighters fall under that \$57,000 poverty line; for families like his where one parent stays home to care for the children, this threshold presents a significant challenge to meet their financial obligations; he faces two difficult choices, working extensive overtime which keeps him away from his family or taking on

a second job further reducing his time at home; and this relentless work schedule has taken a toll on his family life, whereas it took his daughter nearly four years to say that she loved him. He added he only had one to two days off per month at that point; and he attributes it to his constant absence due to work commitments. He continued by saying he is not seeking luxury or extravagance, his simple desire is to maintain a single job that allows him to support his family without sacrificing precious time with them; the Department is unified in its commitment to provide the best service to the community often going above and beyond to ensure the well-being of others, even to the point of picking residents over their own families; however, the current circumstances compel them to consider other opportunities elsewhere, in search of employers who recognize the value of their worth rather than offering empty promises. He noted a mass exodus is coming and stations will get browned out due to no employee availability; it is disheartening to acknowledge that certain detrimental influence driven by greed and power exists within the system; as Commissioners, their primary objective should transcend re-election ambitions and should focus on the lives of the residents and guiding this County towards its full potential; in the area of campaigning on tax cuts at the expense of essential services should be reconsidered; Brevard County lacks in crucial areas such as Public Safety, infrastructure, sanitation, and educational services that have been neglected in favor of minimal tax savings; and this approach is unfair to residents and contributes to the County's decline. He stated he would urge this Board to reflect on these concerns and consider actionable steps to address them.

Sandra Sullivan stated the primary problem she has with this presentation is it looks at a solution that is a year down the road, fire assessment is a year down the road and does not solve the problem now; she inquired what is going to happen in a year's time with where the County is with the escalating issue that it has now; she mentioned she was very disappointed not to see other issues being looked at; the billing software, the Board is writing off \$14 million of non-Medicare per year; that number has been going up very high and it needs to be evaluated; impact fees seem to be the fundamental problem, the County is not looking at how to resolve that; the Board should be doing an impact fee feasibility study immediately for EMS and fire; and it would take six weeks. She pointed out she had an Attorney General Opinion (AGO) on the Emergency Medical Service Assessment from 2012; it is in an email that she had sent to the Board; she stated she contends that the Board could put an EMS fire assessment; it says, "a County that has adopted an Ordinance authorizing the imposition of an assessment for Emergency Medical Services prior to January 2022"; this County had it back in the 1990s; she continued reading, "All of the special assessments for Emergency Medical Services levied by a County prior to the effective date of this section are ratified and validated in all respects, if they would have been valid had this section been in effect at the time they were levied, however, this subsection shall not validate assessments in counties with litigation challenging, blah, blah, blah"; if the County had, prior to 2022, an EMS assessment, its illegal; there is also another way to do it; it is also legal under a fire district; and she pointed out this solution does not solve the problem now, but in terms of planning there are some things that can be done now. She commented in terms of what the Board can do now, it can negotiate; there is a crisis right now pertaining to Space Florida and sewage capacity; this County has a right to collect a tax on the federal lands that are leased to private entities; it can negotiate to the table and solve this problem here and it solves other problems; and it is not fair to the taxpayers of Brevard County to take another assessment, when the Board has an opportunity to take some monies from some other sources and solve this problem now.

Scott Gardiner stated he is a 26-year employee of BCFR; he is currently a District Chief in Merritt Island; he had the opportunity last week to attend the Florida Fire Chiefs Association Safety and Health Conference in Orlando; there was a round table discussion and one of the counties there was Pasco County; they announced in 2022 that they are going to a 24/72 hour work schedule; they started in April and have not even started the new schedule yet; prior to

