

**MINUTES OF JANUARY 3, 2022 SPECIAL MEETING
HARRIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 16**

A special meeting was duly called of Harris County Emergency Services District No. 16, which was held at **8681 Louetta Road, Klein, Texas 77379-6682** on Monday, January 3, 2022.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER.

The meeting was called to order at 6:55 p.m. by **Rich Jones**, President.

Mr. **Jones** announced that a quorum was present. Those Commissioners present were:

Rich Jones	Present
Steve Falkner	Present
Lance Wilson	Present
Mike Pate	Present
Gary Morrison	Present

Also present at the meeting were KVFD Board Members Barry Blum, Wendy Ray, Matt Pentifallo and Cody Psencik, Ira Coveler and Dawn Selden of Coveler & Peeler, P.C., District legal counsel. Concerned citizens, Mounsef Serghini and Jaime Serghini, Gemma Smith and Jay Lucas, were in attendance along with numerous KVFD personnel

TO RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENT.

The Board opened the floor for public. Moe Serghini, husband of Jaime Serghini, addressed the Board. Mr. Serghini shared that he has lived in the area for five years and his wife, Jaime, has worked with the Department two of these years. Mr. Serghini stated Ms. Serghini had been sexually harassed and he sent emails regarding the situation a month ago though no response was received to his inquiries. Mr. Serghini noted his wife worked beyond what was required of her while employed with Klein VFD with no appreciation shown for her efforts. Mr. Serghini did not understand why the Fire Chief was allowed to resign with severance pay, a minimal investigation about the complaint and a reference letter. Mr. Serghini expressed wanting to know what people would do if their spouse was treated the way his wife, Jaime, had been treated.

Mr. Coveler then stated he had responded to Mrs. Serghini's email and not to Mr. Serghini as he found it to be inappropriate for the ESD to correspond with a contractor's spouse. He clarified Klein VFD as being a contractor for the District. Mr. Coveler explained the District to be responsible for funding matters, such as providing fire stations, fire engines, and funds for salaries, along with being trustee of the public's property and sales taxes. The District is not responsible for personnel matters within the fire departments nor does it have the right to investigate disputes between the KVFD's personnel. Mr. Coveler expressed that a possible remedy was for Mrs. Serghini to file a lawsuit against KVFD, not the District, to adjudicate the matter.

Jaime Serghini then addressed the Board as she noted her extensive education in human relations. Mrs. Serghini explained in graphic detail the manner in which the Fire Chief, Michael Gosselin, sexually harassed her. She alleged Mr. Gosselin has a drinking problem and his mistress disrupts the Department's operation. Mrs. Serghini submitted a complaint to the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission though KVFD's investigation of her harassment was sloppy and did not involve her being interviewed. She expressed her belief that personnel receive punishment for doing the right thing and the message sent to Department members is "do the wrong thing and get promoted." Mrs. Serghini maintained KVFD to be guilty of nepotism and a cover-up. Mrs. Serghini expressed her concern that she may be unable to become gainfully employed in the future due to her experience at KVFD.

Kevin Horton, former KVFD Training Chief, stated he has given his life to the Department, yet he is not treated with respect. He eluded the KVFD Board as not being truthful about recent events and have created a hostile work environment. Mr. Horton has sent emails about the controversy with no response received. The lawyers had not contacted him. Mr. Horton noted no one explained what he may have done wrong to cause the loss of his Training Chief position and shared wanting to return to work and train. Mr. Horton suspects the KVFD Board may not have all the facts for which he has supporting documentation for everything.

Barry Blum, President of KVFD, conveyed his wish they were meeting about a better issue. Mr. Blum relayed the Fire Chief, Michael Gosselin, had resigned and no one had been retaliated against. Mr. Blum explained Mr. Horton had been placed on administrative leave by Chief Gosselin, not the KVFD Board. He communicated the Command Staff had been restructured allowing everyone to remain in the Department and the KVFD Board continues to work to rectify the recent difficulties. Mr. Blum voiced the recent problems had not affected KVFD's ability to care for the public as the service quality remains high. Mr. Blum voiced his confidence in the good job the Command Staff was doing, under the circumstances. Unfortunately, there is a large amount of gossip which cannot be controlled though Mr. Blum reiterated his faith in the officers.

Discussion was then led by the ESD Board.

Mr. Pate: "Did Mike Gosselin resign in writing?"

Mr. Blum: "Yes."

