

Minutes for the Special Meeting called on Tuesday, July 26, 2022, at 3:00 pm at 8305 Augusta Road Pelzer, SC 29669.

Jim Darby called the meeting to order. Due to the large number of constituents in the meeting, Jim Darby welcomed them and asked if anyone wanted to sign up to speak at the meeting. No one signed up to speak. Jim Darby asked Donnie Freeman to open with prayer.

#### Old Business

- I. Jim Darby reviewed what had previously been discussed in the meetings. He stated that the question of our Commissioners getting paid had been brought up due to the fact that we know other departments are paying their Commissioners. In State Statute 67, South Greenville Fire District was created. In Section 4 of that statute, it specifically states that Commissioners are to serve without pay. There was a question as to whether the Commission Board could vote themselves to get paid. The question originally came up in May, but there was confusion on who could change the State Statute and By-Laws. There was also a question about if this was an ethical decision. It was further discussed in June and SC Representative Ashley Trantham was set to attend the meeting, but had to cancel at the last minute due to another unexpected obligation. The issue was tabled until we could set up a time to meet with SC Representative Ashley Trantham. There has been information received from the SC Ethics Commission and Appalachian Council of Governments, whom helped write our current By-Laws, that Jim Darby and Sabrina Bedingfield felt needed to be discussed prior to meeting with SC Representative Ashley Trantham. There is a lot of time and expense that we would have to overcome to complete this process. The SC Ethics Commission (see attached) gave opinion that our Commissioners could be paid if we follow the correct process to allow them too, but it would not start until the next term of each seat. So as the Commissioners were elected starting in January of 2024, if everything was approved in time, would be the first ones to get the pay. It would continue until all 5 seats have been re-elected before everyone would be paid. We can not just start paying everyone at January 2024. It would be a process to go through and the information would have to be reported correctly on each Commissioner's yearly Statement of Economic Interest. Sabrina Bedingfield said that she had requested that Jennifer Adams reach out to Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) about the question of whether Statute 67 was an actual State Law and what is the process to get that changed since there was a question of that in the discussions in the previous meeting. ACOG said that Statute 67 was an actual State Law and it supersedes all other By-Laws and policies for the District. (See Attached) Sabrina Bedingfield explained the way to get State Legislation passed. She said we would have to get our local state representative, Ashley Trantham, to help us with the process. We would have to get an attorney to write the new legislation for a bill for us. If a local representative is willing to support the bill, then they would have to get other representatives to also support the bill. It would not be able to be presented to the State Legislation until they go back in session in December or January. It will then have to go to a committee and be passed by the committee. Then it would then have to go to House of Representatives for a vote, which probably would not be until the middle or end of March. If the House of Representatives passes the legislation, then it would have to go to a Senate Committee for review. If the Senate Committee passes it, which would be about mid-April, it will have to go to the Senate floor for a vote. That would put it being passed by the Senate at the earliest in May. The Governor will then have 5 days to sign it. We would then have to figure out the dollar amount of the pay for the Board. If we say \$50 a month or \$600 a year, it would then have to go before our constituents. We would have to have a referendum passed by them. We would have to pay for the referendum and in 2018 our District thought about doing a referendum for the bond we needed at that time. The cost would have been around \$75,000.00 and has probably increased since then like everything else. If we start the process, we would also have to redo the 2022 Budget in a

Public Hearing because the costs were not included in the original budget. But still after all of that, the referendum would have to be approved by the constituents and they could vote no. That would mean we have wasted all that time and money for nothing. We are here for our community and to provide them the best service we can and to do that we have to take care of our employees. Sabrina Bedingfield said if it does get approved by the constituents you will have to remember that we get a 1099 showing we received income from the District. And again, the SC Ethics Commission said that we will have to start implementing it when the seats are re-elected. It will not start for everyone at the same time. Sabrina Bedingfield said that if that is what everyone wanted to do then we could. Sabrina Bedingfield motioned to get everything we need ready to present to our Legislators for South Greenville Fire District Commissioners to get paid. John Jennings thanked Sabrina Bedingfield for her research for everyone. John Jennings said that he had originally proposed the question because he was talking to a Commissioner from Piedmont Fire Department, and found out they are getting paid. He spoke to their Fire Chief and he confirmed it. John Jennings said that he brought up the question to get information. He said "there is no way in hell" that he would consider taking money away from our firemen. He felt like the information about the process would be good for everyone. He stated that he knew the vote would be 3-2 before he even brought it up. He said after hearing the process, he thinks it would be ridiculous to pursue the process to get paid. He said that he did not know how complicated the process was and there was no way he wanted to go through it. He said he felt like that we really did not need to meet with SC Representative Ashley Trantham. We are pre home rule and that is why we must go through this process. Jim Darby said that he felt like this discussion was taking too long and there was starting to be a lot of gossip that was causing information to be misconstrued for the public. He said he that he knew no member of the Commission Board wanted to take any money away from our employees with the current recession. That would really hurt our morale. He also stated that because we could not talk about this in Executive Session, it causes more confusion and gossip. Donnie Freeman said that originally, they were told that we were crated by State Law and our Board could change that. There was confusion about that and he just wanted to determine who was the body that could change that. He said that he and John just wanted to know who would be the ones to make the decision of Commissioners getting paid. He stated that he knew that the vote would be 3-2 against it, but he wanted more information on the process. He stated that Sabrina Bedingfield had given them good information if it was accurate and that was all he wanted. He thanked her for getting this information so he could better understand. He said \$50 would not make or break him and now that Sabrina Bedingfield had given them this information, he agrees that it is not something that he felt our Board should do. He asked Sabrina Bedingfield if she really wanted to go forward with the original motion. Sabrina Bedingfield motioned to stop the process of getting paid. Donnie Freeman asked if she had retracted her first motion. Sabrina Bedingfield retracted her first motion and motioned to use the information from today and the Commissioners of South Greenville Fire District not proceed with the process of trying to get paid. John Jennings seconded it. All were in favor. Sabrina Bedingfield thanked everyone for coming today and taking the time to hear her information. Jimmy Brashier motioned to adjourn. Sabrina Bedingfield seconded it. All were in favor.

Minutes recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Adams, Administrative Specialist