that announcement they were getting 20 applicants for hiring; after they made that announcement they received an average of 250 applicants; prior they had zero Fire Medic hirings and after they have had 76 Fire Medic hirings and over 40 of them were from other departments who do not transport, and Pasco County does transports. He mentioned that would be the equivalent of Melbourne, Palm Bay, Fire Rescue that does not transport, he would be hiring those people. He continued by saying prior to their announcement in 2022 they had spent \$5.5 million in overtime; 2023 they had \$2.4 million in overtime; there overtime budget was almost cut in half due to the amount of people they hired; mandatory overtime was rampant prior to the announcement now they are looking at negligent numbers and they have a lot of people to fill those overtime spots; and the health and safety of their firefighters is paramount to their County Commissioners, bring those down. He noted the numbers are conservative, it is \$25,000 approximately to hire and train one firefighter and nearly 100 firefighters have resigned this year; that averages \$2.5 million that was spent just this year; like he said he is a 26-year employee, averages about 25 people leaving per year; over his career, the County spent \$16.25 million in training firefighters that have left for other departments; Chief Voltaire talked about fire trucks and a lot of Capital expenditures; he showed a picture of his three kids, they were two and three years old at the time of the picture and were sitting on Engine 40 in Merritt Island; that engine is still in service as he saw it yesterday while on shift; and his kids are currently doing ride-alongs with Departments as they are looking to go to fire school, but they are not doing them here in Brevard County, they are looking in Indian River County and Palm Beach County. He mentioned he wants his kids to work here, but how is he to convince them to work here if Mr. Abbate and County leadership does not watch out for their people; he asked for help to convince his children to work in Brevard County and to make an investment on its people here; capital infrastructure is great; but the County has to invest in the people too.

Mason Boylan stated he is a veteran and an employee of BCFR for 16 years and a lieutenant for the last seven; he is also a small business owner and a citizen of Brevard County for the last 18 years; he is attendance to speak to the Board about the state of affairs of the BCFR; he lives here and stayed because he wants to serve the County where he lives, where his daughter goes to school, and where his wife works; over the last decade he has witnessed a steady decline in his career; the housing market boomed and inflation went up drastically and his business charged accordingly, but Brevard County employees were left behind; the Department was given another insulting offer of five percent a year spread over the next three years; and he knew he had to consider a career change. He went on to say he has been clear since the beginning and he does not want to leave, but it is the same story every contract negotiation; this is insulting because the industry standard and the County's cost of living; the industry standard on the lowest side is 40 percent with many getting an additional month and one-half off, commonly referred to as a Kelly day; on the high side it is 100 percent, in some instances even more than that with an additional three months off per year with the 24/72 schedule that was just discussed; this percentage reflects how much Brevard County is behind its neighboring fire departments; since this offer, he has been offered another job in another department, along with four other Brevard County employees; and the irony is that his pay is the same at recruit academy, day one as it is here after 16 years as a lieutenant with a degree. He stated the disparity in pay is why BCFR cannot recruit and retain employees; just at his station alone, low pay has affected his crew in many ways; he has an employee with 11 years on the job and still makes just \$1 more than minimum wage; his lease agreement has run out and he is looking for a new apartment to live in, he also has custody of his daughter, the problem is he cannot afford a two bedroom apartment in Cocoa or Rockledge, and neither are affluent areas; the rent is \$2,100 per month or more; he is now looking into living arrangements for his daughter possibly with family and friends; and this is a guy that has 11 years on the job, it is not a new starting pay issue. He noted this is a guy who is confident and skilled in his trade, who is also looking into changing his career; he has another employee who

owns a lawn care business and has a family of five; he owned a truck which he used for both for commuting back and forth to the station and to pull his lawn trailer; once again he found himself in a financial situation where something had to go; he sold his truck and now he commutes back and forth in his wife's car; when he needs to mow lawns he rents a U-haul truck for the day because it is cheaper than owning his own truck; this is an employee at the highest pay rate of a firefighter/paramedic scale with a degree; and his other crew member's wife was a teacher for Brevard County for 20 years for the same pay, low morale, and high turnover rate she has recently taken another job which pays her drastically more. He shared while he has been a lieutenant he has had 14 partners in just seven years; that is getting a new employee, having to train and teach them how to mitigate the problems they will face, how to drive trucks in emergency, where the hospitals are, and what he expects as a Lieutenant; that process starts all over again roughly every six months and it is not because those hired do not like this line of work; they are all currently still firemen, they just work for other agencies that compensate them much better for their time; and there is a book that is often referenced to regarding leadership in the Fire Department and it is called Extreme Ownership; in this book it makes frequent reference to being accountable for ones words, decisions, and actions; and he looks up here, the department has pleaded many with the same faces contract after contract and explained their pay issues. He continued by saying in the previous contracts the Department was told it would like to give them all raises but the money is just not there, then many in the same group do budget workshops for the coming year and very little has been done to increase the budget that allows for wage increases; and he asked where is the accountability for County Management.

