

Excerpt from Brevard County Commission Minutes -- September 4, 2007

Commissioner Nelson stated he has concerns about the EMS or Fire Rescue reserves because there is the impression those were Fire Service dollars, but they are not; those were General Fund dollars that were transferred over; and he would like to move that those monies be held in reserve at this time. He stated he does not care if they are held in Fire Rescue or wherever, but they should be unable to be expended until the Board deals with these issues.

Motion by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Bolin, to direct that the EMS reserves be held in reserve and be unable to be expended until the Board deals with the issues.

Commissioner Scarborough requested the money be moved back to General Fund Reserve; and stated the money is not part of the capital improvement planning process; it would be a disservice not to see how the funds fall within the comments; but if Chief Farmer has a need for the funds, they can be moved back.

Commissioner Nelson amended the motion to provide that the reserve dollars will be moved to General Fund Reserve.

Commissioner Bolin inquired if there is an amount; with Commissioner Nelson responding \$5.4 million. Assistant County Manager Stockton Whitten stated that was what was on the memorandum of August 27, 2007; he does not know if the fund balance figures are going to change, but whatever the figure is it would be the fund balance minus the reductions in the first section of the memorandum. Mr. Whitten stated he does not know if that figure has changed, but they continue to work on fund balances.

Chairperson Colon inquired if it is the full amount of \$5.4 million. Commissioner Scarborough stated Chief Farmer and Finance Director Steve Burdett may want to comment.

Fire Rescue Chief Bill Farmer stated the issue for the EMS budget is the fact that reserves are not coming from General Fund, but from balance forward; the money that County Finance is discussing is money looking at a snapshot of time for EMS; he does not agree with Mr. Burdett; and it does not take into consideration the \$1.3 million for First Responder, which was reserve money from balance forward. He noted the additional \$1.5 million is tied to capital, which is truly a one-time purchase; but because it is tied by balance forward, if there is no balance forward next year, he is going to need \$1.5 million of additional General Fund. He stated if all the reserves are removed which come from balance forward, he will be coming to the Board next year for \$1.5 million plus \$1.3 million for a total of \$2.8 million. He stated it has been said that he did not say that as clearly in budget meetings before so he wants to be very distinct about it; the budget review that County Finance has done only discusses this year; it does not project for next year; and by next year, 2008-2009, he would have to come for an additional \$1.5 million or \$2.5 million or \$3 million.

Chairperson Colon stated the direction the Board gave was because it saw that there were some dollars there; the Board will now be scrutinizing every Department; and it is just starting with Fire Rescue. She stated the Board is saying that it would like any dollars that are in any Department to be brought up to the surface; and at that point they go into the General Fund. She stated the Board needs to have feedback from every Director about where the dollars need to go; and from there, the Board will decide. She stated the key thing is that from there, the Board of County Commissioners will decide; it would be negligent for any Director not to tell the Board what the needs are in capital projects that are being worked on and so forth; but it is a totally different world that they are in now with all the things that the Board has learned in the last three months. She stated things that the Board did not think could possibly happen have happened; and now the Board wants to be able to see every single dollar that is in the budget. She stated the Board is starting with Fire Rescue; it will keep going to other Departments; and \$500,000 here, a million here, and \$200,000 there will eventually add up to the point where the Board will need to come back to prioritizing. She stated Fire Rescue is a unique Department; it must be supported by the Board; and she does not want Chief Farmer to fear that the Board will leave him out there hanging. She stated one of the biggest concerns is making sure that Fire Rescue has the proper equipment so the men and women can get the job done; and that kind of commitment is there because public safety is a priority to any government. She stated public safety is the number one priority; it is the reason

why there is government; and everything else is just blessings, toppings, and what makes the community; but public safety is key. She stated Fire Rescue is the first Department coming off the gate; that is why the Board wants all those dollars now to be in one particular place; and one of the things she has said to Mr. Whitten is that she was not about to debate about whether his numbers or Mr. Burdett's numbers are correct. She stated she wants all the data to be given to the Board; at that point the data that is given also says what dollars have been identified, \$5.4 million; and it should include the Director's comments. She stated at that point there will not be the concern and frustration that the Board has had in the last two or three months; it has been very frustrating; the Board wants to see all the dollars put in one particular pot; and then the Board will decide where it goes.

Chief Farmer stated he completely understands that; it is 100% the Board's decision; but he was told he had not been distinct about the balance forward issue for capital and balance forward for First Responder. He stated both items that were put into the budget came from balance forward money; it is true that it was in reserves; but it was reserves that were generated by balance forward. He stated he wants to make sure that is clear that if the same kind of savings are not recognized in the course of the next fiscal year, as they go into FY 2008-2009, he may have to ask for between \$1 million and \$2.8 million. He stated they may be able to save the funds again and everything will be good.

Chairperson Colon stated at that point the Board would have to figure out what is a priority and where it is; and they are like the blind leading the blind now because all they want to do is see the dollars.

Finance Director Steve Burdett inquired which specific question does the Board want him to address; and stated he could get into a debate as to whether first responder money is from carry forward or from General Fund subsidy this year or from ambulance fees, but that would be a meaningless discussion.

Chairperson Colon stated it has been a trying experience; it is important for the Board to be able to have Mr. Burdett's Department bring forward those kinds of suggestions and for the Board to know what dollars it is working with; and it has not been so much that Mr. Whitten and Mr. Burdett do not agree; but the information that was given to the Board is where it is having a hard time. She reiterated the Board decides where the dollars are going to be spent; the Board just wants the information; but nobody else should be making the decisions for the Board.

Commissioner Nelson stated he knows what Chief Farmer is saying but the memorandum from August 27 does not say that, so he is confused. He stated he is further confused because there is no reference to those two areas in how they would use the reserve; and Chief Farmer can understand why the Board may be frustrated when it is told one thing yet there is a document that says the money is going to be put into capital. He stated if it is reserve for capital, they can never spend it; once it is spent, it is gone; and those are ongoing responsibilities. He stated the fees for EMS and the millage that is used for Fire Rescue have to be used for those purposes; it cannot go anywhere else; but the Board put \$20 million of General Fund to balance; and specific dollars are expended first, General Fund dollars are the next level that is spent; and as a result, what is left over is General Fund, not Fire Rescue dollars.

Chairperson Colon requested Mr. Burdett remain for additional discussion; and stated there is a motion on the floor regarding transferring those dollars to General Fund.

Commissioner Voltz inquired if the First Responder funds are General Fund dollars; with Chief Farmer responding not this year. Commissioner Voltz inquired where did they come from; with Chief Farmer responding from reserves that Fire Rescue says come from balance forward, not from General Fund or billing; and they just disagree. He stated the original going from \$19 million to \$16.6 million was in part by reducing the First Responder; when First Responder was put back in as an option on the budget, it came out of reserves; and his opinion is that those reserves come from balance forward savings. Commissioner Voltz stated she is not going to support the motion; the Board needs to make sure that the capital is needed; and next year it will be difficult for the Board to find any money.

Commissioner Nelson stated he did not even know about a Central Cocoa EMS station until he found the \$5 million; and some of these were needs that were known but were not articulated as part of

the program. Commissioner Voltz stated the Board has seen a lot of that through this process. Commissioner Nelson stated he and Chief Farmer disagree on exactly where those monies came from and how they got there; once the Board pumped \$20 million of General Fund in there, all of the other responsibilities were taken care of that were in there, but whatever is remaining becomes General Fund.

Chairperson Colon called for a vote on the motion. Motion carried and ordered; Commissioner Voltz voted nay.