

**FIRE-RESCUE BOND
BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE MINUTES (REVISED)
REGULAR MEETING**
City of Fort Lauderdale
100 North Andrews Avenue
8th Floor Conference Room
Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 33301
September 20, 2007

Board Member	Attendance	Cumulative Attendance	
		P	A
Don Bastedo	P	9	0
Mary Graham	P	9	0
Thornie Jarrett, Chair	P	9	0
Steve Kirsch	P	8	1
Allan Kozich	P	9	0
Patrick McTigue	P	7	2
Douglas Ruth	P	9	0
Dianne Shuler, Vice Chair [6:54]	P	7	2
Norman Thabit	P	8	1

Staff

Albert Carbon, Director Public Works Department
Frank Snedaker, Chief City Architect
Robert Bacic, Battalion Chief
Alexandra Woolweaver, City Auditor's Office
Jim Hamill, Audit Manager
Eric Geen, URS Program Manager
Matt Little, Public Information Office
James Eddy, Fire Chief
Sherman Whitmore, Gibson Partners
Lieutenant Dave Carter, Fire Department
Assistant Fire Chief Jeff Justinak
Jamie Opperlee, ProtoType Services Recording Clerk

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Jarrett called the meeting of the Fire-Rescue Bond Blue Ribbon Committee to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes: August 16, 2007

Motion made by Member Kozich, seconded by Member Graham, to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2007 meeting. Upon voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

Item 4 was then taken out of order.

3. Staff Liaison Report

Station 88/53:

Mr. Geen said Change Order #4 for \$18,346.74 and had been presented to the City Commission Tuesday night. He explained this granted the contractor 46 working days of excusable non-compensable extensions, pushing the completion date from September 7, 2007 to November 2, 2007. Since then, the contractor had submitted a request for another 21-day extension, which had been denied.

Member Graham asked about the transformers mentioned on page two of the progress report. Mr. Geen explained that these transformers were the ones they could not fit into the electrical room. One had been relocated to the second-floor electrical room; the other had been left in the main switchgear electrical power room. Both had been installed, and high-tension wire installed to them as of yesterday. Mr. Geen stated a change order would be coming for this.

[Members McTigue and Thabit left at 8:30]

Mr. Geen explained that the power for the eye controls was in dispute with West construction. He noted the documents indicated it was West's responsibility to coordinate with the electrical door contractor and they had failed to do this. Mr. Geen said they had issued a directive for work to proceed without awaiting a change order.

Mr. Geen explained that the security equipment installation work would not affect the schedule because this work was not on the critical path.

Mr. Geen explained the additional 91 days were "totally contributable to the contractor." Member Graham remarked that there were proper applications for tilt-up and inappropriate applications for tilt-up, and there were contractors who specialized in this and had it down to a science. She noted that all of the concerns she and other committee members had expressed regarding this had occurred. She hoped URS would not recommend tilt-up for any future fire stations.

Station 47:

Member Graham remarked that this was going pretty well.

Mr. Carbon said they had done well coordinating deliveries on this tight site. He said there was a very good project manager, and Mr. Geen remarked there was also very good site superintendent. Mr. Geen said the contractor here was working with the subcontractors they used all the time; this made the job run smoother as well.

4. Member Discussion Items

[This item was taken out of order]

Walk-on item

Presentation by Sherman Whitmore, Gibson Partners

Mr. Sherman Whitmore, Gibson Partners, explained that he owned property on Harbor Drive and was acquainted with many property owners there. He informed the Board that in June he had heard about the redevelopment of Fire Station 49, and phoned several of these property owners to discover that they knew nothing about this. Mr. Whitmore had then contacted Anthony Fajardo in Planning and Zoning, who insisted all nearby owners had been noticed about the fire station project.

Mr. Whitmore said he had examined the staff report and found errors in measurements and in code requirements. He had then phoned the architect, who informed him hard costs were \$265 a square foot. Mr. Whitmore said he had seven meetings with City staff, including Mr. Carbon, the Fire Chief and an Assistant City Manager regarding moving the Fire Station to a City-owned lot on Las Olas Boulevard.

Mr. Whitmore prepared a development offer with a cost of \$4 million, because the City had quoted him this price. Mr. Whitmore reported that communication with the City had inexplicably ceased, even though he sensed that City staff liked his plan.

Mr. Whitmore learned from Commissioner Moore that the City Commission knew nothing of his offer for the station. Mr. Whitmore said the generic plan for a three-bay station would fit on the Las Olas lot, and would be much cheaper to build.