Faust Higgins stated he grew up on Merritt Island and still currently lives in Brevard County; he worked as a firefighter/paramedic for the County for four years and recently changed jobs to be able to afford to live in this County; after buying a home he quickly realized that he could not afford to live and work for this County; he worked close to 1,500 hours of overtime each year and still struggled to make ends meet for himself and his family; not only is it the sense of pay, but the morale; since going to a new job it is drastically different; from work/life balance, he is currently on his Kelly day right now, the work/life balance is amazing; and Brevard County does not support that. He noted it is upsetting, from working for the County and seeing the ins and outs of it; he has six months on with a different Department and he is already making more and has a work/life balance; he is more in tuned with his family when he comes home, where he was defeated day in and day out coming home from work; he was on shift and at stations more than he was at home seeing his own family; he thinks there needs to be a change before it becomes a critical failure because he still wants to live in this County, he loves it and he did not want to leave working for this County. He commented he still wants that for him and his family.

David Joseph Van Meir Breeden stated January 6 he was hired with 22 other people he considers his brothers because they went through EMT and fire together thanks to the County sponsorship program, and there are 12 of the 22 left; five have left for Melbourne Fire Rescue; a couple including other people hired last year just finished Palm Bay Fire Rescue orientation; a lot of them have left for cities because they pay better and do not transport; February 22, the Department entered arbitration with the Contracts, February 29 was the Budget Workshop, he just noted that because he is new and hopefully the contract goes well; and honestly, the only reason he is still here is because the contract has not gone through yet and he is hoping something good comes from it, but ultimately, he has to do what is best for his family. He went on to say September 30 the contract expires and the Department goes to impasse; they will run calls, he spends most of his time at station #83, one of the busiest stations; they run with both Palm Bay and Melbourne; it used to be almost like brotherly bullying when the other Departments would say, 'come join our department' but lately it has just been pity when they run with the city engines; they say things like, 'you just need to get out of there, even if you do not come to our department'; his friend Alejandro said that failure of competitive contract

will result in a mass exodus, and that is true if nothing good comes from this; he has talked to plenty of people who have been testing for other departments and applying elsewhere; and he has talked to many people who have left that said if this Contract is good they would love to come back. He added everything about the County has been something they loved, the culture, the people they work with, it is just a matter if they can afford to live here; and they are not looking for anything exorbitant just competitive or comparable to continue to live the County they love and serve in.

Chairman Feltner asked the Board if it has any follow-up questions based on what was said before moving to discussion on the Workshop.

### **J.3. Workshop to Discuss Fire Budget Current and Future Needs**

Commissioner Delaney thanked everyone who came to speak; she stated at the last Commission meeting she proposed a workshop to talk about the needs of the County's Fire Department; it is clear to her that the people are what the Board needs to focus on; capital is great and there is definitely a need for that, however, if it does not have the people to fill the fire stations, it does not matter how pretty the buildings are or how many there is; and with that being said, she is proposing three dates, January 29, 30, and February 3 at 1:00 p.m. to meet to talk about the needs of the Fire Department.

Chairman Feltner inquired if there were any questions for Commissioner Delaney on the workshop to discuss the Fire Department's needs; and he reiterated the dates that were provided.

Commissioner Adkinson responded by saying she would prefer either January 29 or 30.

Commissioner Goodson asked Commissioner Delaney how she is going to run this workshop, and what she plans on doing.

Commissioner Delaney responded by saying she would like to get direction and talk about everyone's priorities for getting the Fire Department to where it needs to be; she wants to know the cost out of changing to 24/72 work schedule, the comprehensive needs, fire stations, trucks, personnel staffing, and rescues; and what the future needs are going to be in the next five years.

Commissioner Goodson remarked to have this workshop and have 200 people in there and hearing the same thing again that everybody is not happy and that they want more money; he asked if that would be something Commissioner Delaney would want to talk to staff about first to get an understanding of how much more money they can raise if they increase the fire fund or the Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU); and he asked if Commissioner Delaney even knows how much the fire fighters want.

Commissioner Delaney stated with all due respect, she wants an open forum to not only talk about the firefighters, they need their public participation time, but also the people of Brevard County in general; and it would be nice to have a dedicated time where everyone is talking about this in the sunshine as one group.

Commissioner Goodson advised Commissioner Delaney she better plan on two or three days.

Commissioner Delaney noted she is good with that.  
Commissioner Goodson noted he will not be there.

