

**CITY OF LABELLE
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP MEETING**

Mayor Wilkins opened the Special Meeting at 4:31 p.m. A roll call was taken, and all Commissioners except Commissioner Akin and Commissioner Smith were present.

A presentation was made to thank Charla Mims Longenecker for her many years of service to the City of LaBelle and her retirement was announced.

Mayor Wilkins invited Chief Brent Stevens of the City of LaBelle Fire Department to the podium to give a presentation on funding two full time Fire Fighters. He then presented the budget proposal to the Commission.

Chief Stevens invited other Fire Fighters from the audience to address the Commission.

Lt. Caleb Pohill of the LaBelle Fire Department approached the podium and explained his role at the Fire Department, his experience in the field. He noted that the area was growing in population and more Fire Fighters would be necessary.

Mayor Wilkins announced the arrival of Commissioner Akin at approximately 4:41.

Commissioner Spratt asked Ron Zimmerly, Finance Director, to speak his opinion on the subject. Mr. Zimmerly then approached the podium and discussed the 2 different budget proposals.

Mayor Wilkins asked Chief Stevens if the calls being ran by the Fire Department were being filtered through dispatch. Chief Stevens informed the Commission that a filtration system is set up, but has room for adjustments and that a flow chart could be created.

Commissioner Spratt asked Brent Stevens how he can be sure that the proposed budget will work. Discussion was had on how the budget would be funded.

Derek Rooney stated that the Interlocal Agreement with Hendry County is reimbursement based. More discussion was had on the funding the budget.

Ron Zimmerly stated that it was very likely that call volume would continue to rise.

Brent noted that even with the projected call volume, it would be possible to stay within the budget, and continued the discussion on the need for full time Fire Fighters.

Mayor Wilkins announced the arrival of Commissioner Smith.

Commissioner Spratt asked Brent Stevens what his aversion was to having one full-time fire fighter. He explained that they work in teams of 2. He expressed the need for benefits and increased payment in order to keep Fire Fighters employed with the City of LaBelle. Ron Zimmerly added that this had been an ongoing discussion for 10 years and that service is valuable.

Mayor Wilkins asked for any more questions or comments.

Caleb Pohill addressed Commissioner Smith about an accident that he had recently been involved in. More discussion was had on the need for daytime Fire Fighters.

Mayor Wilkins called upon Captain Ron Snell to address the Commission. He then discussed his previous role at the Fire Department. He discussed the physical and mental health of Fire Fighters.

Commissioner Spratt asked how 2 full time Fire Fighters would relieve the mental and physical anguish. More discussion was had on the mental and physical health of the Fire Fighters. It was noted that full time Fire Fighters could possibly receive insurance coverage for the PTSD treatment.

Zane Mungillo of the City of LaBelle Fire Department, addressed the Commission about the number of calls received every day.

Lt. Quinton Willis addressed the Commission and stated his education, qualifications, and how he had to EMS in order to pay for his education. He then stated why 1 full time Fire Fighter would not be efficient, and how it would be unlawful in certain situations.

Commissioner Akin asked how often Officers run calls by themselves during the day. Chief Stevens stated that it happened about 50 times in the previous year. Chief Stevens then addressed the issues of night time calls versus daytime calls.

Mayor Wilkins asked for a motion.


Commissioner Ratica made a motion to accept Proposal 2 of the Fire Fighter budget. Commissioner Akin seconded the motion, and stated that the County needed to be on board with financial help.

More discussion was had on the proposed budget. It was stated that the budget number is staying the same. It was suggested that the proposed budget become effective February 1, rather than January 3 to compensate for possibly going over the budget.

Motion carried 5-0 to become effective January 3, 2022

Mayor Wilkins adjourned the meeting at 5:39 p.m.

APPROVED:


Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

Attest:


Thomas A. Smith, Clerk-Commissioner