Mr. Whitmore provided the Board with a list of soft costs. He said there were also costs the City had not considered such as the effect building the station would have on the other properties on Harbor Drive.

Mr. Whitmore continued that the lawsuit regarding the Palazzo site was for damages not for performance, which meant if the appeal were upheld, the developer would recover monies owed by the City, but not the property.

Chairman Jarrett noted that an outside architect did the current design for Station 49, and it was vastly different from the standard three-bay design. Mr. Whitmore confirmed he had also offered to cover the costs of the plans they would not use.

Mr. Carbon said the City Attorney determined they could not use this site until all of the Palazzo lawsuits were closed. He said the cost quote given to Mr. Whitmore referred to the City's Fire Bond budget for the station, not the actual costs.

Fire Chief James Eddy said he had not attended these meetings.

Member Graham wondered why the Committee had never been informed of Mr. Whitmore's offer. Mr. Carbon said until there was a proposal on the table he did not believe he needed to bring it to the Committee.

Member Thabit said they could not be sure when the Palazzo lawsuit would be cleared up, but they were already on a time schedule to build the fire stations. He asked Mr. Carbon and the Fire Chief prepare a report detailing the pros and cons and differentials of building the two different stations on the two different sites.

Walk-on Item

Presentation by Fire Chief James Eddy and Board discussion

Chief Eddy said he had taken a hard look at this project this summer with Mr. Carbon and City staff, and determined they were building fire stations that were way too big, considering project demographics and operations. He concluded it would be more reasonable to build stations to house their existing apparatus. He recommended they build to accommodate four people for an engine and three for a rescue.

Chief Eddy was also concerned that it was assumed building new stations was the only option, and wanted the City to consider renovating existing stations. Chief Eddy felt that if the population of one area increased dramatically, it was possible the City could require a developer to pay for increased fire protection costs. Chief Eddy pointed out that if they continued on the present course, they would run out of funds to build all the stations.

Mr. Carbon consulted the bond resolution and confirmed that the bond funds could be used for renovation instead of new construction. Mr. Carbon said he was in favor of considering renovation, and his deciding factor whether to renovate or build anew would be whether significant structural changes were required, not the typical cost projection.

Member Thabit requested a report from Mr. Carbon on the cost of building a new station versus renovating, and wanted input from the Fire Department regarding this.

Member Kozich pointed out that the older existing stations had been built to a much lower standard of structural integrity. He said they would need to decide where to draw the line regarding the structural standards. Member Kozich noted the new stations were supposed to be facilities capable of withstanding a category five hurricane.

Mr. Carbon described the items they considered when determining if improving versus rebuilding was appropriate: construction cost increases, land value, and recommended station size. Mr. Kozich said they would need an engineer to evaluate every building and prepare a report detailing what was required to bring the building up to a current standard. Mr. Carbon said the engineer could estimate costs for lower levels of renovation.

Member Ruth said they needed input from Mr. Snedaker and the union.

[Member Shuler arrived at 6:54]

Mr. Snedaker agreed with Mr. Kozich and said they should select the proper stations for renovation. Mr. Carbon said this was why they had selected 13 and 54.

Lieutenant Dave Carter, Fire Department, said the only reason they were considering this was because they were running out of money. He said the City was historically very poor about infrastructure. Lieutenant Carter remembered that one of their intents had been to house reserve apparatus that was currently stored outdoors. He noted that the Fire Department had been informed long before Chief Eddy came to the City that 47 would be replaced. Lieutenant Carter agreed with Chief Eddy that some stations could be scaled down a bit, but he felt the correct position was to ask the City Commission to fund the project appropriately.

Chief Eddy reiterated his belief that the size of some of the stations they were building was a waste of the taxpayers' money, and they were impractical. He agreed that stations in deplorable condition must be replaced. Chief Eddy confirmed that reserve apparatus was parked outdoors, but said this could be addressed by parking reserve apparatus under a garage at a repair facility.

Member Thabit noted that if the square footage of a new building were drastically reduced, the building costs would be reduced as well, which could bring the costs to build new closer to the budgeted amount. He reiterated his request to be provided with a report including new square footage numbers and new costs.

Member Graham remembered that early on, they had many discussions regarding the programming requirements for the stations and how this determined their needs. Member Graham said she was astounded that they were just talking about this tonight. She felt it would be impossible to obtain renovation bids as well.

Regarding Chief Eddy's opinion that this was a waste of taxpayers money, Member Graham said, "This is all the voters of Fort Lauderdale need to hear, three years after they voted for this thing."