Commissioner Delaney stated one thing she wanted to talk about and it was brought up in public comment; she had mentioned the 24/72 schedule; the people are the most important piece of the Fire Department; what she is seeing from going to all of the negotiation meetings over the past year is that the people are broken; in her opinion that is a failure; and it is the Board's duty to fix that. She continued by saying this 24/72 schedule is in her opinion, the only pathway forward because there are people right now who have letters from other departments saying in a year they will have a job when their Department starts this schedule; if Brevard County does not offer that same work/life balance for the County's people, it will not have a Fire Department to save; Brevard County firefighters are some of the best trained in the State and probably the country; they will be sought after; and she thinks the Board needs to make sure it is putting up a contract for the people that shows their value and that they are wanted. She noted Brevard County has a Space Center and if an emergency happens, she wants the best trained people here in Brevard County; Brevard County has one of the busiest ports in the world and if a catastrophe happens, she wants the best people in the country to be here in Brevard County; the only way to bring those people here is by being the gold standard and the leaders in the State of Florida to get those people here; and she is of the belief that after spending so much time with the field throughout over the past year, but not only would the people stay here, but people would be flocking to Brevard County because it is not just about the exceptional training and the people that are already here, but Brevard County is an amazing place and people want to be here. She noted like was stated earlier, the only reason some are not here is because he or she does not feel valued and he or she cannot take care of his or her family; she really feels a huge sense of responsibility for this; she thinks this conversation needs to happen in the public; and there needs to be as much public participation that it can get.

Commissioner Goodson noted the Commissioner mentioned that Brevard County fire fighters are trained so much better; he inquired if training for a firefighter in Brevard County is not the same as it would be in Pasco County; if Brevard County firefighters are above the scale and he is just not aware of it; and he commented he thinks they do a wonderful job.

Commissioner Delaney noted yes they are.

Commissioner Goodson asked if they are above the scale.

Chief Voltaire stated he is not familiar with the hiring process but they go through minimum standards; then when one comes to Brevard County there is another eight week orientation with a 10 shift ride along; he appreciates Commissioner Delaney saying that; he starts every graduation for the new hires saying how proud he is; and many other fire departments in the State have actually modeled their new hire academy after that of Brevard County.

Commissioner Goodson stated he will compliment Chief Voltaire and the fire fighters on that; he did not realize that; and he mentioned, at the same token the Board values them, the Sheriff's Department, even the people who work in the ditches.

Commissioner Delaney responded by saying she loves the police and the Sheriff, but frankly they just received over \$8 million and the Fire Department has taken the hit every year for years; these are the people that save people's lives; when one is on the ground the Fire Department is who comes to save his or her life; and they are the ones who run into the fires.

Commissioner Goodson stated the Sheriff is going to be watching this just like the other unions; he understands that; he wishes everything was perfect; he thinks if the Board is going to do this the Board should bust the cap and just raise it; and he asked somebody to tell him what the Fire Department wants so they can make the money that way.

Commissioner Delaney commented what she would like to see is the fire impact fees to be adjusted; at some point she would like to make a motion to start the process for that; and part of the reason she wants the workshop is to talk about how the County is going to get there for the people.

Chairman Feltner stated back on the Item, the issue of a workshop; he is hearing January 30; he asked how long Commissioner Delaney thinks this will go; there are some other things and that leads him to say to the Board that if this Board is going to do workshops, and he thinks this Board will do workshops, he intends to bring something back for discussion at January 14, to discuss some basic ground rules for workshops; he thinks they need to be time certain, along with some other things; and with that said he asked if Commissioner Delaney feels a four hour workshop would be adequate for this on January 30, 2025.

Commissioner Delaney advised she is okay with that.

Chairman Feltner announced it will be a time certain to end at 5:00 p.m.

The Board approved a Workshop to be scheduled on January 30, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., to review the cost of changing to a 24/72 work schedule, comprehensive fire needs (fire stations, fire trucks, personnel/staffing, rescues), and review future fire needs (five years).