Mr. Pate: "What actions did KVFD take in response to the allegations?"

Mr. Blum: "He (Chief Gosselin) spoke to the Department's attorney, and they reviewed the billing hours."

Mr. Wilson: "What criteria did KVFD use in the decision to restructure the organization?"

Mr. Blum: "First, the bickering affected operations, second, KVFD had provided a full report of the investigation and third, they looked at the security tape to learn who might have left a handwritten note in Chief Gosselin's office."

Mr. Pate: "Did you think the investigation was thorough?"

Mr. Blum: "Yes, it was. For example, they interviewed the accuser."

Mr. Wilson: "People have concerns about how KVFD conducted the investigation. People are angry and they would like to understand how things developed. Was a written report given to the KVFD Board?"

Mr. Blum: "Yes."

- Mr. Stergio: “There was a thorough investigation. All the allegations were examined, and the accusers were interviewed.”
- Mr. Wilson: “Did Dr. Angela Zacharias interview the accusers.
Mr. Blum: “Yes.”
- Mr. Wilson: “KVFD’s investigation needs to be reviewed with “fresh eyes.”
Mr. Blum: “Dr. Zacharias removed herself from the investigation after receiving threats.”
- Mr. Pate: “Will KVFD make any additional actions after tonight’s meeting? Will there be an independent investigation?”
Mr. Blum: “Yes.”
- Mr. Pate: “Number one, we need a fresh perspective to see if there is some information that has not become known. Number two, it would be good if the KVFD Board informed the Department’s members about the situation. And number three, we need to install an interim fire chief before installing a permanent/long term chief.”
- Mr. Jones: “We all want to see the Department grow and heal any wounds. The ESD Board is going into Closed Session in Station No. 6, but everyone is invited to stay to learn what the Board has to say when we return.”

TO RECEIVE ANY REPORTS FROM THE KLEIN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

No action taken.

TO REVIEW, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON ISSUES RELATED TO THE DISTRICT ASSUMING DIRECT PROVISION OF EMERGENCY SERVICES, INCLUDING ACTIONS TO EMPLOY STAFF, AND SCHEDULING PUBLIC MEETINGS ON THIS ISSUE:

No action taken at this time. District counsel will reach out to counsel for KVFD.

TO REVIEW, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION ON PUBLIC OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS.

Mr. Coveler read aloud during the meeting letter from KVFD regarding the notice related to the resignation of Fire Chief Mike Gosselin.

TO MEET IN CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE §551.071 TO CONSULT WITH LEGAL COUNSEL ON MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE CONFIDENTIALITY UNDER THE TEXAS DISCIPLINARY RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS.

The Board did not exercise the option to enter Closed Session.

TO MEET IN CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE §551.074 TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS.

The Board entered Closed Session regarding personnel matters at 7:53 p.m. and returned to Open Session at 8:45 p.m.

TO REVIEW, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION REGARDING THE DISTRICT'S SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH KLEIN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT.

No action taken.

TO REVIEW, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION REGARDING HIRING AN ADMINISTRATOR TO SERVE THE DISTRICT.

No action taken.

TO REVIEW, DISCUSS AND TAKE ACTION REGARDING EMPLOYMENT/PERSONNEL ISSUES, INCLUDING HIRING, RETENTION, COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS OF DISTRICT EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, EXECUTIVE STAFF AND AN INTERIM FIRE CHIEF.

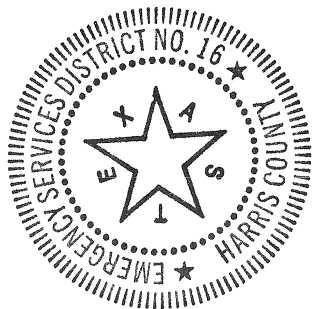
The Board reviewed the matters discussed during Closed Session. Thereafter, Mr. **Wilson** made a Motion, seconded by Mr. **Pate** to approve hiring an interim fire chief. After discussion, President Jones called for a vote and the Motion passed 5 to 0.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business brought before the Board, Mr. **Wilson** made a Motion, seconded by Mr. **Pate** to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 P.M. After discussion, President Jones called for a vote and the Motion passed 4 to 0.

The foregoing minutes were passed and approved by the Board of Commissioners on February 14, 2022.

**HARRIS COUNTY
EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 16**



By: _____

Gary Morrison

Gary Morrison
District Secretary