Chief Eddy clarified that his opinion was not that the project was a waste of money, but that if they built the stations as envisioned, this would be a waste of money because he felt they did not need that much space.

Member Kozich pointed out that decreasing the size of the building would not result in a proportional decrease in the costs. Member Kozich requested that Mr. Carbon and Mr. Snedaker come up with some new square footages and costs.

Mr. Carbon said Fire Chief Eddy had reevaluated the program with his assistant chiefs. As an example, Mr. Carbon said station 3 could be reduced to one story, two bays and seven bunks at 9,300 square feet instead of 13,000.

Member Shuler asked what the estimated savings could be per station. Mr. Carbon said he had estimated that the way the program was going, the program would cost upwards of \$64 million. Adjusting the program per Chief Eddy's recommendations, Mr. Carbon felt the program could be completed for under \$40 million, with a \$2 million contingency.

Member Kozich requested an evaluation regarding which stations they would consider renovating based upon the cost of the renovation, and the structural integrity of the stations.

Chair Jarrett echoed other Board members' concern that in three years, remodeling had never been mentioned as an option. He remembered seeing photos of crowded and deteriorated conditions at stations. Chair Jarrett felt this recommendation was being made based upon cost, not practicality. He also felt the fact that this suggestion had arisen within just a couple of weeks indicated that insufficient thought may have been put into it.

Chair Jarrett said the people who put together the bond issue had been incorrect, and it seemed the City administration decided that instead of putting more money into the project, they would reduce it. He said the Committee could not make a decision based on direction given in a 20-minute disclosure of what the City administration decided to do now.

Chair Jarrett said the Committee must request a station-by-station analysis, and questions regarding situations such as the reserve apparatus must be addressed. Chair Jarrett requested to see projected cost savings, with square footage comparisons. He said the Committee could make no decisions or make no recommendations based on the information that was available right now.

Member Kozich asked who the consultant was who determined the sizes for the existing station designs. Mr. Carbon said he, Chief Bacic and Chief Eddy researched this and determined that the square footages had been based on what had been done at Fire Station 2.

Member Kozich requested a sketch of the two basic designs for the 9,300 square foot stations to see what it would look like and if it would be functional. Mr. Carbon agreed to provide these.

Member Shuler asked if they could obtain industry-standard documents. She also wanted to compare costs to renovate with costs to build at reduced square footage.

Motion made by Member Thabit, seconded by member Shuler, to recommend that a study be done by qualified consultants, pursuant to an appropriate RFP.

Member Graham feared it could take nine months to complete this study.

Member Kozich noted this was not an unusual situation for this type of project. He referred to the bond issue the school board had floated 15 years ago, which was proven to be inadequate.

Member Bastedo asked if they could use the reserve to pay for the study.

[Member Kozich left at 7:30]

Board members agreed to table Member Thabit's motion and continue their discussion.

Member Thabit amended his motion to state the study should be conducted on all stations that had not been started, to determine if they were too large for the area they were intended to serve

Chair Jarrett requested two separate motions: one containing the information that staff already compiled in order to make this suggestion, and one requesting the information Member Thabit suggested. He explained that he wanted separate motions because the analysis requested by member Thabit would require an RFP, and funding for an outside consultant, and must be approved by the City Commission. It would also take some time to accomplish.

Chair Jarrett said more than once, the County's citizens voted for a bond issue and did not receive what they believe they paid for. He said this was exactly what they were discussing here. Now they were discussing renovating old stations when they voted for new 50-year fire stations.

Chair Jarrett said these decisions were not for this Committee. The purpose of this Committee was to ensure that the bond money was spent properly.

Member Thabit said he wanted an expert consultant to determine appropriate sizes for stations based on the area and population to be served.

Member Graham said considering the history of this project, she hated to think that what was being presented to them this evening was a "done deal." She read from the resolution describing the Committee's duties, indicating they were responsible for the expenditure of the bond funds "consistent with the ballot language approved by the electorate..." Member Graham said she realized that things changed, but she did not want to change course in the midst of the project. She felt there was a chance additional funds could be found to build new stations "with the reduced program evaluated accordingly, on the sites rather than renovating or remodeling."

Mr. Carbon said the fire bond did not indicate there would be extra bays for extra operating vehicles. Chair Jarrett said there were numerous discussions of additional units and additional personnel over the past three years.