**Result:** Approved

**Mover:** Katie Delaney

**Second:** Thad Altman

**Ayes:** Delaney, Goodson, Adkinson, Feltner, and Altman

**J.4. Workshop for Speak Up Brevard Citizen Efficiency and Effectiveness (CEER) Program for the Board of County Commissioners to Receive and Consider Citizen Recommendations**

Commissioner Delaney stated this is for the public; the County has a program called Speak Up Brevard Program; it is something that throughout her campaign she spoke about a lot because there are times in her experience where people have felt unheard; they come to the podium and say their three minutes and there is not usually an immediate response; basically, this program was placed into the Charter to give the people a mechanism to bring forward their ideas and to have a response from staff and the Board; one of the things she feels is lacking from the Program is more of a discussion around what the proposals are; therefore, she would really love to have a workshop where people could come up and provide a presentation on what their proposal is so the Board can get a better understanding of what the idea is. She mentioned sometimes people put in two to four items in to Speak Up Brevard and they only have the one three-minute time to talk about all of those things; she does not feel that is fair or that it is what the spirit of the program is; she is proposing this workshop for February 18 or 27 at 5:00 p.m.; and the reason she was hoping for a later time was because a lot of people work and she wants to make sure it allows for people to participate.

Commissioner Goodson asked how many proposals were given last year.

Commissioner Delaney replied she believes it was 59.

Commissioner Goodson asked if that was all.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, confirmed it was somewhere in that range.

Commissioner Goodson asked if Commissioner Delaney is proposing that 60 people get to

come up and talk five minutes or longer.

Commissioner Delaney noted it depends on how many people participate, the year prior to last there was just one proposal.

Commissioner Goodson asked if she would like to take this to her district, just handle it, and report back to the Board.

Commissioner Delaney noted she would do that if that was the Boards desire; but she thinks it is important to have this as a County conversation.

Commissioner Goodson advised that staff reviews them and tells the Board what cannot be due to statute; and he asked if that is correct.

Mr. Abbate asked him to repeat the question.

Commissioner Goodson asked if staff reviews the input and reports back to the Board addressing why things can or cannot be done.

Mr. Abbate stated a lot of them, if it is outside the Board's jurisdiction, if it is things that the County has already tried, many of them are things that have come to the Board previously and the Board chose not to take any action; each department gets what is under their jurisdiction and then prepare a first draft; that comes to the County Manager's Office and the Public Information Office; staff then prepares drafts and puts it altogether in a package to bring back to the Board for its consideration; and that is how that works right now.

Commissioner Goodson asked if the Board is going to follow that procedure.

Commissioner Delaney responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Goodson stated the Board may not even need a meeting if all 60 are of no value, or if the staff says the Board cannot do it; and he asked if she wants to wait until she gets these prior to scheduling a meeting, or does she want to go full blown and have a meeting.

Commissioner Delaney stated she was hoping the Board could have a meeting because in her experience over the past year with this program, what she saw was...

Commissioner Goodson interjected saying that she did not believe staff.

Commissioner Delaney responded by saying no, she was hoping to find more of a how can the Board work these ideas into the County; maybe it will not be exactly what the people are proposing, but maybe there is a yes somewhere in there; she thinks if the people get a fair shake of submitting their proposal and talking to the Commission about it, the Board can get a better idea of what the people are proposing; that way the Board can direct staff; and is there a yes somewhere in this.

Commissioner Goodson stated okay.

Chairman Feltner stated first of all members of the public, anyone, can petition a Commissioner to take up an item and possibly get it put on the Agenda to consider it for discussion; he has that in his office very routinely; there are people who come to him with a whole host of things and he tries to own it right there: either no he does not think that will work and he is not willing to overturn that Ordinance, or he agrees with them saying he thinks maybe this had fallen

through the cracks, let him see if he can cure that; and it goes on the Agenda if it is something that needs to be done and if not it does not make it there. He went on to say that is why he suggested to Commissioner Delaney earlier about Representative Tramont in the north end of the County, to have a conversation with her legislators for exactly the same reason; quite candidly he thinks she can host this meeting herself and bring back to the Board some group of five items or something and say she thinks these things are all worthy of legislative intent and go through that process, see if it meets various legal requirements, and then for the Boards consideration in a final vote; he thinks Commissioner Delaney could do that without a workshop; but that is just his two cents.

Commissioner Altman noted he thinks he would like to see the proposal in writing so he could read it and think about it, other than just hearing and voting; he would like to see what her ideas are; and see it in writing, so he can mull it over and consider it.

Chairman Feltner stated he thinks Commissioner Altman has a good point in that it could come back to the Board, all the CEER stuff, possibly in January.