Mr. Carbon confirmed for Chair Jarrett that Station 29 had not gone out to bid on September 10. Mr. Carbon said this station would be rebuilt, but not with the plans they saw last month. Member Graham said those plans that they already paid for would now be put on the shelf.

Member Thabit restated his **motion** to recommend to the City Commission that a study be conducted by qualified consultants, pursuant to an appropriate RFP, including all stations that had not been started, to determine if they were appropriately sized for the area they were intended to serve. Member Shuler restated her second. **In a voice vote, Board unanimously approved.**

Motion made by Member Thabit, seconded by member Graham, to request Mr. Carbon and his staff create a comprehensive report with the information that was presented this evening. The report should include: square footage comparisons between existing designs and Chief Eddy's recommendations; structural analysis of the stations; dates the stations were built; explanation from the Fire Department how they determined what the future station needs would be and cost estimates for stations at a reduced square footage.

Assistant Fire Chief Jeff Justinak said Chief Bacic did the demographic research. Assistant Chief Justinak said he was involved with the project in 2002 and had prepared the program Chief Latin presented. He disagreed that this had been a waste of time, and said what they were faced with was fiscal constraints.

Assistant Chief Justinak explained that Chief Eddy was asked to provide an objective opinion that did not have some of the political influences that may have been part of the bond project initially. He said the Board had three options: spend \$40 million, and not build all of the stations; exceed the budget in order to build all of the stations, or reduce the size of the stations. He said times had changed and they must adjust to the changes.

Assistant Chief Justinak believed Chief Eddy was an expert and had excellent history in the fire service, not only from a fire operations standpoint, but also from an inspection standpoint.

Chair Jarrett said the Board would incur the wrath of the citizens "for telling them that for \$40 million, they're going to get 10 new, fine homes and if they end up with travel trailers instead of the homes for the same \$40 million, they're not going to be happy about that." He said he, as a taxpayer, would not be happy about this, and he would not be happy about renovating an old station that he knew would not be the same as building a new building.

Member Thabit said he had no qualms about requesting additional funds from the City Commission to build the stations as currently proposed if the study supported that. He said he would find it difficult to request more money for stations after hearing a recommendation that they did not need the sizes that were currently planned. Member

Thabit felt the study would be required to convince the City Commission that downsizing the stations was appropriate.

Chair Jarrett said he did not object to reducing the size of the stations, if the consultants determined this was appropriate. But he did object to changing the entire direction of the bond project from new construction to renovation. Since the charge of the Fire Bond Board was to ensure the bond money was being spent wisely, Chair Jarrett said he would need to be convinced that renovation would be spending the money wisely. In his experience, Chair Jarrett said unless it was an historic building, demolition was the answer, not renovation.

Member Thabit thought that before any work was contracted out it should be presented to the Committee to see if it met their concerns. He said the study they were discussing this evening was something that should have been done three years ago but had not been.

Chair Jarrett agreed, and stated it was “absolutely impossible for us to function as an advisory committee, if we don’t have all the information to work on, to analyze, to make any ... advisements to the Commission.” Member Thabit wanted to make sure that after the study was completed it would be presented to the Board.

Member Graham requested that the report from Mr. Carbon be emailed to Board members a week in advance of their next meeting so they would have time to study it.

Board voted unanimously in favor of Member Thabit’s second motion (see page 8, paragraph 3).

Member Thabit asked that the Board be provided with a staff report regarding Mr. Whitmore’s alternative station plan. Mr. Carbon agreed.

Chair Jarrett reminded Board members that they needed to speak to their individual Commissioners to explain the necessity for the study. Member Thabit said they must also make it clear that this was a separate study from the ones the Commission approved on Tuesday.

Member Graham requested that the RFP for the audit the City Commission approved on Tuesday be emailed to the members so they could see the scope of work and the time frame.

Mr. Bastedo thought the Palazzo property should be able to be released since the appeal was for damages. Mr. Carbon said the City Attorney had determined this was not possible

Board's Annual Report

Chair Jarrett recommended the Board table their annual report for the time being since this was "an all different ballgame." He said they should wait until after they received the information from staff and analyzed it. Chair Jarrett felt they would probably do something completely different.

The Board discussed a date for the next meeting.

Motion by Member Graham, seconded by Member Shuler, for the Board to change their next meeting date from October 18 to November 1. Board unanimously approved.

Member Thabit recommended that the City Commission reconsider its approval of the Fire Bond Audit until the Fire Bond Committee reviews the scope of the audit.

5. Adjournment

The Board's next meeting was scheduled for November 1.

With no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.