Mr. Abbate explained January is the month in which the ideas would be submitted; it would be a significant amount of time after because there is a 60-day period to bring it back; he thinks it is 90 or 120 days after staff receives the first of the items; and it would probably be in late March or April time frame.

Chairman Feltner asked if these are the Items that were proposed in the last year, at the end of 2023.

Commissioner Delaney replied it will be for the proposals that are put in from January 1 to January 31; when she talked with staff about the nature of this, that way the Board has the proposals in writing; January 31 would be the cut off; that would provide the Board time to see the proposals in writing and then have the workshop in February where the Board could hear more about the ideas, staff could hear more about the ideas, and then the Board could give staff direction at that point; and then staff would bring back the findings at that point.

Chairman Feltner stated he thinks he would like to clarify Commissioner Altman's intentions, he thinks Commissioner Altman would like to see those first before having a discussion about scheduling a workshop.

Commissioner Altman advised before he votes on a workshop he would want to see something in writing ahead of time just to mull it over and familiarize himself with the process because this is something he has never been a part of; it would be nice to have those proposals; and he does not think the Board having a workshop would increase or decrease the number of proposals that are coming in.

Chairman Feltner stated the deadline for submitting CEER is January 31, and he asked if Commissioner Altman would rather have this discussion after.

Commissioner Altman stated that makes sense.

Chairman Feltner asked if Commissioner Delaney is amenable to that.

Commissioner Delaney responded affirmatively.

Commissioner Goodson stated he is not trying to bust anybody's chops, but he asked to have a workshop, and get staff to do a certain amount of work to be ready for it, is there a number that

it costs the County every time the Board requests a workshop.

Mr. Abbate stated not off the top of his head he does not have a number, he would guess it depends on what staff is asked to prepare for that workshop.

Commissioner Goodson asked if he could get the Board some sort of numbers, low side, middle of the road, and the high side, he would be curious to know how much effort is put into a workshop that the Board takes staff away from their jobs.

Mr. Abbate stated for example staff will be preparing for Budget workshops and he will use that an example because there are three scheduled for next year; he will work with other staff and come up with a number as to each of those workshops, what staff anticipates the time would be spent; and that is the best he can do.

Chairman Feltner advised Commissioner Delaney the Board will revisit this.

Commissioner Delaney agreed to that.

The Board discussed a workshop for Speak Up Brevard CEER Program to receive and consider citizen recommendations, but took no action.

**L.7. Rob Feltner, Commissioner District 4, Chairman, Re: Board Report**

Chairman Feltner advised there will be an executive session following this meeting; it will be in the County Manager's conference room; the Clerk has asked that he take 15 minutes after the meeting is adjourned to sign documents; therefore, there will be a 15 minute break in between the two meetings.

**L.3. Katie Delaney, Commissioner District 1, Re: Board Report**

Commissioner Delaney stated on the December 3 meeting, the Board got a challenge from a member of the public to do a ride-along with the Fire Department; she was able to do that with Station 22 last week; and she wanted to thank them for allowing her the opportunity to see all of the amazing things that the Fire Department does. She mentioned she also went to the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) meeting; at the meeting they had talked about the proposed legislation, she was a little troubled by it, and she hopes to be able to get the others on the Board to discuss it a little more, because she does not remember there being a conversation about things that the Board as a whole wants to bring forward to Tallahassee; that is something she will be talking with TPO about; she brought up that she would like to see more discussion on the projects that are going on because she has attended a lot of the public outreach meetings and there are very few people who show up to these meetings; because she has participated, she has not really seen the public input translate into the actual projects; and that is another thing she will be making sure to talk more about. She mentioned on Friday, December 13, she went to the North Brevard Economic Development Zone (NBEDZ) meeting; they have accepted an offer on one of the properties in the Industrial Park and that is going to be coming before the Commission at some point; that is good news; and the expansion of the Event Center at the Valiant Air Command, there has been a little bit of a hiccup with some of the funding, and she thinks North Brevard really needs some event space to cater to some of the businesses and what not that are out there; and she really hopes that continues to move forward.

\* At the end of the Regular Meeting an Executive Session will be held for the purpose of discussing the Status of Collective Bargaining Negotiations with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 2969 Rank and File Unit.

Upon consensus of the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

ATTEST:

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RACHEL M. SADOFF, CLERK

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ROB FELTNER, CHAIRMAN  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

As approved by the Board February 25, 2025.